Carbon tax would do only harm

Opinion by Bob Carter

ON JULY 10, now dubbed Black Sunday, Prime Minister Gillard released firm details of the government’s planned climate change policy, which aims to cajole claimed dangerous global warming.

The intention is that as its centerpiece the introduction of a new tax on carbon dioxide emissions of $20/tonne, and was developed and approved by Parliament’s Multi-party Committee on Climate Change (MPCCC).

Passing the new legislation depends upon the support of the independents, one of whom, NSW MP Tony Windsor, is a member of the MPCCC. Mr Windsor welcomed the release of the policy with the following statement:

“I believe that this climate change package is an affordable catalyst for this change as it will reduce greenhouse gas emissions, clean up our environment, and move our economy from its dependence on fossil fuels, ensuring the future of our children and children’s children.”

This statement contains 10 misunderstandings and errors.

First, the issue is one of science not belief. The most important observation is that at $20/tonne of carbon dioxide emitted, the cumulative cost by 2020 will be more than $100 billion, and it is sheer fantasy to claim that this cost will be paid by 900 mythical “big polluters.” On the contrary the costs will escalate right down to the average Australian, such that a family of four persons will incur new distribution costs of more than $2000/family/year.

Second, the package is far from affordable. At $20/tonne of carbon dioxide emitted, and it is sheer fantasy to claim that this cost will be paid by 900 mythical “big polluters.” On the contrary the costs will escalate right down to the average Australian, such that a family of four persons will incur new distribution costs of more than $2000/family/year.

Third, the package is unlikely to be a catalyst for lower emissions because petrol and energy are notoriously inelastic commodities, which is to say that a moderate increase in their price results in little or no reduction in consumption (in contrast to the projections of ideologuistic and unrealistic treasury computer models). For example, Norway has had a carbon dioxide tax of $20/tonne in place since the early 1990s, in response to which by 2008 national emissions had risen by 15 per cent.

Fourth, even were the result of the tax to be the targeted 5 per cent reduction in emissions by 2020, that indicates only that in 2020 global carbon dioxide would attain 411.067 ppm rather than the 412 ppm projected by the IPCC, potentially preventing less than a thousandth of a degree of global warming. Such a tiny reduction will, of course, have no measurable effect on climate.

Fifth, the intended MPCCC policies will extend even more costly favours to impractical sources of base-load power such as wind and solar energy. The result will not be the claimed positive but rather a net negative for the environment, littering the landscape with inedible beemethans, and (as a recent Four Corners program outlined) causing sharp social conflict in country communities.

Sixth, there is no urgent necessity to move away from using fossil fuels as the industrial basis for our economy. Abundant hydrocarbon energy sources exist to fuel the world for at least many decades, together with fast-improving ways of harnessing nuclear and other energy sources.

Seventh, even if such a necessity existed the MPCCC package will do virtually nothing to meet it. For, as already pointed out, at any feasible tax rate usage will be scarcely affected.

Eighth and ninth, the opportunity cost of using the billions of dollars of intellectual and environmental policy is enormous. The policy will rob us of the wealth available to our children and grandchildren. It will also prevent Australia having the spare money to contribute generously to such urgent humanitarian disasters as the current drought and food supply shortage in Somalia: millions of third world people will die as a result.

Tenth, the policy package is therefore immoral.

The misunderstandings and errors in Mr Windsor’s statement reflect the fact that the MPCCC has received unbalanced scientific advice. Andrew, in view of the importance of an issue that is first and foremost a scientific one, the committee includes only one scientist.

That person, ANU’s Professor Will Steffen, is both a senior Australian representative on the UN’s Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) as well as criterion co-chair of the federal Department of Climate Change. The IPCC is an unelected, unaccountable, overseas political body, and that its advice is political, and not rigorously scientific, has been widely known for at least 10 years.

Comprehensive and scientific audits by independent senior Australian scientists have pointed out many flaws in IPCC advice*, and were provided to the MPCCC, which appears to have taken the verbatim criticism is ignored, then it will go away.

Alas, science isn’t like that. Instead, the operation of science is based upon the steady discarding of flawed ideas, such as those of the IPCC, and their replacement with more accurate versions of reality.

Given clearly he has been misled, Mr Windsor’s solaces regarding climate policy are perhaps understandable. However, accurate analysis is now available in the public domain, and this shows that the climate policy package that Mr Windsor and other independents support is fundamentally flawed and will grossly damage their constituents’ interests, not to mention the country’s.

Mr Windsor, and others who are processing the same mistaken arguments, need to rethink, regroup and withdraw their support for the government’s misbegotten carbon dioxide policy package.


References

ARIK (May 21 to June 21): You’re full of good ideas about how to make improvements to your health today. Similarly, you’re full of equally good ideas about how to improve your job, if you have one.

TAURUS (April 20 to May 20): Parents might tackle a new project or organize toys, clothing and items either you or your children own.

GEMINI (May 21 to June 20): Tackles home repairs. In particular, work on anything that can be improved related to the kitchen, bathroom and laundry, or consider repairs to your home.

CANCER (June 21 to July 22): You’re extremely persuasive today. This means today is a wonderful day to sell, teach, or persuade others, whether at work or in your private life.

LEO (July 23 to Aug. 22): Respect your money making ideas today. You might well come up with a new source of income or a new way to make money on the side. You might also see new uses for something you already own.

VIKING (Aug. 23 to Sept. 22): Take a realistic look in the mirror to see how you can improve your image in the world. After all, you never get a second chance to make a first impression. (And you like to make a good impression.)

LIBRA (Sept. 23 to Oct. 22): Your research abilities are excellent today! If you’re looking for answers, you will find them.

SCORPIO (Oct. 23 to Nov. 21): You might be obsessed about something in your discussions with bosses, parents and authority figures today. Don’t let your enthusiasm override your respect for their authority.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22 to Dec. 21): You might be obsessed about something in your discussions with bosses, parents and authority figures today. Don’t let your enthusiasm override your respect for their authority.

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22 to Jan. 19): You will love to study any new thing today. You’re keen to penetrate matters in order to find out the truth of something, especially in politics or religion, that concerns you and your friends will be approached with intensity today. You’re not casual about anything. Be careful about obsessive thinking. (Ooga.)

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20 to Feb. 18): This is quite a passionate, sexual day for some of you! Others will use this same driving passion to settle issues about shared property and inheritances.

PIECES (Feb. 19 to March 20): Whatever you talk about to partners and close friends will be approached with intensity today. You’re not casual about anything. Be careful about obsessive thinking. (Ooga.)

Basketball player Shane Heal turns 41 today.