

AJ Turner

(address redacted)

30 September 2020

The Honorable Scott Morrison
Prime Minister of Australia

Dear Prime Minister,

Thank you for your letter of reply dated 31 August 2020 reference MC20-128020. There are a number of issues that need to be commented on if there is to be an environment where Australia is to be a place where humans, animals and plants can continue to live comfortably to and beyond 2050.

Your letter did not answer some issues that were raised in our correspondence of 22 August 2020. We remind you that we were writing as former senior government veterinarians concerned about where climate change is taking our livestock and indigenous animal populations.

Firstly, the letter maintains that the 'Government is developing a long-term strategy to reduce emissions like other parties to the Paris Agreement'. The former CVOs are not aware of the Government developing a long-term strategy to reduce emissions but they are aware of all State and Territory Governments and the majority of Local Governments endorsing a strategy of achieving at least net zero emissions by 2050 as in the Paris Agreement. The suggestion that investing in technology without a broad national policy framework is not a credible response to mitigate Australia's escalating carbon emissions.

If the Government's long-term strategy is gas generation, as recently articulated, to lead the recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic, it will only further increase Australia's carbon emissions. This will represent another missed opportunity to plan a recovery that reduces the use of fossil fuels for electricity and other power generation. We note from your recent appearance on the ABC Insiders Program that you have acknowledged to meet net zero carbon emissions in the second half of this Century and development of a hydrogen production industry for export purposes. While welcoming you setting a target date, it is too vague for the world target date of 2050 for net zero emissions. Australia also has a need for hydrogen power, with generation using renewable power being the only responsible approach. This week Germany has indicated that it proposes to establish a green hydrogen industry in Australia to transport it to Europe. Surely Australian scientists are able to match Germany's initiative in green hydrogen generation.

Secondly, why will the Federal Government not sign up with the State, Territory and Local Governments to set the target of net carbon emissions by 2050 as the national target? The National Cabinet is able to achieve national targets in dealing with the COVID-19 pandemic. There is an urgent need for practical action to reduce carbon emissions beyond the current 26-28 per cent reduction by 2030. The severity of the fires in California, Oregon and Washington Western States of the USA and severe hurricanes in the Eastern States of the USA are reminders that floods, droughts, bushfires and extreme weather events have increased in number and severity in the USA as well as in Australia in 2019 and 2020.

Thirdly, your reply letter to the former CVOs infers that taking heightened action on carbon emissions will impact on 'jobs and livelihoods' of Australians. The increasing severity of pandemics, floods, bushfires, droughts and extreme weather events are already impacting on Australians and the impact will only increase with the current carbon policies. Climate changes are moving Australians in a direction where the severity of the changes will become irreversible. It is our generation's responsibility to take action that will provide an environment for our children and grandchildren. We should aspire to be acknowledged as responsible forebears because of urgent action taken in the period 2020 to 2030, rather than a generation that failed to act.

Finally, the ozone hole that appeared in the twentieth century in the stratosphere above Australia was fueled by the use of fluorocarbon gases. The hole exposed Australians to higher levels of harmful solar ultraviolet radiation normally absorbed by the ozone layer. The solution was obtained through the Montreal Protocol by all countries mutually banning the use of the ozone depleting gases. In respect for what other countries did for

closing the ozone hole, Australia needs to play its part in urgently reducing our production of carbon emissions for other nations.

While the ozone depleting gases were banned in 1989, restoration of the ozone layer above Australia has still many more years to achieve full healing. Like the ozone restoration, achieving reductions in climate changes will be slow and reversing those changes make it urgent for Australia to take every action now to reduce carbon emissions.

As former senior veterinarians, we note that climate changes are impacting on animals, plants and the natural Australian environment and agricultural industries due to increasing severity and occurrence of droughts, floods, extreme weather events. This is driving to extinction indigenous animal and plant species through loss of habitat through fires, floods, land clearing and degradation and the spread of diseases and pests to new localities within Australia.

Your letter made a point about jobs and the economy but there are jobs to be had in climate change action such as will follow when Germany and Australia get serious about green hydrogen production, jobs in battery manufacturing, jobs in biochar production, jobs in electric vehicle production, jobs in seaweed production and other renewable projects. It will be imperative for Australia to maintain the 2050 net carbon emissions target if we are to maintain our free trading status with our trading partners particularly the European Union and other countries taking strong action in reducing carbon emissions. Australia does not want to be left behind.

Australia's peak agricultural organisations are leading action to reduce carbon emissions in their industries and we are calling on the Commonwealth Government to also act, in bipartisan cooperation, by adopting a target of net zero carbon emissions by at least 2050. This target must not include the support for proposals for increased gas use that will only increase annual emissions. Attaining this target will be a legacy to future generations.

We ask again for a meeting with you or the Government's Energy Minister to provide more information on the impact that climate change is causing to Australia's livestock, indigenous wildlife and agricultural production.

Yours faithfully

Signed

Dr Andrew Turner, former CVO Victoria

Dr Ron Glanville, former CVO Queensland

Dr Rick Symons, former CVO Queensland

Dr Helen Scott-Orr, former CVO New South Wales

Dr Ian Roth, former CVO New South Wales

Dr Hugh Millar, former CVO Victoria

Dr Charles Milne, former CVO Victoria

Dr Rob Rahaley, former CVO South Australia

Dr Robin Vandegraaff, former CVO South Australia

Dr Rod Andrewartha, former CVO Tasmania

Professor John Edwards, former CVO Western Australia

Dr Allen Bryce, former CVO Northern Territory

Dr Malcolm Anderson, former CVO Northern Territory

Professor Martyn Jeggo, former Director, Australian Animal Health Laboratory

Dr Bill Scanlan, former Manager, Australian Animal Health Committee Secretariat

Dr Peter Hooper, former Senior Scientist, Australian Animal Health Laboratory