

The Australia Institute Climate Integrity Summit

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12.45 Panel 2 – Polly Hemming (Chair), Dr Sophie Scamps MP, Stephen Long, Pamela Avusi

Polly Hemming 0:00

Countries shipping their emissions from gas and coal production to a developing country or to another country, but the impact is on a developing country. Or it can mean continuing to emit on shore, but relying on a developing country or community to reduce their emissions. So you don't have to, and Australia is guilty of both. As a skilled practitioner in traditional colonialism, we are also proving ourselves to be quite adept at the practice of carbon colonialism, particularly in the Pacific. With we are, as you all know, one of the world's largest fossil fuel exporters. We don't have to count the emissions from those fossil fuels in our national accounts, Australia's fossil fuel fuels that are contributing to the climate change that is being most acutely felt in places like Papua New Guinea and other areas of the Pacific. Australian owned gas companies are set up in places like PNG Timor Leste, stay until recently Myanmar and the Australian Government's even finance some of those operations. Then the real kicker is that Australian companies and governments can present a green image here. They say that their net zero because they've offset their emissions from carbon credits that are generated in countries like PNG. So today answering the question who plays the price for Australia's greenwash and what we can do about it more importantly, I'm joined by three exceptional individuals who are all extremely qualified to provide a perspective that each perspective will be quite different. So please, let me introduce you to Dr. Sophie Scamps. Actually, I'll just say first, the way this is going to run is I'll introduce our panelists. I'm going to ask each of you a question on a different question, which is a change from the previous panel, and we'll have a bit of a discussion. I'll open it up to questions. So please, let me introduce you to Dr. Sophie Scholes, the independent member for Mikayla, we're sure needs no introduction. So he ran for the 2020 election on a platform of a clean bill of health for climate. In your maiden speech to parliament this year, she called for more action on the climate crisis and for climate. The Parliament recognized climate change as a health emergency. Next to Sophie is the esteemed investigator. Sorry as that microphone Walkley winning journalist Stephen Long, who has just returned from Papua New Guinea, and can now add to his back catalogue of major breaking stories and investigation into land grabs in PNG. And finally, we are incredibly lucky to have someone who helps David behind the scenes with his four corners investigation was Pamela Vusi, who is joining us all the way she has come from west New Britain in Papua New Guinea. She's a force of nature. And it's not her nine to five job but she is the coordinator of the PNG Environmental Alliance, which was critical in having the PNG government put a moratorium on voluntary carbon credit projects. She also works as a forestry expert and as advisor for p&g government on on climate change and other policies, and thank you so much for joining us.

Sophie, I'm going to address the first question to you just to sort of set the scene. I mentioned in my address earlier that Minister Bowen has said that it's important for us, international citizen, and we care deeply about our region. Yet we're one of the biggest fossil fuel exporters in the world. The climate change, obviously, that we export is being felt by communities like Pamela's community. The

government has said that there is no need to stop new gas and coal projects because the safeguard mechanism is theoretically going to take care of that. Okay, we'll just go through the safeguard and we'll be fine. Does this mean that the safeguard mechanism is going to stop fossil fuel exports? No, no, it doesn't.

Dr Sophie Scamps MP 4:10

So the door is wide open for future expansion of coal and gas in this country and also new as well. And we know that there is a global consensus that we must have no new oil or gas. Otherwise we won't be able to the world not just Australia, but the world will not be able to meet our Paris Agreement targets of keeping global temperature rise to less than 1.5 degrees so we know no new oil or gas that is very clear, but the door is wide open for that to continue. So yes, so what we have here is the safeguard mechanism which allows people what allows Australian companies to pay to pollute, so it's polluting as usual. It's business as usual. And I think we're one of the only countries in the world where you can offset that Australian facilities can offset 100% of their pollutions above the baseline. So I think it's Australia and Kazakhstan in a cozy cozy kind of mess there. But I'm sorry, no, it can continue. So that's the great problem as well. And also when we look at I think, for us, there's been a lot of contestation about the actual integrity behind the carbon credits that are in Australia as well. So for ordinary Australians, like you know, all of us here in this, we want to know that we can trust what's happening. We've got this whole system set up and there's a lot riding on the safeguard mechanism. So we want to be able to trust this system that it's actually doing what it'll say it will do so if we are not sure whether the carbon credits are actually doing the job that they're supposed to be that is a major problem. So one of the things that I keep coming back to, which is part of my platform, as well is being able to trust the institutions which underpin our democracy and in this case, we need to be able to trust one the mechanism is like that mechanism, but also, those bodies and institutions behind it, like the climate change authority, which is providing advice to the government. And we know, it all comes down to how do we trust the bodies behind the government and the decisions that they're making a lot of it comes down to the appointments and who's been appointed to these boards. And we have on the climate change authority at the moment, somebody who was appointed by Angus Taylor during the during the gas led recovery. So so it does come down to the integrity of those governor, government appointments, the Commonwealth Government appoints and then having that as a transparent, accountable process that is actually independent of the government. And that is one of the biggest pieces that I'll be working on in this year or in this term in government is the accountability and the independence of those public appointments. Yeah.

