

The Hon. Scott Morrison
Prime Minister of Australia

PO Box 6022

Canberra ACT 2600

17 June 2020

CC:

Peter Harris, CEO, National Covid-19 Coordination Commission

Neville Power, Chair, National Covid-19 Coordination Commission

Consultation regarding the National Covid-19 Coordination Commission

Dear Prime Minister,

We write as organisations representing more than one million Australians with a deep interest in the direction of the economic recovery following the impacts of Covid-19. While any loss of life is tragic, we acknowledge that the Government's adherence to independent expert advice has so far mitigated the risks of the far more serious consequences we have seen around the world.

We note that our organisations are listed on the National Covid-19 Coordination Commission (the Commission) website as organisations with which the Commission has engaged. We also note that on June 4, Chair of the Commission, Mr. Power, gave evidence to the Senate Committee into Covid-19, where he stated that the Commission has consulted with over 1,000 organisations, and that these organisations are listed on the Commission's website.

We write to inform you that our organisations have not been consulted by the National Covid-19 Coordination Commission, and to express our disappointment at the Commission's lack of meaningful engagement with the environment and climate change sectors.

Integrity concerns regarding the Commission

We are deeply concerned that the Commission lacks fair representation of the Australian community, has no transparent public consultation or accountability mechanisms, and has not made public any of its materials including policies to guide the Commission, modelling to inform its work, submissions or even its conflicts of interest register.

As the International Energy Agency¹, the Bank of International Settlements² and others have pointed out, the present economic conditions create an opportunity to accelerate the deployment of renewable energy, renewable energy infrastructure, and storage while accelerating the decarbonisation of the manufacturing and other sectors. We are concerned that the Commission as it is presently composed will miss opportunities to set Australia up to thrive in the 21st century, and could lock in projects and infrastructure with long lead times and returns on investment that would make it more difficult for Australia to prosper in a rapidly changing world. We also note references within the leaked Manufacturing Taskforce interim report to reducing environmental protections while the Graeme Samuel review of the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 is ongoing, and the risks this would pose to our response to the ongoing biodiversity crisis.

Representation concerns regarding the Commission

We note that the Commission has no representation from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations and businesses, virtually no representation from sectors most impacted by Covid19, such as tourism, hospitality and the arts, and is weighted to sectors that will fuel climate change and are unlikely to drive the necessary economic activity due to their capital-intensive nature.

A fair economic recovery

We would urge the Government to ensure that any economic recovery agency be transparent, independent, accountable, representative, guided by expert advice, invest in good quality jobs and acknowledge the need to meet our fair share of global commitments to keep warming well below two degrees and as close to 1.5 degrees as possible in line with our greater capabilities and responsibilities.

Recent modelling by EY for WWF Australia found that zero-emissions stimulus in the electricity, transport and manufacturing sectors alone would create at least 100,000 jobs, with a labour-intensity three times higher than equivalent investment in fossil fuels.

We are calling for four crucial measures to be put in place to ensure the community can have faith in any body tasked with economic recovery: a publicly available conflict of interest register; broad representation of the Australian community; full transparency of operations of any such body and its recommendations to Government; and a commitment from Government to not support stimulus measures that will exacerbate climate change.

Our organisations stand ready to support work to quickly develop a climate-ready economic recovery.

Signed,

David Ritter, CEO Greenpeace Australia Pacific

Amelia Young, National Campaigns Director The Wilderness Society

Darren Kindleysides, CEO Australian Marine Conservation Society

John Hepburn, Co-Executive Director The Sunrise Project

Daniel Gocher, Director of Climate and Environment

Australasian Centre for Corporate Responsibility

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<https://www.iea.org/commentaries/put-clean-energy-at-the-heart-of-stimulus-plans-to-counter-the-coronavirus-crisis>

2 <https://www.bis.org/speeches/sp200514.pdf>