

CLIMATE ACTION MORELAND 2013 Federal Election Questionnaire

Response from Margarita Windisch, Socialist Alliance

- 1. With scientists forecasting substantial sea level rise this century, many people from low lying coastal regions of Southeast Asia and islands in the South Pacific will be seeking asylum in Australia as climate refugees. What should Australia's response be?**

Socialist Alliance's policy on Refugee and Immigrant Rights clearly outlines our policy on climate refugees. This is as follows: Institute a program for accepting climate refugees, especially from countries in the Asia Pacific region, and that this program not results in any reduction in the number of humanitarian refugees.

- 2. The Australian government has committed to reducing greenhouse gas emissions by 5% below 2000 levels by 2020. However, under the emissions trading scheme, Australia does not need to reduce local emissions, but can purchase emission reduction certificates from overseas.**
 - What do you think Australia's emission reduction targets should be by 2020? 2030? 2040?**
 - Should these targets be conditional on the actions of other countries?**
 - How would these emission reductions be achieved? Could you please describe how the emission reduction schemes that your party proposes will work in practice?**
 - What is your position on whether Australia should be required to reduce its local emissions rather than purchasing certificates from overseas?**
 - How do you propose to reduce emissions produced in Australia?**

Socialist Alliance's Climate Change Charter states the following: Set immediate emission cut targets to reduce net emissions to zero as soon as possible, including a target to achieve 100% renewable energy by 2020. Introduce emissions reduction targets of at least 5% a year. Beyond Zero Emissions has shown how Australia can rapidly transition to 100% renewables. Australia's emission reduction targets should not be conditional on what other countries do. Australia is well placed to play a leading role internationally in demonstrating how rapid emission reductions can be achieved.

Social Alliance opposes the use of market mechanisms such as emission trading schemes. These crisis-prone market schemes subsidise the biggest polluters, while delaying the big structural changes we need to make now. The Socialist Alliance calls on the Greens to end its support for emissions trading and instead help to build the campaigns for an emergency transition to a zero-carbon Australia. Socialist Alliance calls for public ownership of the energy sector.

Socialist Alliance's Climate Change Charter provides details on how rapid emission reductions can be achieved. This is available online at <http://www.socialist-alliance.org/policy/environment-climate-change/climate-change-charter>

- 3. Australia is regarded as particularly vulnerable to climate change. Given the lack of action to date, it is inevitable that Australians will be subject to serious impacts, including adverse health impacts and increased mortality due to rising temperatures and heatwaves, changes in rainfall and water availability for drinking and agriculture. What are your policies to reduce the impact of climate change on Australians?**

Socialist Alliance has been focusing its effort on climate change mitigation as we must slash out greenhouse gas emissions to avoid the worst impacts of climate change. However, as you note, the lack of action to date means that Australia will be subject to serious impacts. We call for substantial funding to be directed towards understanding and managing those impacts. We support the research efforts of the National Climate Change Adaptation Research Facility, which was established in 2008 to provide research in this area. We were shocked that by the announcement that the federal government would cease funding this facility, and call on the government to reverse this decision.

- 4. Heatwave induced mortality is expected to increase in inner urban areas like the Wills electorate due to the interaction between increasing temperatures caused by climate change and the urban heat island effect. While 173 people lost their lives in the Black Saturday Bushfires, 374 people died in Victoria due to the heatwave according to Victoria's chief health officer, Dr John Carnie. The 2013 State of Australian Cities report found that heat-related deaths are expected to quadruple in number by 2050. What is your response to this public health threat?**

Climate change is expected to exacerbate deaths from heat waves. There are measures that should be taken to address this. Firstly, trees and other vegetation are known to have a substantial cooling effect in urban areas. All levels of government, but particularly local government, have a role in greening our cities and towns. At the same time, we need to be mindful that south-eastern Australia is very vulnerable to bushfires particularly where eucalyptus trees are prevalent. The number and severity of bushfires are also expected to increase with climate change. This illustrates the need for a planned and integrated approach to adapting to climate change.

People's susceptibility to heat waves is also affected by building design. It is imperative that we have much stronger building regulations that ensure all residences are highly energy efficient thereby maintaining a more uniform temperature with minimal energy usage. We support the ideas expressed in Zero Carbon Australia *Buildings Plan* on what technologies can be used to achieve this

Many of those who are susceptible to heat waves are the elderly. On days when very high temperatures are forecast, we need to put in place plans to ensure their safety. This may mean providing alternative accommodation on those days. We see a strong role for government in ensuring that our most vulnerable residents are not left to fend for themselves during these periods

- 5. Transport is a large contributor to climate change. What are your policies to transform the transport sector to ensure it is sustainable?**

Socialist Alliance has an extensive policy on public transport, which can be found on its website at <http://www.socialist-alliance.org/policy/nationalisation-public-transport-social-justice/public-transport> In summary, Socialist Alliance calls for the following:

- Free public transport
- Free carriage of bicycles on public transport
- Ending all tax concessions for company and company-purchased cars
- The imposition of a public transport levy on all CBD employers with more than 10 staff, along the lines of the French *versement de transport*.
- Special levies on developers who gain access to commercially profitable sites close to railway stations and bus interchanges.

- The reclassification and redeployment of all public transport staff whose job has been the sale of tickets to passenger assistance/security functions, with no loss in pay or conditions.
- Rebuilding public transport staff numbers to ensure safe, comfortable and efficient services.

Socialist Alliance also advocates public ownership of all public transport.

