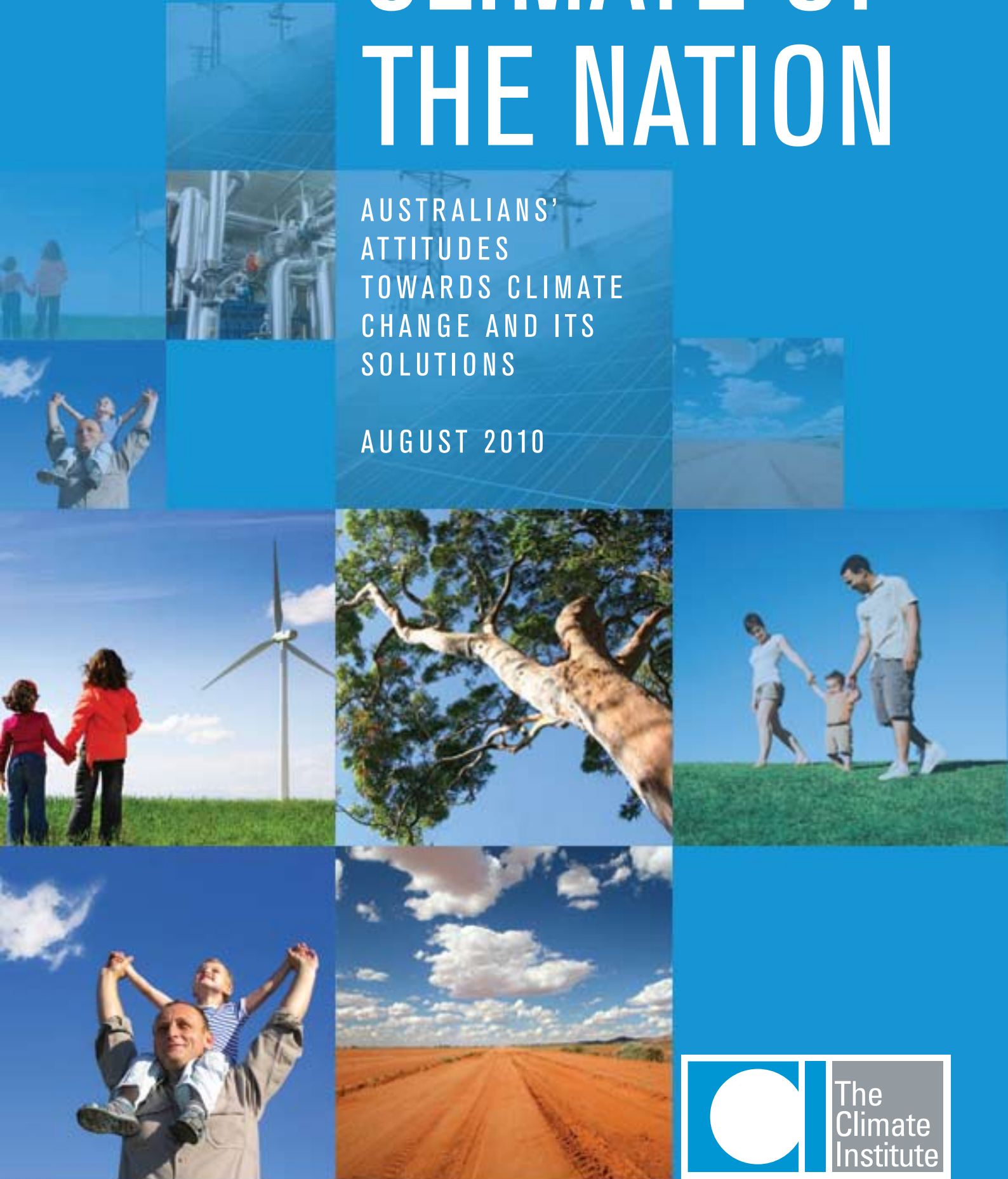


CLIMATE OF THE NATION

AUSTRALIANS'
ATTITUDES
TOWARDS CLIMATE
CHANGE AND ITS
SOLUTIONS

AUGUST 2010



CLIMATE OF THE NATION

August 2010

The Climate Institute has commissioned both quantitative and qualitative market research on the attitudes of the Australian public on climate change and climate change solutions, for the past three years. This research aims to understand and track Australians' attitudes to climate change and policy over the past year, as well as identify and track issues, particularly among soft voters.

This report summarises research by Auspoll and includes broader market research on public opinion on climate change. The Auspoll research was undertaken as a four-phase research program, both qualitative and quantitative during the months of April to June 2010. Auspoll also conducted exit poll research on 21 August 2010.

ESTABLISHED IN LATE 2005, THE CLIMATE INSTITUTE AIMS TO RAISE PUBLIC AWARENESS AND DEBATE ABOUT THE DANGERS TO AUSTRALIA OF GLOBAL WARMING AND TO MOTIVATE THE COUNTRY TO TAKE POSITIVE ACTION.

THE CLIMATE INSTITUTE IS A NON-PARTISAN, INDEPENDENT GROUP THAT WORKS WITH COMMUNITY, BUSINESS AND GOVERNMENT TO DRIVE INNOVATIVE AND EFFECTIVE CLIMATE CHANGE SOLUTIONS. WE RESEARCH. WE EDUCATE. WE COMMUNICATE.

OUR VISION IS FOR AN AUSTRALIA LEADING THE WORLD IN CLEAN ENERGY USE AND INNOVATION, WITH CLEAN AND LOW ENERGY SOLUTIONS A PART OF EVERYDAY LIFE THROUGHOUT THE COMMUNITY, GOVERNMENT AND BUSINESS.

THE CLIMATE INSTITUTE IS DEPENDENT ON DONATIONS TO FUND ITS RESEARCH. THIS REPORT IS FUNDED BY A DONATION FROM THE KANTOR FAMILY.

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SUMMARY

Climate change has evolved from an issue linked primarily to concerns of environment, drought and water shortages, to one viewed through a more complex prism of political leadership, pollution and sustainability. It is a mistake to view climate change as a stand-alone issue.

A key finding of the research is the link between climate change inaction and an erosion of belief in political leadership, trust and credibility.

After the then Prime Minister Kevin Rudd announced the delay of the Government's flagship climate policy – its Carbon Pollution Reduction Scheme (CPRS) – his trustworthiness, leadership and credibility was undermined.

Fifty-six per cent of Australians said they had a worse or much worse opinion of him in the area of keeping promises; 49% had a worse opinion of his credibility and 48% a worse opinion of his ability to tackle the big issues.

"The big fall [in the opinion polls] was in the aftermath of the announcement on the ETS and that has to be seen as an Australian community reaction to abdication of leadership on an issue that the community thought was very important." (Professor Ross Garnaut, ABC Four Corners, Monday 14 August 2010)

Australians were looking for leadership on the issue and were willing to back a political party that had a plan. 85% said they would support a party that had a "detailed plan to change Australia to using cleaner energy sources."

"The government, all they do is talk, talk, talk. Why don't they actually put some strategies in place?" (Deakin)

Not only do people want action, they also want substantial action. Eighty-two per cent believe that Australia should make "medium" to "very large" changes to address climate change.

In addition, just over one third would have rewarded the Government if they had taken action, 37% of voters said they would be more likely to vote Labor in support of new pollution and climate change policy.

Prime Minister Julia Gillard's announcement of the ALP's climate change election policy in July, did not provide a clear start to pollution reduction and included processes such as the Citizens' Assembly. This was broadly seen as the moment in which the ALP's bounce in polling, after Julia Gillard's ascension, stalled.

“The rot set in with the announcement of a climate change policy ... On the first Friday of the campaign came the big announcement: a citizens’ assembly to consider what the policy should be ... Labor’s polling, as well as the published opinion polls, showed Labor’s vote declining from that moment.”
(Graham Richardson, opinion, The Australian, pg. 14, 11 August 2010)

As well as eroding opinions of political competence, the initial April delay of the CPRS, and lack of perceived credible replacement policy, appeared to have fuelled an increase of concern about climate change. Forty-three per cent of soft voters were more concerned about climate change because of the delay of the CPRS.

The delay also eroded the perceived difference between the major parties as better managers on climate change. Pre-election, neither political party could claim leadership on the issue, two-thirds (66%) believed that both parties were the same at handling the issue; just 19% believed the Labor Party was better – an historic low - while 15% believed the Coalition was the better manager.

Election exit polls show that 62% believed Julia Gillard failed to show leadership on climate change. The decision to further delay the CPRS fuelled a clear switch from Labor to Green votes. Almost a third of Green voters, 32%, said they would have voted Labor had they not delayed a Carbon Pollution Reduction Scheme. Only 3% of Labor voters say they would have voted Coalition but for the delay.

