

# Project SafeCom's climate justice views and policies

*We, the people of the western world, are responsible for the damage to our environment that has caused climate upheaval. So, we are responsible for cleaning up the mess that caused it and for implementing policies that stop it.*

## Climate change

Serious disturbance of the current climate balance of our planet is rapidly becoming an accepted fact in the western world, where *drier or wetter* weather patterns, fiercer storms, more disastrous floods, melting icecaps around the poles and rising sea levels are some of the symptoms of this disturbed balance of our climate.

In August 2005 Project SafeCom endorsed the *Friends of the Earth* Climate Refugee policy, because from our inception in 2001 we had recognised the importance of independent citizens groups speaking out in Australia about Climate change and about Australia's responsibilities to displaced people in our surrounding countries.

See [www.safecom.org.au/foe-climate-guide.htm](http://www.safecom.org.au/foe-climate-guide.htm)

## Man-made "natural" disasters

Every person on planet earth has the right to live in peace in their own environment, also living free from fear of *"man-made natural disasters"*. The fate of the people of New Orleans, where hundreds of thousands of people fled from Hurricane Katrina - and 250,000, according to the Earth Policy Institute, did not return - was a stark example of the effects of climate disasters on people who are living in peace by all other accounts.

*Hurricane Katrina* is not the only example though: Shishmaref, a village in Alaska, is relocating to another part of the Alaskan peninsula; the Pacific Island of Tuvalu is already a nation of climate refugees, where New Zealand has committed itself to an annual intake of a quota of Tuvaluans who are effected by rising sea levels. Other Pacific island nations such as Fiji and Vanuatu are also starting to feel the immediate effects of climate change through rising sea levels.

## Australia: Torres Strait islanders

In August 2006 *The Age's* Environment reporter Liz Minchin reports about the Torres Strait island of Saibai:

"An international report on climate change ... to be published next year, says that up to 2000 people - or half the strait's inhabitants - may eventually be forced to leave their islands because of rising sea levels and bigger storm surges."

Ms Minchin expressed her appreciation when we copied her report to our website:

See [www.safecom.org.au/torres-strait-sinking.htm](http://www.safecom.org.au/torres-strait-sinking.htm)

## United Nations report

The United Nations Institute for Environment and Human Security (UNU-EHS) states:

- "Millions of people in northern and western China have abandoned their villages as the land turns semi-arid because of overgrazing."
- In China the Gobi desert expands more than 10,000 square miles (26,000 square kilometres) each year, forcing many farmers there to leave...
- In Alaska about 200 villages are in serious danger of coastal erosion and flooding due to rising sea levels.
- By 2010 the number of environmental refugees could grow to 50 million ... according to other estimates, there could be as many as 150 million by 2050.

## Earth Policy Institute

- "Overgrazing destroys the vegetation which leads then to local sandstorms ... we are looking at growing flows of environmental refugees in Africa, for example in Nigeria, Senegal, Mauritania or Kenya" - *Lester Brown, Earth Policy Institute.*

## Signing Kyoto?

So far we have mentioned the USA, China and Australia – three of the world's major polluters – all three countries have not signed the Kyoto agreement. We think Australia should sign Kyoto and even help the world to make its demands stronger. If we did, Australia would find itself in much better company than at present and we would improve our international standing!

## Nuclear Power is not the Answer

See Dr Helen Caldicott's book on Nuclear Power, and associated material on our website:

<http://www.safecom.org.au/caldicott.htm>

## No fossil fuels

The world economy is not of greater importance than the welfare of the planet's climate balance, and we're now at a point where mainly industrial pollution can squarely be blamed for disastrous upheavals in the balance of the world's climate.

Therefore any industrial production will need to be subservient to the measure of pollution it causes. We have created a situation, just within the last fifty years, where "the economy" and "large companies" seem to rule the consumer world. Perhaps we simply need to tell them: *"if what you do or make, pollutes, then – out with it!"*

In Australia, we simply need to stop using coal as a power source for energy, and we need to supply energy needs for households and industry using sustainable, re-generative, non-polluting and non-exhaustive resources. The notion of "clean coal" is a fallacy because the vast amounts of energy its processing uses, defeats its purpose.

