

Copenhagen and the road to a safe climate

Copenhagen didn't give us a fair, ambitious and binding treaty that would guarantee a safe climate for all.

So what did it Copenhagen give us, An accord that would see the world proceed further down the road of dangerous climate change by adopting a 2 degree of temperature rise. The "accord" has no 2020 targets; no 2050 targets; nothing binding to anyone and the majority of nations refused to sign up to it.

Does the failure of world leaders to reach an agreement mean it's time to give up and bathe in the glow from our Plasma Screen TVs as we watch episodes of Survivor based on heavenly pacific islands soon to go under ?

No, absolutely not, switch off the TV and switch onto what is really going on.

Governments understand what they have to do to sort out climate change, they know because the scientists have told them. The governments of the rich world just demonstrated in Copenhagen that they don't feel strong enough to face up to the fossil fuel lobbies back home. The debacle of these negotiations has merely confirmed that the rich world leaders are still in the throes of finding their backbones and that they will need more help from the public if they are to negotiate a real deal.

There were highlights from the conference that make me optimistic that we will get a real, fair, ambitious and binding treaty in the near future.

The first cause for optimism is that a real, science-based target for stopping climate change is finally getting traction on the international stage. 112 countries called for warming to be limited to 1.5 degrees and carbon dioxide levels in the atmosphere to be returned below 350 parts per million. That was the vast majority of the countries at Copenhagen, and the fact that Australia didn't sign onto this only makes me feel a sense of shame and embarrassment, but make no mistakes, the call for a safe climate treaty is clearly on the table, backed by the majority of countries and the international scientific consensus and it won't be left unattended in future negotiations.

Yet it is the emergence of a people's movement that is a major cause of optimism. The 350 call for a safe climate was driven home by a growing citizens' movement across the world, of which MASG and others in Australia were a part of. Gathering in the streets with ice and humour, holding candlelight vigils, making phone calls and signing petitions, millions of people across the world read the science and echoed it firmly back to their governments. If we can't get atmospheric carbon dioxide levels below 350ppm we threaten our very civilisation. This people's movement has grown so big and so loud that we nearly forced world leaders to take REAL action. As the concern and the climate justice movement builds we will have world leaders lining up to sign up to a real deal within four or five years, a deal that has social justice and ecological sustainability as a centrepiece will never be separated again

My final reason for optimism is that the call for renewable energy is clear, the solutions exist to climate change and people are getting on with it despite the lack of political leadership. This year MASG had 200 people sign up to install Solar PV on their rooves, and next year we will see even more solar panels, solar thermal electricity plants, solar hot water units, wind turbines, wave generators and the like installed across the globe. A recent report by HSBC said that revenues for climate change related businesses are booming. In 2008, they grew 75% to \$530 billion, and that was during the Global Financial Crisis that saw the global

economy contract. By 2020, these revenues are predicted to be as much as \$2 trillion. In the business world, entrepreneurs realise there is money to be made from investing in climate change solutions, and if we get the Australian Government to help this shift, instead of subsidizing fossil fuels to the tune of \$10B per year, then we will be seeing that investment and those jobs in our communities too.

So next year, post Copenhagen, and in the heat of two elections, will be the year that the call for real action on climate change, 100% renewable energy and a safe climate for all will become unstoppable.