In addition to an indelible link between climate change and leadership, a majority also consider climate change as interwoven with pollution. Disaggregating climate change from issues of leadership and pollution therefore leads to a fragmented picture. People are extremely concerned about pollution and don’t believe that it is at acceptable levels for their children’s health, while eight out of ten people directly link pollution and climate change, with 82% agreeing that pollution is making climate change worse.

“We’ve got more of a problem than we realise with pollution and health.”
(La Trobe)

Australians are concerned that our economy is too dependent on polluting sources of energy, and support a shift to clean energy sources.

“Yes we do need to move away from an economy that is dependent on using resources that create pollution, the way to do that would be to look at adopting better practices, that is most probably cleaner energy.”
(Deakin)

Just 8% believe current pollution levels are safe for children’s health. 78% of people agree that our economy is too dependent on burning coal rather than using clean energy sources. And, 72% support a plan to reverse our rising pollution in the next three years.

A strong theme from the research is a belief that business needs to take responsibility for the pollution it causes. 84% agree that it is unacceptable that some businesses focus too narrowly on profits while ignoring the risks of pollution. In addition, 81% agree that “polluting corporations are dumping their garbage in our air and they should start cleaning it up.”

“You’ve got to stop business getting away with what they’re getting away with now.” (Macarthur)

While support for action on pollution and climate change is solid, following the Global Financial Crisis, there are sensitivities to cost of living pressures and this was the number one, top of mind, concern for people about taking action on climate change.

However, in spite of widespread scare campaigns from polluters and the Coalition about the cost impacts of action on climate change, particularly on electricity prices, people are undecided on the issue. In a head-to-head question, opinion is split 50/50 (51% to 49%) as to whether electricity prices will go up if there is investment in clean energy on a large scale. In terms of employment, 63% believe the impact of changing to clean energy will either be jobs neutral, or lead to jobs growth.

Willingness to pay higher electricity prices has softened since 2007, but in the face of economic pressures, remains significant. In fact, people under financial pressure were the keenest to see strong action on climate change. In June, Auspoll found that 82% of Australians were concerned that pollution was making climate change worse, a concern shared by 86% of Australians who described themselves as ‘under financial pressure’.

In 2007, three out of four people, 77%, were willing to pay more for the use of renewable or other alternative sources of energy, if it would help reduce greenhouse gas emissions. (Climate of the Nation 2007 pg. 15, figure 14)

According to Auspoll (June 2010), 55% are willing to pay between \$5 and \$10 extra per week in electricity in order to reduce carbon pollution and address climate change. A 2010 Lowy Institute Poll showed that six in ten people, 59%, were willing to pay between \$1 and \$21+ each month in higher electricity prices, if it helped solve climate change.

In terms of solutions, support for direct action and clean energy options remain very strong. Eighty-six per cent support moving to clean energy sources such as solar, wind and geothermal, while current support for nuclear power generators for electricity has risen only slightly to 38% whereas in 2007, 33% supported this idea.

In terms of large, structural economic changes, people show support for reducing our dependence on coal-fired power generation for our electricity (62%) and putting a price tag on pollution so clean energy gets cheaper quicker (78%).

According to a July Galaxy poll for WWF in four Queensland marginal seats (Brisbane, Bowman, Petrie, Ryan), almost three quarters (74%) supported an emissions trading scheme - a 4% increase from the last poll in the same electorates just one month earlier. Fifty-seven per cent were also in favour of Prime Minister Gillard making a commitment, in her election campaign, to introduce such a scheme within the next year. ¹A Nielsen poll taken during the last week in July corroborated these findings: 60% of respondents showed support when asked if they supported or opposed an ETS scheme for Australia.²

Both major parties missed opportunities to improve policy and brand credibility on pollution and climate change throughout 2010. Cost of living pressures were, and are, a concern for citizens but it appears a simplistic mistake to automatically respond by freezing any policy that may have an impact on electricity prices. It is also a mistake to see climate change as a stand alone issue, it is integrated with leadership, economic reform, health as well as the environment. Australians want policies that amount to a credible and detailed plan on pollution and climate change.

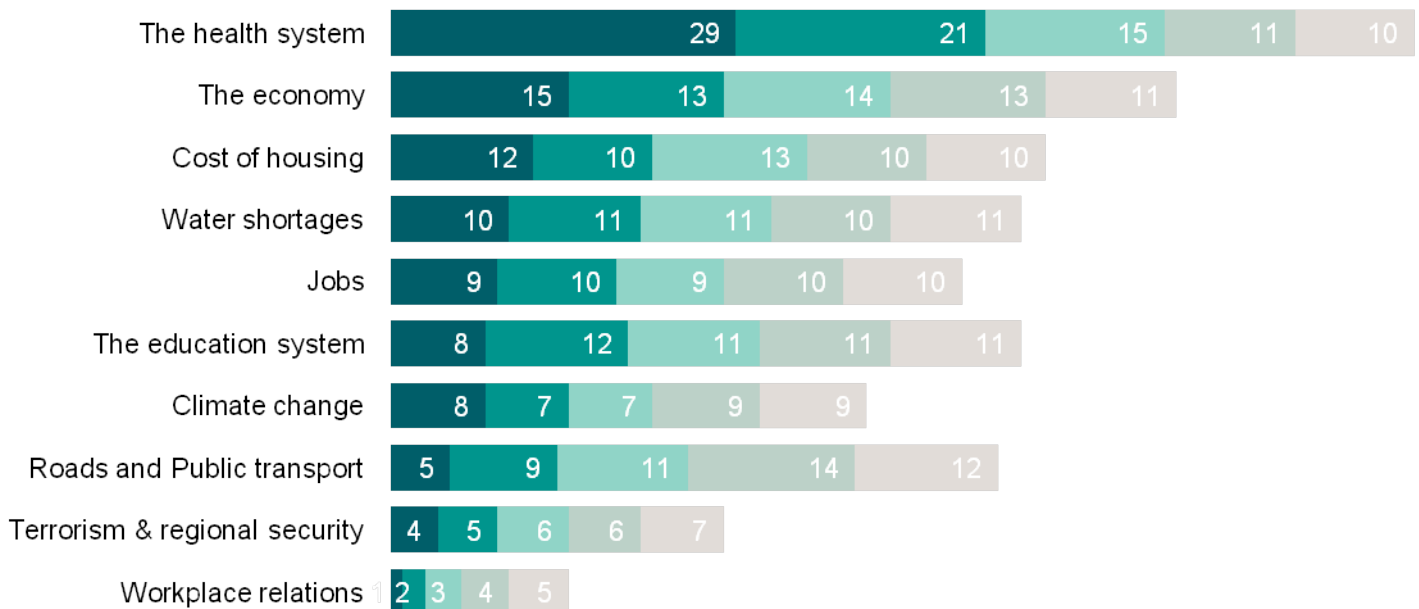
Climate change concern

In 2007, a year of drought and urban water shortages, an Australian Research Group survey found concern for climate change at an all-time high, second only to water shortages and ranked above the cost of housing, and terrorism.

Concern for climate change remained steady in 2009, with 79% indicating some level of concern. About two thirds of respondents (67%) also agreed that climate change presented a threat to the Australian environment.

By 2010, after the signing of Kyoto and the easing of the drought, climate change appears as a mid-ranking issue below the health system, economy, the cost of housing, jobs and the education system.

Q: Below is a list of topics that some people say are important issues facing Australia. Which are the most important issues to you? Please select the 5 most important topics to you personally and then rank these from 1 to 5. Please enter the number '1' for your most important through to '5' for your fifth most important issue (April survey).



Prompted reasons for concern about climate change that resonated included:

Water shortages for our cities

(64% are “extremely concerned” or “very concerned”)

More droughts affecting our farmers

(62% are “extremely concerned” or “very concerned”)

A more polluted planet

(61% are “extremely concerned” or “very concerned”)

A more polluted Australia

(59% are “extremely concerned” or “very concerned”)

Destruction of the Great Barrier Reef

(58% are “extremely concerned” or “very concerned”)

Animals and plants becoming extinct

(58% are “extremely concerned” or “very concerned”)

Extreme weather/bushfires

(56% are “extremely concerned” or “very concerned”)

Overall, present levels of concern for climate change as an issue in Australia remains strong despite continued softening in the past 12 months. In 2010, a substantial majority of Australians were concerned about climate change to some degree. In April 2010, 68% of people were concerned about climate change compared with 79% in February 2009.

