

CCHQ 2022

STRONG ECONOMY. STRONGER FUTURE.

29 April 2022

Mr Alan Page
Federal Election Subcommittee
Blue Mountains Conservation Society
Email: [REDACTED]

Dear Mr Page

Thank you for the opportunity to provide the views of the Coalition on important issues facing the Association. A response to your questions is attached.

The last two years have been tough for our country.

Despite the setbacks, Australia's economic recovery is leading the world.

Unemployment is at 4%, the equal lowest in 48 years. And the recent Budget included the biggest turnaround in our finances in over 70 years.

There's much more to be done. To build a stronger future, our plan will:

1. Deliver more jobs and working towards unemployment below 4%.
2. Deliver tax relief for workers and small businesses.
3. Invest in roads, rail, water infrastructure and renewable energy technology.
4. Make record investments in health and other essential services.
5. Invest in stronger defence, security and borders.

This election provides a clear choice, with real consequences for Australia.

The alternative at this election is Anthony Albanese and Labor. Labor would weaken our economy and put Australia's recovery at risk. Now is not the time to change course.

Thank you for communicating our response to your members.

Yours sincerely,



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Federal Director

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INATIONALS
for Regional Australia

MORRISON GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO BLUE MOUNTAINS CONSERVATION SOCIETY

Q.1 Climate change and sustainability action

The Morrison Government is committed to driving down emissions while protecting our economy and jobs. We are one of a handful of countries to have released a [detailed economy-wide long-term plan](#) which sets out how we will achieve net zero emissions by 2050.

Having a target is one thing, but having a detailed plan, backed by \$22 billion of Government investment (leveraging at least \$88 billion in total public and private investment) in low emissions technologies, including renewable energy, is how Australia is making a significant contribution in the global fight against climate change.

We have been getting on with the job and our emissions are now down 20 per cent. Between 2005 and 2019 (the last year for which there is comparable data), Australia reduced its emissions faster than other similar countries including Japan, Canada, New Zealand and the United States. We are on track to beat our 2030 target by up to 9 per cent and Australia is forecast to achieve a similar or greater reduction in emissions per capita by 2030 than other major developed economies including Canada, the European Union, France, Germany, Japan, New Zealand and the United States.

Since 2017, there has been more than \$40 billion of investment in renewable energy by the Coalition Government, industry and the community. The Coalition has also supported more than 27,000 clean energy, emissions reduction and energy efficiency projects right across the country.

We have provided funding for the installation of 400 public fast charging stations for electric vehicles (EVs) in both metropolitan and regional areas nationwide, while more EV chargers will be needed, our investment will increase the existing number of public fast charging stations by seven-fold. Our policies and energy programs have also supported businesses, community groups and households to install solar panels and batteries, with more than one in four homes with solar systems.

Last year, the share of renewable energy across our energy system was more than 29 per cent. Under the previous Labor government, the share of renewables in the grid was just 7.5 per cent. The Morrison Government's approach to reducing emissions is by investing in technology and not through carbon taxes. This has been very successful and Australia's emissions are 130 Mt lower today than where Labor's forecasts said they would be with a carbon tax (2012 projections). Emissions are also lower today than at any time under the previous Labor government.

The Morrison Government will continue to build on the work we have already done to reduce emissions. There is \$22 billion committed to fund practical climate action across areas including

community and commercial renewable energy projects, batteries and energy storage, new hydrogen hubs, electric vehicle charging infrastructure and seed funding to support Australian innovators developing the low emissions energy solutions of the future.

Q.2 Warragamba Dam

The Morrison Government is committed to ensuring that the World Heritage values of the Greater Blue Mountains World Heritage Area (GBMWA) property are protected and maintained.

The New South Wales Government is assessing a proposal to raise the Warragamba Dam wall on behalf of the Australian Government under an assessment bilateral agreement. The bilateral agreement provides for a robust assessment of matters of national environmental significance including world heritage values.

Before making any decision on the proposal, the Minister will consider the New South Wales Government's environmental assessment and all other matters required under national environmental law.

Q.3 Extend the boundaries of the GBMWA

Under the World Heritage Intergovernmental Agreement, the preparation of a nomination for additional areas to the World Heritage area is the responsibility of the State. No such nomination has been made by NSW.

The Morrison Government is committed to ensuring that the World Heritage values of the Greater Blue Mountains Area World Heritage property are protected and maintained.

The impact of the 2019-20 bushfires was unprecedented. More than 60 per cent of the Greater Blue Mountains World Heritage Area was fire-affected and more than half of this burnt with high or very high severity. Under the Government's \$200 million bushfire recovery program, more than \$17 million has been invested in recovery of native wildlife and their habitat in the Greater Blue Mountains and World Heritage Area bushfire region.

The terrain, vegetation and climate make the Greater Blue Mountains World Heritage Area one of the most fire-prone regions in the world. In 2021, the World Heritage Committee commended Australia for its immediate fire-fighting responses, including those targeting specific attributes of the Outstanding Universal Value of the property, including the Wollemi pines.

We have worked with local communities, Landcare organisations and Traditional Owner groups to implement pest and weed control, traditional burning programs, the restoration of 'hanging swamps', erosion control, captive breeding and protective fencing strategies.

