

DIPLOMATS FOR CLIMATE ACTION NOW

26th September 2021

The Hon Scott Morrison MP, Prime Minister

The Hon Barnaby Joyce MP, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Infrastructure, Transport and Regional Development

The Hon Josh Frydenberg MP, Treasurer

The Hon Sussan Ley MP, Minister for the Environment

The Hon David Littleproud MP, Minister for Agriculture and Northern Australia

Senator the Hon Bridget McKenzie, Minister for Regionalisation, Regional Communications and Regional Education, Minister for Emergency Management and National Recovery and Resilience

Senator the Hon Marise Payne, Minister for Foreign Affairs, Minister for Women

The Hon Angus Taylor MP, Minister for Energy and Emissions Reduction

Cc all other Cabinet Ministers

Cc Hon Anthony Albanese MP, Leader of the Opposition

Cc members of the Shadow Cabinet

Dear Prime Minister and Ministers

We are a group of former Australian diplomats concerned about Australia's current lack of commitment to time-bound targets to achieve rapid reductions in carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gas emissions and the implications this has for the climate and environment we bequeath to future generations. We are also concerned about what this lack of commitment means for Australia's future strategic and economic prosperity.

The recent IPCC report emphasised that the global community must work urgently to achieve the Paris Agreement objective of limiting the global average temperature rise to below 2C above pre-industrial levels. We must make rapid reductions in CO2 and other greenhouse gas emissions, if we are to prevent increased climatic extremes, catastrophic sea level rise and a dangerous rate of biodiversity loss. The challenges of climate change are matters of public importance which we believe go beyond politics; and acting on climate change now is our ethical and moral responsibility towards future generations.

As former diplomats we are deeply concerned that Australia's key strategic and economic interests are at risk because of our failure to date, to commit to a target of net zero emissions by 2050. This lack of commitment is particularly concerning to those regional partners for whom climate change already poses a clear existential threat. The United States and other key partners in Europe and

around the globe are increasingly voicing concerns that Australia is not pulling its weight on climate action. Australia's inertia on commitments undermines our credibility as a regional partner; it undermines our reliability in the minds of our strategic allies; and it will cost us dearly as trading partners seek to impose carbon tariffs on imports of our goods and services. We fear this inertia will undermine many of the strong international relationships we have built up over decades.

Actions, plans and policies are of course vitally important, but without a commitment to targets at the highest levels of government, no-one will believe that we are serious about pulling our weight on reducing emissions of CO2 and other greenhouse gases. According to a recent climate poll by the Australian Conservation Foundation, a majority of voters across Australia and a majority in all federal electorates – including where coal and gas are key economic sectors – are now demanding action on climate change. And a clear commitment by Australia to targets would be welcomed by our neighbours and partners and would encourage greater investment in renewable energy and new green industrial processes.

We know that Australia can benefit from responding more ambitiously to climate change. As we transition to a green economy, we can also support our regional partners in their transitions, to our mutual benefit. Australia has the resources to become a major clean energy exporter, and many private investors are already looking at these opportunities which can also generate enormous employment benefits, particularly for regional communities. Australia also has a proud tradition of building effective coalitions to solve regional and global problems, and we can continue that tradition if we take a pro-active approach on climate action; and in cooperation with our Indo-Pacific partners, we can build a stronger, greener, clean energy region.

The science of climate change is now incontrovertible, and numerous substantial reports have shown that it is possible to replace fossil fuels with renewable energy over the next decade. The International Energy Agency, in its report Net Zero by 2050, found that beyond projects already committed, no new investment in oil or gas fields or coal mines – or mine extensions – is required. Many of our businesses and communities have already begun the change to power our communities with clean energy. Australia has a wealth of capabilities and resources to rapidly transition our transport, energy and industrial sectors to clean energy and green hydrogen. And we have the know-how and ability to protect and restore our forests, wetlands and mangroves and preserve the beauty and bounty of our great nation for future generations, while continuing to build a prosperous future.

But time is running out for us to catch up with the rest of the world. As former diplomats, we see what is happening around the globe, and it concerns us that Australia is not at the leading edge of international action on climate change.

Therefore, we urge the Government to commit Australia to achieving net zero emissions before 2050, and to make more ambitious nationally determined contributions before 2030, in advance of the UN Climate Change Conference (COP26) in Glasgow in November. We urge all our political leaders to work together on this.