Regression analysis was conducted to discover attitudinal factors that are more closely associated with people’s level of concern for climate change. The results showed that trust in the science is the most important indicator for concern about climate change; people who trust the science, that says climate change is happening, are more likely to be concerned. Other variables associated with higher levels of concerns included concern about pollution and support for putting a price on carbon. Younger and postgraduate-educated respondents are more concerned about climate change, as are Greens voters.

Focus group research showed that many also thought that climate change had become too politicised. This made some suspicious of information on climate change provided by the government or politicians because the assumption was that it was politically motivated.

“I’m wondering whether it’s politically-driven or self interest-driven. Do people want to just sell books or whatever rather than just talking about the facts? I guess I wonder do we actually ever hear what’s really going on?” (Deakin)

Some also believed there was a lack of balanced, unbiased information available and they do not know which sources of information to trust.

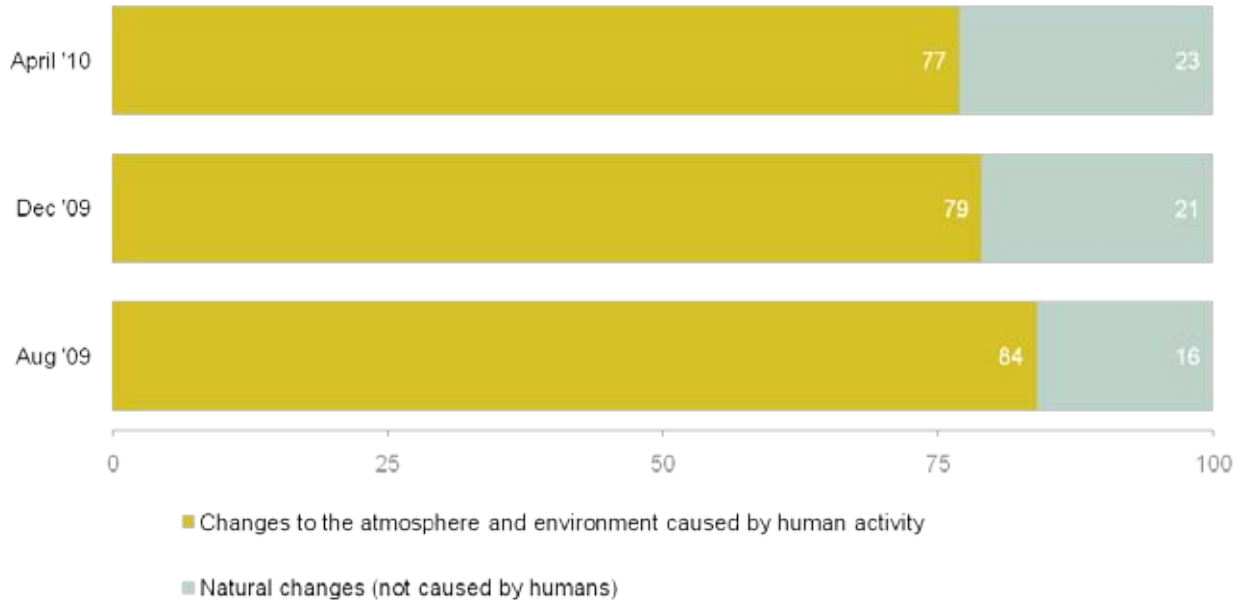
“What I’m noticing is how emotive it’s becoming and the divisions. You’re either totally for or totally against and how many in the middle are confused?” (Deakin)

(i). Denialism, scepticism and climate change

As noted above, regression analysis shows that people who trust the science are more likely to be concerned about climate change, while those that do not are less likely to be concerned.

There has been an increase in the proportion of people who believe climate change is due to natural causes and this suggests that the campaign to discredit the science of climate change is having an effect. The proportion of people who believe it is due to natural causes has increased over the last year, from 16% (in August 2009) to the current level of 23%.

Q. And you think this change [in the climate] will be mostly due to....? (April survey)



Around two thirds of people (65%), however, believe that climate change is happening now, 17% believe it will happen in the future, while 18% don't think it will happen at all.

People are most likely to trust the science of climate change to some degree but there is a fair degree of scepticism about it. Around 4 in 10 respondents "mostly trust the science that suggests climate change is happening," while another 16% "completely trust the science." Conversely, 27% "slightly trust the science" and 17% "don't trust the science at all."

Despite this, the level of belief that the earth's climate will get warmer remained fairly consistent over the past year. Around two thirds of people (69%) believe that the earth's climate will get warmer in the coming decades, while 27% believe it will stay the same. And, the great majority of people still accept that the climate will change as a result of human activity:

More than three quarters (77%) believe that the climate is mostly changing due to human activity.

Focus group research reveals that there is no strong, consistent message on climate change and this leads to confusion, scepticism and disengagement. Most people with soft attitudes to climate change (those who are unsure if climate change is happening) said that there is a lack of credible information on the issue.

The perceived lack of consistency in climate science has led many to be sceptical of the reliability of all information. The belief that climate change has become politicised also means that many people were questioning the motivations of scientists.

“People need more proof. We need to be able to read and see things. We have so many different people telling us so many different things that are happening that none of us are really...we don’t know enough about it. My view is that I don’t know enough about it so I’m quite happy to just put it over in the corner and try and tackle other things that at this stage seem a bit more important, only because there’s just so much conflicting advice about it.” (Bennelong)

“Is it a natural phenomena or not? That sums up my thinking on it because one minute a scientists says yes another minute they’re saying no. What am I supposed to know? For me it’s confusion.” (Deakin)

There is some anecdotal and other evidence that this sceptism is waning, at least in intensity as the “climate-gates” and other “gates” have, although highlighting process problems, proven to show that there are no conspiracies or fundamental flaws in climate science. It is also important to note, that on 16 August 2010 the Australian Academy of Science published a review of questions and answers on climate science which included the following unequivocal statement:

“The Earth’s climate has changed. The global average surface temperature has increased over the last century and many other associated changes have been observed. The available evidence implies that greenhouse gas emissions from human activities are the main cause. It is expected that, if greenhouse gas emissions continue at business-as-usual rates, global temperatures will further increase significantly over the coming century and beyond. The science behind these statements is supported by extensive studies...”³

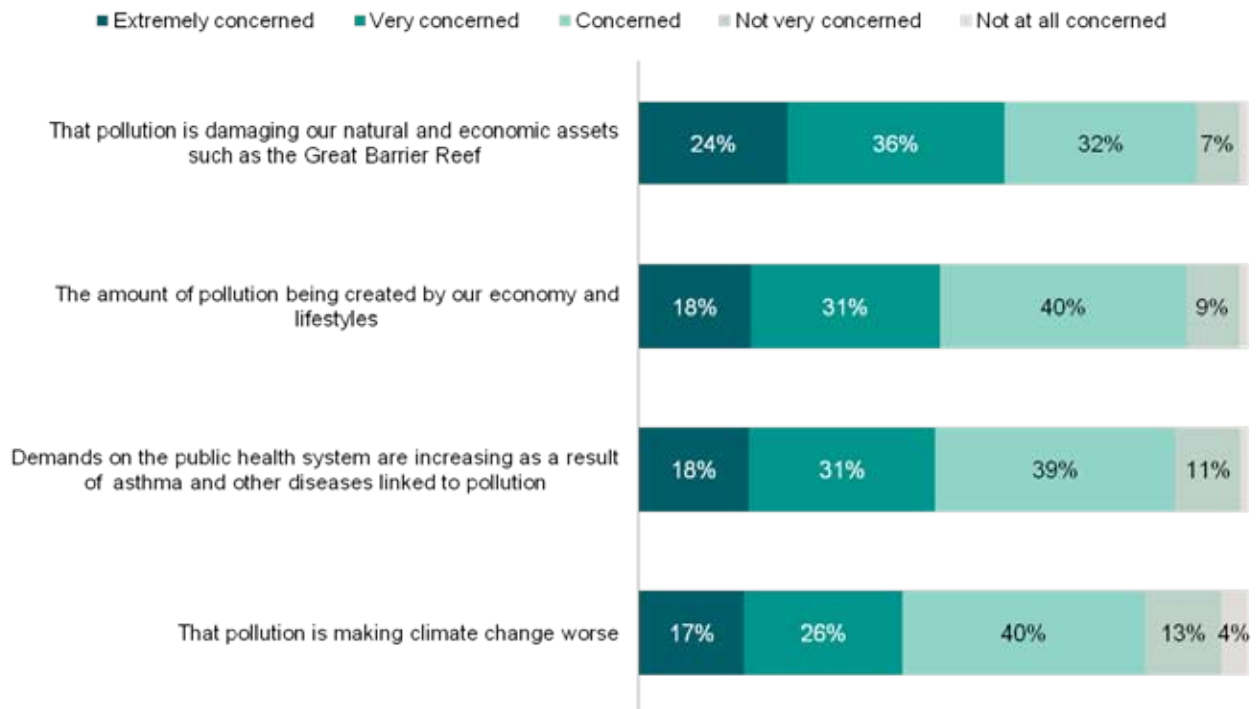
2. Pollution and climate change

Our research shows that disaggregating climate change from issues such as health, pollution and sustainability leads to a fragmented picture of true concern, as many consider the issues linked.