The Morrison Government has shown its commitment to practical partnerships that can make a difference and which also showcase the scientific leadership in this region.

We have also provided \$33.5 million to support conservation work and infrastructure upgrades across 23 National and World Heritage sites as part of the Government's \$1 billion COVID-19 Relief and Recovery Fund to create jobs, boost local tourism and preserve our environment as part of Australia's economic recovery plan.

Q.4 Support additional values criteria for GBMWhA listing

Under the World Heritage Intergovernmental Agreement, the preparation of a nomination for additional values to the World Heritage area is the responsibility of the State. No such nomination has been made by NSW.

A nomination of additional areas and values (natural and Indigenous) to be included in the National Heritage listing of the Greater Blue Mountains is currently under assessment by the Australian Heritage Council.

The Morrison Government is committed to ensuring that the World Heritage values of the Greater Blue Mountains Area World Heritage property are protected and maintained.

The Greater Blue Mountains Area comprises eight protected areas. It consists of 1,043,826 hectares of sandstone plateau, escarpments and gorges dominated by temperate eucalypt forest.

The property is noted for its representation of the evolutionary adaptation and diversification of the eucalypts on the Australian continent. It also supports significant numbers of rare or threatened species, including endemic and evolutionary relict species such as the Wollemi Pine.

Q.5 and Q.9 Flights

Designing flight paths is complex. It requires a thorough process to get it right so we can present an accurate and thorough picture to the community on the preliminary flight path design. A significant amount of effort will go into avoiding residential and nature areas, including in the Blue Mountains World Heritage Area, as much as possible. The flight path design for Western Sydney Airport is progressing and is on track for the airport's scheduled 2026 opening. The initial flight paths were shared with the public via the 2015/16 Environmental Impact Statement consultation process and are now being updated to take into account this feedback to ensure minimal impact on the community whilst ensuring safe aircraft operations. A preliminary flight path design for environmental assessment will be shared with the community for feedback again by mid-2023.

Q.6 GBMWhA eucalypt baseline research

The Morrison Government is committed to ensuring that the World Heritage values of the Greater Blue Mountains Area World Heritage property are protected and maintained.

As part of the government's reporting requirements to the World Heritage Committee, and in response to decisions and requests of the Committee, the State of Conservation of the site and values for which it has Outstanding Universal Value are assessed and reported on.

The Morrison Government is also backing in a new era of environmental science through the second phase of the National Environmental Science Program, a \$149 million investment that will meet the most pressing environmental management and policy needs, with an emphasis on climate adaptation, threatened species, protected places, and waste impacts.

Q.7 Establish an active and stronger role for federal government in environmental protection

The Morrison government is committed to improving Australia's environmental laws and protections to secure better environmental outcomes and the ongoing protection of our unique plant and animal species.

Key to achieving this will be to reform Australia's pre-eminent environmental law, *the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (the EPBC Act). Informed by the independent statutory review of the EPBC Act undertaken by Professor Graeme Samuel, a re-elected Morrison Government will persevere with its reform agenda adopting a staged approach to modernising the EPBC Act and developing national environmental standards to underpin decision making and adopting an outcomes-based approach to protecting our biodiversity and ecosystems.

In the recent budget, \$9.5 million was also allocated to improve compliance and enforcement capabilities and investigations. This is part of \$181 million being provided for EPBC Act reforms to provide greater certainty around environmental protection, streamline assessment and decision-making processes, and strengthen compliance.

Q.8 Political integrity, donations & transparency

The Morrison Government is committed to delivering on our model to establish a Commonwealth Integrity Commission, with funding already in place for when the Commonwealth Integrity Commission legislation is passed.

The model put forward by our Government builds on the already strong anti-corruption arrangements that exist at the Commonwealth level. The Commission would be a specialist investigation body for the most serious forms of criminal corruption.

It will have appropriate safeguards to protect the rights and reputations of the people it investigates and robust oversight through an independent Inspector-General and a dedicated Parliamentary committee. It will also play a preventative and educative role.

The Morrison Government has already implemented phase one of the Commonwealth Integrity Commission by expanding the jurisdiction of the Australian Commission for Law Enforcement Integrity (ACLEI) to cover five additional agencies – the Australian Taxation Office, Australian Securities and Investments Commission, Australian Prudential Regulation Authority, the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission, and the Office of the Special Investigator.

The Commonwealth Integrity Commission has been funded since the 2019-20 Budget. The Government has committed \$168.3 million over four years from 2022-23, including capital expenditure, to establish the Commonwealth Integrity Commission.

Total funding also includes \$101.2 million of ACLEI's existing appropriation from 2022-23, that will transfer to the Commission once established. At full capacity, the Commonwealth Integrity Commission will have approximately 172 staff.

Australia's political parties are subject to a rigorous funding and financial disclosure regime under Part XX of the *Commonwealth Electoral Act 1918*, which has been in place under successive governments.

The Liberal Party fully complies with the funding and disclosure regime.

In recent years, the Coalition Government has strengthened this regime by banning foreign donations and better regulating third party campaigners.

It has been the long-standing position of the Liberal Party that Australian democracy is best served by a legislative framework for political party funding that is fair to all parties and takes adequate account of the role of third parties, such as trade unions and activist groups.