Sincerely,

Joanna Adamson	former High Commissioner to Ghana and Sierra Leone, Ambassador to Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, Liberia, Mali, Senegal and Togo
Margaret Adamson	former Consul General Berlin; Deputy High Commissioner to Papua New Guinea; Ambassador to Poland and Czech Republic; Ambassador to Cambodia; High Commissioner to Pakistan
Dr Ruth Adler	former Ambassador to Ireland; High Commissioner to Brunei Darussalam
Graham Alliband	former Ambassador to Vietnam
Zena Armstrong	former Consul-General Guangzhou, China; Assistant Secretary Environment Branch DFAT
Kamal Azmi	former Counsellor (Development Cooperation), Australian High Commission, Solomon Islands; former Director, G20 Domestic Resources Mobilisation Section, DFAT
Allan Behm	former diplomat and Head of the International Policy and Strategy Divisions, Department of Defence
Dr Lucinda Bell	former Deputy High Commissioner to Bangladesh
Brendan Berne	former Ambassador to France; Ambassador to APEC
Dr Denis Blight AO	former diplomat; Honorary Visitor ANU School of History
Dr Alison Broinowski AM FAHA	former Counsellor, Australian Mission to the UN, New York; Acting President, Australians for War Powers Reform
Richard Broinowski AO	former Ambassador to Mexico; Ambassador to Vietnam; Ambassador to the Republic of Korea
Penny Burt	former Deputy High Commissioner Singapore; former CEO Asialink
Noel Campbell	former Ambassador to Argentina; Ambassador to Spain; Ambassador to United Arab Emirates; Ambassador to (former) Yugoslavia
Alex Cassie	former Second Secretary Australian Embassy Mexico
Jocelyn Chey AM	former Consul General to Hong Kong and Macau
Nicholas Coppel CSI	former Ambassador to Myanmar
Aron Corbett	former Consul Makassar, Indonesia
Susan Cox OAM	former Ambassador to Federated States of Micronesia, Marshall Islands and Palau; Ambassador to Croatia
Bob Desiatnik	former diplomat (DFAT)
Laurie Dunn	former Counsellor, Development Cooperation, Australian High Commission, Port Moresby; former Minister-Counsellor, Development Cooperation, Australian Embassy, Hanoi
Susan Elliott	former Counsellor, Australian Permanent Mission to the United Nations, Geneva
Douglas Foscett	former High Commissioner to Bangladesh
Roger Frankel	former Ambassador to Venezuela

George Fraser	former High Commissioner to Nauru; High Commissioner to Kiribati; Ambassador to FSM, Marshall Islands and Palau
Janet Gardiner	former Ambassador to Syria; Ambassador to Portugal
Anne Giles	former diplomat (DFAT)
Susan Grace	former Ambassador to Nepal; Consul-General Chennai, India
Bruce Haigh	retired diplomat (DFAT)
Robin Hamilton-Coates	former DFAT officer
Peter Hooton	former High Commissioner to Samoa and Solomon Islands; former Deputy Permanent Representative to the UN Environment Program, Nairobi
Catherine Hurst	former Counsellor Australian High Commission, Port Moresby
Sean Kelly	former Consul-General for Southern China Guangzhou; former Consul-General for Southern India, Chennai
Evelyn Killick	former Assistant Commissioner-General Shanghai Expo; Executive Deputy Director Taipei; Second Secretary Tokyo
Dr Peter Lawrence	former First Secretary, Australian Permanent Mission to the UN Geneva
Dr David Lee	former DFAT officer and historian 1995-2019; now Associate Professor University of New South Wales
Jan Linehan	former Assistant Secretary, Deputy Legal Adviser DFAT
Sandi Logan	former Counsellor, Public Affairs Washington DC, Bonn and Port Moresby; former Assistant Secretary, Department of Immigration
Alan March	former Australian Humanitarian Coordinator AusAID
Richard Mathews	former Consul-General for eastern Indonesia, Makassar; Deputy Representative Taipei; Deputy Ambassador to Greece
Michael Mayer	former DFAT officer
Mary McCarter	former High Commissioner to Mauritius
Jackie McConnell	former First Secretary Australian High Commission New Zealand
Lyndall McLean AM	former Ambassador to Myanmar; Deputy High Commissioner to New Zealand
Heath McMichael	former DFAT officer, APEC and Multilateral Development Banks Branches
Beverly Mercer	former Ambassador to Croatia
Sharyn Minahan	former Ambassador to Denmark, Norway and Iceland; Ambassador to Argentina, Uruguay and Paraguay
Elizabeth Morris OAM	former diplomat (DFAT) posted to New Zealand and Nepal
Bill Nelson	former DFAT officer
Bronwyn Nicholas	former First Secretary, Australian Embassy, Jakarta
Susan Oliver	former First Secretary Bangkok
Estelle Parker	former Chargé d'affaires a.i. Mexico City; Deputy Ambassador to Mexico, Central America and Cuba
Anthony Pearce	former Consul General Stockholm and lead climate negotiator
Anne Plunkett	former Ambassador to Portugal; Ambassador to Ireland and the Holy See; former Deputy High Commissioner Fiji
Maria Poulos Conklin	former Chargé d'affaires Mauritius; former First Secretary France and Sri Lanka
Jacqui Rabel	former diplomat (DFAT) posted to Palestinian Territories, Solomon Islands, Iran and Bougainville
Violet Rish	former Vice Consul Makassar, Indonesia
Godfrey Santer	former First Secretary, Australian Embassy, Paris; and Director, Marketing Operations, Australian Tourist Commission

Alistair Sherwin	former DFAT officer and Humanitarian Coordinator, AusAID
Tom Sinkovits OAM	former High Commissioner to Nauru
Paul Smith	former Australian High Commissioner to Barbados and Ambassador to Suriname
Tanya Smith	former Minister-Counsellor, Australian Embassy Washington DC
Robin Taylor	former Counsellor, Australian Embassy Jakarta
John Tilemann	former diplomat (DFAT) and international civil servant; member of the Australian delegation to the Rio Earth Summit
Peter Versegi	former Ambassador for Regional Health Security and former Minister-Counsellor, Australian Mission to the United Nations New York
Stephen Waters	former High Commissioner to Vanuatu; Australia's Representative in Taipei; Consul General Mumbai, India
Paula Watt	former Director Soft Power Strategy, DFAT
Michael Wood	former Consul-General Chicago, United States
John Woods PSM	former Ambassador to Peru; former Ambassador to Venezuela
Lucinda Wright	former DFAT officer, 1975-1989