

20th March 2020

Submission to the Inquiry into the Transparency in Carbon Emissions Accounting Bill

I thank Andrew Wilkie MP for his work on this Bill.

There needs to be global cooperation on reducing emissions to avoid extreme temperature rises (2 degrees or more above pre-industrial levels) leading to catastrophic climate change. It is essential to have transparency around carbon emissions. It is important to accurately know the trajectory of our emissions and, by extension, how much further we need to accelerate emissions reduction. There is scientific consensus around the need for around 50% reduction in global emissions in 2030. The current Australian federal emissions target of 26-28% by 2030 seems inadequate. The proposed use of “carry over credits,” from our performance under the Kyoto Protocol, means the real reduction in emissions may only be 15%. This is not something that we can avoid by creative accounting or shifting the blame around, or crying that the costs are too high. The impact of climate change is real and present and will only get worse in the coming decades. As a prosperous country with high per capita emissions, Australia has a greater responsibility to act.

The Bill aims to include Scope 3 emissions in our national emissions reporting, which includes the emissions from exports (including fossil fuels) to other countries. Tracking the impact of our exports is important. Arguably the primary responsibility for emissions lies with the country which use the goods or services (including energy). According to this, Australia would be responsible for the emissions behind much of our imports, including goods produced in China. Though, there is also a responsibility for exporting countries to consider how they are contributing to global emissions, including Australian coal exports.

Australia does not have to be a high emissions exporter. We have great opportunities to become a world leader in developing and exporting low emissions technology and materials. Lithium

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2

deposits can be used in solar energy and battery storage, for example. There are economic opportunities in helping the world move to a low emissions future. Our exports can be part of the problem (causing more emissions), or they can be part of the solution (helping nations transition to a low emissions future). Including emissions from associated with our exports could give Australia greater motivation to transition towards exporting low-emissions technology, materials and expertise.

Communities, businesses and governments working together can make good progress in reducing emissions. Australian State and Territory governments, many big businesses (including Qantas and BHP) and other community groups are aiming for Net Zero emissions by 2050. For effective, cooperative action, there needs to be transparency and honesty around emissions reporting.

I am genuinely concerned, as are many Australians, about the impact of climate change on the environment, the economy and our health. This is exacerbated by the perception that the government is not aware of the threat or unwilling to take necessary action to protect Australians from the effects of climate change. There is also uncertainty and confusion about the level of emissions, including the amount of emissions reduction. There is a need for much greater transparency and honesty in emissions reporting, which this Bill does well to promote. With clearer and accurate reporting about our emissions (including emissions from our exports), we can better plan the transition to a low emissions future and mitigate climate change.

Thank you for considering my submission,

Kind Regards,

Benjamin Cronshaw.