

06 November 2009
Prime Minister
Address to the Lowy Institute
6 November 2009

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

I acknowledge the First Australians on whose land we meet, and whose cultures we celebrate as among the oldest continuing cultures in human history.

Thank you Michael and thanks to all the supporters of the Lowy Institute for joining us today.

As you know, I attended the Major Economies Forum in L'Aquila in July; I was recently at the G20 Leaders meeting in Pittsburgh; and next week I will travel to the APEC Leaders meeting in Singapore.

At each of these meetings, and in constant bilateral conversations being conducted by national leaders around the world, the common thematic is: What does our nation, what does our region and what does the world do to respond to climate change, the greatest long term threat to us all?

As APEC leaders gather in Singapore next week, this is a critical question.

The Asia Pacific region will play the key role in leading the world into economic recovery. Similarly, our region must play a central role if we are to forge a global consensus on tackling climate change.

This afternoon I want to set out the views that I will be reflecting to other world leaders in the days and weeks ahead, in bilateral conversations and in forums such as APEC, leading up to the Copenhagen summit.

Australia and the world today stand at critical junctures in our national and global strategies to tackle climate change.

It is around 20 days until the Senate votes on the Australian Government's Carbon Pollution Reduction Scheme.

20 days until the most important vote on our national strategy to tackle climate change.

20 days away from the vote on the Government's cap and trade emissions trading system which both sides of politics have recognised as the lowest cost way to tackle climate change.

And we are just 31 days away from the Copenhagen Conference of Parties - an historic moment to forge a global deal to put a global price on carbon.

Today we are approaching the crossroads. Both these policies are reaching crunch time.

When you strip away all the political rhetoric, all the political excuses, there are two stark choices - action or inaction. The resolve of the Australian Government is clear - we choose action, and we do so because Australia's fundamental economic and environmental interests lie in action.

Action now. Not action delayed.

As one of the hottest and driest continents on earth, Australia's environment and economy will be among the hardest and fastest hit by climate change if we do not act now. The scientific evidence from the CSIRO and other expert bodies have outlined the implications for Australia, in the absence of national and global action on climate change:

- Temperatures in Australia rising by around five degrees by the end of the century.
- By 2070, up to 40 per cent more drought months are projected in eastern Australia and up to 80 per cent more in south-western Australia.
- A fall in irrigated agricultural production in the Murray Darling Basin of over 90 per cent by 2100.
- Storm surges and rising sea levels - putting at risk over 700,000 homes and businesses around our coastlines, with insurance companies warning that preliminary estimates of the value of property in Australia exposed to the risk of land being inundated or eroded by rising sea levels range from \$50 billion to \$150 billion.
- Our Gross National Product dropping by nearly two and a half per cent through the course of this century from the devastation climate change would wreak on our infrastructure alone.

The Government took a plan to tackle climate change to the last election, to tackle the risks climate change poses to our planet, and especially to the health, lifestyle and livelihoods of our children.

That plan included two fundamental parts:

- First, a domestic plan of action to reduce Australia's carbon pollution, including:
 - Expanding the Renewable Energy Target to 20 per cent by 2020 (and subsequently directly investing over \$2 billion in renewable energy, including investment in large scale solar generating capacity that will be three times larger than the world's current largest project).
 - A national energy efficiency strategy to reduce the energy that we can consume, and undertaking the largest investment in energy efficiency ever seen in this country.
 - A Carbon Pollution Reduction Scheme that will increase the cost of carbon over time and facilitate a transition to a low carbon pollution economy.
- The second part of our strategy is participation in global action to tackle climate change, including:
 - ratifying the Kyoto Protocol;
 - participating in global technology transfers - including Australian leadership in a global coalition to develop carbon capture and

- storage through the Australia-initiated Global Carbon Capture and Storage Institute; and
- strong engagement towards a new post-Kyoto global agreement .

This was the platform we took to the Australian people at the election. This is the program of action we have been prosecuting over the past two years. Yet the cornerstone of this program of action, the CPRS, still lies stymied in the Senate.