Polly Hemming 7:15

If I'm correct in saying it doesn't count the exports, so no, no,

Unknown Speaker 7:20

that's exactly right. So the safeguard mechanism only have a scope one. So that is just the emissions that are created by the facility itself. It doesn't actually come as scope two or three. So that's whatever coal and gas is created. It's exported overseas that has nothing to do with the same kind of mechanism. So we're adding to the global emissions. We're adding hugely to the global emissions

and the safeguard mechanism that we have in this country does not have to account for that and anyway,

Polly Hemming 7:48

just to add to that, because this is an answer. This is going to lead to a question I want to ask Pamela and Steven. Government and industry whether it's related to the safeguard mechanism or not, there's this narrative that you can meet to some fossil fuels, gas or coal emissions, as long as they are offset is that a plausible argument? Because that's the argument that's being used. It's okay, we'll make some we just have to offset them.

Unknown Speaker 8:16

Well, as I said, Australia, you can admit that you can actually offset 100% So as I said, it's painful. It's business as usual pollution as usual. And so there's actually no huge incentive to actually produce facilities to start colonizing. So if you can pay if you can pay to pollute, and it's actually much cheaper to pay for one of these carbon credits than it is to invest in actually decarbonizing them. We have a major problem because we're not actually incentivizing these huge emitters to actually decarbonize, we're just sort of slit you know, and so, you know, that fraud is not there that we need to get we need we know that we need to actually decarbonize the what Australia is doing is leaving the door open for more not only just not decarbonizing, but leaving the door wide open for new oil and gas so we will be exporting more emissions overseas. Right. I mean, this is where

Polly Hemming 9:09

I'm gonna bring you into the conversation because you have a pretty good understanding now of carbon credits. You had your secondary investigation, featuring Professor Andrew McIntosh that looked at the some of the issues there. You've just carried out an investigation into Australia's carbon offsets, or sorry to PNGs carbon offsets, carbon offsets are exploding because the demand is coming from from gas and coal. From what you have seen in Australia, and in PNG, do you feel confident that these are robust mechanisms to use to offset any kind of omissions?

Stephen Long 9:50

The short answer would be, I have very, very severe doubts as to what I've seen and the doubts are on many levels. When I've worked on the story for 730 and I spent months working on that story that featured Andrew McIntosh. One of the things that raised alarm bells for me was that the regulator in this space the clean energy regulator, was doing co branded videos with the industry lobby group featuring major players in the industry, including green collar company in the industry. And I just thought that that was extraordinary. I have not known a situation before where you had a regulator during that. Can you imagine if ASIC was doing co branded videos with the Australian Banking Association featuring financial planners of the Commonwealth Bank and the good work they do? That was the equivalent. And then when I looked at the Australian offsets the integrity body under the successes to Andrew McIntosh, had effectively been stamped with people from from extractive industry backgrounds. It commissioned from a former colleague of Dr. Brian Fisher,

notorious for talking down the need for robust action on climate change. A report and both of these men had done while back advocacy of the coal and extractive industries. Nonetheless, this report, if you went through the data actually showed that nearly 40% of projects in Queensland are meant to be doing carbon offsets through human induced regeneration. I, a farmer does things to keep livestock out or stop using something we kill it and we grow more trees that was the principal. This report commissioned by advocates and clearly intended to produce positive results and had a positive headline. Nonetheless, family reporting projects in Queensland were either static or going backwards. And we put this to the Clean Energy regulator as part of that investigation. After close of business just when a story was due, where they sent out a statement, and it says that they looked at projects that have been directly referred to them in this report, and they only found issues with four and that was x percent, you know, so there was only this tiny percentage of projects that had a problem. They didn't address that other issue at all. And they throw that at you just before deadline, ABC right to respond. You got to work it in and that's how the media is manipulated. But I don't mean no faith in the regulator and the oversight and PNG even less so.

