

CLIMATE
EMERGENCY
NETWORK

There is no doubt in my mind that this is the greatest problem confronting mankind at this time and that it has reached the level of a state of emergency. - Governor of Victoria, Professor David de Kretser, 17 July 08

27 January 2010

Invitation to the launch of the Transition Decade – February 14th

This letter has two main purposes:

- to invite your group and its members to attend the launch of the Transition Decade at Melbourne Town Hall on 14th February and
- to give you a fuller explanation of the social change strategy that lies behind the Transition Decade initiative.

The invitation

All members of your group are invited to attend the launch of the Transition Decade (T10) campaign to promote the restoration of a safe climate. A growing alliance of groups has created the foundation for a powerful collaboration of groups and individuals – working together under the banner of the Transition Decade – to push for the necessary physical rebuilding and social change to be completed by the end of the end of the decade – by 2020.

Please find attached a copy of the Transition Decade launch invitation. The invitation is open to everyone, but seats need to be booked online to make sure that people are not turned away if we have a capacity crowd. Go to the T10 website for more information on how to register: **www.t10.net.au**

We are keen for your group to also invite its whole membership and to encourage everyone to come along. The reason for making this request is explained below.

If your group has relationships with other groups engaged with the climate issue it would be great if you could pass on the invitation and this covering letter to them too.

Why it's important to get as many people as possible along to the launch

The climate movement routinely gets many thousands of people along to rallies and human sign events. These events are aimed mainly at sending a message outwards to politicians, governments, the media and the general community. The events also message inwards, allowing participants to express their personal solidarity and to see evidence of the strength of the climate movement.

We have a different reason for wanting to bring a large number of people together at the Town Hall on 14th February. We want to present a new strategic direction to the climate movement. So it would be helpful to bring as many people as possible together to consider the proposed change of direction.

If you want to email the invitation and the T10 strategy argument to your members please ask for digital copies of the documents. (Email: Philip.Sutton@green-innovations.asn.au)

The social change strategy underpinning the Transition Decade

If 2010 is to be a year of productive campaigning on climate then there is a strong case to be made that we need to face up to the shocking reality of 2009. The CPRS saga went from bad to worse and then ended with the Liberal/National Party Coalition not only firmly set against even very modest climate legislation, but gearing up to create, in Tony Abbot's words, a 'people's revolt' – driven by passionate denialists.

Internationally, the Copenhagen conference ended with no formal agreement at all. Since then the US Democrats have lost a Senate seat in a by-election, depriving them of the ability to prevent filibustering (delaying tactics) if the Republicans are united in the use of their Senate numbers. There is now a much lower chance that any climate legislation will pass through the US Senate for quite some time. So, the much hoped for US leadership on climate may have been put on hold for a while.

The rather obvious (in hind sight) reason for these terrible results is that the climate movement in virtually every country, and certainly in Australia, is simply not yet anywhere near strong enough, relative to the strength of the fossil fuel and energy-intensive industry forces.

In Australia during 2009 most of the climate movement's efforts went into lobbying and generating media actions – to send a very simple message to governments (who were not interested in listening) that they should "take strong action now".

With a deadline-driven focus on the government we didn't put enough creative effort into consciously developing a hugely stronger movement.

But what sort of movement do we want? One that is driving incremental change over the four decades up to 2050 and perhaps beyond?? Or a movement that can engage the public in pushing decisively for the restoration of a safe climate at emergency speed?

How do we choose between these options? The critical decider should be the seriousness of the climate situation now and what might be set in train in the next few years. Here is some of the current evidence:

1. The oceans have warmed so much already that 80% of the Arctic ice mass has melted and the Arctic has warmed so much as a result that the massive 3000 plus billion tonnes of carbon stored in the permafrost lands and the Arctic Ocean are beginning to be mobilised into the air. (By comparison, the burning of all fossil fuels to date, which has caused most of the current climate problem, has released "only" 340 billion tonnes of carbon.)
2. Ocean warming means that two crucial glacial fields in the West Antarctic (Pine Island and Thwaites) are passing their tipping points and are likely to produce 0.25 m to 0.50 m of sea level rise between them by 2100.
<http://climatecoded.blogspot.com/2010/01/pine-island-glacier-loss-must-force.html>
3. Within 10 years ocean warming is likely to cause bleaching of the Great Barrier Reef every year. Reef recovery however takes about 10 years after each bleaching event. So the loss of about 70-80% of the reef would be locked in by about 2020 if the ocean is not cooled before then.

It is clear that we are already in the time of dangerous climate change and the action option to go for is to restore a safe climate at emergency speed. That is certainly the rationale behind the Transition Decade initiative.

But calling for a rebuilding of the economy in 10 years to cut emissions to zero and to create the capacity to draw down several hundred billion tonnes of carbon as soon as possible is a massive ‘ask’ - both of the political system and of the community.

To pull off a ‘stunt’ like this will require a massively stronger climate movement. It will also be essential that this growth in the climate movement does not create an equal and opposite mobilisation of denialist forces. And all of this social change has to occur in an incredibly short time.

These requirements have led the alliance of groups that has developed the Transition Decade initiative to realise that a huge effort needs to be put into movement building and into growing the movement’s capacity for sophisticated strategy development – in a context where what needs to be done is unprecedented – and where the terrain is uncharted.

Given what needs to be done to restore a safe climate, the conventional strategy of taking an “ask” straight to government will not work. State and Federal Governments know that the public does not currently support a push for a safe climate at emergency speed. So we need a movement that is big enough not just to reach a thousand or so politicians, but one that is big enough to engage 22 million Australians in serious discussion and action.

It is obvious that no one group can tackle this task successfully by itself. Instead, it will take the concerted effort of a whole host of groups and a vast number of people working cooperatively, while maintaining the coherence of their combined effort through a shared plan.

But how is this to happen? It is unlikely to occur without deliberate effort.

This realisation has led to the idea of the Transition Decade for a safe climate as a multi-group campaign linking partner groups and individuals who support 5 key sign-on principles:

1. to hold a vision for a sustainable world
2. to recognise the climate emergency situation
3. to want to restore a safe climate
4. to grasp the needed scale of the social and structural transition
5. to want to complete the structural change in the next 10 years.

Perhaps surprisingly, the initial groups developing the Transition Decade framework are finding that working on the restoration of a safe climate at emergency speed is invigorating and inspiring rather than depressing, despite the big gap between the present state of affairs and our goal. This seems to be because our goal is intrinsically desirable (restoration of a safe climate) and it is exciting to be working on the creation of strategies that have a real chance of being effective, despite the enormity of what we are taking on. This positive feeling derives not from wishful thinking, but from the opposite, a rock solid commitment to facing reality, no matter how bad (and it is

bad!) while adopting the optimist stance of aiming for a desirable future, not just one that is a little less disastrous.

We feel that participation in the 2010 launch of the Transition Decade offers groups a chance to kick off the year with a positive feeling, underpinned by a sense that we have a strategy that can actually work.

That is one of the reasons that you might want to maximise the number of your group's members who come to the launch. The other reason for organising a big attendance is that if your group at any stage wants to consider adopting the Transition Decade framework, then the greater the number of members experiencing the launch, the more people in your group will have a good understanding of the contending strategies, thus making for a more informed discussion.

We look forward to seeing members of your group at the Transition Decade launch on 14th February at the Melbourne Town Hall. For more details see the attached invitation.

Yours sincerely,



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It's time to restore a safe climate.

*The T10 Guiding team organisations are:
Sustainable Living Foundation, Beyond Zero Emissions, Friends of the Earth and the Climate
Emergency Network.*