

Hon S. J. Morrison MP
Member for Cook
PO Box 1306
Cronulla NSW 2230

31/1/2020

Dear Hon S. J. Morrison MP,

JANUARY LETTER TO POLITICIANS – seeking advice and reassurance

Would you be prepared to join a non-partisan discussion group in your electorate to help plan possible local climate change projects?

Our community organization was initiated by a concerned group of citizens in the Anakie/Steiglitz area of Victoria, but is now attracting interest in Tasmania and other states. We believe the challenges humanity faces in terms of climate change and sustainability are unprecedented and that our traditional democratic processes are incapable of addressing the issues unless politicians, from all parties, tackle the challenge in a united way. Australia needs planning that spans decades, not just one or two electoral cycles.

We can use events of the past month to illustrate our focus. Despite some contrary news coverage, there were promising signs. Members of the Crossbench, Centre Alliance MP Rebekha Sharkie and Independent MPs Dr Helen Haines and Zali Steggall re-established the Parliamentary Friends of Climate Action in the 46th Parliament. However, such a promising initiative can only succeed if members of the major parties are prepared to participate. To date, the indications are disappointing.

Nevertheless, Federal science minister Karen Andrews acknowledged that the science of climate change is unequivocal and that ideological debates with climate change deniers are stealing valuable time from the actions that need to be taken to mitigate and adapt. Accordingly, she organised a meeting with leading scientists.

Brendan O'Connor welcomed the planned meeting with scientists and Labor encouraged the government to set up a business taskforce to provide a direct line of advice to government. This is the kind of positive interaction that needs to occur both ways.

Despite these positives, some press interests and political media releases continued to seek political mileage. Labor's media release that reported Ms Andrews calling the debate on climate change a waste of time was pure opportunism. It took her comments out of context. She believed it was a waste of time because it was robbing humanity of the time it needs to make the urgent responses to climate change. This release was disingenuous on the part of Labor's media people.

Anthony Albanese's comments that the approach to climate change ought to be based on moral and ethical issues rather than politics is fundamental to any real progress. However, there needs to be care taken that this statement is not construed by his media people or the press generally as accusing the government of acting politically on the issue.

When media releases from political parties are focussed on attacking the other parties, three dysfunctions occur.

1. The chances of united action are greatly reduced.
2. Citizens at large lose faith in politicians and in parliament generally.
3. In a social media world, there is danger of a great divide, where citizens communicate, as in a bubble, only with those whose views they support. The only way we believe this can be prevented is for politicians to begin to acknowledge the good will, and sometimes good judgement, of the members of other parties. The modelling is vital.

We therefore seek your views on how non-partisanship among politicians can be achieved. For example, Is it feasible to create joint consultative committees to advise the parliament? Should there be a statutory advisory body set up, representative at least of scientists and economists to monitor new technologies and their capacity to ease the transition to sustainable patterns of living?

Again would you be prepared to join a non-partisan discussion group in your electorate to help plan possible local climate change projects?

Yours Faithfully

Robert Patterson	Chris McKenzie	Kylie Smith	Adele Duffy
Al Knox	Peter Sharp	Tim Godbert	Steve Duffy
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