



I write to you on behalf of the Macedon Ranges Sustainability Group and its sustainable energy project team WISE (Woodend Integrated Sustainable Energy).

The MRSRG has established a hub in Woodend which features: a community demonstration permaculture garden; a function room - where we screen a year round program of “Movies that Matter” and host guest speakers; a resource room for storing magazines and other materials; an under-croft secure storage area – to be used by the planned food co-op and farmers market; and an office. We have a combined membership of more than 170.

Run completely by volunteers, with no support from any government funding, we are trying to make a difference – to create and nurture sustainability in the Macedon Ranges and help our communities take responsibility for the energy and carbon future.

Individually, in the community and in our places of work, members are informed and encouraged to get involved in the solutions to sustainable living. In MRSRG and WISE our attention has focussed on education, planning, food and energy.

Government policy calls for community engagement and individual action on climate change. Indeed from all levels of government households and small businesses are being encouraged to reduce their GHG emissions through reduced energy use and through local energy generation.

WISE has been active in developing a community “greenpower” product - in association with Ark Climate an accredited green power broker – and facilitating solar hot water and solar PV bulk buying programs. WISE believes that the demonstrated ability for an activity to reduce emissions is one of the most important factors in the purchase of offsets. Members are largely motivated to support renewable energy and to take individual and collective responsibility for reducing aggregate emissions.

It is therefore disappointing that, through the design of the Carbon Pollution Reduction Scheme and the treatment of carbon offsets, the individual aspirations of contributing to the aggregate Australian abatement of carbon emissions are likely to be ineffective.

MRSRG and WISE call for the re-connection of individual and collective (community) voluntary contributions, through “additionality” under the cap, not the transference of emission savings to heavy emitters.

If the CPRS is to work effectively in reducing GHG emissions we need to progressively transform our way of life to one largely independent of fossil fuels. As a market / price mechanisms of the CPRS and the NCOS need to provide clear signals in relation to energy preference.

Voluntary measures undertaken by Australian and New Zealand households (solar PV, solar hot water and the purchase of greenpower) currently contribute just 2.9M tonnes of CO₂-e of carbon emission abatement (0.5% of the 576M tonnes emitted across Australia). Ref NCOS discussion paper.

Voluntary measures are a small but important industry and have the potential to contribute to required market solutions. They represent an important demonstration of behaviour change. Through voluntary measures, households and small business can create the market for renewable energy as well as jobs, investment and export opportunities (ref. Germany).

In MRSG and WISE we want to make a difference and be part of the solution. Through sustainable design, energy efficiency, the purchase of greenpower and local energy generation we are reducing our emissions. We expect real change to occur as a result.

Shifting carbon permits from household consumption of energy to energy intensive emitters is a perverse outcome and needs to be removed from the future design of the Scheme and Standards.

MRSG and WISE therefore seek the recognition of the following principles in the National Carbon Offsets Standards. That:

- The demonstrated ability for an activity to reduce emissions is one of the most important factors in the purchase of offsets.
- Eligible voluntary offset purchases should be reflected in the national accounts as appropriate through the cancellation of a Kyoto Assigned Amount Unit.
- The broader economic, social and environmental aims of a voluntary offsets market should be fully considered in the design of the Standard.
- The Standard should aim to provide principles and guidelines that can be applied to a wide scope of eligible offset types, and be flexible to potential changes in international and domestic policy.
- The internationally accepted definition of 'carbon neutrality' as zero net emissions at the entity level should be retained after CPRS implementation

Yours faithfully

Peter Hansford

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