Australia has certainly not been alone in our endeavours to tackle global climate change. At the same time, around the world we have seen nations of every political stripe take concrete action to work towards legislation in this critical area - actions which have been slowly building towards coordinated international action to tackle climate change. And most nations have been engaged in the multilateral process - through the Bali Roadmap two years ago, through the 14th Conference of the Parties in Poznan, Poland last year, and the intensifying global negotiations leading up to the 15th Conference of Parties in Copenhagen this year.

Today, the culmination of this domestic and global action is in sight. Much progress has been made, but, the truth is that there is still a long way to go. In fact, the hardest part of our journey is ahead of us over the next 31 days.

This is a profoundly important time for our nation, for our world and for our planet.

In Australia, we must pass our Carbon Pollution Reduction Scheme - to deliver certainty for business at home and to play our part abroad in any global agreement to bring greenhouse gases down.

President Obama in the United States is also working hard so that he can take strong commitments to Copenhagen. And let us never forget that in the US, as in Australia, under both our respective previous governments, zero action was taken on bringing in cap and trade schemes meaning that the governments that replaced them began with a zero start.

Other countries are striving to build domestic political momentum in their own countries to take strong commitments into the global deal.

The challenge we face, and others around the world face, is to build momentum and overcome domestic political constraints.

The truth is this is hard, because the climate change skeptics, the climate change deniers, the opponents of climate change action are active in every country.

They are a minority. They are powerful. And invariably they are driven by vested interests.

Powerful enough to so far block domestic legislation in Australia, powerful enough to so far slow down the passage of legislation through the US Congress. And ultimately - by limiting the ambition of national climate change commitments - they are powerful enough to threaten a deal on global climate change both in Copenhagen and beyond.

The opponents of action on climate change fall into one of three categories.

- First, the climate science deniers.
- Second, those that pay lip service to the science and the need to act on climate change but oppose every practicable mechanism being proposed to bring about that action.
- Third, those in each country that believe their country should wait for others to act first.

Together, these groups, alive in every major country including Australia, constitute a powerful global force for inaction, and they are particularly entrenched in a range of conservative parties around the world.

As we approach Copenhagen, these three groups of climate skeptics are quite literally holding the world to ransom, provoking fear campaigns in every country they can, blocking or delaying domestic legislation in every country they can, with the objective of slowing and if possible destroying the momentum towards a global deal on climate change.

As we approach the Copenhagen conference these groups of climate change deniers face a moment of truth, and the truth is this: we will need to work much harder to reach an agreement in Copenhagen because these advocates of inaction are holding back domestic commitments, and are in turn holding back global commitments on climate change.

It is time to be totally blunt about the agenda of the climate change skeptics in all their colours - some more sophisticated than others.

It is to destroy the CPRS at home, and it is to destroy agreed global action on climate change abroad, and our children's fate - and our grandchildren's fate - will lie entirely with them.

It's time to remove any polite veneer from this debate. The stakes are that high.

The first category of those opposed to action is the vocal group of conservatives who do not accept the scientific consensus. This group believes the science is inconclusive and does not provide an evidentiary basis for anthropogenic climate change.

In Australia, before the 2007 election, this group was thought to be relatively small. There appeared - for a time - to be bipartisan consensus on the need for action on climate change. In recent times, this bipartisan support has frayed.

As one Liberal Member of Parliament said to Phil Coorey of the Sydney Morning Herald last year:
"[at the last election we supported an ETS because] we were staring at an electoral abyss. We had to pretend we cared."
(SMH, 28 JULY 2008)

More recently that pretence has been increasingly cast aside. Would-be Liberal leader Tony Abbott said in July this year that *"the science ... is contentious to say the least"*. (27 July 2009)

Liberal Senator Cory Bernardi said:

"I remain unconvinced about the need for an ETS given that carbon dioxide is vital for life on earth".

Liberal Senator Alan Eggleston said:

"Levels of carbon dioxide have risen in the world, but whether or not this is the sole cause or just a contributor to climate change is, I think, unanswered."

(11 AUGUST 2009)

Liberal Senate leader Nick Minchin said this year:

"CO2 is not by any stretch of the imagination a pollutant... This whole extraordinary scheme is based on the as yet unproven assertion that anthropogenic emissions of CO2 are the main driver of global warming."

