

[Climate change, property rights and free trade](#) [1]

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The Institute of Public Affairs (in Australia) has [a report](#) [3] out looking at the issue of property rights and trade in the various goods and services that might be used to lower CO2 emissions. They point out that a number of NGOs and developing country governments (no doubt prompted by said NGOs) are arguing for two things. This first is that it should be possible to compulsorily licence CO2 reduction technologies. The price to be paid to be determined by the party wielding the compulsion of course. The second that developing countries should not need to open their economies to trade in goods from more advanced economies, that they should be allowed to keep their tariff barriers.

This is, as they point out, an extremely odd set of arguments. Assume for a moment that everything the IPCC tells us is true. We therefore want to increase the incentives for people to invent those new technologies. We most certainly also want people to be incentivised to develop the technologies that will allow developing nations to develop but without going down a carbon intensive route. So the proposal actually being put forward to encourage such is that if these inventors and innovators are successful then they can have their intellectual property taken from them?

This is an incentive?

The very same developing countries also have tariff barriers of up to 30% and non-tariff of up to 160% on the similar CO2 reducing technologies being imported. They're arguing that take-up of new technology will be higher is it's more expensive?

As the IPA points out, it's difficult to think of a series of policy positions which would make things worse. So why on earth are such things being proposed?

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