Australia's energy research centre of the CSIRO has already shown in July 2006 that it can generate enough clean solar power for all households in 2050 using a solar-thermal power plant in the Australian desert – in an area measuring 50 x 50 km<sup>2</sup>.

See [www.safecom.org.au/greenpeace-coal.htm](http://www.safecom.org.au/greenpeace-coal.htm)

## Stop the car!

Just in a period of less than fifty years, we have created a society where everyone has become almost entirely dependent on fossil-fuel driven cars and on many luxury items, and we may well have almost *entrapped ourselves* in a consumer-driven world: an Australian's "environmental footprint" is the fourth largest of 150 countries measured in a World Wildlife Fund study (where one person needs 7.7.ha to sustain their lifestyle). We will have to drastically reduce our demanding lifestyle. Perhaps *"stopping the car"* is a radical but effective way of saving ourselves!

## Summary points

- We need to radically, but creatively, change our energy needs from fossil fuels to sustainable energy modes
- We need to seriously reduce our eco-footprint in Australia, and we need to start immediately
- Farming in many areas in Australia's arid and semi-arid regions is unsustainable and has led to degradation and salination of the land. As an example, if we don't do anything 30% of Western Australia will soon become permanently damaged through salination. We need to simply stop farming these areas and help farmers to see this and support this change
- We need to open our minds, our hearts and our country to climate refugees and to people in countries who are displaced as a result of man-made natural disasters
- We need to become world leaders, not in terms of maintaining archaic policies that serve the interest of fossil-fuel producers, but in developing clean and sustainable industries that do not use dirty energy to develop these technologies
- If we cannot lead, then we need to be honest and humble, and follow the excellence of those European countries that do most to reduce their pollution
- We need politicians who do not serve the interests of business above the human rights of people and the welfare of our planet
- We need to demand, without compromise, that all our State and Federal government representatives represent our agendas and us, when we represent not just ourselves but our planet in our communications with them

Project SafeCom is an Incorporated Association in Western Australia. Since the days of the TAMPA stand-off in 2001, it has been able to support its full-time unsalaried operations. Since January 2006 it also operates from premises in South Fremantle.

Project SafeCom does not receive public funding, but supports its work through memberships, donations, public events, and from the sale of books through its website: [www.safecom.org.au](http://www.safecom.org.au)

Donation details: Bendigo Community Bank Kulin, BSB Number 633-000. Account name: Project SafeCom Inc., account number 115643900.

## Silencing the climate change prophets

(From ABC Four Corners, Febr. 13, 2006)

**JANINE COHEN:** Kevin Hennessy is the coordinator of the CSIRO's Climate Impact Group. One of his jobs is to talk about the potential impacts of climate change. But there are some likely impacts of climate change that are clearly a no-go zone. Some scientists believe that there'll be more environmental refugees. Is that a possibility?

**KEVIN HENNESSY, CSIRO IMPACT GROUP:** I can't really comment on that.

**JANINE COHEN:** Why can't you comment on that?

**KEVIN HENNESSY:** That's, that's, er... No, I can't comment on that.  
See [www.safecom.org.au/csiro-silence.htm](http://www.safecom.org.au/csiro-silence.htm)

- We need to demand from our governments, in particular from the Howard government, total openness, uncompromised honesty, parliamentary accountability and consultative forward-thinking sustainability policies for people and the environment, without sacrifices because the fossil fuel industry lobbies the government, bringing coffers full of money - to the detriment of our well-being and our environment

### What you can do

Become part of our work in social justice lobby and action network by sending us your email address: visit our website, click on "Contact Us" and send us your details, and you'll become part of our action force, holding politicians to account. Also, make sure you know about our events by being notified of them! Web address of our events page:

<http://www.safecom.org.au/events.htm>

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## from Climate Change to Climate Justice



*Some remarks about the  
human impact  
of climate change*