

Climate of the Nation 2021 – Report Launch

Speakers:

The Hon Chris Bowen MP

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Ebony Bennett [00:00:02] G'day, everyone. I'm Ebony Bennett, I'm deputy director at the Australia and welcome to the launch of Climate of the Nation for twenty twenty one and two hour webinar series. Thanks so much for joining us today. We've got close to two thousand people registered, which is very exciting, so it should be a good one today. I'd like to begin by acknowledging that I live on Ngunnawal and Ngambri country and pay my respects to elders past and present. Sovereignty was never stated and this always was and always will be Aboriginal land and caring for country is obviously a key part of tackling climate change. And we know that indigenous peoples the world over some of the people who are on the frontlines suffering the impacts of climate change. The Australia Institute is aiming to do these webinars at least weekly, but sometimes, like this week, we have more than one. So make sure you head on over to Australia Institute dot org dot A.U. forward slash webinars to find the details for all of those, and just a few tips before we begin today to help things run smoothly. If you hover over the bottom of your Zoom screen, you should be able to see a Q and a button. You can type in questions there for our panel and also upvote questions and make comments on other people's questions. A reminder to please keep things simple and on topic in the chat bot will boot you out. And finally, a reminder that this discussion is being recorded. If you have to duck out for any reason, you'll be able to find it up on the Australia Institute's YouTube page a little bit later. Well, what a week it has been, and it's only Wednesday lemon. So if you're following the news, you'll know that not only are the climate headlines are almost on par with the COVID headlines, which says quite a lot in the midst of this pandemic, and it's with good reason. It's less than three weeks until representatives from nearly every country on Earth will converge for what's being described as the most significant climate event since the 2015 Paris Agreement, and the outcomes of the Glasgow summit, known as COP 26, will help shape the fates of billions of people for decades to come. So it's no wonder we're being confronted with a new headline or a new announcement just about every day on climate policy in Australia. Things are moving pretty quickly, and in the last two weeks there have been announcements from state governments, from business, even from News Corp announcing or calling for action on climate change. Some with more credibility than others, shall we say. So today we're here to find out what Australians think and want when it comes to climate change and climate action and to launch our report. We are honoured to be joined this morning by the Honourable Chris Bowen, Shadow Minister for Climate Change and Energy. We're also joined by Ben Oquist, executive director of the Australia Institute, and Richie Merzian and director of the Australia Institute's Climate and Energy Programme. You might have spotted him on ABC Breakfast this morning talking about some of the results. But Ben, if I can now hand over to you for a few introductory words.

Ben Oquist [00:02:57] Thank you, Ebony, and thank you to the audience, to Ebony Bennett and our audience who together have created this lively webinar series that has brought together experts, world leaders, former prime ministers, Nobel prize winners, wonderful Australians, politicians from all sides of politics across the aisle, Labor liberal green independent art to engage directly with you. The public and I think genuinely helped improve our Democratic debates and helping protect our democracy at a time when democracies and democratic norms are under threat is something that we think is really important at the Australia Institute. It's something we're passionate about for a variety of reasons. Democracies are under a bit of strain and democratic norms, so congratulations to Ebony and our audience for being part of something that's not just really important to the Australia Institute. But I think Australia and its democracy today, importantly. Thank you. Chris Bowen, Shadow Minister for Climate Change and Energy, for launching this report and from and for the important speech the important speech about to give the report. Thank you, everybody before me. But before I formally introduced Chris, I thought I just might add to Ebony's comments briefly because not just been awake. It's been a year for climate announcements, which is unsurprising. When we were told by Antonio Guterres, the UN secretary general, that 2021 there really isn't much left of it is the make-or-break year for climate. In April, President Biden called on world leaders to move quickly and to protect livelihoods as a moral and economic imperative. He spoke at the latest Summit on Climate. At that same summit, a number of countries officially announced that they had significantly increased their climate ambition. In May, the International Energy Agency laid bare in no uncertain terms, a stark appeal to stop investment fossil fuels or face the world beyond 1.5 degrees of warming. Just think about that. In August, the IPCC released its most comprehensive and thorough review of the physical science of climate change to date, unequivocally linking fossil fuels with global temperature rises. While these reports announcements are always what are always sobering, they are no longer a surprise and Australians are living with this. I imagine everyone here today is all too aware of the impacts of climate change and each year. The Australia Institute looks into some of that, and since 2007, starting with the work of the Climate Institute, we have been tracking changing Australian beliefs and attitudes toward climate change, towards climate change, its causes, impacts and solutions. Climate of the Nation is Australia's longest continuous survey of community attitudes to climate change and the experience of experiences of last year reflected in our attitudes. It will not surprise you in light of what I've just said that concern about climate change is at an all time high. Amongst Australians and the intensity of that concern has increased, there is enormous appetite for leadership on climate change, something that most would agree is currently missing. More than two thirds of the community want Australia to commit to net zero emissions and set targets to limit global warming to 1.5 degrees. I'll introduce Chris in just a moment, but before I do that, I'd like to take the opportunity to thank the Australian Museum, with whom we're partnering again this year to produce this report and all the individuals and organisations too many to mention here that have supported climate the nation. So just to finally thank you to the Climate Institute, or should I say, the Climate Institute family while the institute does not exist anymore? Its friends and family live on? I know, and some of you are tuned in today and thank you for all the work in setting up climate of the nation all those years ago and allowing Australians to take it forward. Finally, we put a little bit of indulgence, if you please, to thank the amazing research and communication and organising team at the Australia Institute, Audrey Quick, the lead author of the report, and which murdered for his amazing work as our Climate Energy Programme director in particular. But it takes a whole team. So congratulations on a really important report this year at its ongoing legacy to but to the star of the event today. Shadow Minister of Climate Change and Energy, the former acting leader of the Labour Party, former shadow treasurer and of course, a senior minister in previous Labour governments with key portfolios in government, including as minister for Small Business and financial services and as treasurer of Australia in 2013. Appoint those key economic portfolios out for for a reason because I think, Chris, you seem perfectly positioned to be a leading climate and energy spokesperson and potentially a minister in the future, depending on what some of our listeners decide to do with their vote later this year or next year. But the perfect spokesperson for climate, because, as you know, around the world, this is where the economic action is in the decarbonisation agenda. You've been skilfully crafting a climate, economic and jobs message and narrative, and we're really looking forward to hearing more of that today in an institute webinar in April. You said where we all were lacking on climate is national leadership from the very people who are

meant to provide it. I'll let Chris elaborate on that and also of the ideas that his party has for alternative to the current climate policies or lack thereof in Australia. Thank you, Chris.

Hon Chris Bowen MP [00:09:02] Well, thanks very much for that warm introduction, Ben, and I'm joining you from the lands of the people the delegation and I pay my respects to their elders past, present and emerging. I do want to thank the Chartered Institute for giving me the honour of launching this very important report today the climate of the Nation Report. This report, as you said, is the longest continuous survey of community attitudes to climate change across Australia, and it's been a key part of measuring changing community attitudes, but also and importantly, informing advocates of the change of arguments which have found support in the community as we build the case. Now there are new and very important records across this poll, and I'll get to those during the my remarks. But the most important thing that this report confirms for me is that Australians know the way forward and want to say it. They want a government without the bizarre fascination and determination of holding Australia and Australians back from embracing the opportunities of a transition to a renewable economy. And they want a government which sets sustainable and a supportive framework to get on with it. This report has also affirmed yet again just how far out of touch the Morrison Joyce government is with the Australian people, and particularly with people in rural and regional Australia who pay a massive price for climate change and who can be significant beneficiaries of well-designed policies to tackle climate change. So back to some of the results in the poll. Three in four Australians are concerned about climate change, and this is the highest level since the survey began a decade ago. They're concerned about the impacts that we've seen in recent years intensifying bushfires, droughts and floods. And I actually want to do something about it. Seven in 10 are considering a switch to an electric car and their homes as well electrified, but the lack of a policy framework or incentives from the government is a consistent barrier. And happily, despite the government engaging in continuous toxic identity politics of dividing rural and urban Australians, this poll shows regional Australians stand united with the compatriots in the cities for their want in climate change action. They want climate change action. Now this, of course, is the great lie of this government. Scott Morrison sneers about inner city wine bars But Australians from all over the country know that action on climate change is both an environmental imperative and an economic opportunity. The top location for rooftop solar uptake in New South Wales is in Double Bay, its Dubbo in Sydney. It's not Mosman, it's Marsden Park in Queensland. It's not Brisbane, it's Bundaberg. But we know despite this heartening results, we have a long way to go. Still, we can't rest on our laurels. We can't assume that the debate has been won despite the government's disarray and dysfunction right now. They will unite before an election on the one thing they can all agree on the need for a dishonest scare campaign on climate, and they'll be aided and abetted by their preference body and campaign financier Tom of the past. So we must, relentlessly and with laser like focus, prosecute the case that the world's climate emergency is Australia's jobs opportunity. Our opponents have never seen a scare campaign or a dishonest representation I didn't love. We all know about the \$100 rice Whyalla being wiped out in the death of the weekend. They also never miss an opportunity to use a car to wade through twisted logic, to argue against transitioning to renewables. Almost any development you can think of will be used to argue for delay in the transition to renewable economy when the coal fired power station at Callide was shut due to an explosion. Matt Canavan found a way to argue that this was a reason for more coal fired power. Even Heroic heroically managed to claim that this was a quote real test for Labor when Texas suffered a catastrophic energy failure in the midst of a deep freeze. Wind energy was blind despite an independent enquiry finding that poor maintenance of gas fired power stations was the main focus. And of course, as Europe has been engulfed by an energy crisis caused in no small part by spiralling gas prices, the usual suspects have alleged that this is all due to Europe's commitment to net zero emissions by 2050. And as certain liberals fall over themselves to convince their electorates that they really are different, does other climate change denying liberals and nationals? Remember that the alleged modern liberals have engaged in this dishonest scare mongering with alacrity. Josh Frydenberg has led the sophistry on the economic cost of action on climate change. Dave Sharma participated in the denigration of electric vehicles, and Tim Wilson, the new appointee to the portfolio, is the same guy who campaigned for Australia to, and I quote, recognise the reality and leave Kyoto and scaremongering that a 45 per cent Medium-Term Emissions Reduction would be economy record. These are the same guys. Not only do these alleged modern liberals have exactly the same voting record as Barnaby Joyce, George Christensen and Matt

Canavan. They've happily engaged in the demonisation of renewable energy when it should. But slogans and scaremongering has long been the currency of choice for this government, led by the best of them all. Morrison himself, he too has had five minutes to midnight conversion to at least a nod in the vague direction of climate change action as it has become more fashionable. He appears to change his tune on the most important policy challenge of our time as quickly and easily as he changed his football teams. Now, none of this predictable politicking by our political opponents means to be clear that we should reduce our level of ambition. But it does mean that we must really relentlessly prosecute the case that action on climate change is not only an international obligation, but it's also an imperative in our own national economic interests. As our opponents run scare campaigns about the economic cost of climate action, we must point out that actually good climate policy creates jobs and cuts power bills. The world's climate emergency is Australia's jobs opportunity, and this is particularly the case in the regions, the regions which have powered Australia for so long will keep powering US renewable economy. A case in point two billion dollar hydrogen manufacturing facility in Gladstone announced just this week and the jobs rich offshore wind sector, which will provide thousands of jobs in the traditional energy hubs of the Latrobe Valley, the Hunter Valley, Central Queensland, for example, and the minerals and metals industries feeding demand for lithium, zinc, nickel and copper grade steel and aluminium in a decarbonising global economy. The international politics of climate can sometimes be a little esoteric and feel detached from people's lives. Now, to be clear. Anything less than committing to net zero emissions by 2050, legislating that commitment and significantly improving our medium term targets is a cop out at cop that shows the Australian economy short. And I'll continue to highlight that no matter what happens in coming days. When you're busy getting food on the table, making sure the kids are doing their homework or trying to pay off a mortgage with stagnant wages, COP26 is probably not what's keeping you up at night? So again, we must bring the arguments in favour of acting on climate change back to what's in the best interests of Australians. Those keen on perpetuating a kind of culture or identity about climate as a rich person's hobby. But it's Darryl Kerrigan Kerrigan's not your Chris Hemsworth that stand to benefit from lower energy bills thanks to renewables. Electric vehicles and energy efficiency, the top 10 percent of income earners spend just four percent of their income on energy costs. But it's more than double that over 10 percent for the bottom 10 percent of income earners. Western Sydney, home to two and a half million people, including myself and my family, has been copping the impact the impact of increased heatwaves over summer. Up to 100 per cent more energy is used to cool households in the west of Sydney than the East, so Morrison and Joyce Furphy that climate and energy only interests the wealthy wealthy in the cities is not just a dishonest ploy to justify inaction. It's also another way that Australians have been neglected. And in fact, I don't say this lightly betrayed. Electric vehicles are one of the technologies where they've gone beyond the do nothing category into the actively undermine to the detriment of Australian households and businesses category low emissions vehicles like battery electric, plug in hybrid and fuel cells, safe households and businesses thousands of dollars in running costs. So while Morrison was falsely bleating about people having no choice in what car they drive and average being a placing of the rich and famous, it was in fact his policy vacuum, reducing choice and increasing costs for Australian households. As we know, less than one percent of car sales in Australia are electric, compared with 15 per cent last month in the United Kingdom and of course, over 70 per cent in Norway, and Australian families and businesses are missing out on the massive ongoing savings of electric vehicles. Your average B is about 70 per cent cheaper to run at its petrol equivalent, and that surges to 90 per cent if it's powered by rooftop solar. But thanks to an openly hostile environment towards electric vehicles, upfront costs have stayed high and choices remain limited in Australia. While you can pick from over one hundred and thirty models in the United Kingdom, Australia has only 31, with less than half of them being available for under sixty five thousand dollars. What's different between the United Kingdom and Australia policy settings? And in the race to secure a globally sought after affordable models, Australia doesn't get a look in with car makers. I'd say the lack of any electric vehicle strategy and the country's prime minister actively campaigning against the technology hasn't helped. Today's poll reveals that two in three Australians will consider buying an electric car. And it also indicates Australians are crying out for government to fill the policy vacuum. Households and businesses should be able to choose between a wider variety of vehicles at a lower cost. So an Albanese Labour government will deliver a comprehensive policy. Our electric car discount to bring down the sticker cost of electric vehicles by cutting inefficient taxes. It's a great technology that's already available. And yet

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Morrison and Taylor insist on slugging Australians with inefficient taxes to keep the price up so much for technology, not taxes. We will exempt fleet vehicles, and that's part of new car sales from fringe benefits tax when they buy an electric vehicle and cut the five per cent import tariffs on eligible vehicles on a \$50000 car that adds up to \$11000 in savings on the purchase price. And we'll be doing a lot more to how rewiring the nation, which will partner with the private sector to modernise the electricity grid off the back of our energy market operator's blueprint for renewable future, unleashing investment and jobs right across the country. We'll deliver 400 community batteries across Australia to store power for up 100000 homes. Further driving down bills, providing opportunities for new industries with \$100 million to support 10000 new energy apprentices. And investing in the technology and sovereign capability for low emissions and renewable manufacturing throughout National Reconstruction Fund. That's what we've already announced, but there's plenty more to do and plenty more that we will announce ahead of the next election. And I'll just finish with one more insight from the report, and that is that more than two thirds of Australians think we should be a world leader in finding solutions to climate change. I agree with them. In fact, we already happened, of course, with Martin Green and his team at the University of New South Wales, for example, revolutionising the technology behind solar panels now employed the world over. But as an economy, we've missed out on the benefit of manufacturing those products here and exporting them to a world hungry with demand. We used to be a country that made things we can and should be again. And renewable manufacturing can and should be at the core of our manufacturing recovery. But to seize an opportunity, you have to recognise it exists where eight years down and there's still no plan for Australia's climate and energy under this government. They've had 21 energy plans and they want us to think that the 20 second go will be the one that they get right. It's always too little, too late, and Scott Morrison and Australians that pay the price for his failures. The global race to seize the opportunities of a decarbonising global economy has well and truly begun. And our federal government hasn't even been at the starting blocks. Today's report is a reminder that the Australian people are raring to go. I'm delighted to be able to join with you in launching this important report today and again congratulate you, Australia Institute on it, and I look forward to helping unleash our nation's potential as a climate superpower, a clean energy superpower. As Minister for Climate Change and Energy under the Albanese Labour government. Thanks for your time today.

Ebony Bennett [00:23:13] Thank you so much for those remarks, Chris. And again, thank you for joining us today. It's really exciting to be presented with an alternative to climate policy in Australia because as you've said and as our report says, Australians are just, you know, crying out for some leadership and some stable policy in this area. I just want to stick with some of the results that you touched on from climate of the nation showing that two thirds of Australians agree that Australia should be a world leader in finding the solutions to climate change. And more than that, about 70 per cent think that Australia should set targets and implement domestic action to limit global warming to 1.5 to two degrees. I guess with all of that in mind and people wanting a more ambitious 2030 emissions reduction target, can you just take us through again what you think the Australian government should be taking to the Glasgow Climate Summit in November?

Hon Chris Bowen MP [00:24:10] So I think three things. Firstly, a commitment to net zero by 2050, that's just the bare minimum. It's a no brainer. It's the essential starting point. Secondly, that commitment should be legislated. It should be the law of the land as so many other countries have done. The United Kingdom in 2018, for example, and that was legislated in their case on tripartisan basis, almost unanimous vote in the parliament. And and finally increase the medium term ambition and we've got 26 to 28 per cent is our country's 2030 target at the moment. And that was Tony Abbott's time. Tony Abbott is, of course, a climate change denier, and it was designed specifically clearly and openly to match the United States. The United States has left this in their wake since then, so they must there must be an increase in the medium term target. Now, unfortunately, I'm not representing Australia at Glasgow. I'd love to be, but I'm not, so I can't set the medium term target for the country at Glasgow. But if the government doesn't, then we will outline our roadmap to net zero by 2050 with a strong, medium term ambition well before the next election. To be honest, I want to give the government maybe one last chance and some room to get up, get it right and let them nominate a figure at Glasgow. But it's got to be much better than 26 to 28. They've got to improve

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their medium term ambition and if they don't, will outline our roadmap well before the next election. Net zero, we're committed to legislating. We're committed to and we will provide a roadmap to get there, which is strong and ambitious as it should be.

Ebony Bennett [00:25:39] Thanks, Chris. Richie, I wonder if I just might come to you next. New South Wales recently announced a 50 per cent by 2030 target and called on Australia and the federal government to adopt a stronger target. What do you think's going to happen at Glasgow and is 2030 target going to be ambitious enough?

Richie Merzian [00:26:00] Hopefully, is the answer. So yes, New South Wales basically projected that they'll reduce emissions by 50 per cent over this coming decade, but then went a step further and actually lock that into a target. Now we understand that the federal government might project that it will meet and beat its target of twenty six to twenty eight per cent, which hasn't been increased over the last seven years. But it's not necessary that they're going to lock that into a target, either, and that's what Glasgow is all about. Glasgow is actually marking the five year anniversary of the Paris Agreement. It's been delayed a year like the Olympics, but ultimately it's about increasing that short term impact because the science the IPCC have come back and said We're going to hit one point five degrees global warming. We've already hit that bumper rail in the Paris Agreement. We all need to be doing more, especially countries that haven't up their ambition. As Chris mentioned, Australia's target was similar to the US, the US and now halving their emissions. The New South Wales coalition government suggested that maybe the Austrian government should do the same. That is actually what's required at Glasgow, halving emissions and Climate of the Nation 2021. But my hard copy, as well as I'm going to show that off two shows that is popular just a little bit over the majority 53 per cent want to see Australia take forward a more ambitious 2030 target. And secondly, 60 per cent of Australians want to see Australia adopt a net zero pathway, similar to what the IEA set out in actually limiting global warming to 1.5 degrees. And that also means no new coal mines and no new gas fields.

Ebony Bennett [00:27:35] Thanks, Richie. Chris, coming back to you. You touched on the strong appetite there is for Australians to electrify their homes in climate of the nation. That's electric vehicles switching over their household appliances to electric. And as we heard last week, we did a webinar with So Griffith's electrifying our households. We can slash emissions and energy prices. You touched on abs and the pulses Labor has in incentivising and driving electric vehicle uptake. Can you just elaborate on other policies? You might have the rewiring fund that you mentioned, those other incentives and how important electrification of everything is going to be as we decarbonise?

Hon Chris Bowen MP [00:28:20] Well, electrifying everything. And in making electricity generation renewable, they're the two things that must be done electrifying everything that can be electrified and in making that energy generation renewable. And of course, the big task there and I see it as a massive opportunity for the country is storage because our opponents say the wind doesn't always blow and the sun doesn't always shine, which I think is about as sensible as saying the rain doesn't always hold. So therefore we shouldn't drink water. We store water in dams. We can store renewable energy in batteries, in pumped hydro and hydrogen. That's the case. A building that storage capacity batteries are great for the short term. The other two technologies are better for the longer term. But when we have something called Dunkle Flora, which is German for probably enough for a long, cold winter last winter, it can happen and we've got to prepare the system for that. That is not a reason not to engage renewable energy. On the contrary, it's a reason to spend massively on storage. But you asked me about a couple of our policies, and I'll just briefly expand on a few of those that we've already announced that you would write. We've announced our electric car discount will have more to say about electric vehicles and a National Electric Vehicle strategy, but we started to announce the first elements of that. But secondly, the Rewiring the nation policy look, it's not the sexiest policy you'll ever hear of it. You might see it on the front page, but it's very, very important. Basically, we need a massive upgrade to the transmission grid to get the renewables from where they'll be generated, which primarily the regions where they have the space to generate renewable energy that have the access to the grid, et cetera, to get that to where we consume energy. The

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big industrial estates, the houses, the big capital cities, the suburban landscape. At the moment, the grid can't cope, and we're already seeing large scale renewable installations slowed down, which is outrageous because the great can't cope. So we need to fix that. And so we're going to need billions of dollars of investment in the electricity grid doesn't come cheap. One small extension of the grid, but one strengthening of the grid comes very expensive. So we'll have the \$20 billion fund to invest in the grid, to upgrade the grid so we can implement the ISP, which are the projects which have already been identified as necessary to strengthen the great to get the energy from where it'll be generated into where it'll be used much more efficiently. And I think that's really a key that's a big policy difference between us and the incumbent government. The second one I'll just mention briefly, just to pick one, is you referred to community batteries. I've talked about the storage challenge and what I said, the storage opportunity. Now, community batteries are a part of that. We have the great opportunity as well as the challenge in Australia. One in four Australian houses have solar panels on the roof, which is a remarkable national achievement. No thanks to the federal government, thanks to the Renewable Energy Target and Australian households and some state policies. But one in 60 has a battery, so one in four has a solar panel. What it's 60 has a battery. That's a massive gap and we need to improve storage. Community batteries are part of that because, well, battery costs, I'm confident will come down. It's going to be a while before they're economic for many, many families who just can't afford the big upfront cost of the battery for their house. Community battery, which should be the size of a car down at the local park, perhaps will enable solar houses to feed in the surplus energy during the day and then feed it back cap at night when they're home cooking and they lights on and the solar panels have to contribute that can actually store in a community facility. The other good thing about that policy is it's not just houses with solar that can participate for a small cost a couple of dollars a week, perhaps a family which doesn't have solar panels. Maybe the renters, maybe to live in a shady area they can still feed out at night without feeding in because there's likely to be surplus energy in the battery in the evening. And some estimates are that up to 30 per cent of Australian households, water or whatever reason won't be able to get solar panels. They'll still be able to participate in the renewable revolution if there's a community battery available to them for, as I said, a very affordable fee. They'll be able to participate in that storage mechanism. There's some of the policies we've already announced, as I said in my remarks, a lot, lot more to do. And we're not resting on our laurels, but we have already announced very substantial policies in the climate change space.

Ebony Bennett [00:32:48] Thank you. I know there's a lot of people in the comments who particularly were asking about renters there, so I appreciate that detail on how community batteries can help with that. I wanted to move on now, Chris, to the Business Council of Australia, which this week did something of a backflip and called for 46 to 50 per cent reduction in emissions by 2030. I'm sure you remember as well as I do it was the BCA that called Labour's 45 per cent target economy, wrecking a mere two years ago, with no modelling to back up that claim. And indeed, Australia Institute research at the time showed the cost to the economy were minimal. I mean, how frustrating. Obviously, it's good that they've backflip, but how frustrating is that now that they're calling for that, that stronger target? Well, I don't. Oh, have I lost Chris there?

Richie Merzian [00:33:44] It's obviously, quite frustrating, Ebony.

Ebony Bennett [00:33:46] Yes. Ben, I might come to you on this one, actually, just knowing that the Australia Institute at the time did a lot of research unpacking that myth and the deceptions of the BCA in making that claim. How big was that of an issue at the time and how important is it now that the BCCI has changed its chain?

Ben Oquist [00:34:09] Yeah. Well, like a lot of people woke up on Saturday morning and didn't know whether to gloat, choke or throw up. When we saw the Business Council of Australia declare that not only forty five per cent no longer economy wrecking, there was modelling that produced modelling, which haven't actually seen the full details yet. So I'm looking forward to that to show that there 40 60 to 50 per cent target by 2030 was a good thing. Now, of course, all all acknowledgements have passed or flips in favour of stronger climate action should be welcomed. It's it's a necessary good thing if we're going to

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achieve a higher ambition, and it's disappointing that some people are already out there in the papers today saying that's too high a target and we can't meet it to be lifting the level of ambition and encouraging others to do more. And so encourage the Business Council of Australia to do more to represent its members interests better and the economic prosperity of Australia better. And while they haven't admitted that they were wrong in 2019, at least their backflip on their rhetoric and their approach. But it is important that we all keep our eyes wide open for what any organisation or any government says about their targets, because targets are one thing, but it's the policies to back them up. What is key? And I think whether it's a government adopting net zero by 2050, as they're set to do in the coming days, or the Business Council of Australia now advocating for secrets, trying to get his conviction back on there, we look forward to having you back on there in a second. As far as I the other over at a Labor 100 of you who are tuned in to this webinar. So welcome to all of you were enjoying the discussion while we wait for Chris to get back online. But it's important going back to what I was saying, that whoever it's advertised was able to get off the air, whether it's close to net zero by 2050, by the federal government or the BCA, that their plans have integrity. And I think that's the key thing to watch out for in the debate coming up, whether it's the Business Council saying 50 percent by 2030, what it actually mean by that, do they mean a genuine decarbonisation of the economy, the transformation of our energy sector or when it comes to the government's net zero by 2050? Do they actually mean retiring coal faster at addressing the decarbonisation of our industry? Because otherwise it can be a bit of a smokescreen and greenwashing? I think we've got Chris back on the line.

Ebony Bennett [00:37:08] I think we might do an offbeat as well. Chris, we were just talking about the BCA before we lost you.

Hon Chris Bowen MP [00:37:15] Yeah, sorry about that [unitelligible] overheated and turned itself off. So there you go. That's that's the life we're living at the moment. I was just going to say about the basis I am frustrated about that, but we have a choice. We can be angry and annoyed and frustrated at them for being so late to the party. All we can focus on the fact that they've arrived. I'm going to choose to focus on the fact that they turn up at the party. Maybe it's late, and that's very frustrating for those of us to be prosecuting this case for a long time. Let's focus on bringing them with us working with the business community to exercise those opportunities that are the world's climate emergency. I think it's going to be harder for the government to engage in that scare campaign about job losses. When the BCA is evidence is so clear and the report is so clear. So I welcome the BCA. It's the broad coalition of those who is arguing for very strong action on climate change in Australia.

Ebony Bennett [00:38:17] I'm keeping on that same price and of being late to the party. News Ltd and News Corp has also changed its tune a little bit this week and in climate of the nation, almost half of people agree that there are too many conflicting opinions for the public to be sure around claims made around climate change. How problematic has misinformation been in advancing climate action? Clearly in Australia. And what do you make of that News Corp shift?

Hon Chris Bowen MP [00:38:48] Well, look again, I'm just going to welcome any transition or any change to support a better position, regardless of how frustrating it is, regardless of what has motivated it. We've got to take it and run with it. Misinformation and disinformation has been and will continue to be a big problem. We cannot just assure ourselves that now this council news limited is to varying degrees and you know, it's still early. Days come on board will see how people react to different policy announcements that everybody makes in the election campaign. But we can't just assume that that means, oh well, that means a whole bunch of people will now support action on climate change. We have to those of us arguing for ambitious climate change policy have to counter the misinformation. It will still be there. Clive Palmer will be spending these millions at the election campaign. He's a climate change denier. He's a nominee as your guide to all of us, and he's text messages. Hey, hey! Perpetrates disinformation quite effectively. And it's been about vaccines up until now. It'll be increasingly about climate change, an election campaign. I venture to predict. So there's a lot of millions behind that, and that effectively is a campaign arm of the government, regardless of what they announced today or tomorrow. Clive Palmer is a campaign arm of the

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liberal and national parties, arguing and spending money against a change of government and with disinformation. So whenever we say disinformation, we have to call it out. In the old days, it was a little bit of a political conundrum. Do you even mention it because it gives it attention? I think now I've reached the view and having thought about a lot in the world of social media, you've got to call it out because it will be wildfire on Facebook. You've got to see it. Pull it out, correct it every time. And that's certainly what I'll be doing, and I'll encourage the thousand people on the call today to do because together we're a very, very powerful fact-checking and correction of misinformation unit.

Ebony Bennett [00:40:45] Yeah, that's a really good point. And we do have over 1100 people on the line with us today. Thanks, everyone for joining us. Excuse me, I am going down to questions from the audience. The first one is from Maxine Barrie. They asked wondering what will Labour's attitude be to the Zali Steggall bill, which I hear she's reintroducing?

Hon Chris Bowen MP [00:41:12] [unintelligible] contribution to the public debate, and it should be debated in the parliament and we should get the chance to vote on it. But the fact of the matter is we won't. And the fact of the matter is, and Ali knows, this challenge is not being disrespectful. Bizarrely, it's just a statement of fact. Only government legislation gets added on and divided in federal parliament. So when a private member knows a bill, it's almost a symbolic thing. It's not going to come for a vote. It could come about if the government allowed it on for a vote. And this comes to my point earlier about these so-called modern liberals, the most senior liberal on the committee, to determine the recommendation about whether Zali Steggall a bill will be voted on these trends in the member for North Sydney, who claims to be one of these modern liberals and different. He's recommended that Zali Steggall bill not come up for a vote as the government's representative and it won't come up for a vote. We won't get the chance to vote for it. I'll tell you what, though. We will get a chance to vote for a climate change bill introduced by me as climate change minister under an Anthony A. With 80 government that will commit Australia to net zero by 2050, it will legislate for it and will outline key mechanisms to Good day. And we would legislate early on coming to office. And I say this with no disrespect to Zali Steggall because I think she's a very fine contributor to the debate. Only a minister moving legislation is what changes the law in the country. As Minister for Climate Change, I would move legislation would pass the bill and the country would finally get on with it.

Ebony Bennett [00:42:43] The next question is from Gregory Olsen. He says the federal environment minister Susan Ley has approved for coal mine expansions in the last months. How can we stop this outrageous assault on the climate and her abrogation of the findings of the federal court case? I think that's the Sharma case, which had found that she had a duty of care to protect young people from the climate crisis.

Hon Chris Bowen MP [00:43:07] I think Susan Ley indicated she's got it. She tends to ignore that caucus. So what you need, whether it is just to give a general answer, whether it's specific to this question or other, the questions about what more can be done. I'm sorry, I'm going to give you one answer. Change your government, Richie.

Ebony Bennett [00:43:25] I might come to you just to follow up on that. Obviously, the IEA pathway talks about no new coal and gas. How significant is it that we might be headed towards a net zero commitment while Australia is still planning to expand gas and coal projects?

Richie Merzian [00:43:44] They don't really gel. You can't commit to net zero by 2050. You pretend like everything can continue like normal. We can't have a clean energy transition while we're growing the problem. And that's why the International Energy Agency is being clear. Net zero by 2050, avoiding dangerous climate change that means no new coal and gas. Sixty six per cent of Australians in climate of the nation agreed that they don't want new coal mines going forward. So we're seeing that support translate the same thing in terms of banning internal combustion engine vehicles. We saw again strong support for a majority supporting a limit by 2035 as well. So we're seeing a desire to actually limit the growth of fossil fuels and begin to phase them down. That needs to go alongside a net zero by 2050 plan.

Ebony Bennett [00:44:34] Thanks, Richie. I can hear your jokes in the background again, Chris. The next question

Hon Chris Bowen MP [00:44:41] I'm in my office. My chooks are at home so definitely not mine.

Ebony Bennett [00:44:45] The next question is from Jim Allen. He says the minister, Angus Taylor, has spurned the BCA proposal to tighten up the safeguard mechanism and dubbed this as a carbon tax by stealth. What is Labour's response to this, and can we move past the Abbott era culture war and have a policy literate debate that might be a strong part there from Jim? What's your response?

Hon Chris Bowen MP [00:45:09] Let's give it a go gut. I think, Jim, it's important to remember just the context of the safeguards mechanism and how we got here. The safeguards mechanism is liberal policy. It was created by the Liberal Party when they abolished the carbon price. They said, Well, we'll abolish the carbon price, but it's okay. We'll have these safeguards mechanism a safeguard a safety rule to ensure that emissions don't go up on the big industrial polluters. But now, Angus Taylor, it's sort of illogical. The position is you've got the safeguards mechanism, but the good thing is it's not effective. It's completely useless. That's basically he's his policy position. It's wonderful. We have got it. And it's wonderful that it's useless. Pretty ridiculous argument. We haven't announced a safeguards policy and you know, I'll continue to look at various options across the board. But what the BCA is proposing those socialists down at the Business Council of Australia is not a carbon tax. Let's be very clear, there are such things as carbon taxes that exist, that can exist. The safeguards mechanism policy, which is a a tweaking or a change, proposed more than a tweaking, but a change proposed by the BCA is not a carbon tax. And if we're going to have a debate about the way forward, as Jim says, let's base it on facts and evidence.