6. **Approximately \$10 billion is paid out each year to subsidize the use of fossil fuels, including in aviation, which helps to keep the price of flying low. Green groups have proposed that instead of subsidizing activities that contribute to climate change, we should be funding technologies that reduce greenhouse gas emissions including energy efficiency and renewable energy. What are your policies on these subsidies to fossil fuels? If you propose to remove these subsidies, please describe how you would do so and over what time frame. What are your policies on redirecting these funds to technologies that do not contribute to climate change?**

Socialist Alliance calls for an immediate end to subsidies to fossil fuels. The funds should be redirected to renewable energy technologies, and conversion of private cars to electric vehicles that run on renewably generated electricity. More details are available in our Climate Change Charter at <http://www.socialist-alliance.org/policy/environment-climate-change/climate-change-charter>

7. **The burning of fossil fuels (coal, oil and gas) are major contributors to climate change leading to a substantial carbon bubble in conflict with emission reduction targets, according to the Carbon Tracker Initiative, Grantham Institute, and Australia's Climate Institute. What are your policies regarding the following: coal exports; use of coal for power generation; use of natural gas for power generation? What would be your strategies for phasing these out?**

Socialist Alliance's Climate Change Charter states the following:

Phase out coal, build renewables now

Coal burning makes up about 36% of Australia's greenhouse gas emissions. Mining, handling and exporting coal adds even more. A plan for phasing out coalmining and export must be developed, and this must involve creating new jobs for miners in sustainable industries.

No new coal mines or coal-fired power plants should be approved.

Australia could meet its basic energy needs from a combination of non-fossil fuel sources, especially solar thermal with storage and wind power. Biomass from agricultural wastes, tidal power and geothermal power (hot rocks beneath the Earth's surface) could also be used.

Australia should set a target to source all its energy from renewables by 2020.

Beyond Zero Emissions has produced a detailed plan for this transition. It shows Australia can move quickly to zero-carbon energy in a decade. The \$370 billion cost is less than 4% of annual GDP — by 2040, the investment in renewables would save the economy \$1.6 trillion in energy costs.

In regard to coal seam gas, Socialist Alliance has been very active in campaigns against gas mining. Our Coal Seam Gas policy calls for:

- A royal commission into the full impacts of unconventional gas.

- An immediate moratorium on all unconventional gas exploration and production until the outcome of the royal commission and democratic decision about the future of existing projects.
- A ban on hydraulic fracturing (“fracking”) and similar stimulation techniques for unconventional gas mining.
- No new gas. Investment in energy must be limited to technologies that can move us to a zero emissions economy, not commit us to new fossil fuels. Along with other fossil fuels, existing unconventional gas projects must be rapidly phased out, with workers guaranteed a just transition to alternative employment.

In order to immediately phase out the use and export of fossil fuel, the energy sector and mining industry must be placed in public hands and brought under democratic control. The privatisation of Victoria’s electricity sector was a huge mistake and has delayed the transition towards renewable energy.

- 8. Households and business can reduce their carbon emissions through increased energy efficiency, solar water heating and generating their own renewable electricity by installing solar panels. Do you support these measures and if so, what are your policies to ensure these measures become widespread? Do you personally use solar hot water and/or solar panels or buy Green Power?**

Socialist Alliance’s Climate Change Charter states the following: Require advanced energy efficiency measures be fitted to existing houses and subsidise owner-occupiers for the costs. Allow renters to use the same system. Install photovoltaic solar panels and solar hot water heaters on home roofs, subsidised or owned by the electricity authority. Give all commercial buildings a deadline to meet six-star energy standards within two years, and 10-star standards within 10 years. Improve mandatory energy efficiency standards for all new buildings.

I am a renter and my landlord has neither installed solar hot water nor solar panels.

- 9. Some councils, including Moreland City Council, have announced that they are carbon neutral. However, this has been achieved partly through the purchase of offsets from overseas projects. What is your position on councils, businesses etc using offsets to claim carbon neutrality?**

Socialist Alliance does not support schemes that allow businesses and other organisations to claim that they are carbon neutral by purchasing offsets from overseas. Australia is a rich country, and must rapidly reduce its own emissions. Indeed, offsetting schemes are counterproductive, not only because they may deceive the general public but also because they are delaying Australia’s transition towards sustainability.

In regard to offsetting practices in Australia, our Agricultural Policy states: Prevent industrial biofuel or biochar production or broad scale carbon “offsetting” through unsustainable plantations that lock up prime farming land.

- 10. Food waste is a major source of carbon and methane emissions. What are your policies to reduce food waste and reduce emissions from food waste? Do you personally compost waste food?**

Socialist Alliance’s Climate Change Charter states the following:

Food production should be decentralised and localised to reduce the energy needed to transport and refrigerate foods.

Government-subsidised urban agriculture should be developed in our cities.

Organic waste, including green waste and sewage, should be composted and the methane gas by-product harnessed for energy. This avoids methane gas escaping into the atmosphere from landfills, as currently occurs.

Agricultural methods such as mulching, organic compost use, and no-tillage or low-tillage farming, should be rolled out on a large scale through development grants and incentives to farmers. All these methods help the soil to hold carbon, and are often very productive farming methods in their own right.

Yes, I compost waste food

- 11. Do you know that in Wills we have platypus in Merri Creek? Eastern Grey Kangaroos visit the Fawkner grasslands? We have rare plant species along our creek corridors? Funding for biodiversity has recently been slashed by the federal government. What is your policy on federal government biodiversity funding and species and eco-system conservation?**

Socialist Alliance's Climate Change Charter strongly supports funding for biodiversity and conservation of species and eco-systems. The Charter includes the following: Ban the logging of old-growth forests and begin an urgent program of reforestation, carbon farming and biodiversity protection. Phase out industrial farming based on fertilisers, pesticides and fuel sourced from petroleum. Restrict farming areas to ensure that threatened ecosystems return to healthy states. Encourage new farming practices including organic and urban farming. This process must allow for security of food supplies, and guarantee full employment and retraining for rural communities.