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Regions To Bear Brunt Of Feel-Good Emissions Target

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Earlier this year, Prime Minister Scott Morrison said that Australia would “not achieve net zero [emissions] in the cafes, dinner parties and wine bars of our inner cities”,

Rather, “it will be won in places like the Pilbara, the Hunter, Gladstone, Portland, Whyalla, Bell Bay, the Riverina. In the factories of our regional towns and outer suburbs,” Morrison said at the Business Council of Australia event.

But for the people who live and work in these regions, a net zero target is far from a “win”.

A net zero emissions target is a policy designed by inner-city elites, and it only serves their narrow interests.

These elites insist that Australia needs to drastically reduce its carbon emissions, even though we only account for about 1.1 per cent of global emissions. To put that in perspective, every 16 days China emits the same amount of carbon emissions that Australia does in an entire year.

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Reducing Australia’s emissions to zero will have no discernible impact on global emissions. But it certainly makes the inner-city elites feel like they’re being responsible global citizens. For Australians in the outer suburbs and regions however, the cost couldn’t be greater.

Research by the Institute of Public Affairs published earlier this year estimated that a net zero emissions target would place up to 653,000 jobs at risk. And, no surprises, these at-risk jobs are overwhelmingly concentrated in regional areas. Some regional electorates could see as many as one in four jobs placed at direct risk, and this doesn’t account for the flow-on effects of mass job destruction.



The experience of the loss of Australia's car manufacturing industry demonstrates the point. A survey by the Australian Manufacturing Workers' Union found that two years after Holden's Elizabeth plant closed 24 per cent of laid-off workers remained unemployed, and two-thirds of those who found a job were in part-time, casual, or contract employment. Only 5 per cent of the workers had a new job that had the same or better working conditions.

We know from the experience to date that Australia has reduced its emissions at a great cost to those living in the regions. As National members of parliament Barnaby Joyce and Matt Canavan wrote in a newspaper article in February, "the emissions from people living in cities have gone up during the past 30 years, but their moral guilt has been eased by sending the bill to the bush".

The mechanism for this was a clause in the Kyoto agreement that allowed Australia to claim a carbon credit if we cleared less land each year than the 688,000ha cleared in 1990. As Joyce and Canavan explained, this "led to state governments imposing ever tightening restrictions on land clearing.

Now Australia clears just 50,000ha of land a year. This is not enough to keep our farming land at a constant amount, let alone develop new areas. In fact, if we had not stripped the right from farmers to develop their own land, Australia's emissions would have gone up, not down, in the past 30 years."

The adoption of a net zero emissions target would do exactly the same thing: allow inner-city types to feel good about their so-called "action on climate change", which does not extend beyond putting Australians living in the regions out of work.

When those working in relatively higher-emitting industries raise concerns about their job security, they are told that the new wave of "green jobs" will ensure that they can continue to work and provide for their family. But these promises ring hollow. IPA research has identified that for each renewable activity job created since 2010, five manufacturing jobs have been destroyed.

The NSW Electricity Infrastructure Roadmap details how the Berejiklian government plans to force expensive and unreliable renewable energy onto households and businesses.

Under the roadmap, the government will establish five renewable energy zones over the next decade and "support an expected 6300 construction jobs and 2800 ongoing jobs mostly in regional NSW".

In other words, the NSW government's plan admits that only 900 jobs would be created each year, with the vast majority of these being temporary.

Where the 107,000 people employed in agriculture and mining across the state are supposed to work if their jobs are destroyed as a result of the emissions reduction effort is not made clear.



Perhaps that's because to the inner-city elites, some jobs are more important than others.

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