(11 AUGUST 2009)

Alternative Liberal leader Joe Hockey - who knows better - has been drawn into the same sort of doublespeak, remarking on the Today Show in August:

"Look, climate change is real Karl, you know whether it is made by human beings or not that is open to dispute."

(12 AUGUST 2009)

Even the leader of the Opposition, once Minister for the Environment, Malcolm Turnbull, has flirted with this doublespeak, telling Alan Jones on 2GB:

"I think most people have at least some doubts about the science."

(19 JUNE 2009)

The tentacles of the climate change skeptics reach deep into the ranks of the Liberal Party, and once you add the National Party it's plain the skeptics and the deniers are a major force.

Climate sceptics are also a powerful political lobby in the United States.

Republican National Committee Chairman Michael Steel said on 6 March 2009:

"We are cooling. We are not warming. The warming you see out there, the supposed warming, and I am using my finger quotation marks here, is part of the cooling process."

House Minority Leader John Boehner said on April 19 2009:

"The idea that carbon dioxide is a carcinogen that is harmful to our environment is almost comical. Every time we exhale, we exhale carbon dioxide."

Republican Congressman John Shimkus said on 25 March 2009:

"If we decrease the use of carbon dioxide, are we not taking away plant food from the atmosphere?"

The legion of climate change skeptics are active across the world, and they happily play with our children's future.

The clock is ticking for the planet, but the climate change skeptics simply do not care. The vested interests at work are simply too great.

It's been more than 30 years since the first World Climate Conference called on governments to guard against potential climate hazards.

It's been 20 years since the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change was formed and produced its first report.

17 years ago, in 1992, the international community acknowledged the importance of tackling climate change at the Rio Earth Summit and created the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change.

And the most recent IPCC scientific conclusion in 2007 was that "warming of the climate system is unequivocal" and the "increase in global average temperatures since the mid 20th century is very likely due to the observed increase in anthropogenic greenhouse gas concentrations."

This is the conclusion of 4,000 scientists appointed by governments from virtually every country in the world, and the term "very likely" is defined in the scientific conclusion of this report as being 90 per cent probable.

Attempts by politicians in this country and others to present what is an overwhelming global scientific consensus as little more than an unfolding debate, with two sides evenly represented in a legitimate scientific argument, are nothing short of intellectually dishonest. They are a political attempt to subvert what is now a longstanding scientific consensus, an attempt to twist the agreed science in the direction of a predetermined political agenda to kill climate change action.

It reminds me of the efforts of the smoking lobby decades ago as they tried for years to politically subvert by so-called scientific means that there was any link between smoking and lung cancer.

Put more simply: these climate change sceptics around the world would be laughable if they were not so politically powerful - particularly in the ranks of conservative parties.

The second group of do-nothing climate change skeptics are those who purport to accept the scientific consensus, but in the next breath are unwilling to support any of the practicable plans of action that would actually do something about climate change. This group plays lip service to the climate change science but when push comes to shove refuse to support climate change action. In Australia, these naysayers have successfully blocked the development of an emissions trading scheme for more than a decade.

After 12 years of inaction under the previous government, this government has worked to build a national consensus around our Carbon Pollution Reduction Scheme. We took the concept to the people at the 2007 election, and since then we have methodically, clearly and comprehensively worked towards passage of our scheme.

The Carbon Pollution Reduction Scheme Green Paper was released on 16 June 2008.

The Garnaut Climate Change Review was released on 30 September 2008.

The Carbon Pollution Reduction Scheme White Paper was released on 15 December 2008.

The Draft Carbon Pollution Reduction Scheme legislation was released in March.

There have been numerous Senate Inquiries.

There have also been numerous industry consultations.

As of May 2009, the Government had built wide support for action on climate through a carbon pollution reduction scheme.

There was broad business, environmental and community support from:

- The Business Council of Australia
- The Australian Industry group
- The Climate Institute
- The Australian Conservation Foundation
- The World Wildlife Fund
- The Australian Council of Social Services representing lower income Australians.

Today, after so many reports, reviews, consultations, not to mention the small matter of an election - the overwhelming need for Australia to tackle the great challenge of our generation is being frustrated by the do-nothing climate change skeptics.

