

Doctors for the Environment Australia
A branch of the International Society of Doctors
for the Environment

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MRET Review Secretariat
Canberra ACT 2601

1.5.03

Dear Sir/ Madam,

Our organisation has as one of its priorities the mitigation of the potential effects of climate change on human health. These effects have been reviewed in recent IPCC reports and members of our organisation have participated in these IPCC processes. The overall scientific assessment is that most of the impacts of climate change on human health would be adverse. The policy of Doctors for the Environment Australia on the Health Aspects of Climate Change is detailed on our web page at www.dea.org.au

We believe that the consequences of global warming on human health and indeed on ecological systems as a whole are not yet fully recognised. The costs have not been taken into account in formulating a policy that would contribute to a more rapid reduction in greenhouse gas emissions. For this reason alone we urge the Review Committee to recommend at least 10% of energy as renewable by 2010. We can see no impediments to the achievement of such targets.

In terms of positive health outcomes, Doctors for the Environment draws attention to the need for increased local employment and self sufficiency in many deprived regions of rural Australia in order to alleviate economic hardship, depopulation, clinical depression and suicide. It has already been demonstrated that local renewable energy projects may play an important role in the correction of some of these problems

In relation to electricity retailers providing electricity from non-plantation forestry waste, we believe that this will be an impediment to consumer acceptance of renewable energy. The use of forest floor waste would be against principles of support for ecological systems expressed in IPCC reports. It is also a questionable practice in that under certain circumstances it could worsen the present unacceptable practices of native forest destruction in Tasmania, New South Wales and Victoria. These latter practices are also greenhouse-negative. In conclusion, medical doctors will have difficulty in purchasing green power in their homes and practices if this is obtained through destructive practices by the forest industries.

Doctors for the Environment Australia is an independent organisation of medical doctors with members in all States and in all branches of medicine. We work for the recognition that human health in its widest sense is dependent on the integrity of the environment. This

integrity will be seriously breached by global warming. Your Committee therefore has a significant role in the health of future generations and this fact should be paramount in making a decision to fast-forward recommendations on renewable energy. We urge you to consider these problems holistically with regard to the needs of the entire community.

David Shearman,
Honorary Secretary, Doctors for the Environment Australia Inc.

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