Eighty-nine per cent are concerned (concerned, very, extremely) about the amount of pollution created by our economy and lifestyles. The same number (89% – concerned, very, extremely) make the direct link between pollution and health and believe that demands on the public health system are increasing as a result of asthma and other diseases linked to pollution.

In particular, the Australian public is concerned that pollution is a result of our lifestyles and is damaging our health, natural assets and making climate change worse. The vast majority of Australians (86%) agree that pollution needs to be reduced and the overwhelming majority (92%) believe that pollution levels are unacceptable i.e. not safe for children. Over 90% also believe that reducing pollution will ‘probably’ or ‘definitely’ result from action on climate change.

Q: How concerned are you about the following issues? (June survey)

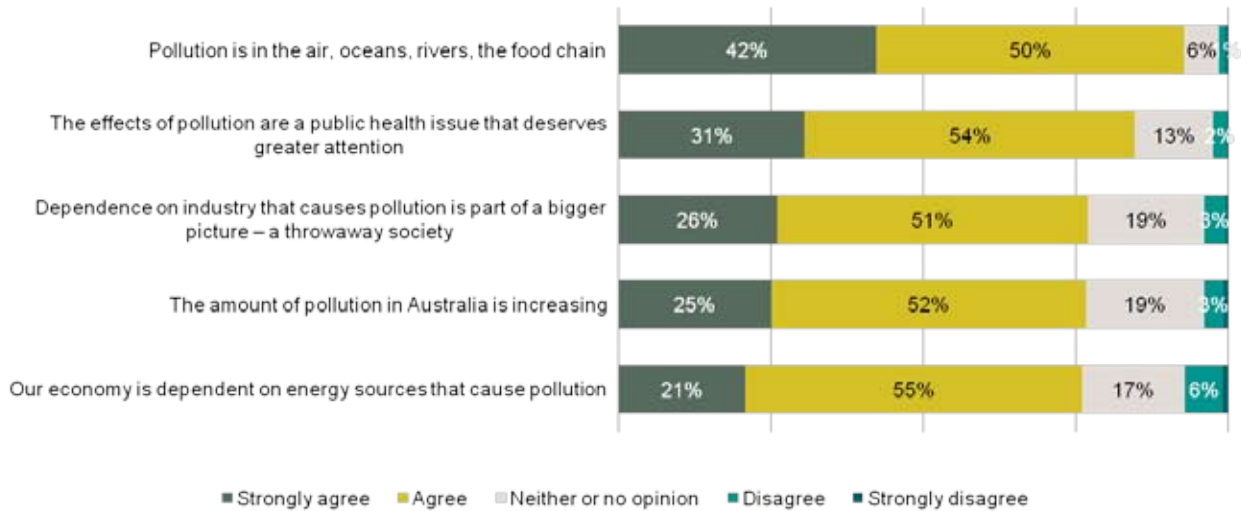


A majority of voters are aware and very concerned about the presence of pollution in their environment, increasing pollution levels, as well as its impact on health. Eighty-five per cent agree that the effects of pollution are a public health issue and the issue deserves greater attention.

In addition to believing that Australia's pollution levels are on the rise, and that the economy is too dependent on sources of energy that cause pollution, a majority link pollution to broader sustainability issues.

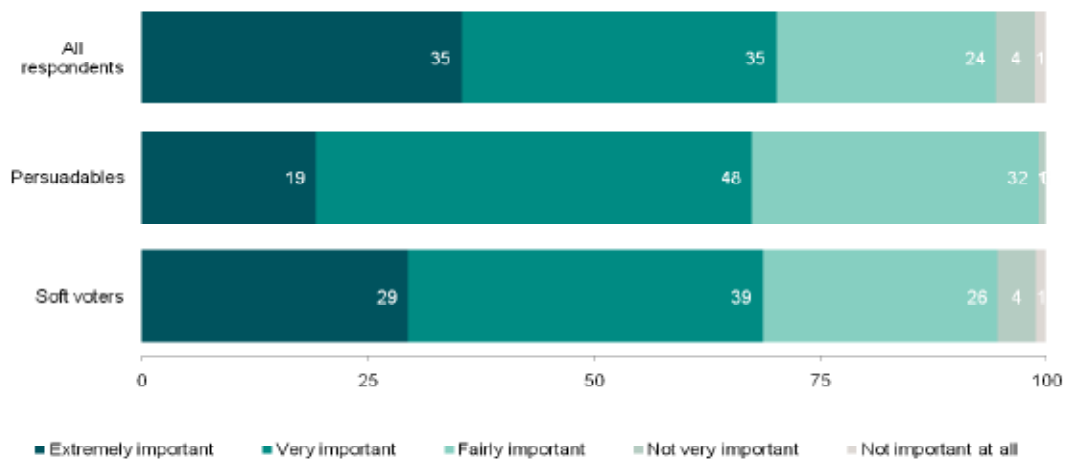
Seventy-seven per cent agree or strongly agree that dependence on industry that causes pollution is part of a bigger picture – a throwaway society.

Q: To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements? (June survey)



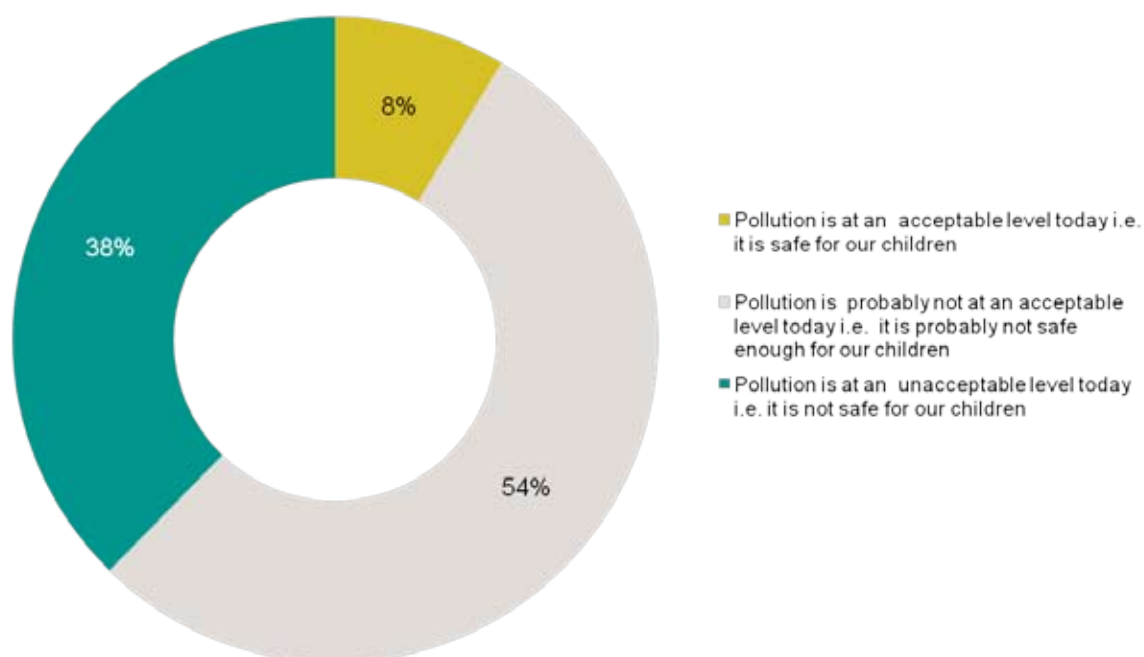
Almost three quarters feel that it is either very or extremely important for Australia to reduce pollution:

Q: How important is it for Australia to reduce pollution? (June survey)



Ninety-two per cent of respondents believe today's pollution levels are not acceptable or safe for our children.

