

Position Statement

The Moreland Energy Foundation (MEFL) is a not-for-profit organisation that works with households, community organisations, small businesses, governments and industry to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. MEFL welcomes the Independent Review of the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999, and is pleased to have the opportunity to contribute to this review.

MEFL believes that the most significant opportunity presented by this review is the potential to insert a greenhouse trigger into the Act. A greenhouse trigger would complement existing Government policy measures to address Australia's greenhouse gas emissions by ensuring that projects which are likely to create significant emissions are assessed and their impact minimised or prevented. A greenhouse trigger would also enshrine climate change considerations within Government decision making processes.

MEFL understands that numerous parties have called for the introduction of a greenhouse trigger to the Act, including the Australian Labor Party when it was in opposition. The inclusion of a greenhouse trigger was also a key recommendation of a review commissioned by the previous Federal Government for the State of the Environment Report in 2006.

MEFL endorses the text for such a trigger recommended by the Climate Action Network Australia (CANA), which is detailed in CANA's submission to this review. Such a trigger would prevent:

- The construction or expansion of a nuclear power reactor
- The construction or expansion of a coal fired power station
- The construction of a new coal mine
- The expansion of an existing coal mine
- A change in land use or land clearing, likely to result in the emission of more than 125,000 tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent into the atmosphere in any 12 month period; and,
- Logging activities in any forest that is ecologically mature and/or where the upper stratum or overstorey is in the late mature growth phase.

By preventing the further expansion of emissions intensive industries in Australia, a greenhouse trigger would support the transition to a cleaner economy based on renewable energy and green collar jobs. Australia is uniquely positioned to lead the world into a carbon constrained future, given our economic prosperity, community motivation to act on climate change and our unlimited access to renewable energy sources. Further, as identified by the Garnaut Review, Australia is likely to be one of the worst affected countries as climate change impacts progressively increase – this gives us an even stronger imperative to transition to non-polluting industries.

It is well and truly time to introduce a greenhouse trigger into the EPBC Act, thereby closing a major gap in Australian environmental law. MEFL urges the review panel to adopt this recommendation, and looks forward to the outcomes of the review.