John Howard and Peter Costello have promised the nation’s wealth will be spent on $34 billion of tax cuts over the next three years. This brings the total cost of tax cuts announced in the last three years to $100 billion. Kevin Rudd soon followed along, with $31 billion in tax cuts, adding only a pitance for education.

The Greens have a better plan.

The Greens do not support these tax cuts. Instead the $34 billion should go to schools, hospitals, climate change and the poor. Australia needs to have real action on climate change, water, infrastructure and services, not another round of pre-election bribes.

Senator Bob Brown said at The Greens campaign launch, that Treasurer Costello’s self-described ‘radical’ $34 billion tax cuts (emulated 91.5% by Labor) left The Greens as the real economic conservatives. “Besides climate change solutions, we would put those billions into schools, hospitals, and housing,” Senator Brown said.

John Howard and Kevin Rudd have blown their economic credibility. They have both thrown out massive tax cuts as election incentives, hoping to buy votes from people cash-strapped with high mortgages. Yet their actions will likely lead to higher interest rates and increased prices on basic goods and services.

Surveys and polls around the country have consistently shown that what people really want is more government spending on public services. Australians are both smart and caring: we want taxes spent as efficiently as possible and for the benefit of as many people as possible. Over the term of the Howard government, the gap between rich and poor has widened. Australia is no longer an egalitarian country where everyone is given a ‘fair go’.

The Greens have been calling for an increase in the aged pension of $60 per fortnight, which has been costed at $3 billion per year. Despite the fact that this is less than half the cost of next year’s tax cuts, the Government and Labor have dismissed such a call as unaffordable.

Meanwhile both Labor and Liberal politicians voted to increase their own pay well above their needs – the PM received a $21,000 payrise!

The gap between rich and poor in Australia is growing. One in ten Australians struggle to make ends meet. We need funding for public hospitals, schools and affordable housing, not election sweeteners aimed at marginal seats.

Last year Nicholas Stern estimated that it would cost developed countries just one per cent of GDP to tackle climate change. In Australia one per cent of GDP is around $10 billion per year, which is the average annual cost of the tax cuts announced this week.

Unlike the Coalition and Labor, The Greens are committed to:
• A guaranteed price for renewable energy.
• A target of 80% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions by 2050.
• A target of 30% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions by 2020.
• A target of 25% renewable energy by 2020.
• A target of 20% renewable energy by 2017.
• A $3 billion Sun Fund for renewable energy research and development.
• A nationwide program (EASI) to retrofit all 7.4 million households with solar hot water and insulation over the next two decades.
• A guaranteed price for renewable energy similar to Germany’s scheme, that will stimulate solar, wind and other renewable energy production.
• A redirection of transport policy from tollways to fast, efficient and cheap public transport across the nation.

What’s with the Senate?

by James Diack

Why are Greens everywhere always talking about the senate? The Senate plays an important role in the Australian Parliament. It is where government proposals are reviewed to make sure they are good laws.

In the past, Australians have elected a Senate that the Government does not control. For the first nine years of the Howard Government, the Opposition and minor parties controlled the Senate. They could block the Government’s worst new laws, and make changes to others to improve them.

That all changed in 2004 when the Coalition gained control of both the Senate and the Lower House.

Since then, they have been able to pass any laws they wanted, such as: VSU, the anti student organisation laws that have stripped services from universities; sedition laws, which seriously curtail civil liberties and let the police lock you up for two weeks without reason; and, of course, WorkChoices.

In this election, Labor might win the most seats in the Lower House and become the Government. But it’s almost impossible for Labor to gain control of the Senate by itself.

With so many Coalition Senators elected last time in Queensland and Victoria, and with these people not up for re-election this time, it is really only The Greens who can rescue the Senate from Coalition control.

Rescuing the Senate is important. If Labor has to get the Coalition to agree to any of its new laws they won’t be able to change much of WorkChoices, or the other terrible legacies of the Howard years. The only way to change WorkChoices is to get more Greens Senators elected.

This time around the big ballot paper is more important than ever.

