

MEDIA RELEASE

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Environment forgotten in election ETS debate

The focus of the climate change ETS debate is on voters and not the environment with ETS talks centred only on reducing greenhouse gas emissions and clean energy targets. Yet it will be next to impossible for nations to achieve the scale of reductions required in sufficient time to avoid dangerous climate change unless there is also a focus on sequestering carbon from the atmosphere by storing it in vegetation and soils.

In a report on the Analysis of Greenhouse Gas Mitigation and Carbon Biosequestration Opportunities from Rural Land Use, CSIRO estimate that the Australian landscape has the biophysical potential to store an additional 1,000 million tonnes of CO₂e in soils and vegetation for each year of the next 40 years.

“We must get trees in the ground and maintain a focus on sequestration” said Greening Australia CEO, Rod Bristow “Effective policy development on carbon is an unparalleled opportunity to address a range of other environmental challenges confronting Australia including repairing degraded landscapes, restoring river corridors, improving the condition of our agricultural soils, and conserving Australia’s biodiversity.”

Australia’s car-addicted nation has been named as one of the world’s biggest per-capita emitter of greenhouse gasses yet the report shows that if Australia were to capture just 15% of this biophysical capacity, it would offset the equivalent of 25% of Australia’s current annual greenhouse emissions for the next 40 years.

“Clean energy targets, low emissions electricity and transport systems will take years and billions of dollars before we begin to see a difference,” Mr Bristow said. “Trees are cost effective and the multiple benefits they deliver are immediate and sustainable.”

With the recently released Global Biodiversity Outlook from the United Nations showing record rates of biodiversity loss, threatened species moving quicker to extinction and one in four global plant species already facing extinction, our natural habitats are in rapid decline and environmental groups are calling for more action.

According to Mr Bristow, Australians are showing genuine concern about the environment and in the absence of policy businesses and individuals are already opting to voluntarily offset their emissions.

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About Greening Australia: Greening Australia is the largest not-for-profit apolitical environmental organisation in Australia, with a network of 350 staff working locations around the country. Greening Australia works in the environmental on issues including salinity, declining water quality, soil degradation, climate change and biodiversity.