Ebony Bennett [00:46:28] Richie, is there anything that you would like to add to that

Richie Merzian [00:46:31] Just that the safeguards mechanism today has been a major failure. The whole point was to cap the emissions from major polluters across the country, and we haven't seen that. I mean, there's actually a good reason why the National Farmers Federation are now acting up about major changes to land use being the source of emission reductions for the last 30 years. Because our energy sector has gotten more carbon intensive, we're using more fossil fuels. We haven't transitioned, and if the safeguards is working, we would get there. And so that's ultimately what we want to see. We want to see the energy sector transition down to net zero, and they can't be by offsetting using land use changes that needs to be by decarbonising 100 per cent clean energy, electrifying homes, electrifying vehicles, electrifying industry. That's what we need to do.

Ebony Bennett [00:47:17] Thanks, Richie. Chris, the next question for you is from Ann Wigglesworth. She says Why has Labor not supported the disallowance motion to stop the coalition from providing taxpayer subsidies of \$50 million for fracking in the Northern Territory? And she also points out that that's against the wishes of the traditional owners. What's your response to that?

Hon Chris Bowen MP [00:47:40] Well, let me do with Ann's question. I will and the specifics. But also let me just say something about gas more broadly, because it's a very controversial topic. I hope it's been displayed in my speech today and other places how passionate I am about moving to renewable economy. We can be 100 per cent renewable. We can be 700 percent renewable and exporting, but we have a big task ahead of us to build that storage. We could not do that tomorrow. We could not turn off the gas fired power stations in Australia tomorrow. The economy and society would not cope without picking up firming from gas. We are going to need gas in the system for the foreseeable future to pay confirm as we move to 100 per cent renewables. And that's going to take some time to build that massive storage capacity, not just batteries for hours, but pumped hydro and hydrogen for weeks. That's the sort of storage capacity we need, and until we get that, we are going to need gas in the system. I'm not saying it's a transition fuel, I'm not saying it's carbon free. I am saying it's necessary for the foreseeable future. Now, if you accept that,

you also accept the need. We extract gas and this what we're talking about, a Beetaloo is an exploration process, it's not actually yet an extraction process, it's an exploration process to see what's there. Again, it's a very complicated debate, but you know, gas has varying levels of carbon. There is some evidence to suggest that maybe the gas under the Beetaloo Basin is lower carbon, the gas which is currently being extracted across the country. We're not opposed to that. That exploration occurring to assess and 50 million that is in keeping with what the support for governments have traditionally given smaller explorers. Not not so much the big multinationals, but the smaller, smaller explorers understand that's controversial. Nobody agrees with it. There are things that we work closely with the Greens on. You know, we're working closely to disallow the expansion of arena into fossil fuel technologies, which is illegal in our view. And call me old-fashioned, I think the parliament should disallow illegal regulations, which Angus Taylor's regulation to do to do that is. But there are other areas where we take a different view. And the Beetaloo has been one of them on traditional owners. Traditional owners actually speak with different voices across the board. There are some traditional owners in support and some traditional owners oppose.

Ebony Bennett [00:49:51] Thanks, Chris. Speaking or sticking with the subject of subsidies in general, the next question is from Jody Festina, who asks How much will Morrison pay to get Barnaby Joyce's support for agreement on a coalition climate change policy? I know we've seen this week the floating of a \$250 billion loan facility. Matt Canavan was talking about jacking up everyone's mortgages. How much do you think is on the line to get the Nationals across the line here?

Hon Chris Bowen MP [00:50:22] Jodie, who knows, I don't know, who knows what they're going to do. I mean, you read these really between the tea leaves every morning in the Australian about who says what? Bridget McKenzie this morning sat down at Spain's National Party policies Liberal Party policy. I mean, this is extraordinary cabinet ministers writing op eds against each other. Where does this end? I don't know. I know this is what I do know Jody. And to all the viewers today, it's rural and regional Australia who will benefit from action on climate change, who can benefit from well-designed policies in agriculture, who can benefit from the investment in renewable technology, energy generation in fuel manufacturing. I want to say it's making more than one per cent of Australia's solar panels here in Australia, and that would happen a lot in the regions if it happens and as rural and regional Australia will pay the price of carbon. Inaction of climate inaction through natural disasters. Through bushfires, through drought. Through falling farm productivity. Falling farm profits. The National Party, while replying this guy and pretending to extract money for the regions, is portraying regional Australia betraying regional Australia. This kabuki dance that we are forced to watch every day between the Liberal Party, the National Party is a betrayal of rural and regional Australia by the people who are meant to represent them. The National Party.

Ebony Bennett [00:51:40] Richie, did you have anything you wanted to add to that?

Richie Merzian [00:51:43] Just if there's one thing that that did increase clearly in climate of the nation, it's the unpopularity of a gas fired recovery. We saw an increase in having a renewables powered recovery, strong investment in renewables as the energy of choice that went up four percentage points between last year and this year, whereas gas remained quite unpopular, only 12 percent want a gas fired recovery. And the other thing to note is that gas hasn't also been popular as an energy choice in and of itself. It's constantly rated the bottom when you do rank energy sources. And that's because gas has also lowered electricity prices, either. It's worth remembering gas supply tripled in the last decade or so and gas prices increased. So gas has also been in uneconomic investment for our electricity, for our energy alongside an unpopular one.

Ebony Bennett [00:52:31] Thanks, Richie. I've got a couple of questions here, Chris, that stick with that idea of the subsidies to gas, but also the IEA pathway outlines and that Richie touched on of not approving new coal and gas. I just wonder if you can comment on Labour's policy on that IEA pathway and that coal to stop approving new projects.

