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[Guy Pearse](#)

### **'Something Big' behind Queensland's ClimateSmart spin**

As with most things that sound too good to be true, so too is Queensland's claim to being the Solar State and being 'ClimateSmart'...

When we hear government say it aims to cut the carbon footprint of Queenslanders by one third, it sounds to most people as if Queensland's carbon footprint is being slashed by a third. Some Bligh Government ministers, including the Climate Change Minister, even seem to believe that.

Yet, as ever, the devil is in the detail.

The target actually applies to the emissions of Queensland households, which are only 16 per cent of the state's emissions total - so we're really talking about cutting less than one-sixth of our emissions by one-third. Factor in the growth projected by 2020 – the year to which the Government's emissions target applies and it soon becomes hard to argue that Queensland is "doing the bright thing". By 2020, its emissions are still much higher than today. And by 2050, without any major policy shift they are expected to grow by over 30 per cent.

That's before we factor in the emissions generated by Queensland growing coal exports. To truly grasp the enormity of the carbon in our coal exports, consider that the 167.9 million metric tonnes we export annually generates 453 million tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> - more than two-and-a-half times as much greenhouse pollution as is generated in Queensland. Those ships carrying Queensland coal abroad might carry up to 250,000 tonnes of coal. Once burnt, that coal has roughly the same annual CO<sub>2</sub> impact as 160,000 cars. If we take ships carrying 80,000 tonnes as the average, one leaves a Queensland coal port about every four hours.

Those trains you see heading for the port - extending for well over one kilometre - routinely pull 100 wagons at a time - each wagon contains around 100 tonnes of coal, or 270 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub>. If we take this as an average, over 16,700 trains arrive at our ports each year - 46 a day, one every 32 minutes. Break it down further, and Queensland exports over five tonnes of coal a second, 100 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> every seven seconds. Put another way, we export the annual emissions of the average Queensland household every second.

The pace at which coal exports are growing is equally daunting, with another million tonnes or roughly 15 new shiploads every month. At the rate our coal exports are increasing,

Queensland is effectively adding a large new coal-fired power station or steel mill about every six weeks. This all helps to put into proper perspective 'ClimateSmart' campaigns, and the talk of doing the bright thing, turning Queensland into the Solar State etc.

So, for example, if we imagine all the effort involved in 420 'solar kindies' around the state installing solar power - the time, the cost, the labour, the paperwork, the young hearts and souls inspired by the projects. All of the greenhouse pollution cut is added back by just three-and-a-half more wagons of coal; imagine the excitement and passion of kids and staff at over 750 schools across the state installing solar energy and energy efficient lighting thanks to the 'Solar Schools' program - how would the kids feel knowing their CO<sub>2</sub> saving is wiped out by less than a trainload of coal.

Then there's the 'Solar University of Queensland' – the biggest rooftop solar array in Australia – the CO<sub>2</sub> saved annually is erased by six-and-a-half more wagons of coal. As for what is billed as 'the largest solar thermal project in the southern hemisphere' – being tacked onto the coal-fired power station at Kogan Creek it's expected to save enough electricity to power 5,000 homes – a saving that is wiped out by four trainloads of coal - something that currently happens every two hours.

Let's add in all the others incentives for solar hot water, solar grants to sports and community associations, a Solar Cararra Stadium, and even solar panels at Queensland Rail. If it tallies up to a 500 MW 'virtual solar power station', doubling Queensland's use of solar energy might eventually save nearly a million tonnes of coal annually. And it sounds great until you realise that we are increasing coal exports by more than a million tonnes every single month.

As for the Government offsetting its official travel for a year – that CO<sub>2</sub> saving is erased by just over one trainload of coal – it's roughly equivalent to pausing the state's coal exports for 37 minutes; giving out a million energy-efficient light-bulbs – erased by three trainloads of coal. Just imagine the effort in distributing a million light bulbs; it's the equivalent of pausing our coal exports for 90 minutes. As for what it took 74,000 Queenslanders a year to achieve by signing up to the Bligh Government's low carbon diet – the CO<sub>2</sub> saved is packed back by increasing coal exports in about two weeks. The CO<sub>2</sub> saved by 260,000 Queenslanders using the ClimateSmart Home Service erased in seven-and-a-half weeks by increasing coal exports.

If the Government succeeds in cutting the carbon footprint of Queensland households by one-third by 2020 – it will save 10.1 million tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> a year, but keep this in mind: Queensland currently exports that much CO<sub>2</sub> in its coal every eight-and-a-half days. And, at the rate those exports are growing, it takes less than 100 days for new coal exports to erase what will take Queenslanders over a decade to cut their carbon footprint by a third. Put another way, one new 12-million-tonne-a-year coal mine in central Queensland will on its own produce three times as much CO<sub>2</sub> as all the ClimateSmart householder emissions savings by 2020 put together.

It's no coincidence the QR National campaign refers to its coal export business as 'Something Big'.

*[Guy Pearse](#) is an author and a Research Fellow at the Global Change Institute at the University of Queensland.*

