



Resolution Number Seven

Submitted by National Secretary, Paul Howes.

Climate Change and the ETS – the impact on Regional Australia

Background

Australia's biggest carbon emitting employers are based outside of our capital cities and are located in regional centers where most AWU members live and work. In regions like Gladstone, the La Trobe Valley, the Hunter Valley, the Tamar Valley and the Pilbara, industries including alumina, cement, steel, oil and gas, bauxite and iron ore predominate. They are the fulcrums of the local and regional economies, and provide stable and highly paid jobs to many thousands of workers and their families. They will also be the first to bear the brunt of any Emissions Trading Scheme that does not strike the right balance between the environment, the economy and the interests of working people.

The AWU is working very closely with the Federal Government on the urgent question of climate change. We are also working closely with these regional communities. Up to 15,000 Australian jobs could be under threat. Industry, government and unions need to make our energy-intensive and export-oriented industries sustainable - so that we can keep good jobs in Australia, which in turn are integral to the future well-being of our nation.

The Federal Government must help these industries to clean up their act, and bring in new technologies such as carbon capture and storage. If this can be achieved, then decent, well-paid, secure jobs will not be driven off-shore to countries like China, India and Brazil, whose pollution levels are far-far higher than we have here in Australia.

The environmental and economic case in support of our position is compelling. We know that by keeping good jobs in smelting and refining in Australia, we are actually helping in the battle against greenhouse gases. For example, for every tonne of alumina made here in Australia we produce fifty per cent less emissions than the same tonne made in China. The challenge for the Federal Government is not to create an Emission Trading Scheme that sees Australian jobs, and industry, take flight to countries like China, Brazil, India or South Africa where environmental regulations and production processes are far worse.

Through a combination of appropriate ETS transition policies, investment in carbon neutral energy resources (by both Government and industry), energy efficiency measures and energy demand management, and income tax credits to help stimulate job creation, Australia can generate significant green job opportunities and can ensure that the interests of workers are given maximum priority throughout this process.



NATIONAL CONFERENCE 2009



Resolution

This National Conference acknowledges the significant role that regional Australia plays with regard to our national economy, and to our union.

In recognition of this role, National Conference strongly urges the Federal Government to ensure that the interests of regional Australia are appropriately taken into account in the design and implementation of an Emissions Trading Scheme, and that specific policy measures are developed to provide direct incentives for industry to continue to operate in regional Australia.

Furthermore, this National Conference calls upon the Federal Government to ensure that the infrastructure needs of regional Australia are appropriately supported so that regional communities and employers have access to sustainable energy technology and supplies.

Moved:

Seconded:

Outcome: