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**GLOBAL WARNING: AUSTRALIA AND THE INTERNATIONAL
RESPONSE TO CLIMATE CHANGE**

Ignoring the warnings at our peril

Last week Rupert Murdoch signed up one of Australia's leading companies to join the non-profit, emissions reducing Climate Group. Instructively this was another example of business being way ahead of the Howard Government's inaction on climate change. In signing up News Limited Mr Murdoch said:

"Climate change poses clear, catastrophic threats... we may not agree on the extent, but we certainly can't afford the risk of inaction."

Mr Murdoch is absolutely right. The threat to our environment and security posed by climate change is one of those seminal issues that has both woken and motivated the Australian electorate. And so it should.

As Labor Spokesman on Foreign Affairs I want to initially focus on the international security issues arising from climate change. Some of those consequences are most profound in our own region.

I will conclude by emphasising the constructive role that Australia can and should be playing when it comes to finding a solution to climate change.

The national security effects

Aside from the economic and environmental impact, many respected international experts have identified climate change as a major threat to national, regional and international security.

Last month the British Foreign Secretary Margaret Beckett regarded the matter as so significant that she brought the matter before the UN Security Council. In doing so she reported:

“Climate change is a security issue: but it is not a matter of narrow national security- it has a new dimension. This is about our collective security in a fragile and increasingly interdependent world.”¹

Also in April eleven retired US Generals and Admirals published a report titled *National Security and the Threat of Climate Change*.² The report put climate change front and centre of the national security debate.

These distinguished Military Officers were not “tree huggers” or unshaven student activists looking for a cause - they are all hardened warriors. Their report warned that violent weather events along coastlines, mass migration of people, conflict over resources and changing national borders would create major drivers for global instability.

Admiral Joseph Prueher, former Commander-in Chief of US Pacific Command, said the signs are particularly relevant to the Asia Pacific region.³ He warned that extreme weather conditions may force governments in Asia to become more authoritarian. He also stated that the structures of regional governance may break down in the face of climate change pressure, writing:

“You see mass destruction in countries where the government is not robust. When people can’t cope, governing structures break down.”

For an Australian Government that has already proven itself unable to deal with the long term implications of unstable and collapsed governments in our region, this is a dire warning.

It is arguable that the effects of climate change are already producing conflict. In a speech delivered on the 10 May British Foreign Secretary Beckett argued that climate driven conflicts were already occurring. She referred in particular to an underlying struggle between nomadic and pastoral communities in Darfur for ever diminishing feed and water. She also referred to an emerging conflict in Ghana as Fulani herdsmen confront established farmers in order to access diminishing water and productive land. These resources are diminishing at a rapid rate as the Sahara desert expands.⁴

Even without producing direct conflict climate change may aggravate violence of another kind. Instability and despair can be the breeding ground of extremism. In that context Admiral Joseph Lopez, the former top NATO commander in Bosnia, views climate change as a potential factor in perpetuating global terrorism. He has stated:

“Climate change will provide the conditions that will extend the war on terror...You have very real changes in natural systems that are most likely to happen in regions of the world that are already fertile ground for extremism...In the long term, we want to address the underlying conditions that terrorists seek to exploit... But climate change prolongs those conditions. It makes them worse.”⁵

Climate change is not just a problem for the Third World

Even developed nations will have difficulty coping with more frequent and more intense storms. The terrible experience of Hurricane Katrina in the United States is an example of what we and future generations may have to confront.

Hurricane Katrina, which hit Louisiana and Mississippi in late August 2005, was the third-strongest hurricane on record to make the US mainland. At least 1,836 people lost their lives in the immediate aftermath and in the subsequent floods, making it the deadliest US hurricane in almost 80 years.

Shortly after the hurricane many residents of New Orleans who remained in the city began looting shops in search of food and water that were not available elsewhere.

Reports of carjacking, murders, thefts, and rapes in New Orleans increased dramatically. Thousands of National Guard and fully armed federal troops were mobilized and sent to Louisiana along with numbers of local law enforcement personnel from across the US who were temporarily deployed to the state.

The repair bill alone totalled some \$105 billion making it the costliest natural disaster in US history.

In addition to the massive repair bill, Hurricane Katrina interrupted the supply of oil and seriously damaged export revenue by crippling transport of the region's primary commodities.

According to the United States Coast Guard approximately twenty offshore oil platforms went missing, sunk, or had gone adrift. The local electric utility filed for bankruptcy protection a month after the Hurricane hit as they cited lower revenue and storm restoration costs as the primary cause.

Prior to the hurricane, this region of the US was responsible for an estimated one million non-agricultural sector jobs – these were lost almost overnight. Hundreds of thousands of residents of southern Louisiana and Mississippi, including nearly everyone who lived in New Orleans, were left unemployed. No paychecks were being cashed and no money was being spent, and therefore no taxes were being collected by local governments. The lack of revenue will limit the resources of the affected communities and states for years to come.

The overall economic impact to Louisiana and Mississippi is estimated to exceed a total of \$150 billion.

The Katrina disaster prompted many to ask whether climate change had played a role. Headlines in *The Los Angeles Times* read: "Storm turns focus to global warming" and the New York Times ran similar pieces. Both cited a report, published in the respected journal *Nature* which challenged the orthodox view that Katrina fitted into long term weather patterns.⁶

The alarm bells are now ringing in Australia

For these reasons the former US Generals are by no means the only group calling for climate change to be dealt with as a priority security issue. As well as the British Foreign Secretary, respected Australian advisors are trying to shake our Government out of its decade long slumber.

Doctors Alan Dupont and Graeme Pearman published a report for the Australian Lowy Institute released in June 2006 which came to many of the same conclusions as the US Generals.⁷ Dupont and Pearman warned:

"climate change will contribute to destabilising, unregulated population movements in Asia and the Pacific. Most of these flows are likely to be internal, but the ripple effects will be felt beyond the borders of the states most affected, requiring cooperative regional solutions." and;

"Where climate change coincides with other transnational challenges to security, such as terrorism or pandemic diseases, or adds to pre-existing ethnic and social tensions, then the impact will be magnified."⁸

Ignore such warnings and we risk the security and stability of our region.

The particular threat of climate change to the Asia-Pacific

As mentioned, there are many reasons for the nations of the Asia-Pacific to be particularly concerned with climate change. A recent CSIRO report has also confirmed that the region's unique characteristics make it highly susceptible to the projected weather changes. The report gives further support to the conclusions of the American military officers to which I have referred.

The CSIRO report warns that land will be swallowed up by rising sea levels, otherwise known as inundation. CSIRO modelling suggests that by the latter half of the 21st century, a 30-50cm sea-level rise will occur in the Asia-Pacific. This would affect 100,000km of coastline, causing millions or even billions of dollars in damage and tens of millions of displaced people. The CSIRO have calculated that a rise in sea levels of half a metre by 2070-2100 would cost Southeast Asia alone \$300 billion in today's dollar value.⁹

This potential damage is maximised by the geography and population distribution in many Asia-Pacific countries. For example, approximately 30,000km² of land is less than 1 metre above sea-level in Bangladesh alone. This is where most of the country's population and agriculture is located. The area makes up 23 percent of GDP of Bangladesh. While Bangladesh is a dramatic example, it is far from unique.

Even if the sea were to rise less than the predicted 14-32cm in the Pacific by 2050, there would still be devastating results for Pacific islands. The worst case scenario is total inundation. That is a real prospect faced by Tuvalu

along with a significant portion of a number of islands in Vanuatu, Kiribati, the Marshall Islands, Micronesia and PNG.¹⁰

Prime Minister Howard - who once prided himself on being able to determine who comes to our country and the circumstances in which they come - has some significant questions to answer about climate caused refugees.

Dr Jane McAdam Director of Law at the UNSW says the time is rapidly approaching for the international community to deal with this issue. Dr McAdam noted that on Christmas Eve of last year the island of Lohachara in the Bay of Bengal disappeared. She predicted a likely source of refugees from the Carteret Islands in Papua New Guinea which she forecast are likely to disappear within a decade.¹¹

New Zealand already has a yearly quota of immigrants it accepts from Pacific Islands at risk of global warming¹². It's difficult to imagine any Government sending SAS troops out to confront people seeking land lost as a result of unrestrained industrialisation.

Health risks constitute another looming disaster for the Asia-Pacific. Without action increased temperatures will extend the tropical zones, and with them tropical diseases such as malaria and dengue. A wider area means a greater number of potential victims. Heat-related mortality is also capable of claiming lives. We have seen the ominous example of 300 people dying per day in Shanghai during a heat surge in the 1980s.¹³

The most recent UN Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change report has also identified clean water supply as an endangered resource in the region. Melting glaciers in the Himalayas are projected to cause flooding, avalanches, and seriously change the patterns of water supply in Central, South, East and Southeast Asia.¹⁴ This is likely to combine with the increasing lack of fresh water caused by rising seas in Pacific islands to cause major transformations to agriculture and population sustainability.

Economic damage and loss of opportunity

Our region is developing into the economic engine room of the 21st century. It contains 60 percent of the world's population, produces around 25 percent of the global domestic product and contains some of the world's fastest growing economies such as China and India. Many of these countries are undergoing rapid development, population growth and economic expansion which produces great opportunities and risks for Australia.¹⁵

The opportunities are clear. The Asia-Pacific represents 61.3 percent of Australia's global trade, amounting to \$201.5 billion. As regional economies are given a chance to grow, Australia's economy can only grow with them.

However, all of these growing economies are at risk of eventual downturn if the threats posed by climate change are not addressed. For example, India

and China alone rely on agriculture for 22.7 percent and 15.4 percent of their GDP respectively.

The sustainability of agriculture in both countries is dependent on the wet seasons or monsoons. Increasing changes to monsoon patterns, and the problems with water that I have already outlined will require strategic planning and mitigation strategies to meet the challenge. A failure of crops would not only result in an inability to feed the rapidly growing population but could also have negative consequences for economic growth.

Increased greenhouse gas emissions are another risk tied up with the rapid economic development that our regional neighbours are experiencing. The World Bank predicts that China alone will triple its emissions from 1990 levels to 2045 tonnes by 2020, making it the world's largest emitter.¹⁶ Carbon emissions are a driving force behind the changed weather patterns and other effects that I described earlier.

A decade of denial – the Howard Government's reaction

In the face of repeated warnings from those who know far more about the science and maths of climate change than we politicians, Prime Minister Howard and his Ministers have staunchly held the line of climate change scepticism.

On the ABC's *Four Corners* program on 28 August 2006 the Prime Minister said:

"I accept that climate change is a challenge. I accept the broad theory about global warming. I am sceptical about a lot of the more gloomy predictions."

On 20 August 2006 Industry Minister Ian Macfarlane candidly admitted:

"I am a sceptic of the connection between emissions and climate change."

On 22 August 2005 the same Industry Minister told the *Four Corners* program:

"There is still a degree of uncertainty in the connection between global warming, which we accept that it appears as though the globe is warming but only slightly, and whether or not that is entirely or largely due to human activity. The jury's still out on that."

Malcolm Turnbull, the Minister for the Environment, on 3 February this year lamented to the ABC's *AM* program about what he called "exaggerated claims" and perhaps raised rather than calmed anxiety when he said:

“...because of the geology or the typography of the east coast, you know, much of that is adequately elevated to deal with a one-metre sea rise.”

Unfortunately this scepticism is producing a lack of motivation from our Government. That lack of motivation is reflected in the Prime Minister's recent 'Rising Australia' speech of 23 April where he argued that:

“to say that climate change is the overwhelming moral challenge for this generation of Australians is misguided at best and misleading at worse”.

All the evidence points to a Government with an incredibly defeatist attitude in addressing the challenge of climate change to our region and our country.

Government decade of inaction despite the world around us

The Howard Government's response to climate change over the last 11 years has been totally inadequate. At Kyoto the Government obtained concessions from the international community striving to have as many countries sign up to the protocol as possible. Under those concessions Australia could actually increase emissions targets of 108 percent of 1990 levels by 2012.

Nevertheless, having obtained the concession the Government signed but refused to ratify the Protocol. With only the US by its side, our Government has turned its back on all the good work of the international community.

Thankfully, the rest of the world has moved on.

Since 2000 the European Union has launched over 30 major initiatives to counter climate change – including laws aimed at improving energy efficiency in buildings, as well as tax incentives for 'clean' transport.¹⁷ Across the EU there is now the world's largest and most comprehensive carbon emissions trading scheme. The scheme came into operation on January 2005.¹⁸ A second phase commenced at the end of 2005 and will be extended during the course of this year.

In fact, the results of Kyoto can be seen in our region with European Union initiatives like the Asian Carbon Group – which is applying the financial mechanisms of the Kyoto Protocol, in particular the Clean Development Mechanism (CDM) and Joint Implementation (JI), to fund power plants across Asia, both large and small utilizing Renewable Energy Technologies (RETs).¹⁹

In 2004, Japan Carbon Finance - the first Green House Gas Reduction Fund in Asia, was set up in Japan.²⁰

The World Bank has estimated that Carbon markets traded US\$30 billion worth of greenhouse gas emission reductions around the world in 2006, an almost three-fold increase on the previous year's US\$11 billion.

The Governor of California Arnold Schwarzenegger - again, no shrinking violet or bleeding heart lefty has realised the significance of Climate Change. California - the 12th largest greenhouse emitter globally - now boasts of legislation that requires a 25 percent reduction in emission by industries and residents to cut emissions by 2020.²¹

The Howard Government has watched from afar as our renewable energy industry moves offshore, and our skills and jobs reduce. A recent prominent example is that of AGL Energy in March joining the world's first voluntary and legally binding greenhouse gas emissions reduction, registry and trading program.²² This is just another example of business being ahead of Government on this vitally important issue.

Government's belated and inadequate response

In the last 12 months the Government attempted to play catch-up, announcing Australia's involvement in the Asia Pacific Partnership on Clean Development and Climate (AP6) – a delayed and limited response reflecting the Governments domestic approach to the challenges of climate change.

The AP6 initiative has the potential to play an important part in mitigating climate change – by assisting in the development and deployment of low emissions technologies – but as stated by the AP6 itself, it is complementary to the Kyoto Protocol.²³ As a standalone measure it falls well short of comprehensive action.

The recent IPCC Fourth Assessment Report on Climate Change notes the achievement of Kyoto and that it has established “new institutional mechanisms that may provide foundation for future mitigation efforts.”²⁴ A feat that the Foreign Minister continues to say is ‘fantasy’²⁵. One can only question how sincere the Current Governments belated engagement in finding a multilateral solution to green house emissions really is.

There is now more than ever a heavy economic as well as an environmental argument to get more involved in the international business of climate change. It is clear that there are excellent initiatives already underway in the region, and excellent opportunities for Australian business and industry to get involved.

Australia can and should take the lead in enhancing these existing initiatives, and promoting and developing new ones.

However, our diplomatic leverage in this area is being eroded by the governments Kyoto hypocrisy - undermining our capacity and reputation for proactive climate-change initiatives.

It is self-contradictory for the Government to declare that climate change requires global action, Kyoto is flawed and not worth ratifying and at the same time boast we are on track to meet our Kyoto targets anyway.

If that is the case why not just sign Kyoto for the sake of Australia's international reputation, regain a seat at the negotiating table and help take a lead on new international agreements to mitigate global warming?

Failure to Ratify Kyoto has Damaged our Reputation and Capacity

The Howard Government's Kyoto recalcitrance has negatively affected our international reputation.

In December 1997 the Irish Times described Australia's role at the Kyoto conference as being "something of a pariah". Fast forward 10 years and the news is no better.

Sir Nicholas Stern, one of the world's leading authorities on the economics of climate change says Australia is "seriously damaging" international efforts to fight global warming. In March this year Sir Nicholas said: "People take Australia not signing as a strong statement. It is very often quoted at me".²⁶

Stavros Dimas, the European Environment Commissioner, recently said that we have "a negative attitude on international negotiations" and stated: "I can really not understand why Australia has not ratified Kyoto."²⁷

Former US Vice President Al Gore has dubbed the US and Australia "the Bonnie and Clyde of the climate debate" and said in September:

"I do think that joining the Kyoto process is the key, because that's what the rest of the world is doing, and only Australia and the United States are outside the treaty".²⁸

Internationally renowned environmentalist Dr David Suzuki has described Australia as "an international outlaw" for failing to ratify Kyoto.²⁹

Richard Worthington, South Africa Climate Action Network, said in December last year:

"Of course we would like our government to publicly distance itself from the Australian rejection of (Kyoto) at every opportunity."³⁰

French Prime Minister Dominique de Villepin last year threatened to add an import tax on Australian goods in protest at Australia's refusal to sign off on the Kyoto agreement.

Even King Carl Gustaf and Queen Silvia of Sweden have expressed their concerns about Australia's position.³¹

Britain's Chief Scientist Sir David King; former Japanese Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi; his Foreign Minister Yoriko Kawaguchi; the Leaders of the Cook Islands, Kiribati, Nauru, Niue, Marshall Islands and Tuvalu; and the

Kenyan Nobel peace prize winner Wangari Maathai – all have publicly expressed their concern or given an outright rebuke to our Government.

Environmental scientist and 2007 Australian of the Year Tim Flannery warned:

*"I see the ratification of the Kyoto Protocol as being supremely important, because what's happening at the moment is the Chinese are citing our recalcitrance as an excuse for them not to do anything."*³²

The Howard Government's obstructionism is catching

Australia's example to the rest of the world is one of obstruction. It gives cover to those who are yet to cut emissions but must do so if we are to genuinely address climate change.

The Paris based International Energy Agency recently said that China's economic growth had been so rapid over the past 12 months that it may soon overtake the US at the world's biggest source of greenhouse gases. Previous predictions were that China would take this dubious honour in 2009 or 2010 but the IEA have suggested it might happen by November this year.

Last month Dr Faith Birol, the chief economist at the IEA, predicted that at current rates within 25 years:

*"CO2 emissions which come from China alone will be double the CO2 emissions which will come from all the OECD countries put together – the whole US, plus Canada, plus all the European countries, Japan, Australia and New Zealand."*³³

The bad news doesn't end there.

China recently released its first official report on climate change and it flatly rejected international pressure for Beijing to put emission caps on its factories and coal power plants. The Chinese report concluded:

*"If we prematurely assume responsibilities for mandatory greenhouse-gas emissions reductions, the direct consequence will be to constrain China's current energy and manufacturing industries. Developing the economy and improving people's lives remains the country's primary task."*³⁴

This sounds a lot like John Howard's prioritisation of the economy over addressing the world's number one environmental threat. The thing is of course that the economy and the quality of people's lives – both here and in China – will be significantly damaged if we fail to take action.

The bottom line is that the Government's climate change scepticism and obstruction is getting in the way of us helping the world take the next step. Instead of acting as a Good International Citizen the Howard Government's

refusal to ratify Kyoto is running interference on efforts by the international community to develop climate change solutions.

Howard Government has surrendered but Australia can contribute

In the Prime Ministers most recent speech *Australia Rising*, he stated that:

“Australia emits fewer greenhouse gases in a year than the United States and China emit in a month.”³⁵

This statement is his justification for inaction. It is as if he has already surrendered.

If anything, those figures warrant a more vigorous determination by all to seek a global solution. Especially since the Prime Minister neglects to mention that Australia is the highest emitter of greenhouse gas emissions per capita amongst OECD countries.³⁶

The Prime Minister is correct in noting the importance of both the United States and China, and how critical they are to a climate change solution, but his legitimisation of inaction essentially forgets Australia’s great capacity for middle-power diplomacy and initiative.

Australia is uniquely placed in the region. We have excellent relationships with both China and the United States. We have been leaders many regional and global institutions and initiatives, and we should strive to regain that status.

Middle power diplomacy and the Montreal legacy

In relation to climate change Australia has many past diplomatic initiatives to be proud of – none more so than the Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer. It remains one of the most effective and successful environmental protection agreements. It also established the world’s first financial mechanism to be created under an international treaty – the Multilateral Fund for the Implementation of the Montreal Protocol.³⁷

The Hawke Labor Government was a leading supporter of international efforts to protect the Ozone layer in the 1980’s, as such Australia was closely involved with the implementation and scientific assessment aspects of the Montreal Framework.³⁸ The 2006 UN Environment Program/World Meteorological Organization Scientific Assessment of Ozone Depletion has recently reported that as a result of the Montreal Protocol, the total abundance of ozone-depleting gases in the atmosphere has begun to decrease in recent years.³⁹

This year, the International Polar Year and the recent Antarctic Treaty Consultative Meeting in Delhi also reminds us of what tools for climate change we have available to us in our Antarctic Territories. The Madrid Protocol, spawned from the Hawke Labor Government has secured Australia a valuable key to understanding climate change.

The Prime Minister's view that Australian action would produce negligible results is disconnected from our proactive drive and history as a nation, and our capacity to promote positive diplomatic initiatives.

All Australians want to be part of solutions, not simply parts of problems. And given our great tradition of effective and creative middle power diplomacy in the past, it can be achieved again.

There is no alternative to immediate action.

The CSIRO recently completed a comprehensive cost-benefit analysis, contrasting the costs of mitigation by 2050 with the benefits of avoided damages by 2100. Even without considering non-monetary benefits, they concluded that at the very least the costs and benefits would balance out. As non-monetary factors are taken into account, the balance increasingly shifts towards taking early action.⁴⁰ This is supported by other studies which conclude that abatement measures in the present can yield positive economic benefits in the long term. This is irrespective of their environment benefits.⁴¹

Dupont and Pearman have recommended the Howard Government establish an interdepartmental taskforce to examine the relationships between climate change and national security. They also advocate mainstreaming the study of climate change in the Australian Intelligence Community, and taking the lead in working with like-minded Asia-Pacific governments to examine the implications of climate change for regional security and stability.⁴²

All of these are valuable suggestions and worthy of consideration as part of a concerted climate change policy.

Engaging business

We should be recognising climate change as a major business opportunity for Australia, instead of seeing it purely in terms of its potential costs. The global response to climate change is creating new markets and new industries that will in time be worth hundreds of billions of dollars every year.

As Rod Eddington, former CEO of British Airways and Chair of Labor's Council of Business Advisors, said at the Future Summit in Melbourne only this week:

"Business can provide the solution but government must set the standards."⁴³

The question is whether Australia is positioned to take advantage of these opportunities. We need a Government that engages with business and asks the question: what can we do to sell the move to a low carbon economy as a massive business opportunity?

Why are we not already sending the message to the global community that Australia aims to be a world leader in climate change knowledge exchange? There is much to build on.

The Australian Business Round Table which includes major Australian companies like Westpac, BP, Origin Energy, Visy and insurance company IAG recently have put together a *Business Case For Early Action*. They concluded that not acting on climate change would put at risk:

- the \$32 billion dollar tourism industry through effects like coral reef bleaching;
- the \$17 billion dollar livestock export industry; and
- the economic future of the entire Murray-Darling Basin – Australia’s food bowl.

The Round Table have stated that their commissioned research from the Allen Consulting Group found that: “it is possible to deliver significant emission reductions at an affordable cost”.⁴⁴

Their CSIRO commissioned studies concluded that:

“The economic impacts are significant and widespread, affecting in particular Australia’s leading export earners, agriculture and tourism. This will have flow-on effects for the whole economy.”⁴⁵

But most importantly these leading Australian businesses have emphasised that “the longer we delay action, the more expensive it becomes for business and for the wider Australian economy”.

