



Three ways to king hit the country

Adrian Glamorgan October 17th, 2007

Three actions show us what John Howard and the Coalition really think of climate change, water and the environment generally.

The first is the supposed 'king-hit' start to the campaign, the Liberal signature of \$34 billion worth of tax cuts. In its current form, the cuts could easily fuel inflation and non-investing consumerism. Another option, if the Coalition really did recognise the quantum shift we need to go through thanks to climate change, would have been to spend the \$34 billion on environmental infrastructure creating an economic and environmental force for the new century.

Imagine \$34 billion worth of incentives for photovoltaic cells (with which we could sell back electricity to the market, making us good eco-entrepreneurs), rainwater tanks (saving dams from being built and water shipped hundreds of kilometres), retrofitting insulation and sunshades (saving coal and nuclear power stations being constructed), greywater systems and public transport community behaviour programs (avoiding freeways and gridlock), and the rich bag of good deeds that could be done to act on our national needs around water, energy and global climate - which would also benefit our hip-pocket.

\$34 billion, and you could do a lot to restructure houses, streets, towns, cities and waterways – an opportunity lost in the burst open bank vault spilling out to tempt us. (I guess it worked in '77.)

The second effort by the Coalition, announced earlier this year to demonstrate their newfound concern about climate change, is replacing incandescent lights with compact fluorescents over the next three years. But there's a problem. Every compact fluorescent we buy in good faith has enough mercury on its own to damage, if left in ordinary landfills, 30,000 litres of groundwater per globe. Unless the fluorescent is properly recycled – if you live in a place that provides for it, and you know how serious the problem – we can expect some extensive contamination of our groundwater from waste leaching.

It shows how little we all know about technological solutions and the environment. Unless we get into sustainable development, instead of growth, we're likely to make more of these crucial mistakes, because we are thinking of simple solutions (line management) instead of system solutions (multiple consequences),

The third tell-tale about the Coalition is the influential Australian Conservation Foundation (ACF) has just announced that it is running an [election scorecard](#).

The scorecard is online and there will be room over the election period to adjust the scorecard for policy announcements, giving the non-government organisation more influence on the debate than in the past, and the voter a clearer picture.

Week 1, and the percentage scores indicate environmental credentials in the following order: Greens (93%), Democrats (90%), Labor (49%), Family First,(31%), and running last with a dose what must be the equivalent of environmental equine virus is Liberal and National (21%). They have a lot of ground to catch up.

Which brings us back to \$34 billion. You could free a lot of pork-barrelling for public transport, battery chickens, labelling, Burrup Peninsula, windfarming, solar power development, rural amelioration, forests and pulp mills, overseas development for the environment and climate change. Now all gone, in fortnightly payslips – mostly to the well off - and no plan to stop runaway inflation.

Now I get why the media's been calling it a king hit.