

Australian expert moots carbon tax on extra kids

A medical expert from Australia has come up with a novel suggestion to reduce carbon dioxide emissions: impose lifelong tax on couples having more than two children, with revenues going to plant more trees in the country.

'As citizens of the world, I believe we deserve no more population concessions than those in India or China. As Australians, I believe, we need to be less arrogant,' writes Perth-based clinical associate professor of obstetric medicine, Barry Walters, in the latest issue of Medical Journal of Australia.

'Every newborn baby in Australia represents a potent source of greenhouse gas emissions for an average of 80 years, not simply by breathing, but by the profligate consumption of resources typical of our society,' he adds.

Australia's population by latest count is 21,155,212 with one birth recorded every 1 minute and 56 seconds. 'One for dad, one for mum and one for the country' was the procreation mantra of former treasurer Peter Costello.

Riding high on Australia's economic boom, a few budgets ago Costello announced a 'baby bonus'. Walters writes that 'baby bonus' should be replaced with a 'baby levy' in the form of a carbon tax in line with the 'polluter pays' principle.

Critical of the A\$4,000 baby bonus given to new parents for every baby, Walters says, 'Every family choosing to have more than a defined number of children should be charged a carbon tax that would fund the planting of enough trees to offset the carbon cost generated by a new human being.'

The average annual CO2 emission by an Australian individual is about 17 tonnes, including energy usage. He calls for parents to be charged A\$5,000 at birth for every child after their second, and an annual tax of A\$400 to A\$800 thereafter for the life of the child.

Walters writes that by the same logic, contraceptives, intrauterine devices, diaphragms, condoms and sterilisation procedures should attract carbon credits for the user and the prescriber.

Garry Egger, director of the New South Wales Centre for Health Promotion and Research, writes: 'Population remains crucial to all environmental considerations. The debate (around population control) needs to be reopened as part of a second ecological revolution.'

But, according to the Australian Associated Press, family groups maintain larger families use less energy than smaller ones and, therefore, should not be penalised.

Neena Bhandari (© IANS / India eNews)