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Hon Chris Bowen MP [00:52:57] So in relation firstly, with Australia's domestic situation, I agree with Ritchie about the gas led recovery. Let me be clear, while I think gas will have to play a role for the foreseeable future, picking confirming there is no gas recovery, it is a fraud. Not one job has been created by this alleged gas led recovery. Not just one job will be. It's a slog. And I think we saw the worst of that last week when the government invested in Andrew Forrest's power plant in the Illawarra and said it was a gas plant when actually it's going to be a green hydrogen plant, they couldn't even bring themselves to admit they were putting money into a green hydrogen plant. They put out a press release saying how the gas led recovery. I mean, it was a lie. There's no gas to the recovery, and they're making up alleged gas projects to try and justify it in relation to new gas and coal in Australia. Firstly, in our view, there won't be any and shouldn't be any new gas fired power or coal fired power stations built in Australia and don't need to be. Certainly not by the private sector, where opposed to the \$600 million the government is spending on the new gas fired power station at Karikari, we're opposed to it and we'll fight. It's not necessary. There's a there's a gas fired power station existing which the government that doesn't turn on a kilometre. So why we need a new one is beyond me. So we'll continue to oppose that intervention, which is propping up new gas fired power. It's not necessary in Australia. If it was necessary, the private sector will get on and build it, and the reason why the private sector is not so I would call. We have to be honest with people, including coal workers, and I am always honest. There'll be no new coal fired power stations built in Australia, and there doesn't need to be an issue to me. And the government pretends that there will be. IS has a \$4 million fraudulent feasibility study into a new coal fired power station at Collinsville. It's a fight, it's a fraud. It won't happen, in my view, and certainly shouldn't happen. It should be no new coal fired power stations built in Australia. That's that's a different relation to coal exports. Other countries are going to handle the transition in their ways, and what I am prepared to do is go into coal communities and say, Listen, the world is changing and decarbonising, and change is not a common way to talk about diversifying our economy, creating new jobs. I'm not going to and say, we're going to stop that. You're mine exporting coal and somebody else is going to export coal. That coal fired power station, which is going to continue so emissions won't come down at all, but you will have to lose your job. That's not what I'm prepared to do. What I am fed to do is talk about supply. Regional economies so that they can prepare for the inevitable decarbonisation of the world.

Ebony Bennett [00:55:35] Chris, there's another couple of questions that kind of stick with that theme of jobs in coal communities and other places where that transition is going to happen. You have focussed a lot on the jobs opportunities in particular for regional Australia. I just wonder if we could end on on that note, can you tell us a little bit more about what the plan is for? You know, when you say you're going to be honest with coal workers, but also for regional Australia more broadly, what are the opportunities that Labor sees as part of this transition?

Hon Chris Bowen MP [00:56:07] Well, I see them probably in three parts. Firstly is renewable energy generation. That's it. The areas where will generate renewable energy are the regions, not cities. Apart from the panels on our roofs, we don't have the space for massive renewable energy installations in our cities. We do in the regions. So that's where there will be construction jobs and it will be ongoing management jobs, you know, running jobs, particularly around storage, because as I've said a few times, we need to massively increase. The storage of hydrogen is labour intensive and we're also in in ongoing maintenance. Take offshore wind, for example. Not only does it create a huge amount of energy, is currently unlawful in Australia, have offshore wind and we've been campaigning to change that. But it's energy rich because it's very windy off the coast. It can go higher, but it's jobs rich because they move so quickly. They need a lot of maintenance. You've got to have ships, take the workers out to the turbines. It's jobs rich. So there's the energy generation. Secondly, this renewable energy manufacturing, which I want us to do more of in Australia, we put 60 million solar panels on our roofs in the last 10 years, and one percent of them have been made in Australia. That's unthinkable that we would continue to do that. In my view, we can be creating. I mean, we effectively painted the modern solar panel, the University of New South Wales, and we're not making them here. That's going to change again. It'll be regional Australia, I think, which is well-placed to take. A big stake in that renewable energy manufacturing, and finally, it's just good energy policy leads to lower energy prices for manufacturers and industry more broadly in regional

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Australia. I was at a factory this morning in my electorate in Smithfield in western Sydney, which has reduced its power bills by two hundred and fifty thousand dollars a year by putting solar panels on the roof. But imagine what good, stable energy and climate policy could do for a manufacturing renaissance, including in rural and regional Australia, as well as the suburban industrial estates spread across our capital cities.

Ebony Bennett [00:58:02] Thank you so much. I'm afraid we're going to have to wrap it up there. I'm really sorry to everyone whose questions I didn't get to. That was a good one on Labor accepting donations from fossil fuel companies, those ones on lithium mining and manufacturing batteries. So a lot of good questions that I didn't get to. I'm really sorry, we just can't get to everything. But I do want to thank Chris Bowen for his time today and for launching climate of the nation. You can find that report up on the Australia Institute website, and I'm sure up on Chris's website will be a copy of his remarks to you here today. I want to thank our executive director Ben Oquist, Richie Massey and the director of our Climate and energy programme. And thanks to all of you who have joined us today and for your interest and ongoing support for climate of the nation. We really appreciate it. Please join us next week. We've got another two webinars on the Centre for Future Work at the Australia Institute is doing an important webinar on the casualisation of work. That should be a really interesting one. And on Thursday, we'll be talking about the rise of India and what that will do for geopolitics in our region. That'll be in partnership with Australian Foreign Affairs Journal. So look out for that. You can find the details on our website and make sure that you subscribe to our podcast. Follow the money that you can find on iTunes or wherever you normally listen to podcasts. The new episode will drop later this afternoon, and in that will be unpacking the New York Post's security pact with the former Ambassador to China, Geoff Raby, as well as our own Alan Bain. So thank you so much to Chris Ritchie and Ben. We really appreciate your time. Thanks to everyone, and we'll hope to see you soon. Thank you. Bye.

Ben Oquist [00:59:51] Thanks, Chris.

Hon Chris Bowen MP [00:59:52] Pleasure.