As recently as last year, the Leader of the Opposition was emphatic in his support for an emissions trading scheme. He said it was the "central mechanism" in the fight against climate change.

Speaking at the National Press Club in May last year, he stated:

"The Emissions Trading Scheme is the central mechanism to decarbonise our economy."

(21 May 2008)

A few days later, he said:

"The biggest element in the fight against climate change has to be the emissions-trading scheme."

(HANSARD - 26 MAY 2008)

But still today, after so many reports and consultations, the Liberal Party, the National Party and other opponents of action raise objections to the Carbon Pollution Reduction Scheme.

Their objections fall into three categories:

- Some argue that the cost is too high in terms of its impact on our economy.
- Others argue that the cost is too high in terms of its impact on households.

- And others object to the system of global emissions trading because they believe it will unjustifiably transfer money and power from rich countries to poor countries.

Let us take each of these in turn.

First is the cost to our economy and jobs.

This has been a constant theme of the Liberal and National Parties' attacks on the CPRS. Mr Turnbull said the CPRS "is guaranteed to slow our economic recovery, cost us jobs."

And the de facto leader of the National Party, Barnaby Joyce, refers to the emissions trading scheme as the "*employment termination scheme*" - whereas I thought any self-respecting National Party leader would be out there standing up for farmers facing 40 to 80 per cent more drought in the future, rather than betraying them.

The facts about the impact of unmitigated climate change on the one hand and the CPRS on the other tell a very different story, but that eternal motto of the Liberal and National Parties is never let the facts stand in the road of a good fear campaign - whether it's debt, border security or climate change.

Here are the facts.

Treasury modelling done in 2008 demonstrates Australia can continue to achieve strong trend economic growth while making significant cuts in emissions through the CPRS. Treasury modelling also demonstrates that all major employment sectors grow over the years to 2020 - substantially increasing employment from today's levels. Treasury modelling also projects that clean industries will create sustainable jobs of the future - in fact by 2050 the renewable electricity sector will be 30 times larger than it is today.

Another element of the Liberal and National fear campaign about the design of the CPRS is that it will impose unmanageable cost on households.

Again, Senator Joyce - fearmonger in chief on climate change, he who therefore betrays the real interests of Australian farmers - puts the position of the Liberal and National parties as follows:

"If you live in a cave with a candle you would probably be OK, but if your house is wired up for power then every electrical appliance will be attached to a power generator which in all likelihood will pay a tax and that tax will be passed on to you, the consumer."

(Joyce - 27 JULY 2009)

Again, the facts on the true household costs and impacts of the CPRS tell a different story. Treasury modelling again demonstrates that the price impact of the CPRS is modest. The CPRS is expected to raise household prices by 0.4 per cent in 2011-12 and 0.8 per cent in 2012-13, and the government has provided household compensation to help assist with these modest cost rises.

Pensioners, seniors, carers and people with disability and low-income households will receive additional support to fully meet the expected overall increase in the cost of living flowing from the scheme. Middle-income households will also receive additional support to help meet the expected overall increase in the cost of living flowing from the scheme.

A third argument from those who quibble with the design of the Carbon Pollution Reduction Scheme is that the international design aspects of the scheme are flawed.

Lord Christopher Monckton - a former adviser to Margaret Thatcher - was quoted this week in the Australian press by Janet Albrechtsen. Lord Monckton describes the potential Copenhagen agreement as a plan to set up a transnational "government" on a scale the world has never before seen. Enter the "world government" conspiracy theorists.

Lord Monckton also publicly warned Americans that *"in the next few weeks, unless you stop it, your president will sign your freedom, your democracy and your prosperity away forever."*

Janet Albrechtsen, in her understated neo-conservative way, refers to the potential Copenhagen agreement as a UN "power grab". This gaggle of world government conspiracy theorists are so far out there on the far right, that they rub up next to the global anarchists of the far left.

Those who argue that any multilateral action is by definition evil.

Those who argue that climate change does not represent a global market failure.

Those who argue that somehow the market will magically solve the problem.

And that uncoordinated national actions will fix the problem.

Without answering the basic logical question of how can we deal with an existential challenge for the whole planet which lies beyond the capacity of any individual national action to address.

