



Nuclear power - no solution to climate change

Professor Ian Lowe AO, ACF President and renowned environmental scientist spoke to the National Press Club recently on the issues of climate change, nuclear power and the proposed expansion of the Olympic Dam mine at Roxby Downs. Here is an edited extract.

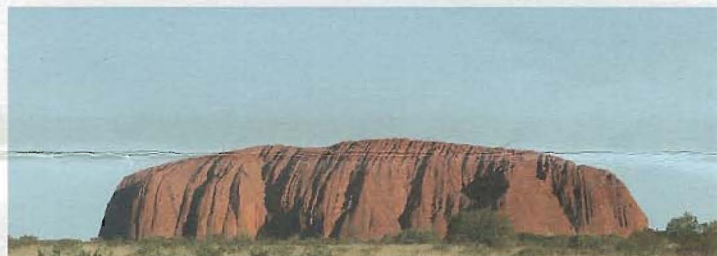
Nuclear power is not the answer to reducing greenhouse gas emissions. It is expensive, slow to implement, it requires the burning of fossil fuels to mine and process, high grade uranium is scarce, it's dangerous and we still don't know what to do with the waste. There are also reasonable and cost efficient alternatives to nuclear power. By far the most cost-effective way to reduce our greenhouse emissions is to improve the efficiency of turning energy into the services that we want: cooking, washing, lighting, transport and so on. All forms of new supply are more expensive than improving the efficiency of turning current energy sources into services.

More than 10 per cent of household electricity in this country is used keeping appliances like TVs and videos on standby. This is an extreme example of large amounts of energy not doing anything useful.

Renewable energy works

We should set the sort of positive targets for renewable energy that progressive nations in the northern hemisphere are doing. We should aim at 10 per cent extra electricity from renewables by 2010, 20 per cent by 2015 and 30 per cent by 2020. These are realistic targets based on existing technology.

Renewable energy works. Renewables now account for a quarter of the installed capacity of California, a third of Sweden's energy, half of Norway's and three-quarters of Iceland's. It is time we joined the clean energy revolution sweeping the progressive parts of the world.



If the Olympic Dam mine expansion goes ahead the pit would eventually measure 3.0x2.8km long and 1 km deep. This is big enough to fit six Ulurus.

Look carefully at the motives of those pushing uranium mining

I can't help but be suspicious of the motives of those who claim that they want to see uranium being exported to slow down global warming. If we were serious about helping the rest of the world reduce their greenhouse pollution, we would start by scaling back our coal exports. That would have much more impact than exporting more uranium. Of course, those urging increased uranium exports generally support the continuing export of more than 100 million tonnes a year of coal, making clear that their real concern is the economic return from mineral exports rather than slowing down climate change.

I wonder how much the current debate actually has to do with BHP Billiton's planned expansion of the Roxby Downs uranium mine in South Australia. The company has applied to the Commonwealth and South Australian Governments to extract five times more water from the Great Artesian Basin than it currently uses. An amount that could threaten the fragile Mound Springs ecosystem in the desert. The Big Australian should be warned that it will not get away with making a big mess in the South Australian outback.

Professor Lowe's full address is available from www.acfonline.org.au and is also scheduled to be shown on ABC TV at 1.00pm on Wednesday 14 December. Tune in to get the whole story!



Health impacts of climate change

Thanks to your support, ACF was able to fund the joint report with the Australian Medical Association (AMA) on the health effects of climate change. This report shows how diseases currently restricted to our tropical regions could spread south.

Dr Mukesh Haikerwal, President of the AMA, and ACF President Professor Ian Lowe spoke at the report launch, saying climate change was real, dangerous and would affect health on a scale not previously encountered by human society. They said coordinated action from government, business and the community to reduce greenhouse gas and air pollution would have major health benefits for Australia and the world.

The report, "Climate Change Health Impacts in Australia: Effects of dramatic CO₂ emission reductions", outlines that if we do nothing to reduce greenhouse pollution, heat-related illnesses could kill thousands of people in Australia every year by the end of this century. It also warns that the climate in Brisbane and even Sydney could become suitable for dengue fever transmission.

The report says if we continue to allow emissions to increase, 8,000 -15,000 Australians could die every year from heat-related illnesses by the end of the century, and the dengue transmission zone could reach as far south as Sydney.

In contrast, early and significant action to reduce greenhouse pollution would have major health benefits. The figure for projected premature heat-related deaths to 2100 could be halved, and while the zone for potential dengue transmission is likely



ACF Executive Director, Don Henry, addressing supporters and medical professionals interested in climate change. Photo: ACF

to move south, it would stay north of more heavily populated south-east Queensland, coastal NSW and metropolitan Sydney.

To receive a free copy of the summary report contact Mark Thomas on (03) 9345 1148 or email m.thomas@acfonline.org.au

Don Henry on view

A portrait of Don Henry, ACF Executive Director, by well known artist and ACF supporter Rachel Rovay, is on view at the 'Hidden Faces of the Archibald' exhibition at Crown Towers, Melbourne, until 8th January 2006. The exhibition features alternatives to the official Archibald selection. Don finds himself in company of personalities such as Rod Qauntock, Reg Livermore and Ron Barassi as portrayed by some of Australia's best contemporary artists. The portrait is for sale with all proceeds going direct to ACF.

EarthVoice - the voice of our future

EarthVoice is an exciting new program for ACF's supporters. Launched in August 2005, EarthVoice gives you the opportunity to voice your concern for Australia's unique and varied landscape by committing to a regular monthly donation. If you are worried about our forests or the outback, passionate about the rivers or the ocean, or alarmed about what is happening to our climate, EarthVoice will ensure you are heard.

For as little as \$20 per month, you can add your voice to the thousands of Australians who want to be heard. Become an ACF EarthVoice today.



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