

28 January 2021

2021-2022 Pre-Budget Submission

Introduction

My name is Eve Elliott-Smith, I am a small business owner and mother of two beautiful children aged 3 and 5. Since my children's birth, my understanding of the urgency of the Climate Crisis and the impact it is likely to have on their life and livelihood has become clearer and clearer. I have watched as the world around us moves forward on taking strong and decisive action on Climate Change which is resulting in a global economy which is decarbonising rapidly. Historically, I have been very proud of my Australian heritage and felt blessed to be able to raise my children in such a wonderful country. Recently however, I have been dismayed at the lack of action being taken by our Government to safeguard our children's physical safety by taking action to reduce the pace and impacts of climate change. I am also extremely disappointed at the apparent lack of planning for their economic prosperity. Australia has vast opportunities to forge ahead and become a leader by decarbonising our economy and innovating to create solutions for a future which will inevitably be impacted by the effects of Climate Change. Instead, our Government is touting a "Gas Led Recovery" from Covid-19 which will saddle our children with an economy embedded in fossil fuels with stranded assets and no vision for the future.

I would like to submit that the 2021-2022 budget instead consider economic stimulus and solutions to the Covid-19 financial downturn that will create economic growth and jobs as well as establishing a trajectory for our children's future economic prosperity and physical safety from the effects of Climate Change. Providing Australia with a foundation from which our outstanding intellectual resources can capitalise on the wealth of natural assets to become a global leader in green energy.

Recommendation

In the May Federal Budget, I would like the Government to fund solar and batteries for every school and early childhood centre that does not already have adequate solar or batteries.

Creating a network of schools and early childhood centres with solar and batteries would provide the equivalent dispatchable green energy as a new power station (as was proposed to replace the Lidell Power station in NSW).

Schools and early childhood centres are the perfect setting for solar and batteries because they are closed during many peak electricity demand events such as weekends, summer holidays and hot evenings. Solar power stored in the schools' batteries could be drawn upon to stabilise the grid at these times. This would negate the need to build more gas-fired "peaking" power stations.

My daughter's school has an annual energy bill which exceeds \$100,000. Research done by Beyond Zero Emissions (BZE) estimates that installing solar panels and batteries on schools and early childhood centres and enabling them to act as Virtual Power Plants would facilitate savings of between \$12,700 and \$114,000 depending on the size of the school or centre.

The economic downturn from Covid-19 has highlighted the need to create jobs in local communities as well as cities. A project of this nature is decentralised meaning that jobs would be created across

all regions of Australia facilitating economic activity where it is needed most. BZE estimates that 6,870 jobs in the renewable energy industry would be created as a direct result of this project.

If we are to stave off a future of regular fiery summers like that of 2019-20, Australia must lower its emissions to meet our Paris Climate Accord targets as well as strengthening our ambition in this area. This project would facilitate the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions in Australia by substantially increasing renewable energy supply and therefore reducing reliance on fossil fuel generated power. BZE estimates that 1.35 million tonnes of CO₂ would be saved each year.

While I acknowledge that Schools are generally considered the State's responsibility, I believe the Federal Government has scope to provide funding for this project, for example, through a grants process. There are State and Territory programs to put solar on State Schools but these programs only provide funding for a proportion of schools and generally result in inadequate solar generation to cover the full daytime energy demands of the school.

State Government funding programs do not usually extend to non-government schools, child-care centres or preschools, many of which struggle to afford solar. This is a significant sector and represents a real opportunity for the Federal Government to create economic stimulus while reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

Thank you for reading my submission, please contact me should you require any further information.

Eve Elliott-Smith

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