

Climate Emergency Australia

GPO Box 1603
Melbourne VIC 3001

27 October 2020

The Hon. Scott Morrison MP
Prime Minister
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

Dear Prime Minister,

I am writing to you on behalf of Climate Emergency Australia, a network of 96 Australian local governments who have organised around the current climate emergency¹. Together, we represent more than 9.9 million Australians and are advocating for a rapid shift to a more resilient, zero-carbon society.

We call upon the Federal Government to seize the moment, to work with local governments as part of the national recovery from the Covid-19 pandemic to build jobs and resilience that buffer our communities from the potentially devastating effects of climate change.

This is not an issue that can be postponed. Globally, we are currently tracking at the ‘worse case’ emissions and temperature rise scenario (RCP 8.5)², resulting in the most dangerous impacts of climate change. Local governments face these impacts directly, as has been shown by the recent experiences of councils such as Bega Valley and East Gippsland in last summer’s bushfires or Central Coast and this winter’s storm surges threatening properties.

Without greater support, Australian local governments will be unable to effectively respond in the future to increasingly dangerous bushfires, prolonged droughts and potentially catastrophic coastal events. Without timely investment the reinstatement of essential infrastructure is likely to increasingly fall on higher levels of government as local governments find themselves unable to cope with the repeated impost on their capital budgets.

We need to acknowledge the necessary action required to create a world that is livable for generations to come. Responding to this emergency requires a rapid transition to zero emissions as well as the drawdown of excess greenhouse gases. Business as usual and incremental improvements will not be enough. While Australians are world leaders in the uptake of renewable energy in the form of rooftop solar, individual actions alone will not be enough to combat the worst effects of the climate emergency.

Local governments have been doing everything they can within their power to build on the growing momentum for positive climate policy, and the Climate Emergency Australia network calls on the

¹ CEDAMIA (2020) Climate Emergency Declarations

² IPCC (2018) Summary for Policymakers

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Federal Government to do the same. This would allow local governments to expand on existing projects and deliver new projects that would increase local economic activity and job creation while moving toward a zero emissions society. We recognize that recovering from the Covid-19 pandemic offers a unique opportunity to re-set climate policy. In this spirit, Climate Emergency Australia is recommending the following Federal Government actions:

1. Increased support for renewable energy and storage, including establishing a national emissions reduction target to reach zero-emissions at a pace commensurate with the latest science, including specific investment in solar and battery installations on council and community buildings.
2. Funding support to address the impacts of climate risks for both councils and their communities (particularly the most vulnerable) including coastal inundation, flooding, drought resilience, bushfire, biodiversity loss and governance processes.
3. Investment in active and sustainable transport, including walking paths and cycle lanes delivered through local government, and support for increased electric vehicle uptake.
4. Increased greening of our cities and towns, including substantial new tree planting to draw down carbon emissions and reduce urban heat island impacts.
5. Enhanced energy efficiency measures throughout the commercial and residential sectors, with the assistance of local government programs, to create jobs, reduce energy costs and create more comfortable homes and workplaces, ensuring nobody is left behind.
6. Integrating circular economy principles – fostering local government action to close the loop on resource use, such as enhancing organic waste collection and processing and converting landfill gas to energy to create jobs and cut carbon emissions.

In setting forward these proposals, we align with a growing and diverse chorus of voices calling for such a recovery, including the Australian Industry Group, the Business Council of Australia, the National Farmers Federation, the Climate Council, Beyond Zero Emissions, the Australian Council of Social Services, the Australian Council of Trade Unions, Doctors for the Environment and the Australian Sustainable Finance Initiative³⁴.

Australia will continue to suffer the consequences of the climate emergency without action. The recovery from this pandemic provides the perfect opportunity for joint action. It must not be missed.

Yours sincerely,



David Meiklejohn
Climate Emergency Australia Coordinator

³ <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2020/aug/31/australian-industry-group-urges-coalition-to-spend-at-least-33bn-on-renewable-energy-over-coming-decade>

⁴ <https://millionjobs.org.au>
<https://www.dea.org.au/joint-letter-to-pm-morrison-australias-doctors-call-for-a-post-covid-19-healthyrecovery/>