The climate change deniers now form the comfortable bedfellows of the global conspiracy theorists - in total bald-faced denial of global scientific, economic and environmental reality. These arguments - thinly veiled attempts to create a new climate change global conspiracy theory - are now being used in Australia.

Like the arguments from climate change deniers, these arguments have zero basis in evidence.

Where is their equivalent evidence basis to Treasury modelling published by the Government of the industry and employment impacts of climate change?

Where is their equivalent evidence basis to Treasury modelling published by the Government on the cost impacts for households from the CPRS - and on the

adequacy of the compensation arrangements put in place by the Government in our White Paper?

The answer once again is there is none.

Where is the evidence basis offered by the new league of world government conspiracy theorists that climate change can be effectively dealt with by market means or by uncoordinated national means?

Answer - there is none.

The truth is that the do-nothing climate change skeptics offer no alternative official body of evidence from any credible government in the world.

Absolutely none. The truth is they offer zero evidence.

Instead they offer maximum fear, the universal conservative stock in trade.

And by doing so, these do-nothing climate change skeptics are prepared to destroy our children's future.

The third group of climate deniers are those who pretend to accept the science but then urge delay because they don't want their country to be the first to act.

In Australia there was once a political consensus resisting this parochial view.

The Shergold Report commissioned by John Howard and written by the head of the Prime Minister's department recommended that Australia should not wait for the rest of the world to act:

"... waiting until a truly global response emerges before imposing an emissions cap will place costs on Australia by increasing business uncertainty and delaying or losing investment."

(Report of the Prime Ministerial Task Group on Emissions Trading, June 2007, p.6)

The current Leader of the Opposition also stated that a domestic ETS would help in international negotiations too:

"... our first hand experience in implementing ... an emissions trading system would be of considerable assistance in our international discussions and negotiation aimed at achieving an effective global agreement."

(Turnbull - SMH Opinion Piece - 9 July 2008)

Then the Leader of the Opposition stated he no longer supported domestic action before Copenhagen:

"I would not find, I would not support finalising the design this year. Even the best designed scheme in theory needs to have the input of the knowledge of what happens at Copenhagen and what the Americans will do."

(AM - 16 MARCH 2009)

Seven times the Liberals and Nationals have promised to make a decision on their policy on climate change - and seven times they have delayed.

1. In December 2007 they said wait for Garnaut.
2. In September 2008 they said wait for Treasury modelling.
3. In September 2008 they said wait for the White Paper.
4. In December 2008 they said wait until the Pearce Report.
5. In April 2009 they said wait for the Senate Inquiry.
6. In May 2009 they said wait for the Productivity Commission - forgetting that the Productivity Commission already made a submission on emissions trading to the Howard Government's Shergold Report.
7. Now the Liberals and National have said wait for Copenhagen and for President Obama's scheme.

It is an endless cycle of delay - and I am sure that with December almost upon us, the eighth excuse cannot be far away - which will be to wait until the next year or the year after until all the rest of the world has acted at which time Australia will act.

What absolute political cowardice.

What an absolute failure of leadership.

What an absolute failure of logic.

The inescapable logic of this approach is that if every nation makes the decision not to act until others have done so, then no nation will ever act.

The immediate and inevitable consequence of this logic - if echoed in other countries - is that there will be no global deal as each nation says to its domestic constituencies that they cannot act because others have not acted.

The result is a negotiating stalemate. A permanent standoff.

And this of course is the consistent ambition of all three groups of do-nothing climate change deniers.

As we approach Copenhagen, it becomes clearer that the domestic political pressure produced by the climate change skeptics now has profound global consequences by reducing the momentum towards an ambitious global deal. The argument that we must not act until others do is an argument that has been used by political cowards since time immemorial - both of the left and the right.

To take just one example, it has been used as an argument to retain protectionism, stifling economic growth and global competition, and preventing the spread of global prosperity.

As many have noted, it is the international political version of the prisoner's dilemma. If we allow our actions to be dictated by what we falsely conclude to be

in our narrow self-interest, then we harm not just others but ourselves as well because climate change inaction harms us as well.