Q: Which of the following statements is closest to your opinion? (June survey)



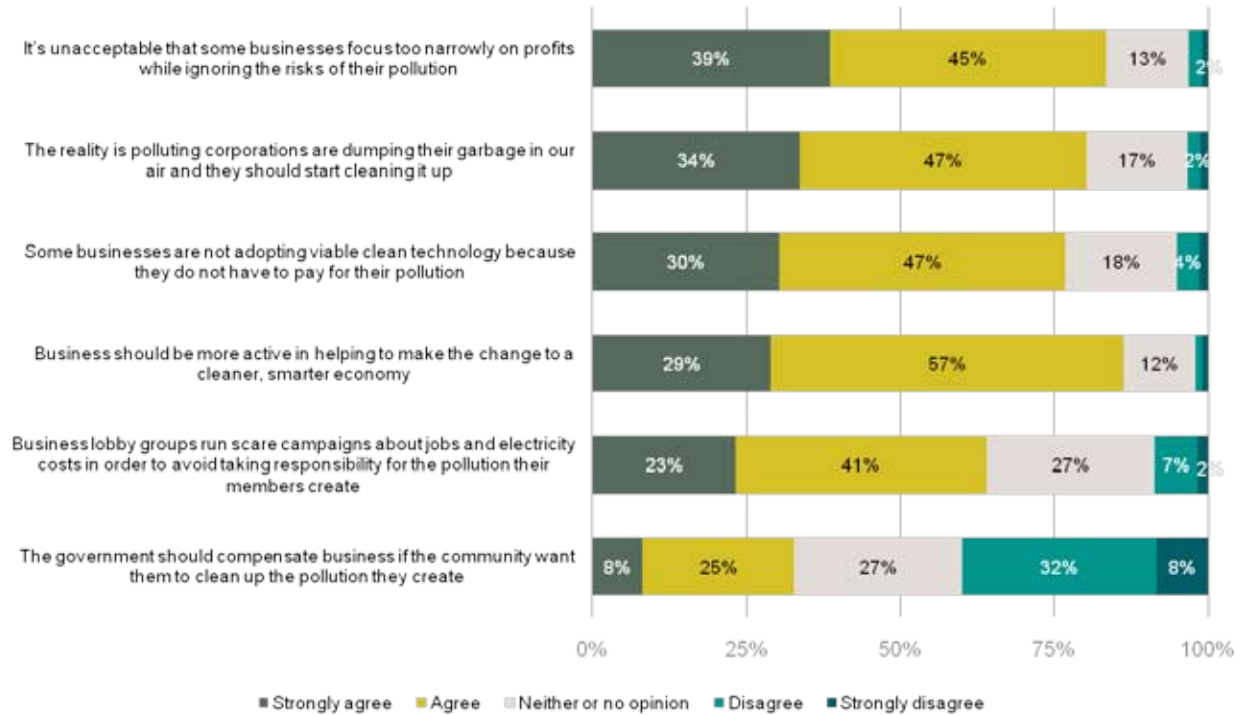
3. Business needs to take responsibility for its pollution

Among focus group respondents, there was a strong belief that big business is not doing its fair share to reduce pollution and address climate change and that the Government needs to make them do more to reduce the pollution they create.

When polled, people strongly believe (86% “strongly agree”, “agree”) that big business not only has a responsibility to reduce pollution, but should take a more active role in helping Australia to change to a cleaner, smarter economy.

Australians support “a price tag on pollution so business has better incentive to change to clean energy, and clean energy becomes cheaper” (76% support, 5% oppose). The price tag on pollution will reward businesses and consumers who produce and consume clean energy. Seven in ten respondents (70%) showed support for “a direct charge on pollution while protecting people who can’t afford energy price increases,” while just over half (51%) said they were in favor of setting up an emissions trading scheme (such as the Carbon Pollution Reduction Scheme). Seventy-six per cent support “making polluting businesses take responsibility and charging them for their pollution while protecting people who can’t afford energy price increases.”

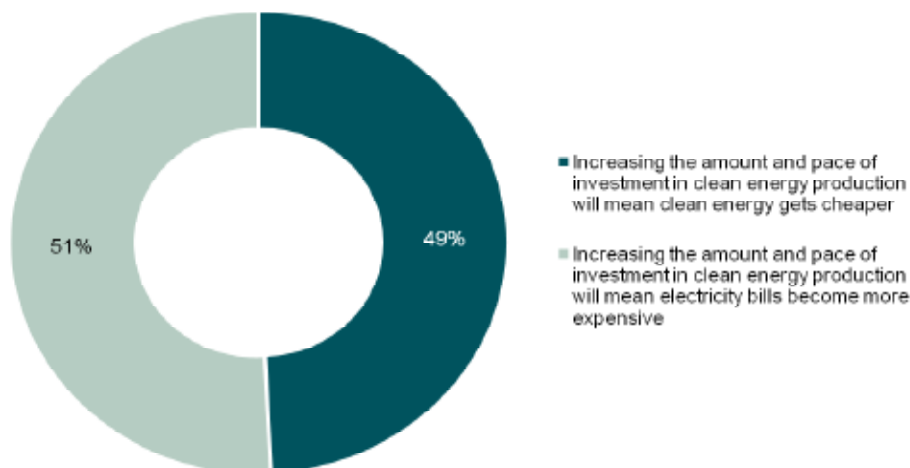
Q: To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements? (June survey)



4. Willingness to Pay

In spite of widespread scare campaigns from polluters and the Coalition about the cost impacts of action on climate change, particularly on electricity prices, people are undecided on the issue. In a head-to-head question, opinion is split (51% to 49%) as to whether electricity prices will go up if there is investment in clean energy on a large scale. In terms of employment, 63% believe the impact of changing to clean energy will either be jobs neutral, or lead to jobs growth.

Q: Which of the following statements is closest to your opinion? (June survey)



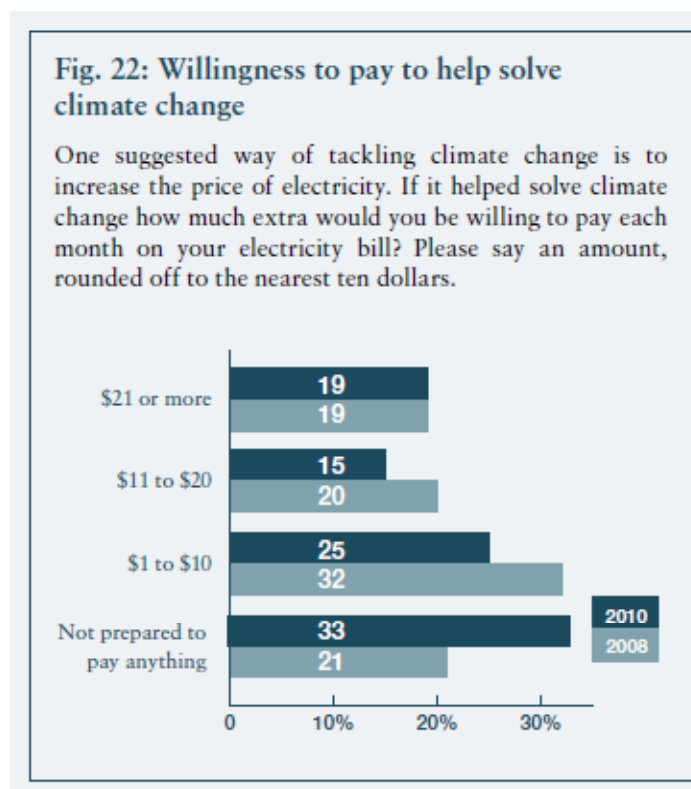
Willingness to pay higher electricity prices has softened since 2007, but in the face of economic pressures, remains significant. In fact, people under financial pressure were the keenest to see strong action on climate change. In June 2010, Auspoll found that 82% of Australians were concerned that pollution was making climate change worse, a concern shared by 86% of Australians who described themselves as 'under financial pressure'.

Q. If the Labor Government were to take stronger action on climate change before the next Federal Election, would it make you more or less likely to vote for them?

	Total	Under financial pressure	
	Weighted	Yes	No
In would make me much more likely to vote for the Labor Government	14.8%	16.0%	13.6%
It would make me more likely to vote for the Labor Government	21.7%	24.2%	19.3%
It would make no difference to who I vote for	52.7%	51.1%	54.3%
It would make me less likely to vote for the Labor Government	3.1%	2.4%	3.8%
It would make me less likely to vote for the Labor Government	7.7%	6.4%	8.9%
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

According to Auspoll (June 2010), 55% are willing to pay between \$5 and \$10 extra per week in electricity in order to reduce carbon pollution and address climate change. And, a 2010 Lowy Institute Poll showed that six in ten people, 59%, were willing to pay between \$1 and \$21+ each month in higher electricity prices if it helped solved climate change.

The results from the 2008 and 2010 Lowy Institute Poll (below) show the willingness to pay from two years ago to present⁵:



People are aware that industrial change of this scale would impact workers in high polluting industries as well as towns, and people on low incomes. Because of this, we see high levels of support for actions that involve “protecting workers in towns and communities affected by the industrial change to cleaner sources of energy” (82%), as well as “making polluting businesses take responsibility and charging them for pollution, while protecting people who can’t afford energy price increases” (76%).