Don’t waste your vote on a major party candidate, and make sure the Senate is returned to the people.
Why is Housing so Expensive?

by Sylvia Hale
Greens NSW MP

Housing costs are rising. A house costs seven times the average income. To afford this, some people are mortgaging themselves to the hilt for periods of 30 years, while others have less to spend on life’s essentials after paying a large chunk of their income in rent.

This is no accident – it’s a direct outcome of the major parties’ policies and tax settings. Both Labor and Liberal have adopted the ‘leave it to the market’ approach, which has only increased housing problems.

Question: Why would ‘the market’ – that is, investors out to make money – have any interest in housing poor people? Answer: They don’t. That’s why it’s governments who must provide affordable housing. However, both major parties have slashed the budget for public housing over the last 15 years, and as a result there simply isn’t enough public housing now.

Many people, who have been renting for a long time but want to buy a home, are being priced out by property speculators. Investors now buy more houses than first homeowners.

So why is housing so expensive?
• Australia’s tax laws encourage investment in housing as a commodity, rather than buying housing to have a secure place to live.
• Lower interest rates and low documentation loans allow people to mortgage themselves into oblivion.
• There is less social housing so low-income people are concentrated in the private rental sector.

The Coalition and Labor have both said that a solution is to give people more money by tax cuts or by increasing the First Home Owners’ Grant.

The problem is, if you add more money then houses get more expensive. And of course, the amounts people can save via rebates, or the amounts they receive via tax cuts, can never match large additional expenditures like those necessitated by the increase in house prices.

More than 267,000 low-income households in NSW live in housing stress and pay more than 30% of their income on housing costs. The escalating costs of renting or buying a home when coupled with the decreasing availability of social housing results in growing numbers of people experiencing housing-related poverty, inappropriate housing, or homelessness.

The waiting list for public housing is 70,000. Yet, despite the demand for secure and affordable housing, the NSW Department of Housing has been building fewer homes and has made it even harder to be eligible for public housing.

Private renters have no security of tenure and rents are predict ed to rise. Boarders and lodgers still have no tenancy rights at all, leaving then with no protection against eviction. Boarding houses are disappearing.

Home ownership – particularly for younger people – is diminishing as house prices move out of reach of the average person.

Homelessness is more and more common. The serious shortage of crisis accommodation and longer-term housing with adequate support to prevent eviction leaves many vulnerable people – the mentally ill, the young, and the unemployed – living on the streets, in squats, or in car parks.

Residential parks have provided a source of affordable housing for many low-income and elderly people. Yet many people are being forced out as developers re zone and redevelop the land for more expensive housing.

The Greens Housing Policy includes commitments to:
• an additional $900m over three years for social housing;
• legislation to create tenancy rights for boarders and lodgers to prevent eviction;
• adequate funding for emergency, youth and refuge accommodation and long-term, supported accommodation for those who have high needs;
• legislation to require at least 10% affordable housing in all new developments;
• support for limited equity housing co-operatives, multiple occupancy and other low cost housing options; and
• increased protection of residential parks to stop the land being sold for redevelopment.

The Greens believe that housing is not like investing in the stock market. Adequate, safe, affordable housing should be a right, not a privilege.

Tax cuts, tax cuts, tax cuts – it’s a get-rich-quick scheme. Of course, our political masters keep telling us it’s all about greed. Kevin Rudd has dutifully followed John Howard to raid the national piggy bank to dole out the biggest election-time tax cut – over $30 Billion each – since the Roman Empire, or so it appears, inviting the ire of both economic commentators (who say the big cuts put upward pressure on interest rates) and advocates across the country.

Why? Because, the mainstream pollies figure, greed sells. Political wisdom says we vote with our hip pockets, and, despite what we might tell pollsters and our mates around the BBQ (increasingly that Australians want services instead of tax cuts), we all love a cheeky short-term gain.

What a shortsighted, unimaginative and irrational bunch Rudd and Howard seem to think we are. They are banking on old-fashioned myopic greed in the form of 20 bucks a week. And it’s not even 20 bucks a week! Rudd’s $992-a-week is a $20-a-week in four years’ time (and if the economic times allow).

That isn’t going to buy a lot of cav iers and champers when the time comes, nor – more importantly – the skills and services that home owners, families, communities and a thriving nation require right now and into the future.

Instead of this puny attempt at electoral bribery, what we really need in this election campaign is some more productive, genuinely high-octane greed to make us all feel truly excited on election night – greed that’ll actually amount to something. How about this for starters: Easy now, don’t cry extravagant appetite and economic irresponsibility, that will only cost $2.5 billion (the $20 a week is costing $11bn a year, don’t forget). And how good would it be? You and your kids can again forget about HECS debts, upfront fees, and start thinking about getting that degree – and getting on with life!

You want more outrageous productive greed with real, ongoing results? What about new trains, new rail lines, free commuter services and a funky European-style fast interstate train service! And all this constructive, mutually beneficial greed that Rudd and Howard refuse to entertain is still cheaper than those $20 tax cuts.

Some people’s greed is in the form of a last for guaranteed bulk-bill ing GPs and free health treatment in hospitals. That sounds pretty good, doesn’t it? Try and buy that with your own $20-a-week and you’ll quickly discover: But save the tax cuts and invest in the public health sector – now we’re talking!

Does this kind of mutually beneficial, win-win greed sound much more satisfying to you, your family and society in general than the short-term, small-picture greed profiered by the major parties? If so, more good news is that on polling day you can vote for a party that does offer much more: The Greens.
Due in part to how well we poll in so many city electorates it is a widely repeated mis-conception that The Greens are an inner city party only and that we have very little relevance to rural and regional electorates. Further, and most heartening, the most recent AC Nielsen poll reported the Greens receiving a healthy 9% of the primary vote in rural electorates. Higher even than our city vote! So why are The Greens attracting more and more support in the bush? Well I believe there are two main parts to it. I believe there are two main parts to it. I and many others are living proof. In the heart of National party territory I ran and was elected as a Green to Orange City Council three years ago. Across rural NSW we have thousands of committed and brave members, activists, councilors and support- ers. Further, and most heartening, the most recent AC Nielsen poll reported the Greens receiving a healthy 9% of the primary vote in rural electorates. Higher even than our city vote! So why are The Greens attracting more and more support in the bush? Well I believe there are two main parts to it. The first is that folks in rural and regional communities increasingly recognise that The Greens’ broad, considered and fair policy platform offers them a real alterna- tive to the hard-headed economic rationalism and individualism that has defined the Howard years and been characterised by lost services, increased isolation and gutted communities. Be it because of The Greens’ unwavering support for reconciliation with Aboriginal Australia, their passion for public educa- tion, staunch opposition to Howard’s rac- ial NIT intervention and Kevin Rudd’s me- taphorical broadcasting onto the same airwaves and radio waves the Greens are the alternative. The second part is that people are going Green because of climate change. While droughts and other effects of climate change are a bigger threat to people in the bush than in the cities, many country people also see the economic opportunities presented to them by renewable energy plants. Some communities have already embraced this evolution that they are perfectly placed for, and others are well on the way, for example Broken Hill residents are fighting to have a solar power plant in their concil area. These communities can be supported by policies with political courage for real action on climate change, with binding targets and with an emissions trading scheme. It was Abraham Lincoln who said soon after his election to the US Presidency that he felt “...like a hotelier too busy booking rooms and counting money at one end of his hotel to go and fight the fire burning at the other end.” This analogy referred to the US economy’s dependence on slav- ery and his task of emancipating black Americans whilst keeping the nation in union. Today in Australia we face a simi- lar conundrum. Whereas Lincoln and the US’s great challenge was to stop counting cotton money and fight the abhorrence of slavery and public corruption, Howard’s stymie the expansion of the coal industry and start building a sustainable, renewable energy industry. The Greens are calling for more EPA offices and tightening of the application process for new coalmining permits. They argue that the industry is not sustainable, that the emissions trade- ing scheme, with its carbon credits, is a massive opportunity offered by the new green economy. They must ensure Australia is not left behind.”

The Greens Climate Futures Bill 2007

The Climate Futures Bill 2007 is a land- mark piece of environmental legislation that the Greens have introduced into the NSW Parliament. It signals a turning of the tide away from coal and towards mas- sive investment in solar, wind, tidal and geothermal energy and new green manu- facturing jobs. “Politicians need to join the real world and take serious action on climate change to avoid untold environmental damage and massive economic costs,” Green NSW MP John Kaye said. “So far, Australia has failed to take real ac- tion on climate change, and remains firmly in the grip of the powerful polluting coal indus- try. Countries throughout the world are mov- ing to take advantage of the massive opportu- nities offered by the new green economy. We must ensure Australia is not left behind.”

Escalating greenhouse gas emissions caused by burning fossil fuels like coal have put Australia in a climate crisis. NSW is particularly vulnerable to climate changes like drought, flooding and ex- treme coastal storms, yet our politicians would continue to rely on outdated, pol- luting energy sources like coal. The Climate Futures Bill 2007 takes real action on Australia’s largest single source of greenhouse gas emissions, coal. The coal industry is now unsustainable. In the past 10 years, employment in the coal indus- try has fallen while the price of coal has skyrocketed. More coal is being ex- ported, but less local jobs are being cre- ated, destroying the fabric of coal com- munities. The NSW Labor Government is rapidly expanding the mining, burn- ing and exporting of coal, yet failing to capitalise on the enormous employment potential of renewable energy, energy ef- ficiency and public transport. The Bill will bring Australia alongside the rest of the world and demonstrate our commitment to a low-carbon economy. It will prohibit the expansion of the coal in- dustry and fast track the development of a renewable energy industry. It will ensure that workers and communities affected by a declining coal industry will have access to retraining, employment and financial assistance. The Greens want to stop the expansion of the greedy coal industry and start build- ing a better climate future with new jobs in clean, sustainable energy industries to leave a sustainable economy and a healthy planet for our children. The Greens seek support from the Australian voters and like-minded organisations to help get the Bill passed into law.
Meet the Greens Candidates

From Dubbo to Double Bay, from Drummoyne to Deniliquen, Greens are standing as candidates in all 49 NSW electorates.

The seat of Farrer runs along the Murray River border with Victoria all the way up to Broken Hill. Darran Stonehouse, an Albury youth worker, has been speaking on local radio stations about the impact of the drought on farming communities and the need to move to more sustainable food production.

Up on the far north coast, Giovanni Ebono (candidate for Richmond) has hosted a forum at the Byron Bay Community Centre titled Pathways to a Low Carbon Future. Giovanni is working hard to make growing and eating local food a priority in Northern NSW. This will reduce carbon emissions and create more local employment.

In Parramatta, Astrid O’Neill, an education union official, is working hard with local teachers to repeal WorkChoices. She is part of the local Your Rights @ Work campaign. Astrid will continue to campaign for fairer workplace conditions through to the election and beyond.

Jenny Leong, in Sydney, is building on her success in 2004. Strongly supporting the rights of same sex couples to marry, she spoke at a recent forum, challenging the major parties to end discriminatory laws. The Sydney campaign has been inundated with volunteers keen to help The Greens on polling day, with letterboxing and attending forums and events.

Lizza Gebiligan, running for The Greens in Prospect in Western Sydney, has recently been interviewed on SBS Filipino radio. As a young Green, Lizza is concerned about the long term impacts of climate change on her generation.

Greens candidate for Robertson, Mira Wroblewski, hosted an event for local African refugees with Greens MP Sylvia Hale. She outlined The Greens support for multiculturalism and for refugees. Mira and Scott Rickard (Greens candidate for Dobell) have also been working to stop the effects of coal mining on their local environment.

The Gilmore electorate stretches from Kiama to Bateman’s Bay and Greens candidate, Ben Van der Wijngaart is meeting his community on his electric bike. After letterboxing 30,000 copies of GreenVoice, Ben is attending a wide variety of community forums. An active church goer, Ben is passionate about social justice in his area.

Bob Brown came to Coogee Beach to launch the campaign of Sue Mahony, Greens candidate for Kingsford Smith. Sue is a marathon runner and has competed in the Maroubra Fun Run, complete with No Pulp Mill signs and a racing challenge to sitting member, Peter Garrett.

Look out for your local Greens candidate – find out all about them at www.greens.org.au.

The Weather in 2050

From left to right: Greens candidates Mira Wroblewski, Astrid O’Neill, Giovanni Ebono, Sue Mahony (with Senators Bob Brown and Kerry Nettle), and Ben Van der Wijngaart.
Save the Endangered Woodlands of the Cumberland Plain

by Suzie Wright

The last bushland in the Sydney basin is under threat from development. Once this unique area is bulldozed, there will be no more wild places for future generations of people and animals to enjoy.

Western Sydney’s bushland is at crisis point due to the neglect at all levels of government. The bushland and grassland of the Cumberland Plain has been plundered for economic gain and today there are few viable remnants of it left in Western Sydney.

The Greens are supporting the campaign of the Western Sydney Conservation Alliance, an alliance of Western Sydney residents and conservation groups, to create a 10,000 hectare corridor across parts of Western Sydney called the Cumberland Conservation Corridor (CCC).

The CCC stretches for 30km from the Nepean River at Mulgoa through to Agnes Banks and Windsor and will protect some of the last great bushland remnants together with hundreds of rare and vulnerable flora and fauna species. The CCC can be seen as a last line of defence for some of the endangered plants and animals that it will protect. It is therefore crucial that we ensure there is management off limits to further development.

The aim of the CCC is to get ownership of all the large remnants transferred to the NSW Government so that we have a network of Nature Reserves dotted across Western Sydney. The CCC is almost ready to go but there are some missing links.

Donors from Labor parties over the past eight years, with Labor alone receiving $120,650 from Transfield and Veolia/Collex, have revealed that the two major potential bidders for the sale, Transfield and Veolia/Collex, were generous donors to Labor’s re-election campaign.

Hundreds of thousands of dollars from these companies has been donated to both major parties over the past eight years, with Labor alone receiving $278,996 from Transfield and $120,650 from Veolia/Collex. Lee Rhiannon has called for both companies to be immediately ruled out of the bidding as not to corrupt government process for an already dodgy policy decision.

Handing over Sydney ferries to the private sector would undoubtedly result in staffing cutbacks that would compromise safety and leave the less popular routes to wither and die.

History shows the touted ‘increases in productivity’ that privatisation brings are usually gained through reducing the quality of services, loosening environmental controls, maintenance and safety, and cutting jobs, wages and conditions.

The Greens ask: how can this possibly be considered ‘productive’?

Instead, the Greens believe public assets and services should be held in trust for future generations, not sold for short-term political or financial gain.

The Sydney ferry system is an important part of Sydney’s way of life and the life of our world-famous harbour.

Privatisation of this important historical asset would be a huge loss to Sydney-siders, visitors to our city, and the Australian public.

The NSW Greens urge people to write to their local MPs and ask what they are doing about the preservation of the endangered vegetation of the Cumberland Plain.

The Greens would like the Commonwealth to use its powers to protect and enhance Australia’s environment and heritage and in particular these last remnants of the Cumberland woodlands and grasslands. The loss of Australia’s biodiversity poses an unacceptable threat to human and ecosystem health, and dramatically reduces our ability to cope with major ecological threats such as climate change.

The Greens seek the preservation of the last remnants of these beautiful woodland communities.

The NSW Greens urge people to write to their local MPs and ask what they are doing about the preservation of the endangered vegetation of the Cumberland Plain.

The CCC is the line in the sand and must be recognised and preserved for future generations.
Cutting of your TAFE to Spite the Unions – Howard’s TAFE Abuse needs Greens Action

by John Kaye
Greens NSW MP

The next time you get a haircut, have your plumbing fixed or need an x-ray, chances are the person looking after you will have been trained at a TAFE college. Australians literally are fed, clothed, housed, transported, heated, cooled, lit, entertained and kept healthy and in touch with each other by TAFE graduates.

So it might come as a surprise to hear that the Howard government has done everything within its power – and a few things that were arguably not within its power – to undermine the state-based TAFE system.

Since it came to power the Coalition has cut Commonwealth funding of TAFE in NSW by 25% in inflation adjusted terms. The consequences for TAFE students, teachers and the rest of us have been appalling.

