

Dear Prime Minister

We, former Chief Veterinary Officers and senior government veterinarians, have written to you previously of our concerns that Australia is not taking enough action to reduce our carbon emissions. Letters dated 22 August 2020 and 21 May 2021 and your reply referenced MC20-128020 apply. We write this time to implore you to consider the latest evidence on climate change and hence take responsible emissions reduction targets to the 2021 United Nations Climate Change Conference (known as COP26).

You are no doubt aware of the most recent Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) report which concludes unequivocally that there is a narrow path to avoiding climate catastrophe, but only through immediate, deep and sustained emissions reductions. Climate change and its effects are accelerating, and more serious consequences are on the way. We cannot overstate the seriousness of this situation and the need for all countries to play their part.

We are seeing new evidence almost daily that the effects of climate change are upon us. The recent wildfires in a number of other countries are just one more example. As Australians, we are deeply concerned about the future for our children and grandchildren. Further, as veterinarians we want Australia's animals, domestic and wild, to have a future environment where they can survive and flourish and where new and emerging diseases are not the norm. We have already seen a range of new and devastating diseases emerge in recent decades, and changing ecology of pathogens and disease vectors, all driven by human effects on the planet.

In response to the IPCC report we have heard you state in the media that you will not commit to a target of zero net emissions by 2050 and that 'I won't be signing a blank cheque on behalf of Australians to targets without plans'. We make three comments in this regard:

- Firstly, while we have previously advocated for the Government to adopt the zero net emissions target by 2050, but preferably sooner, the science in the latest IPCC report now makes it clear that the target needs to be net zero by 2035 to avoid a temperature rise of greater than 1.5°C. The scientific evidence is now strong that a target of net zero by 2050 is inadequate to avoid the worst consequences of climate change.
- Secondly, a well-accepted management principle is that you should first set your aims and objectives and then develop plans to achieve those aims. There are some good examples on the world stage where this has been done. Probably the most well-known is the statement by JFK in 1962; 'We choose to go to the moon in this decade and do the other things, not because they are easy, but because they are hard'. The current situation requires exactly this sort of national and international leadership. The solutions that could form the basis of our strategy are already available to us, and you have the significant resources of the Australian Government to develop a plan to achieve those aims. We implore you to show such leadership.
- Thirdly, we should regard this as an opportunity to build a more resilient economy, rather than a cost. We know that the agriculture industry is approaching the issue in this way and aims to increase production at the same time as setting ambitious emissions reduction targets. Further, veterinarians have specialised competencies and professional obligations that can help in achieving these targets within our sector. We are keen to play our part.

Given the above, we are concerned about the targets for reaching net zero carbon emissions that Australia will take to COP26 and whether that target will reflect Australians' aspirations and our international obligations. We strongly request that you adopt a responsible target for COP26, preferably zero net emissions by 2035.

You will also note that we've copied this letter to the leaders of Australia's other major political parties and all jurisdictions. This issue is now too serious for partisan politics. We request that you all to work together to heal Australia's fractured beliefs on climate change and together adopt agreed and responsible emissions reduction targets for Australia.

The future of our environment, our animals and our grandchildren depends on us all taking this issue more seriously. We can do this if we put our minds to it and we ask you to urgently lead the way.

Yours sincerely

Ron Glanville for

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CC: Leader of the National Party

CC: Leader of the Labor Party

CC: Leader of the Greens

CC: Premiers/Chief Ministers of all States and Territories