5. The Solutions: Smarter, cleaner, cheaper energy

(i) A low pollution economy

The survey data shows that a clear majority of voters want to see Australia move away from a polluting economy, and towards cleaner energy and taking advantage of the benefits that accompany this transition, such as more jobs in the new clean energy industry, a healthier, less polluted environment and a safer future for children.

Almost three quarters (72%) of respondents are in favour of Australia reducing its dependence on coal-fired electricity.

A full 86% of voters support “moving to clean energy sources like solar, wind and geothermal”, and 87% support “making clean energy cheaper quicker (through large-scale development of solar, geothermal and wind power, etc).”

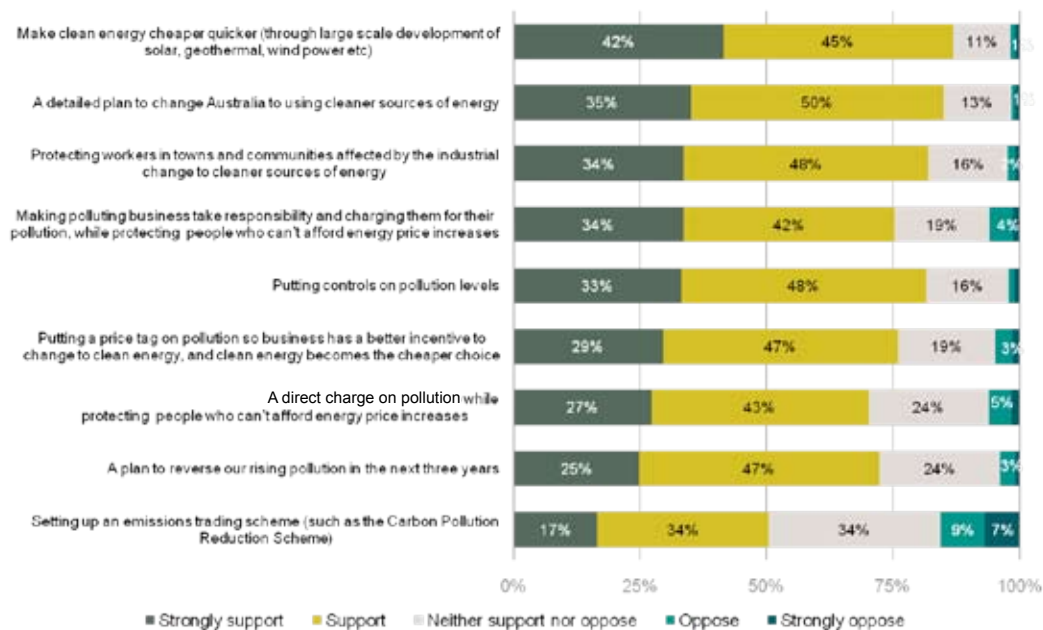
Support for nuclear power remains relatively low at 38% and has barely risen from 33% in 2007.

People see the benefits of action on pollution and climate change – among most commonly mentioned benefits were - to create better future for earth/future generations and a less polluted environment and to set an example to other countries.

Australians would like clean energy to be cheaper – a finding consistent with the popular demand for action-oriented, Government schemes like solar and insulation subsidies, as well as support for increasing the number of houses with rooftop solar panels (86%) and large scale programs to plant more trees (87%).

The focus group research also reveals that people are supportive of pollution reduction and investment in cleaner energy and industrial change; they broadly understand that with an increase in clean energy industries, the cheaper clean energy will be and more jobs will be created.

Q: Thinking about changing to an economy based on cleaner energy sources like wind and solar power, to what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements? (June survey)



(ii) A detailed plan is needed

The research shows that almost three quarters of the electorate support “a plan to reverse our rising pollution in the next 3 years” and even more (85%) support a major political party that has “a detailed plan to change Australia to using cleaner sources of energy.”

Australians want large scale clean energy investment, they want clean energy to be the cheaper choice, they would like workers in towns and communities impacted by the industrial change to be protected, and they are in favour of rewarding businesses that are innovative and responsible and charging those who are not.

6. Support for an emissions trading scheme

In terms of large, structural economic changes, people show support for reducing our dependence on coal-fired power generation for our electricity (62%) and putting a price tag on pollution, so clean energy gets cheaper quicker (78%).

According to a July Galaxy poll in four Queensland marginal seats (Brisbane, Bowman, Petrie, Ryan), almost three quarters (74%) supported an emissions trading scheme - a 4% increase from the last poll in the same electorates just one month earlier. Fifty-seven per cent were also in favour of Prime Minister Gillard making a commitment in her election campaign to introduce such a scheme within the next year.⁴

A Nielsen poll taken during the last week in July, corroborated these findings: 60% of respondents showed support when asked if they supported or opposed an ETS for Australia. ⁵When asked if they supported or opposed an ETS for Australia (a non-specific, generic scheme), 60% in total showed support for an ETS. Interestingly, there is a significant gap in opposition by gender, with almost twice as many males strongly opposed to it as females.

Support for generic ETS

	Total	Male	Female	By party vote		
				Coalition	ALP	Greens
Total Support	60	57	63	44	74	84
Total Oppose	27	33	21	42	14	9
Strongly Support	20	19	21	11	27	43
Strongly Oppose	11	14	7	19	3	1

7. International Leadership

Australians are looking to Government to lead

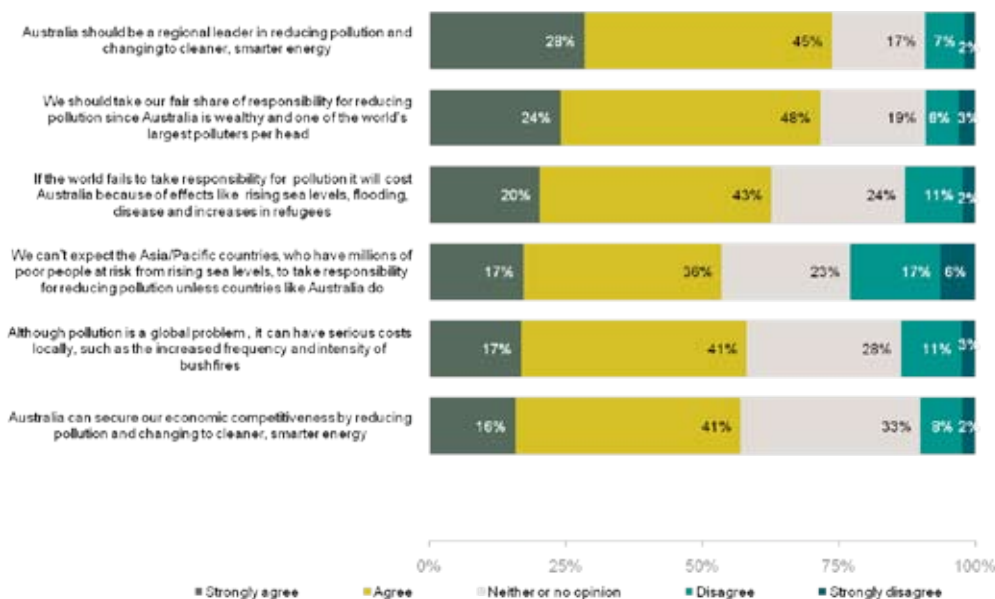
According to focus group research and polling, people overwhelmingly believe that Government should be leading the response to pollution reduction.

“They have to lead, they have to solve the problem.” (Macarthur)

Moreover, the survey shows that people want Australia, as a nation, to lead in reducing pollution and changing to cleaner, smarter energy (73%). An overwhelming majority of Australians think we need to reduce the amount of carbon pollution we put into the environment and lead the world in clean energy use; 81% of respondents support putting controls on pollution levels.

When asked about the benefits of taking action on climate change (unprompted), 20% of Australians cited setting an example to the world or being a world leader in climate change. More specifically, a significant 73% of voters think Australia should be a regional leader in reducing pollution and changing to cleaner, smarter energy.

Q: Thinking about pollution as a global issue, to what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements? (June survey)



Furthermore, according to the 2010 Lowy Institute Poll, 72% of the electorate agreed that Australia should take unilateral action on reducing carbon pollution and not wait until a global agreement is reached ⁶:

Q: At this stage there is no global agreement to reduce carbon emissions. Do you personally agree, or disagree that Australia should take action to reduce its carbon emissions before a global agreement is reached?