Climate change deniers are small in number, but they are too dangerous to be ignored. They are well resourced and well represented by political conservatives in many, many countries.

And the danger they pose is this - by collapsing political momentum towards national and global action on climate change, they collapse global political will to act at all. They are the stick that gets stuck in the wheel, that despite its size may yet bring the train to a complete stop.

And that is what they want, because they are driven by a narrowly defined self interest of the present and are utterly contemptuous towards our children's interest in the future.

This brigade of do-nothing climate change skeptics are dangerous because if they succeed, then it is all of us who will suffer.

Our children.

And our grandchildren.

If we fail, then it will be a failure that will echo through future generations.

The consequences for Australia of failing to act domestically and internationally on climate change are severe. We know from formal global and national economic modelling that the costs of inaction are greater than the costs of acting. Treasury modelling from October 2008 shows that economies that defer action on climate change face long-term costs around 15 per cent higher than those that take action now.

The sooner we act, the better placed our companies will be to benefit from new emerging global markets, and to benefit from the economic gains from improved efficiency. Moving to a low pollution economy will require significant investment in renewable energy, carbon capture and storage, energy efficiency and other low emissions technologies.

We need to start giving the signal to investors that they need to factor the price of carbon into their decisions to make the investments we need. Importantly, business needs certainty to make these investments.

As Greig Gailey, former President of the Business Council of Australia said:
"Only business can make the many investments needed to transition Australia to a low carbon economy. To do this business needs certainty."

Without passage of the CPRS there will be no certainty for business. That is why business groups like the Business Council of Australia and the Australian Industry Group want to see the major parties come together and vote on the CPRS this year.

Heather Ridout, Chief Executive of the Australian Industry Group said:
"... many of our members are telling us that they are holding off making investments until there is a greater degree of clarity around domestic climate change legislation."

(ADECCO Group Australia Breakfast - 15 October 2009)

Russell Caplan, Chairman of Shell Australia, said:

"... we believe a far greater risk is that Australia misses the opportunity to put a policy framework in place to deal with this issue. This would create a climate of continuing uncertainty for industry and potentially delay the massive investments required."

(BRW - 6 August 2009)

These are the implications for Australia. These are the political challenges we now face both at home and abroad.

But my unequivocal message to the nation today is that this nation Australia will not be deterred.

Our course is clear.

That is why this government will press forward with our plan to tackle climate change domestically and globally.

Domestically we will press forward with the passage of the Carbon Pollution Reduction Scheme.

It will be voted on in the House in the week beginning Monday November 16.

It will be introduced into the Senate immediately after the vote in the House.

It will then be voted on in the Senate in the week beginning 23 November.

We welcome the Opposition's recent cooperation and I'm pleased to hear from Minister Wong that negotiations are proceeding in good faith. I'd like to personally commend the Member for Groome for his genuine efforts to engage with the Government in good faith to reach a reasonable outcome with the Government that will finally deliver action on Climate Change.

We are of course concerned by the comments of the Leader of the Opposition in the Senate that *"even if the government accepts all our amendments, we may well still vote against the bill."*

(NICK MINCHIN- 2UE- 30 OCTOBER 2009)

The do-nothing climate change skeptics are still alive and well in the Coalition. After 12 years of inaction, and after two years of preparation, the nation demands a genuine timetable and good faith negotiations to give business the certainty they need with climate change.

The Australian Government is also committed to intensively engaging to support an ambitious agreement in Copenhagen.

At Copenhagen we need an ambitious agreement on mitigation, adaptation, finance and technology.

As UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon said yesterday, the formal UN negotiations are moving slowly.

The UN Secretary-General has said we must maximise the agreement we can reach in Copenhagen. They can resolve some issues, but not others.

Now is time for strenuous efforts by all leaders and ministers.

Denmark's Prime Minister Rasmussen is engaging a growing number of leaders - in the Copenhagen Commitment Circle - to accelerate engagement by leaders.

Australia is committed to playing a leadership role and has joined Mexico and the UN Secretary-General in the initial group of 'friends of the Chair' to help build consensus and draw out concrete commitments from across the world.

