



Speech by

# Peter Wellington

MEMBER FOR NICKLIN

Hansard Wednesday, 1 November 2006

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## CLIMATE CHANGE

**Mr WELLINGTON** (Nicklin—Ind) (5.30 pm): I move—

That this parliament acknowledges the growing threat to Queensland from climate change and calls on the state government to take immediate action to reduce greenhouse gas emission levels.

This is a very simple motion and it is in two parts. The first part calls on this parliament—that is, Queensland's 52nd Parliament—to acknowledge the growing threat to Queensland from climate change. The second part of the motion is that the parliament calls on the state government to take immediate action to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. I moved this motion at the first sitting of this parliament three weeks ago so that all members, irrespective of their political persuasions, would have time to think about how they would vote. Would they vote in support of the motion or against the motion, or would they sit on the fence and abstain from voting?

When I was recently invited by the Sunshine Coast ABC staff to join them and other state and local government representatives for the first viewing on the Sunshine Coast of the film made by the former United States Vice President Al Gore titled *An Inconvenient Truth*, I was asked what I would do. I said that I would take the matter to state parliament and we would talk about it on the floor of the parliament. I believe everyone should see the film *An Inconvenient Truth*. It certainly makes you sit up and think; it certainly demonstrates the issue. The film prompts people to think about the issues of climate change, the future of our environment and the future of our communities where we live.

I agree with comments made by the Queensland Conservation Council and other commentators that climate change represents the most significant problem facing our planet today and that its impact will adversely affect all life and activity on our planet. For the purpose of this debate, when I use the term 'climate change' I refer to the changes in rainfall patterns across the state, the dramatic rise in average temperatures and the more severe weather conditions and the fact that these changes will significantly alter our lifestyle and the environment on which we so heavily rely.

Only this morning, another article was published in the *Courier-Mail* commenting on how soon a moderate global warming of, say, two to three degrees would affect the Great Barrier Reef and our nation's \$32 billion tourism industry. For the benefit of members who did not see the article, I table a copy of it.

*Tabled paper:* Courier-Mail article dated 1 November 2006 and titled 'perilous Future for the Reef'.

In the first sitting of this parliament, we spent a lot of time debating water supply problems in south-east Queensland. Yesterday and today again, water supply problems in south-east Queensland were raised as significant issues in this chamber. Those problems are all a result of climate change.

It has been reported that the paper prepared by the former World Bank chief economist, Sir Nicholas Stern, has caused a major international storm which has rocked our own federal parliament in Canberra, with some federal politicians being ejected from the chamber and others being warned about their behaviour. I certainly hope we will not see that sort of action during this debate. While some people do not agree that we have a climate change problem, I hope this debate will prompt our Queensland government—and in fact all levels of government in Australia and our community—to do more and to work

harder at reducing greenhouse gas emission levels. Together we can achieve it. Individually it will be so much harder.

I note that the Queensland government has produced its own greenhouse strategy which is on the public record. I believe tonight is a perfect opportunity to talk about not only the government proposed strategy but other alternative greenhouse reduction action plans. For the purpose of this debate, I table a copy of the Queensland Conservation Council's three-page action plan for Queensland.

*Tabled paper:* Document by Queensland Conservation titled 'A Greenhouse Reduction Action Plan for Queensland'.

Members will note that this proposal is a multipronged approach. The first component deals with setting a greenhouse reduction target; legislating a greenhouse target of at least 60 per cent reduction by 2050; setting a binding milestone target of a 20 per cent reduction by 2020; convening a climate summit to engage government, industry, business, academia and community stakeholders in an action plan to achieve the target; and providing an annual progress report to this very House.

The second component refers to providing incentives that support emission reductions; implementing with other states in Australia a national carbon trading scheme by 2008—yes, two years away—negotiating individual energy reduction agreements with high energy users; fast-tracking public transport infrastructure and promoting a public transport first program; and funding climate mitigation programs for agriculture.

The third component refers to supporting renewable energy and energy efficiency; setting a renewable energy target of 20 per cent by 2020; providing \$400 million from climate futures funds to support renewables and efficiency initiatives; and establishing a renewable energy centre here in Queensland.

The fourth component refers to supporting individual action on greenhouse gas reductions; introducing part 2 of a sustainable housing code to include existing houses, units and commercial premises; providing a policy focus by setting a 50 per cent energy-saving and water-saving target for residential and commercial premises to be achieved by 2015; establishing a sustainable housing fund to provide interest-free loans—yes, interest-free loans—for the purchase and installation of energy and water-efficient appliances and sustainable design improvements, and I believe the state of our finances in Queensland means we can fund this proposal; providing incentives for the purchase of low-emission and fuel-efficient vehicles; and introducing annual public transport passes as a part of salary packages for government employees.

The fifth and last component touches on capping government energy use and making major developments greenhouse neutral; introducing an energy reduction target that cuts government use by 25 per cent by 2012; converting government fleets to hybrid or efficient vehicles; establishing a climate neutral program that ensures all major infrastructure projects are at least greenhouse neutral; ensuring that all new major developments offset all projected greenhouse emissions; and setting energy-saving and water-saving targets and offset programs for all new residential developments. I acknowledge that some of these proposals are also covered in the government's own greenhouse strategy, but tonight is a time for us to consider these issues and put other issues on the table for debate.

While some people in our community are critical of the Queensland Conservation Council, I say that we should be grown-up and mature enough to be prepared to give credit where credit is due. I certainly believe Queensland needs a strong conservation movement to assist in keeping this very important issue of climate change on the state government's agenda. I use this opportunity to call on my parliamentary colleagues in the National and Liberal parties to follow the lead of the members on the crossbenches and raise this issue in the parliament and assist us to maintain the government's focus on the need for real outcomes. That is what we are after—real outcomes during the life of the 52nd Parliament.

I now table a further two-page letter from the coordinator of the Queensland Conservation Council dated 13 October 2006, together with a one-page letter dated 1 November from the coordinator of the Sunshine Coast Environment Council supporting the very intent of this motion.

*Tabled paper:* Correspondence from Queensland Conservation dated 13 October 2006.

*Tabled paper:* Correspondence from the Sunshine Coast Environment Council Inc dated 1 November 2006.

This morning in the House the Minister for Mines and Energy spoke about how Queensland is leading the world in clean coal technology. I hope that, when the government members speak to the motion, they will clearly set out their anticipated start date for the plant and comment on my understanding that one tonne of carbon combined with 2.66 tonnes of oxygen produces 3.66 tonnes of carbon dioxide. I urge members to support the motion. I also thank members of the crossbenches for allowing me to bring forward this important motion for debate tonight. I commend the motion to the House.