	2010
Strongly agree	44
Somewhat agree	28
Somewhat disagree	12
Strongly disagree	16
Neither/Don't know	1
Total Agree	72
Total Disagree	28

In a two year study done by the University of Technology Sydney's Centre for the Study of Choice (UTS:CenSoC) of over 7,000 Australians' preferences on emissions trading plans, there was a general preference for starting a plan for large reductions in emissions now and not waiting for action from other countries, like China and the US.⁷

"They've (government) got to do something and not just talk about it, create policy, be effective." (Deakin)

8. Politics of Pollution and Climate Change

(i) Better party at dealing with climate change

After the Government's decision in April 2010 to delay the implementation of its CPRS, the drop in the Labor Party's approval rating, as better manager of climate change, continued to slide and reached an historic low of 19% — its lowest point in three years. The delay appears to have fuelled concern for climate change with 40% of respondents having said the then Prime Minister Rudd's announcement of the CPRS policy delay made them "more concerned about climate change."

In 2008, the ratification of the Kyoto Protocol appeared to solidify climate action as part of the brand of the ALP with 40% of respondents saying the ALP was the better climate change manager, compared with just 7% for the Coalition. After months of delay and debate over the detail of an emissions trading scheme, over half of Australians (52%) would not rate either party as the better with 30% again considering them both to be the same and 22% with no opinion.

In February 2009, over a third (37%) were still unable to perceive a clear difference between the parties in their approach to climate change, even though the Liberal Party lagged substantially behind Labor as the better party with only 12% who said the Liberals were better compared to 32% for Labor.

(ii) Voting intention

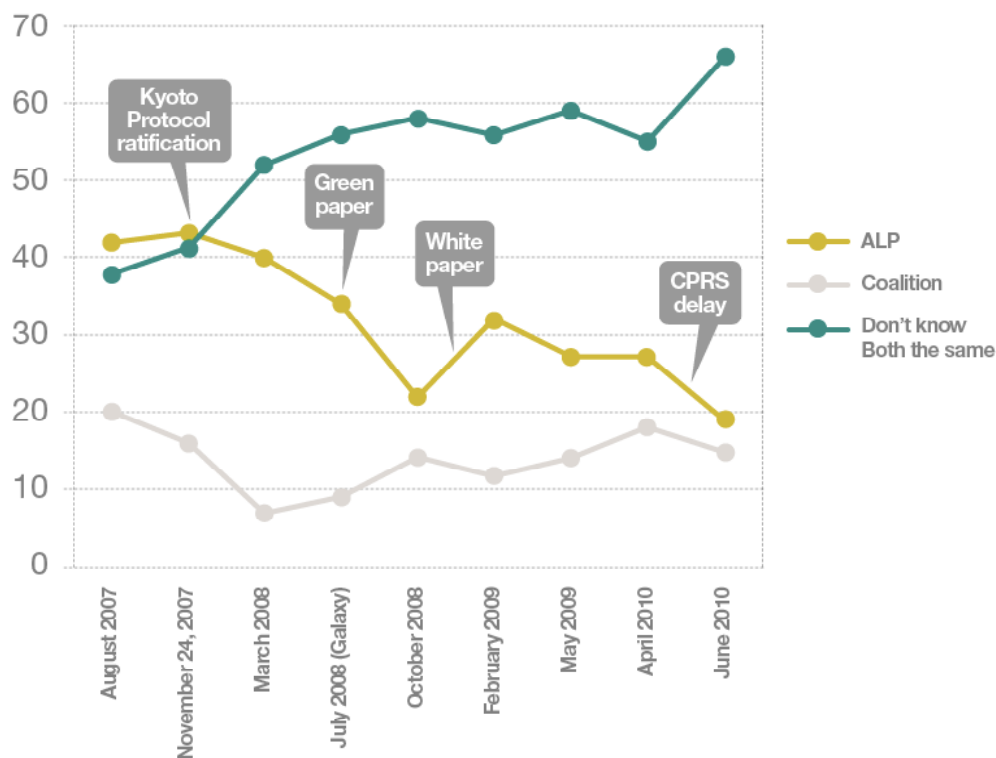
The Auspoll May survey shows the public has lost confidence in both the major parties' ability to manage climate change – just 19% thought Labor was better at handling climate change and only 15% thought the Coalition was better. Both these figures have dropped since an earlier survey in late March, when 27% perceived Labor as the better manager of the issue and 18% said the Coalition was better.

There is a solid foundation of support for a Party with a plan to reduce pollution and change Australia to a clean energy economy. Eighty-six per cent say they would support a major party that offered to make clean energy bigger and cheaper through large scale investment in solar, wind, etc.

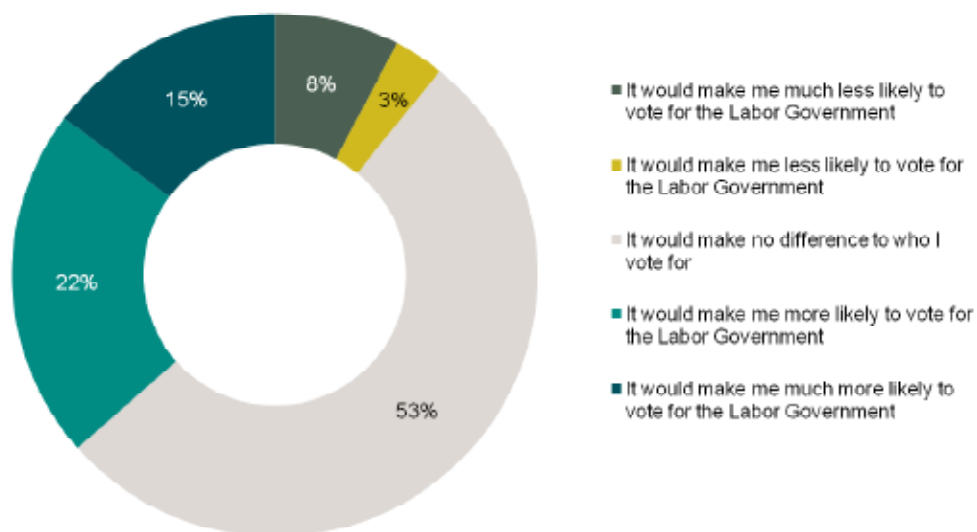
In May, polls revealed that if Kevin Rudd and the Government were to “take more responsibility for pollution and climate change and offered a decisive plan for smarter, cleaner, cheaper energy”, a majority of people were more likely to find it credible (42.5%) than not credible (28%).

Thirty-seven per cent of voters would have been more likely to vote Labor in support of a new pollution and climate policy. A high proportion of that total is soft voters who are more likely to vote Labor if the government took “stronger action” on pollution and climate change.

Which of the major political parties do you think is better at handling climate change?



Q: If the Labor Government were to take stronger action on pollution and climate change before the next Federal Election, would it make you more or less likely to vote for them? (June survey)



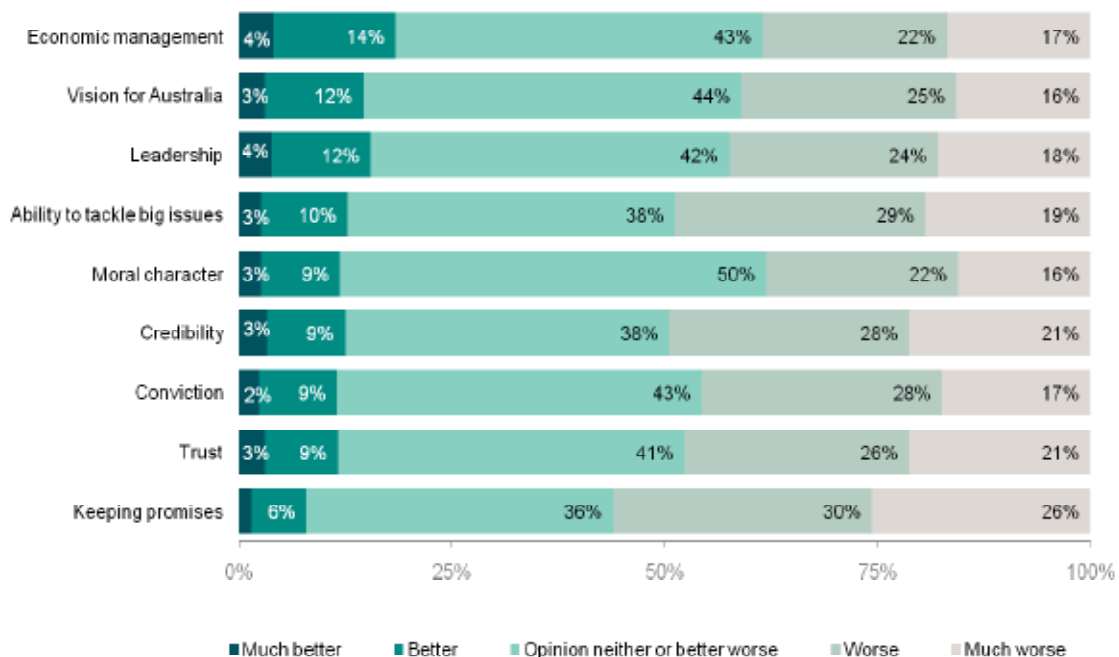
(iii) Trust, credibility and leadership

A key finding of the research is the link between climate change inaction and an erosion of belief in political leadership, trust and credibility.

