


Promoting Sustainable Industrial Policy – an Australian Perspective

Andrew Dettmer
National President
Australian Manufacturing
Workers Union



GOUDIN

Policy context

- Sustainability  Environmental policy
- Role of Governments
- Political environment
- Role of business and employers
- Union response and role

Sustainability

- 147,000,000 google entries
- Wikipedia: “In ecology, **sustainability** is how biological systems endure and remain diverse and productive...In economics-centred accounts, sustainability requires the reconciliation across the "three pillars" of sustainability: economic demands, environmental resilience, and social equity.”

Oxford Dictionary

1. Able to be maintained at a certain rate or level: *sustainable economic growth*
2. Conserving an ecological balance by avoiding depletion of natural resources: *our fundamental commitment to sustainable development*
3. Able to be upheld or defended: *sustainable definitions of good educational practice*

Australian Government role

- Strong tradition of Govt intervention in economy
- Power divided between Commonwealth (Federal Govt), States (independent entities), and Territories (subservient to Commonwealth legislation).
- 1983 – Dams Case (Commonwealth v Tasmania (1983) 158 CLR 1) – C'wlth used treaty power (s51 (xxix) of Australian Constitution)

Government role

- Strong tradition of Govt intervention in society
- Environmental protection processes commenced 1970s
- All States & Territories have Environmental Protection Agencies or similar
 - Post Dams Case – C'wlth EPA also set up.
- Concentration on natural environment originally
 - World Heritage protection, endangered species, etc.
- **Now**, broader role; “sustainable manufacturing” part of “whole of Govt” approach

Political developments

- PM Howard (1996 – 2007): Refused to endorse Kyoto Protocols
- PM Rudd (2007 – 2010; 2013):
 - Endorsed Kyoto
 - Climate change: “Greatest moral challenge of our generation”
 - Original Carbon Pollution Reduction Scheme legislation defeated in Senate by Conservatives and Greens
 - Resulted in eventual replacement as PM

Political developments II

PM Gillard (2010 – 13)

“No Carbon Tax under Govt I lead”

Introduced Emissions Trading Scheme post 2010 election

Immediately dubbed “Carbon Tax” by conservatives – significant industry assistance/transition program, tax breaks for workers

PM Abbott (2013 - ?)

“Climate Change is Crap”

Election promise: abolish Carbon Tax “A great big new tax on everything”; replace with “Direct Action” (\$5bn giveaway to business)

Business and Employers

- Ambiguous position
 - Socially responsible business: can't ignore climate change
 - Conservative employers: Climate change deniers ("Climate sceptics")
- All oppose "Tax on business"
- Accepted incentives from Carbon Tax package, e.g. Foundries - \$300M to modernise, reduce emissions

Union response and role

- AMWU: Lengthy internal dialogue re – sustainability
 - Green for All the Workers (1990)
 - Working for the Environment (1993)
 - Just Transitions (2008)
- Argued for sustainable industrial practices
 - Support for CPRS
 - Involvement in e.g. wind farms, solar panel manufacture
 - Policies re: sustainable manufacturing practice

Further reading

- <http://www.theguardian.com/environment/southern-crossroads/2013/oct/06/green-jobs-climate-change-andrew-dettmer-manufacturing-union>