Every year, more than 45,000 Australians are turned away because there are not enough places. The permanent teaching force is being run down and replaced with casuals.

For a government that is going to the polls on its supposed track record of economic management, this treatment of TAFE is more than strange. Allen Consulting estimated that for every dollar invested in TAFE today, the economy would be $6-40 better off over the next two decades.

In hard cold economic terms, the Howard cuts have cost the economy more than $7.6 billion. In human terms, it has denied young Australians a chance in life and it has hamstrung the future with a skills shortage.

Not content with starving TAFE of funds, the Howard government set up its own semi-privatised system of ‘Australian Technical Colleges’ (ATC), wasting $341 million that should have been spent on improving TAFE colleges. John Howard has now promised another $2 billion for 19 more ATCs. He is using your money in an attempt to undermine TAFE and destroy the teachers’ union.

And to top it all off, the Howard government threatened to withhold its’ funding of TAFE if the state governments did not offer Australian Workplace Agreements to all staff. In yet another example of funding blackmail, the Coalition took aim at teachers and their union.

Kevin Rudd’s so-called ‘education revolution’ will no doubt be a little kinder to TAFE but if the NSW state Labor government’s record of increasing fees and charges and cutting public funding is anything to go by, times will still be tough.

What TAFE needs is a new deal that secures its economic and social future. The Greens are campaigning for another $3 billion for TAFE over the next three years to undo the damage of the Howard years, to get rid of fees and charges and to restore per student funding and increase numbers.

Re-electing Kerry Nettle will make sure there is a strong voice for TAFE in the senate.

If Australia is to cope with the looming skills crisis and create opportunities for all young people, we have to put the Howard years well behind us.

The only way to do that is to vote for The Greens in the Senate.

WorkChoices and the School of Hard Knocks

by David Shoebridge
Greens Senate candidate

Like most students when I was at University I needed to work to support myself. Studying full time allowed for a bit of casual work during term but it was in the holidays that I really saved up for the year.

Every Easter I worked during the Royal Easter Show. Over five years I graduated from picking up rubbish, to picking up cow dung and finally to working as a super-rubbish, to picking up cow dung. I worked 16 days straight for 12 or more hours a day. Why did I do it?

Apart from loving “the Show” it was because on an ordinary day after eight hours I was paid penalty rates. Every weekend paid time and a half or double time. All public holidays were time and a half or double time. Of course, if a student complains to their boss about the poor pay, they have worked though university, they can now look forward to more hard work reducing their per student funding and concentration on my studies.

I didn’t bargain with my employer for these conditions. At eighteen I don’t think I could have. I was fortunate to inherit my conditions from generations of active union members who had worked long and hard to get them from my employer.

WorkChoices has killed this for most of today’s students. These days few holiday jobs come with an AWA and no employer writes an AWA that gives such generous penalty rates.

And it is not just work during holidays. Many students live off part-time waiting, bar tending and other out-of-hours work that used to pay penalty rates. These jobs, with their casual workforce and low union membership, are rife with AWAs that strip away penalty rates and reduce students’ take home pay.

Of course, if a student complains to their boss about the poor pay, then they can simply be sacked. No reason is needed because most students are casual or work for smaller employers and have no unfair dismissal rights.

The end result is today’s students are spending more time working longer hours just to pay for the rent and food. And thanks to other Howard “reforms” once they have worked though university, they can now look forward to more hard work reducing their HECS debt.

The Greens believe in fair working conditions. If you are working outside of normal hours, on a public holiday or late at night you should receive decent compensation.

If elected, every Green in the Senate will work hard to restore the balance in industrial relations, not just for students, but every working person in this country.
The world saw the recent protests in Burma, led by Buddhist monks, through the eyes of Burmese bloggers who risked their lives to send eye-witness accounts to the internet. But why were the Burmese protesting? Burma is the largest country in South East Asia, with a population of 50.7 million mostly Buddhist people. But at the centre of this land there beats a heart of political darkness which has taken the country from a position of wealth to one of poverty and repression.

The regime is regarded as one of the most corrupt in the world dealing in gems and opium. It uses forced labour in its mining and development projects and has been accused of human trafficking and drug exploitation.

