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Climate Proofing Australia urges Coalition to use \$500m from new ERF funding to prioritise co-benefits on the land

Climate Proofing Australia: A whole-of-landscape approach to tackling climate change

The Climate Proofing Australia (CPA) alliance welcomes the Prime Minister's announcement to inject \$2 Billion into the Emissions Reduction Fund, and calls for at least \$500 million of the new funds to prioritise land-based carbon solutions.

Carbon sequestration has been the largest source of emissions reduction in the past decade, and adequate funding will not only create more habitat for Australia's native plants and animals, but also increase resilience and productivity on landscapes over time.

The CPA alliance, led by the Australian Forest Products Association, Farmers for Climate Action, the Red Meat Advisory Council and Greening Australia, has received bipartisan support following its launch in Canberra last week, with a one of its key shared principles to expand the scope and benefits of carbon farming through the ERF.

"Since the introduction of the Emissions Reduction Fund in 2015, over 80 per cent of emissions reductions contracted to date through the ERF have come from agriculture and land sector projects."¹ said Brendan Foran, CEO, Greening Australia.

"This long-term commitment to the ERF is an opportunity to not only boost the capacity of the landscape to contribute to Australia's carbon mitigation strategy, but to be more ambitious about what it can achieve by encouraging more projects that deliver these co-benefits of biodiversity, productivity, water quality and landholders and employment."

"To achieve this, CPA calls on the Government to remove existing barriers in the ERF architecture that have limited the land sector's participation, and direct at least \$500 million from the \$2.2 billion ERF fund, including the funds that remain in the program, for land-based projects that also deliver environmental and productivity benefits."

¹ <http://www.cleanenergyregulator.gov.au/ERF/Auctions-results/december-2018>

CPA seeks to bring the conservation, farming and forestry sectors together to work with decision makers on removing some of the existing barriers in the ERF that have limited the land sector's participation, and to prioritise ERF projects that deliver environmental, social and economic co-benefits.

"The current Emissions Reduction Fund (ERF) conditions limit the land sector's capacity to generate co-benefits associated with carbon sequestration, such as reinstating wildlife habitat, supporting sustainable agriculture, increasing the plantation forestry estate, and cleaner waters in our rivers," said Ross Hampton, CEO, Australian Forest Products Association.

"This next phase of the ERF is an opportunity to address these barriers and make it more accessible to primary industries and landowners," he said.

Farmers for Climate Action CEO, Verity Morgan-Schmidt said: "As land custodians, farmers and graziers are on the front line of climate change and are uniquely positioned to deliver an important component of Australia's climate solutions and deliver exciting co-benefits."

"However, it is essential that agriculture's efforts are delivered in conjunction with a broad suite of policy options to actively reduce Australia's emissions across the economy while delivering benefits for the community," she said.

The Climate Change Authority (CCA) has supported the approach in a number of recent reports recommending a greater uptake of land and agriculture-based carbon sequestration projects and better recognition of the co-benefits to support our industries to work together toward a common climate goal².

What the Government and Opposition said at the launch of Climate Proofing Australia

"We need to make sure that we just don't have blunt instruments. While I'm a big supporter of carbon farming I think we also need to enrich that at the farmgate level to reward biodiversity, good stewardship of our land by our primary producers."

- Minister for Agriculture and Water Resources, David Littleproud

Carbon farming presents an enormous opportunity not just to reduce our carbon emissions, but to improve our landscape, make it more productive through areas like farm forestry and provide that really good income stream to a land sector that is under pressure through pressures like drought."

- Shadow Minister for Climate Change and Energy, Mark Butler

About Climate Proofing Australia

Climate Proofing Australia (CPA) is a conservation and industry led alliance of organisations committed to advancing the role of agribusiness, conservation and natural resource management in Australia's climate change and emissions reduction policy.

CPA advocates for a climate change policy framework that strikes the right balance between environmental, social and economic policy outcomes. Such an approach recognises that optimal sustainability and

² For example, the March

20<http://www.climatechangeauthority.gov.au/sites/prod.climatechangeauthority.gov.au/files/files/Action%20on%20the%20Land/AOTL2%20-%20Issues%20paper%20action%20on%20the%20land%209Mar.pdf>

environmental restoration practices can increase productivity and/or profitability and build regional resilience through restoration of natural and social capital.

CPA recognises the critical importance of carbon emissions measures, but also suggests a new approach to land management that encourages farmers to earn carbon credits on their land, sequester carbon from the atmosphere and create more habitat for Australia's native plants and animals, while increasing resilience and productivity.

The CPA's underlying principles are:

- The continuation and enhancement of the Carbon Farming Initiative (CFI) – around which the Emissions Reduction Fund was built – to maximise biodiversity, and food and fibre production benefits alongside the scheme's carbon sequestration objectives.
- The development of new mechanisms and incentives for carbon abatement on land projects that brings together institutional, private and public capital.
- The need for new and improved national environmental datasets and mapping to guide best practice and whole-of-landscape policy making that integrates forestry, farming and conservation outcomes.
- Improving the Australian landscape by balancing native biodiverse plantings with agricultural production and forestry.
- Primary industries working towards carbon neutrality by 2030.

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