

Socialist Alliance policy

<http://www.socialist-alliance.org>



Energy policy framework

Core issues for energy policy

1. The Socialist Alliance's energy policy builds on the ten point Climate Action Plan contained in our Climate Change Charter.
2. Given the urgency of the climate crisis, Alliance energy policy must recognise and incorporate the objectives of alternative energy policies and plans such as the "Clean Energy Future" work of Dr Mark Diesendorf and others and "Coal Switch: Halving Victoria's greenhouse emissions" by the Greenleap Strategic Institute and Beyond Zero Emissions.
3. The three principal yardsticks that the Socialist Alliance includes in an acceptable alternative energy proposal are:
 - i. Do the measures it proposes recognise the urgency of the climate crisis, and the need to reduce atmospheric concentrations of carbon dioxide to 300-325 parts per million as quickly as possible?
 - ii. Does it guarantee and maintain employment, living standards and retraining for affected workers and communities?
 - iii. Is the economic burden of developing national sustainable energy infrastructure shared equitably?
4. The Socialist Alliance proposes that its energy policy form part of the campaign by climate change scientists, local climate change groups, climate campaign organisations, environmental organisations, trade unions, local councils and community groups to develop an energy policy adequate to the challenge of global warming. The key goal is to develop an integrated alternative energy policy that is broadly understood and supported by working people and the wider community.
5. A primary purpose of its energy policy is to strengthen the broad climate change movement. In particular, the Alliance commits itself towards encouraging the trade union movement to support and adopt adequate climate change and alternative energy plans.
6. The core objective is to phase out carbon-intensive energy production as quickly as possible (such as a target of 100% electricity supply from renewables in 10 years). This will not be achieved by even the most successful examples of market-based mechanisms (such as Germany's feed-in tariff mechanisms for solar energy). The Socialist Alliance therefore calls for the establishment of an energy sustainability transition plan and a national Sustainable Energy Authority to oversee its implementation.
 - This authority would: Control and coordinate all energy production, including existing state and private generators, distribution networks and retail energy outlets, and to replace the National Electricity Market;
 - Have the power to establish wholesale and retail energy tariffs, along with generous feed-in tariffs for all users;
 - Oversee a properly funded crash program of phasing out coal-produced electricity. It would—in collaboration with energy scientists, energy workers and their unions, local

- government and climate campaign groups—decide the best mix of sustainable and renewable energy technologies;
- Develop a plan for the decentralisation of sustainable energy production, after discussion with the same groups and on the basis of trial projects;
 - Implement carbon audits throughout industry, and impose sanctions for cases of failure to implement world's-lowest-emissions technology;
 - Oversee a plan for the conversion to sustainability or closing down of the most energy-intensive and polluting industries (coal, aluminium, cement etc), with workers retrained on full pay, and alternative industries established, especially in rural and regional areas;
 - Encourage R and D of innovative proposals to develop renewable energy, and to ensure that scientific and industrial work in renewable energy is not forced offshore but developed to potential in Australia;
 - Oversee a crash program of energy efficiency and demand reduction, in particular extending the work already done by the National Framework for Energy Efficiency in the domestic and commercial sectors to industry, with binding targets set for demand reduction and building stock energy efficiency refits;
 - Oversee the removal of subsidies for fossil fuels and energy wastage.

Financing energy sustainability

7. The Socialist Alliance, in line with the “polluter pays” principle and in order to defend the living standards of working people and people on welfare, adopts the following approach to financing the transition to energy sustainability:

- A shift in budget priorities away from war (“defence”) expenditure, and subsidies to polluting industries;
- A sharp increase in taxation of polluting industries if they do not meet pollution reduction targets;
- A general increase in tax rates on the wealthy and in company tax rates (see 2004 election manifesto).

8. The Socialist Alliance rejects carbon trading and the “cap-and-trade” model as they are incapable of reducing carbon emission levels adequately, socially inequitable within countries and between the First and Third Worlds, and open to massive abuses.

Projections

9. The National Environment Committee shall investigate, via a discussion involving all interested members and carried in Alliance Voices and on our wiki site, whether the Socialist Alliance should support a carbon tax and, if so, to propose a specific formula for consideration by the incoming National Executive.

10. The National Environment Committee shall adopt the same approach in developing a draft Socialist Alliance position on carbon rationing, for consideration by the incoming National Executive.

11. The National Environment Committee shall further develop and refine the policy points adopted in this statement, with a view to the incoming National Executive adopting a comprehensive energy policy, especially in the light of the forthcoming Canberra Climate Change Summit.