Burma was given its independence from Britain in 1948 and has battled to find its identity ever since, veering between democracy, socialism and military authoritarianism. Since 1962 it has been governed by a bizarre form of military socialism.

Free elections were held in 1990 and the National League for Democracy (NLD) led by Aung San Suu Kyi was elected with a 3/4 majority in the parliament. The junta quickly annulled the results and Aung San Suu Kyi was placed under house arrest, a condition she has endured for 12 of the last 18 years.

The military government, ironically named the State Peace and Development Council, has recently built a new state capital which has helped bankrupt the regime. It has commissioned a nuclear research reactor adding to nuclear proliferation concerns. This was recently followed by fuel rises of 500%.

In August, demonstrations began in protest against the price rises and economic mismanagement, these grew over the following weeks. By mid September, hundreds of thousands of Burmese were calling for democracy and an end to corruption. As the world watched via pirate internet. But why were the Burmese pro-democracy demonstrators so determined to keep public support, action on global warming must be "sexy" he says.

While the Howard government de-funded solar research, Australian technologies for solar thermal, PV and even the flowering in the Silicon Valley world of climate innovation taking off in California.

California has a renewable energy target of 20 percent by the year 2018 to help drive the replacement of coal power with solar, wind and geothermal energy. There is the Million Solar Roofs Initiative which will have 1 million solar roofs on residential and commercial buildings by 2018, and there's strong car emissions standards that aim to cut transport emissions by 30%. California has also invested $6.5 million to support a network of filling stations, building a growing fleet of cars and buses that run on hydrogen fuel.

Governor Schwarzenegger has signed an Executive Order creating the Green Build Initiative for both public and private buildings. This initiative sets goals to reduce electricity use, create more energy efficient units and to reduce the inefficient structures throughout the state.

The former body-builder has also invoked images of "pumping iron" to make his point about what is needed to make fighting climate change "hip". He says that weight-lifting was once considered a pursuit for weirdos, but with positive action and messages "it became mainstream, it became sexy, attractive, and this is exactly what has to happen with the environmental movement".

Sudanese refugees now facing more political victimisation

African refugees are suffering political victimisation as a direct result of the Minister for Immigration’s alarmist comments about Sudanese refugees, Greens Senator Kerry Nettle has found.

Senator Nettle has been visiting African communities around NSW, giving them a message of support from the broader NSW public and specifically from the Greens.

Senator Nettle met in Newcastle recently with the Hunter African Communities Council, which detailed specific concerns both about incidents of vilification and problems with settlement services for new refugees.

"I heard today that since Mr Andrews’ appalling comments about African migrants they have experienced racist taunts," she said.

These experiences reflect those of Sudanese members of the Wagga Wagga community, who met with Senator Nettle last month.

"In Wagga I was told of incidents of racial abuse by teenagers. But what was most powerful about hearing that story was the attitude the African community leaders had. They told me they were prepared to forgive the teenagers because they were young and will, with help learn the error of their ways," Senator Nettle said.

"It is a pity this is not the attitude taken by the Minister for Immigration in his response to sensationalist media reporting of the alleged misdeeds of teenage Sudanese refugees." Senator Nettle identified this as a passionate approach as the most effective way to deal with settlement problems and call for more resources to better tailor settlement services for refugees’ needs.

"Refugee communities in Wagga Wagga, Newcastle, and Sydney have all called for government to tailor settlement services, like English language programs, to suit African refugees who have not been able to attend school in Africa because there were no schools open during conflicts.”

The Greens have strongly opposed the ban on African refugees, and instead called for an increase in humanitarian refugee intake and services.

by Irene Doutney
Images of protests in Rangoon courtesy of BBC, NYtimes and Irrawaddy websites. Image of protest in Sydney by Irene Doutney.

by Kerry Nettle
Greens Senator for NSW

Free Burma

by Irene Doutney

Arnie is a big guy with big ideas and he is leading a clean energy revolution in California that may help save the world.

California has always been out in front on solar technology but more recently Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger has seen the groundswell of public opinion and is taking big steps to cut greenhouse pollution. To keep public support, action on global warming must be "sexy" he says.

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