Zali Steggall MP
FEDERAL MEMBER FOR WARRINGAH

Office of the Chief Scientist
Industry House
10 Binara Street
Canberra City
ACT 2601 Australia

3rd of October 2020

Dear Dr Finkel AO,

I wish to seek clarification on your views and advice as Chief Scientist in respect to how climate change is likely to impact Australia and Australia's actions to date to reduce emissions.

Governments of Australia have appointed a Chief Scientist since 1989 and the primary purpose of the appointment is described as to "**provide high-level independent advice to the Prime Minister and other Ministers on matters relating to science, technology and innovation**" and, "**An equally important part of the role of Chief Scientist for Australia is to be a champion of science, research and the role of evidence in the community and in government**."[1]

As such, a primary aspect of your role is to report and advise on important issues of science impacting Australia. It is difficult to consider any issue more relevant to the future safety and security of Australians, than climate change and its impacts. As Chief Scientist advising the Government for the last four years, you have clearly been instrumental on whether we are adequately addressing those risks or not.

In your recent appearance before Senate Estimates, you stated that climate change is a complex problem and that our current trajectory of reaching over 3°C of warming by the turn

[11] Office of the Chief Scientist, 2020, https://www.chiefscientist.gov.au/about/the-chief-scientist (accessed 3/11/2020)

Level 2/17-19 Sydney Rd Manly NSW 2095
P: 02 9977 6411 F: 02 9977 8715 E: zali.steggall.mp@aph.gov.au

of the century, as earlier advised to Senate Estimates by the Bureau of Meteorology[2], is "**not a place we want to be**."[3]

In seeking to limit warming and reduce emissions, you stated to Senate estimates that **an earlier net zero target year is preferred over a later one.** However, in qualifying these comments, you stated that **Australia has signed up to net zero in the second half of the century under the Paris Agreement.**

Under the Paris Agreement, Australia has agreed to Article 1 (2) (a) which sets out the goals of holding the increase in the global average temperature to well below 2°C above pre-industrial levels and pursuing efforts to limit the temperature increase to 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels, recognizing that this would significantly reduce the risks and impacts of climate change.[4]

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change's report 'Global Warming of 1.5°C Special Report,' found that "limiting global warming to 1.5°C would require 'rapid and far-reaching' transitions in land, energy, industry, buildings, transport, and cities. Global net human-caused emissions of carbon dioxide (CO2) would need to fall by about 45 percent from 2010 levels by 2030, reaching 'net zero' around 2050."[5]

The IPCC was created to provide policymakers with regular scientific assessments on climate change, its implications and potential future risks and that the science is updated frequently. You accepted that the IPCC is a reputable organisation amongst the scientific community.

According to the Department of Industry, Science, Energy and Resources[6] between January 2016 and December 2019, during your appointment as Chief Scientist, Australia's seasonally adjusted and weather normalised emissions have gone up by 0.7%. Australia's emissions have reduced by 14.3% on 2005 levels to date, with the large proportion of those emissions reductions occurring between 2008 and 2014.

Accordingly, as Australia's Chief Scientist, I would appreciate you clarifying the following matters:

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[2] Dr Andrew Johnson, Chief Executive Officer and Director of Meteorology, *Proof Committee Hansard*, Environment and Communications Legislation Committee, Canberra, 20 October 2020
[3] Dr Alan Finkel AO, Australia's Chief Scientist, *Proof Committee Hansard*, Environment and Communications Legislation Committee, Canberra, 28 October 2020
[4] UNFCCC, *Paris Agreement, 2015,* p. 3. https://unfccc.int/sites/default/files/english_paris_agreement.pdf (accessed 3/11/2020)
[5] IPCC, "Summary for Policy Makers," *Global Warming of 1.5 °C, p. 12. 2018,* https://www.ipcc.ch/site/assets/uploads/sites/2/2019/05/SR15_SPM_version_report_LR.pdf (accessed 3/11/2020)
[6] Department of Science, Energy, Industry and Resources, *National Greenhouse Gas Inventory: March 2020,* 2020, https://www.industry.gov.au/sites/default/files/2020-08/nggi-quarterly-update-march-2020-data-sources.xlsx, (accessed 3/11/2020)

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1. Firstly, could you please clarify what impact 3°C of warming will have on Australia. Do you accept that Australia will be heavily impacted by global temperature rises as indicated in the recent Bushfire Royal Commission Report?[7]

2. Do you accept the IPCC's findings and advice that global net human-caused emissions of carbon dioxide reductions reaching 'net zero' around 2050 is necessary to limit global warming to the temperature goals of the Paris Agreement? And if not, why not?

3. Is it your opinion that current policies and actions are sufficient to reduce Australia's emissions to reach the temperature goal of the Paris Agreement?

4. Taking into account your evidence that global temperatures rising by 3 degrees is **not a place we want to be** and that "**an earlier net zero target year is preferred over a later one**, do you agree that Australia should commit to reaching Net Zero emissions by no later than 2050? If not by 2050, by when?

I look forward to your response.

Kind Regards,

Zali Steggall OAM MP

Member for Warringah

[7] *Royal Commission into National Natural Disaster Arrangements*, 2020, p. 22.

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