

Media Release

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Greening Australia supports the Carbon Pollution Reduction Scheme

Greening Australia, the country's largest practical non-government environment organisation, has today backed calls by the Australian Conservation Foundation (ACF) for the Federal Parliament to pass the Carbon Pollution Reduction Scheme (CPRS) legislation and for the Scheme to commence in July 2010 as planned.

Greening Australia not only supports the CPRS because it is the right policy instrument for least cost carbon emissions reduction, but because it also provides an historic opportunity for carbon mitigation to fund land and water restoration programmes on a scale that will actually start to address the challenge confronting Australia.

"There is simply no way that Government's can invest funds into land and water restoration programmes on a scale that will make a significant difference in a reasonable timeframe. Most Australians recognise that a lot more has to be invested in areas such as the Murray Darling Basin if we are to ensure a sustainable future for Australia and future food security", says Greening Australia's Director of Carbon Rick Humphries.

"The CPRS, if properly designed, could see tens of billions of additional dollars invested in large scale restoration projects. The Scheme includes investment in forest sinks as an important response to climate change. Forest sinks soak up atmospheric carbon and are therefore one legitimate way to deal with Australia's emissions" Rick said.

"To delay or postpone the scheme would mean Australia would lose a unique opportunity to start to seriously address a range of environmental needs; carbon pollution reduction, biodiversity conservation and the repair of a large area of land, as well as our precious water resources", he continued.

This statement from Greening Australia echoes the call made by ACF Executive Director Don Henry today, where he told the Senate Select Committee on Climate Policy that the climate change problem is too urgent and Australia has too much to lose for the Parliament not to fix the flaws in the CPRS.

To take advantage of this opportunity the Federal Parliament should focus on ensuring that only those forestry sinks that achieve a net environmental benefit, be allowed to be counted under the scheme. Greening Australia believes that the Scheme's design can be "tweaked" to ensure significant investment flows towards establishing large scale, biodiverse forest carbon sinks designed to re-establish native vegetation systems on marginal agricultural land.

"The potential for the CPRS to relieve the Treasury of the urgent need to fund large, landscape scale restoration of our land and water resources should be an attractive proposition to all parties. The global financial crisis will severely limit state and federal governments' capacity to invest in such projects. A well designed CPRS is the real, viable alternative."

"We join with the ACF, the majority of Australians and progressive end of the business community in calling for the CPRS to be supported by all parties and the cross benches," Mr Humphries concluded.

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