The choice is clear: we either act on climate change now and mitigate the economic cost or we delay and the bill gets bigger.

Both the financial and security consequences will become more complex and threatening and the quality of life of our children and grandchildren will be detrimentally affected.

Labor intends to promote a paradigm shift in the way we view climate change.

We are aware of the negative consequences of no action, but we should also be aware that climate change represents a huge positive opportunity for Australia to lead the global community, that knowledge and technology export (particularly to China) can reap large profits.

A Labor Government can position Australia to be ahead of the rest of the world and ready to seize this change as an opportunity not as an impediment.

But to do this we must ratify Kyoto and regain our international credibility.

Regional leadership

By adopting measures such as those discussed Australia should be taking a lead role in our region. We should be setting an example of compliance and innovation. Instead our example is one of obstruction and criticism of sincere global effort.

Australia should foster and develop our own carbon emissions trading scheme to facilitate the growth of such technology and industry. We should be developing and distributing those technologies throughout the region. We need to be ready for the future development of a regional trading system that has already been discussed at various international fora from APEC to ASEAN.

Working within the Kyoto framework and assisting the further development of systems like the Asian Carbon Exchange and other Clean Development Mechanisms is another step towards a global solution.

Australia should expand and develop its scientific research into climate change utilising the vast wealth of knowledge held deep in the Antarctic ice. Our access and skills proximity are invaluable and vital to a greater understanding of climate change.

Dealing with enormous Chinese emission levels that the Prime Minister points to and determining what happens when it comes to the post 2012 climate change regime are vitally important issues for Australia and our region. They should be met front and centre by an Australia that moves forwards on the climate change agenda at one with the international community.

The Conference to the Parties to the Kyoto Protocol will meet from 3 to 14 December in Bali, Indonesia. This will be the next big chance for the world to flesh out post-2012 emissions targets. It will be the international climate change negotiating room right on Australia's doorstep.

The key to this room is ratifying the original Kyoto agreement - that's how you get a seat at the negotiating table. And given that by December the Federal Election will have come and passed, the only way for the Australian people to get their hands on that key to the negotiating room is to elect a Labor Government.

So the question to the Australian electorate is now clear: come December this year do you want to see John Howard and Malcolm Turnbull locked outside while the world attempts to reach a new climate change consensus?

Or do you want to see Kevin Rudd and Peter Garrett in the room, getting on with the job, looking after our future in cooperation with our international neighbours and friends?

For the world the long-term policy decisions are complex and varied. But for Australians the immediate political decision to make is really that simple.

ENDNOTES

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- ³⁹ 2006 UN Environment Program/World Meteorological Organization Scientific Assessment of Ozone Depletion
- ⁴⁰ Jones, R.N. and Preston, B.L. *Climate Change Impacts, Risk and the Benefits of Mitigation*, CSIRO December 2006 pp77-79
- ⁴¹ McElroy, M.B. et al (eds). 1998. *Energizing China: Reconciling Environmental Protection and Economic Growth*, London: Harvard University Press, p2
- ⁴² Alan Dupont & Graeme Pearman, *Heating Up the Planet: Climate Change and Security*, Lowy Institute Paper 12, June 2006, pp ix-xi
- ⁴³ S. Lunn & C. Overington, 'Clean coal for China vital: Downer', *The Australian*, 16/05/07, p. 6
- ⁴⁴ [The Allen Consulting Group - Deep Cuts in Greenhouse Gas Emissions - Economic, Social and Environmental Impacts for Australia](#) found at: <http://www.businessroundtable.com.au>
- ⁴⁵ [CSIRO: Climate Change Impacts on Australia and the Benefits of Early Action to Reduce Global Greenhouse Gas Emissions](#) found at: <http://www.businessroundtable.com.au>