In July this year at the G8 meetings in L'Aquila, Australia helped form a 2 degree Celsius 450 ppm ambition for global action on climate change, and it was at this meeting that Australia launched the Global Carbon Capture and Storage Institute, a concrete initiative to make CCS technology a reality.

Australia is currently chair of the Pacific Island Forum which this year delivered the Pacific Leaders' Climate Change Call to Action demanding urgent action on a real threat to the viability of some Pacific communities.

In September, Australia at the request of the UN Secretary-General co-chaired a roundtable at the UN Special Session on Climate Change - with a view to driving a sense of political urgency with other leaders, and representing the views of the Pacific.

Australia has launched the Forest Carbon Partnerships with Indonesia and Papua New Guinea - an initiative providing policy and technical support to protect the great forests in our neighbourhood.

And Australia has established a \$150 million Climate Change Adaptation Fund - supporting vulnerable nations dealing with the real impact of climate change, with a strong focus on the Pacific.

For years - and then, with increasing intensity, in recent months - do-nothing climate change skeptics have been mounting a systematic campaign against action on climate change.

Their aim is not to convince every person on earth of the follies of acting on climate change. Their aim is to erode just enough of the political will that action becomes impossible.

By slowing the actions of each individual country, they aim to slowly drag global negotiations on climate change to a standstill. By hampering decisive action at a national level, they aim to make it impossible at an international level.

If Copenhagen does not deliver the outcome we so urgently need, no individual climate change skeptic will be responsible, but each of them will have played their part.

The corrosive effect of climate skeptics eroding the political will to act may be the disintegration of any possibility of meaningful action on climate change.

In this debate the climate change skeptics have erected an intellectual house of cards based on one simple premise: that the cost of not acting is nothing.

When you boil down their arguments, their world government conspiracy theories and their back of the envelope calculations - that in its starkest simplicity and entirety is what is left: that the cost of not acting is nothing.

That is the simplest premise upon which the scepticism of Malcolm, Barnaby, Andrew, Alan, Janet and even Lord Monckton is based. They cling to that single premise like a polar bear clings to a melting iceberg.

Without that premise, their scepticism is sunk. Malcolm, Barnaby, Andrew, Janet and the Thatcherite Lord Monckton are betting the house on that simple premise that the cost of not acting is nothing.

For people who claim to hold the conservative torch, their scepticism is in fact radical in its riskiness and recklessness. By deliberately undermining and eroding the capacity to achieve both domestic and international action on climate change the skeptics are attempting to force the world to take the single most reckless bet in our long history.

They are betting our future, the future of our children and our grandchildren, and they are doing so based on their own personal intuitions, their personal prejudices and their deeply ingrained political prejudices.

And they are doing so in the total absence of any genuine body of evidence.

Climate change skeptics in all their guises and disguises are not conservatives. They are radicals.

They are reckless gamblers who are betting all our futures on their arrogant assumption that their intuitions should triumph over the evidence.

The logic of these skeptics belongs in a casino, not a science lab, and not in the ranks of any responsible government.

Malcolm, Barnaby, Andrew, Janet, even Lord Monckton shouldn't even bother with the pretence of science and just admit the currency of their prescription for inaction has all the legitimacy of a roulette wheel.

Basically, let's just sit back, do nothing and see what happens.

The alternative - our alternative - is to base policy on the evidence.

No responsible government confronted with the evidence delivered by the 4,000 scientists associated with the international panel could then in conscience choose not to act. In any public company, it would represent a gross contempt of the most basic fiduciary duty.

Malcolm and Barnaby might like to bet the future of Australia on the off chance of winning an election, but this Government will not.

A fairly well-known bloke once said that when gambling:

*You've got to know when to hold 'em, know when to fold 'em.
Know when to walk away, know when to run.*

My message to the climate change skeptics, to the big betters and the big risk takers is this:

You are betting our children's future and the future of our grandchildren.

You are betting our jobs, our houses, our farms, our reefs, our economy and our future on an intuition - on a gut feeling; on a political prejudice you have about science.

That is too big a risk, too radical a departure from the basic conservative principles of public policy.

Malcolm, Barnaby, Andrew, Janet - stop gambling with our future.

You've got to know when to fold 'em - and for the skeptics, that time has come.

The Government I lead will act.