After the then Prime Minister Kevin Rudd announced the delay of the Government's flagship climate policy – its Carbon Pollution Reduction Scheme (CPRS) – it undermined belief in his trustworthiness, leadership and credibility.

Fifty-six per cent said they had a worse or much worse opinion of him in the area of keeping promises; 49% had a worse opinion of his credibility and 48% a worse opinion of his ability to tackle the big issues.

Q: Thinking about Kevin Rudd's decision to delay the government's key climate change policy (the Carbon Pollution Reduction Scheme) until 2013, how has your opinion of him changed in the following areas? (June survey)



“The big fall [in the opinion polls] was in the aftermath of the announcement on the ETS and that has to be seen as an Australian community reaction to abdication of leadership on an issue that the community thought was very important. (Professor Ross Garnaut ABC Four Corners, Monday 14 August)

Australians were looking for leadership on the issue and were willing to back a political party that had a plan. Eighty-five per cent said they would support a party that had a “detailed plan to change Australia to using cleaner energy sources of energy.”

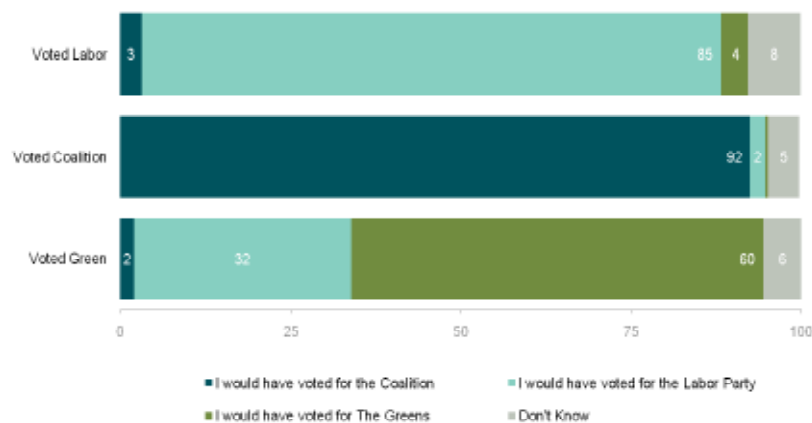
“The government, all they do is talk, talk, talk. Why don’t they actually put some strategies in place?” (Deakin)

iv) The 2010 election exit poll results

Election day exit polls show that 62% believed Julia Gillard failed to show leadership on climate change.

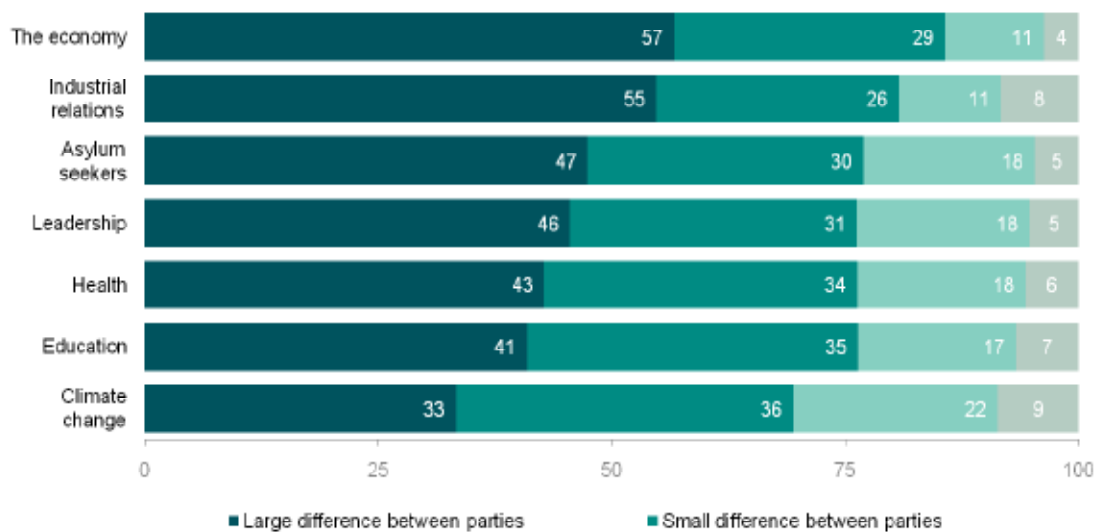
The decision to further delay the CPRS fuelled a clear switch from Labor to Green votes. Almost a third of Green voters, 32%, said they would have voted Labor had they not delayed a Carbon Pollution Reduction Scheme. Only 3% of Labor voters say they would have voted Coalition but for the delay.

Q: Who would you have voted for if Julia Gillard had not delayed the introduction of a carbon pollution reduction scheme? (August survey)



The exit poll also demonstrated, that the ALP's less decisive 2010 policy mix meant that climate change slid down the list of issues for which it had the clearest differentiation when compared with the 2007 election. In 2007, climate change was the third highest issue of differentiation behind leadership and climate change. In 2010, climate change slid behind those issues as well as health, education and asylum seekers.

Q: How much difference is there between the positions of the Liberal National Coalition and the Labor Party on the issue of _____? Would you say there is a large difference, small difference or no difference? (August survey)



BACKGROUND TO THE RESEARCH

The Climate Institute's *Climate of the Nation 2010* report was informed by research on Australian attitudes to climate change and climate change policy which was commissioned by The Climate Institute and partner organizations working in fields including environment, conservation and research.

The report mostly contains the results of a survey which was undertaken by Auspoll in a four-phase research program designed to understand and track Australians' attitudes to climate change. Phase one began with a round of four focus groups involving people across a spread of ages, gender and occupations; this was undertaken between 11 March to 18 March, 2010 in Deakin, VIC; Bennelong and Macarthur, NSW. In the second phase, 1000 Australians participated in an online questionnaire between 25 March and 29 March, 2010. During the third phase, the second round of focus groups was conducted in the same locales as in phase one, between 22 April and 29 April, 2010. The fourth phase was undertaken by another online poll of 1000 Australians during the first two weeks in June.

A series of regression models were also constructed to get a deeper understanding of the key factors associated with attitudes to climate change. The accuracy of the results at an overall level is accordingly +/- 3.1% at the 95% confidence interval. This means, for example, that if the survey returns a result of 50%, there will be a 95% chance that the actual result will be between 46.9% and 53.1%. All percentage figures in this report are rounded. Accordingly, totals may not add up to 100%.

Finally, an exit poll was conducted by phone on the day of the Federal election on 21 August 2010.

ENDNOTES

World Wildlife Fund (Australia). "Support for an ETS Continues to Grow," 21 July 2010. <<http://wwf.org.au/news/support-for-an-ets-continues-to-grow/>> (accessed 21 July 2010).

² Phillip Coorey. "Support for an ETS Dwarfs Backing for Assembly," 31 July 2010, <<http://www.smh.com.au/federal-election/climate/support-for-ets-dwarfs-backing-for-assembly-20100730-10zss.html>> (accessed 31 July 2010).

³ The Australian Academy of Science. "The Science of Climate Change: Questions and Answers," August 2010, <www.science.org.au/policy/climatechange 2010.html> (accessed 16 August 2010).

⁴ World Wildlife Fund (Australia). "Support for an ETS Continues to Grow," 21 July 2010. <<http://wwf.org.au/news/support-for-an-ets-continues-to-grow/>> (accessed 21 July 2010).

⁵ Phillip Coorey. "Support for an ETS Dwarfs Backing for Assembly," 31 July 2010, <<http://www.smh.com.au/federal-election/climate/support-for-ets-dwarfs-backing-for-assembly-20100730-10zss.html>> (accessed 31 July 2010).

⁶ Fergus Hanson. "The Lowy Institute Poll 2010," Released 31 May 2010, <<http://www.loyyinstitute.org/Publication.asp?pid=1305>> p. 15, (accessed June 2, 2009).

⁷ University of Technology Sydney, Centre of the Study of Choice. "Trading Plans that Australians want their Government to Implement," 2010 http://www.censoc.uts.edu.au/news/CenSoC_People_Choose_A_Carbon_Plan.pdf (accessed 4 August 2010).