

Friday 18 September 2009

RESPONSE TO REVISED TREASURY PROJECTIONS CONCERNING AUSTRALIA'S POPULATION.

We've had tax reform, microeconomic reform, industrial relations reform. It is now time for population reform. We are sleepwalking into an environmental disaster.

First, the impact of a 60% increase in Australia's population on our native wildlife will be catastrophic. Already over 200 of Australia's birds are under threat – 30% of our 760 species. And when was the last time you saw a Bandicoot, or a Bilby, or a Bettong, or a Tree Kangaroo? It's not just the habitat destruction caused by spreading suburbs, through that's serious enough. It's also habitat destruction from agriculture and the impact on our river systems, which are already in a state of poor health.

Secondly, what about carbon emissions? The Government has promised to cut carbon emissions by 60% over the next 40 years, and all the science is saying that we need to cut them by 80% to tackle global warming. How are we supposed to do that if our population is going up by 60% at the same time? It's pretty hard to reduce your carbon footprint when you keep adding more feet.

And there's the impact on the availability of food, water, energy, and land. These things are already stretched and a 60% population increase will only drive up the prices of these essentials, and lower our living standards.

And what about the impact on our major cities – Sydney, Melbourne, Brisbane? Declining housing affordability, traffic congestion, overcrowded concrete jungles. I don't want my city of Melbourne to become Mexico City, or Karachi, or Shanghai. I'd be surprised if people in Sydney or Brisbane want that either.

Another 14 million people will not give us a richer country. It will spread our mineral wealth more thinly and give us a poorer one. It will make a mockery of our obligation to pass on to our children a world in as good a condition as the one our grandparents gave to us. It's time we thought hard about stabilising our population.

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