



THE HON TANYA PLIBERSEK MP

MINISTER FOR THE ENVIRONMENT AND WATER

MC24-012920

Ms Jenny Brown
Climate Lead
Queensland Conservation Council
Unit 1 377 Montague Road
WEST END QLD 4101

jenny.brown@qldconservation.org.au

Dear Ms Brown

Thank you for your correspondence of 5 June 2024 about the impact of coal mines on koala habitat.

The Albanese Government is committed to protecting, restoring and managing nature for our kids and grandkids. We're also committed to strong action on climate change and reducing pollution.

As the environment minister, I'm responsible for looking at possible impacts of a project on nature – for example, its effects on national parks, koala habitat or on water quality. When I blocked Clive Palmer's massive coal project, I became the first environment minister in Australian history to stop a coal mine. I blocked it because of the impact it might have had on water quality and the Great Barrier Reef national park. That's my job as environment minister.

The Government has passed strong new climate laws which are supported by the Greens Party and the independents. These laws say that coal and gas projects must comply with Australia's commitment to Net Zero. They also allow the climate minister to stop coal and gas projects adding to Australia's emissions. That power rests with the climate minister, not with me as environment minister. There are serious criminal penalties for breaking our strong new climate laws, including jail time for company executives.

Years of political fights over climate change have cost Australia. They have meant higher emissions for longer and put renewable energy projects years behind schedule. The Liberal and National parties announced 22 different climate and energy policies, but landed none. The Greens political party teamed up with Tony Abbott to knock off the Carbon Pollution Reduction Scheme – which would have prevented more than 80 million tonnes of emissions by now.

Australians had rightly had a gutful of the denial, delay and endless fighting. They know we need to act now and they're doing their part – more than three million households now have solar panels on their roofs. But they expect the government to do its part too. Australians saw how political fights stopped action on climate change and delayed renewables. At the last election, they voted for an end to it. That's exactly what Labor has delivered.

We know that the Liberals want to re-start the climate wars with their unsafe, uncosted and uncertain nuclear energy policy. Peter Dutton's reckless plan appears to be deliberately designed to put investment in renewables at risk. Those of us who believe in climate change and who want to transform Australia into a renewable energy superpower need to work together to stop this.

As environment minister I have been busy approving renewable energy projects. I have now approved 54 projects which is enough energy to power more than three million homes. There are an additional 135 projects in the pipeline.

We are ticking off renewables energy projects at record rates, outstripping coal and gas projects seven to one. Under the nine years of the Liberals and Nationals, about 13 coal or gas projects were being ticked off per year, on average. Renewables were about the same - 13 or so a year, on average. Now, under Labor, it's just over three coal or gas projects per year, on average, versus 27 renewable projects per year. Fossil fuel projects now represent just a little over two per cent of projects ticked off by the federal government – a record low, down from highs of nearly 11 per cent under the previous government.

The federal Labor Government has shown just how bright Australia's future can be, when there's less political fighting, and more action on climate change. We're undoing a decade of political fights that stopped progress and cost the climate. Since the election we have turned things around, with:

- Strong new climate laws, designed with and supported by the Greens political party and independents, to force big polluters to bring down their emissions by 200 million tons by 2030. That's the equivalent of taking two thirds of cars off Australian roads.
- Net zero by 2050 – in law.
- 43 per cent emissions reduction by 2030.
- 82 per cent renewable energy by 2030.
- Cheaper electric cars.
- Higher fuel efficiency standards.
- Huge upgrades to our energy grid so it can take more renewable energy.
- Help for homes and businesses to get off gas and onto electricity.

This is the kind of positive change that's possible when Australia has a government focused on climate action instead of political fights.

The transition to Net Zero emissions and renewable energy is a massive job. It's the biggest change to the economy in our lifetime. This enormous transformation can't happen overnight. But we're working overtime to get there.

Thank you for again for bringing your concerns to my attention.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Tanya Plibersek". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

TANYA PLIBERSEK

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