

20th May, 2015

The Hon. Tony Abbott, MP  
Prime Minister of Australia  
Parliament House  
CANBERRA ACT 2600



Dear Prime Minister

We write as religious leaders from diverse communities concerned about the targets Australia has accepted for the reduction of carbon emissions. In response to the issues paper of the Prime Minister's Department, we would like to comment on Australia's formal post-2020 target for emissions reductions to be put to the UNFCCC by mid-year.

We are pleased to see the Government acknowledges the importance of Australia contributing to a strong and effective global agreement in Paris. However this needs to be matched by robust policies.

Some of the reasons given in the issues paper for considering that Australia should not set higher targets are reasons we suggest should make our ambition higher. That coal and natural gas make up so much of our exports, that 95% of our energy consumption comes from fossil fuel sources when the OECD average is 81%, should spur us on to more rapidly decarbonise our economy.

On April 22, the Climate Change Authority released its report putting forward that a reasonable pollution reduction target for Australia should be 30% below 2000 levels by 2025. This would be broadly comparable with levels of ambition of other wealthy developed countries, given the aim of limiting global warming to 2 degrees. We believe there is a moral imperative to work towards this target.

Indeed there are very good reasons to aim for even higher emissions reduction targets. We propose 40% below 1990 levels by 2025, and 80% below by 2030, and to increase our offer to the UN Climate Fund.<sup>i</sup> We recognise that these are challenging targets that require a significant restructure of the Australian economy over a relatively short timeframe, will involve strong political debate and require particular courage given the strength of the mining lobby in Australia. We want to assure you of our support for these policy positions.

Australia has the technological and economic capacity to deliver on these policies. It is an opportunity to play our part in addressing the common environmental challenge humanity faces. It would not only create a safer, more stable climate for Australia and other vulnerable countries; it would also bring added economic benefits, through the strengthening of sustainable technology sectors and the creation of new employment opportunities.<sup>ii</sup>

As representatives of some of the world's great faith traditions we find compelling moral and religious reasons from within our very different traditions for the policy actions we commend to you and your government.

We urge you to support these emissions reduction targets so that Australia can begin to show leadership in this important international and intergenerational issue.

Yours faithfully

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Philip Freier'.

Archbishop Philip Freier  
Primate, Anglican Church in Australia

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Nihal Agar'.

Professor Nihal Agar,  
Chairman, Hindu Council of Australia



Venerable Ajahn Brahm,  
Australian Sangha Association,  
Spiritual Director, Buddhist Society of  
Western Australia



Ms Jacqui Remond,  
Director, Catholic Earthcare Australia



Rev Professor Andrew Dutney  
President, Uniting Church of Australia  
National Assembly



Rabbi Jeffrey Kamins,  
Senior Rabbi, Emanuel Synagogue



Mr Kim Hollow,  
President, Federation of Australian Buddhist Councils



Rabbi Jonathan Keren-Black,  
Environmental Advisor,  
Council of Progressive Rabbis

Cc The Hon. Greg Hunt, MP  
Minister for the Environment

The Hon. Mark Butler, MP  
Shadow Minister for the Environment, Climate Change and Water

<sup>i</sup> An analysis at ANU suggested Australia's fair contribution to be somewhere between \$1.9 and \$2.7 billion p.a., ref. Jotzo, F., Pickering, J. and Wood, P.J., "Fulfilling Australia's International Finance Commitments: Which Sources of Finance are Promising and How Much Could they Raise?" CCEP working paper 1115, October 2011.

<sup>ii</sup> According to Professor Robert Pollin at the Political Economy Research Institute, University of Massachusetts, investment in a green economy creates 17 jobs for every 5 jobs created by equivalent investment in fossil fuels and nuclear energy.