Polly Hemming 13:04

Just to add to that, that's a quite a cool tactic of the regulator. I spoke to another journalist once who said, we don't even want to stop running stories about carbon credits anymore because we get a response from the regulator and it takes us all day to unpack it, and respond again. So it's just not worth our while. It takes a full day or so to write up a story about carbon offsets. So sorry, yeah, check it elsewhere. So it's an effective strategy and it goes back to that issue of simplicity and complexity. This seems like you've just talked about Australia, but this seems like a good time to play a bit of the clip from Monday's episode, which I think it will speak for itself about what's happening in PNG, if we can play that

Unknown Speaker 13:47

as we traveled deeper into the rainforest, on we come across a shocking scene, my screen

Unknown Speaker 14:06

this is not what we expected to see. We asked a driver to take us up and show us the pristine rainforests now. There is rainforest here. But there's also utter devastation from logging within the night. carbon credits project area that's meant to be saving the forests from deforestation.

Unknown Speaker 14:46

This is not villagers harvesting timber. This is commercial lobby. What our cameras captured here has up until now been hidden from the world and from businesses that are in good faith bought carbon credits from this project, or considering buying. Not concedes locking has been going on since June 2020.

Polly Hemming 15:17

That's cherry pemula Stephen can talk about this because he's visited but you live you live with this you know these projects but then anyone you've been fighting what I called carbon catalyst for a long time. This is not a new thing happening in PNG. This has been going on for about 30 years. You lead an alliance of environmental organizations to secure a moratorium on carbon credit projects in PNG. Can you talk a bit about a actually could you talk about the nine project and could you talk about why we wanted that Martin?

Pamela Avusi 15:52

Thank you. Before before we dive into answering your question on why the big Environmental Alliance went into asking the government to put a moratorium on public projects. Firstly, Mr to give a B context or background or polygamy is is recognized unlike other countries is recognized at 55% More than 85% overlap is customary. Which means land owners or business owners or customer owns the land make it easy resources. Also b&c Over 70% of the world's biodiversity and BND is PNGs the guidelines is read in the wall as well. So we the growing trend of companies or carbon developers or carbon trading bias expressing the interest or like we have in the morning, the main the main interest or the main focus on what we call the need to be solutions. With a growing interest Papua New Guinea with with with big government a coordinating agency for the Committee's developing authority, the coordinate the work on climate change, adaptation and mitigation. So properly the name with this growing trend, it is really important for people to get good safeguards on how the benefits are going to be distributed on free prior informed consent. And as well as if, if there's a dispute, what rewards mechanisms do we have in place for our projects of adverts play red bus projects? These are these are very important strategies that we have in place. PNG by itself of Climate Change Management Act, but we don't have a regulation yet to regulate these volatile carbon protests. And we know that this the nature based tourism projects or the carbon projects going to benefit our population as a substitute for loading. But we don't have proper strategies in place. We don't have a regulation to regulate the voluntary carbon projects as yet. And then, then we have like big corporations, big companies or we call them we we like to term them as carbon cowboys coming into into the country. Going going going to committees. They will sit him in communities on signing up projects on paying them pretty to buffer the football for us. And this is not been it went out of control. So the BND civil society through the PNC Environmental Alliance, we we went out the media we put out public statements and we expose what is happening in the country especially on the carbon footprint bias at the limit of people in our communities. So that that led to that led to the moratorium on the orange power project. So we a few examples of wanting to carbon road projects or carbon Coronavirus. New seating with our communities for carbon carbon credits, but it has gone terribly wrong. If we if we said one in the ECP province in the Solomon, and in a very typical example is the ninth new island that are based in Hawaiian province Steven and his team the Four Corners export expose India documentary so night by all means did not conduct the SPF process properly. Free prior

Polly Hemming 20:20

to yes they pray and

Unknown Speaker 20:23

they went into the community once and then asked for me to sign up there the forest area for carbon cloning project. They were dealing with only lights in the communities, the community it's a red class. carbon offsetting is a very technical given, given the literacy level in our communities. He says to be really properly simplify for them to understand what they're signing for. And a night. Night negotiated with me if you see the documentary that four corners Last night saw most of their products to buyers. It's most of these buyers are based in Australia might win when the communities saw the benefits so the benefits of not reaching them. They went all the way up to take me to court and then they themselves don't know what is exactly in that agreement as well. How many how many credits are being sold? How much money did they generate for the project area these these all these information are not revealed to the communities which is which is not the right approach for civil society organizing we did. We did the press. We had to take it out on the media. And then that puts the PNC government and the Minister for environmental damages to pull out a moratorium. We'll jump in on a couple of points

Unknown Speaker 22:08

one. One of the issues is the moratorium has been observed in the bridge. Night was exempted from it. And my resources and Australian based company that operates pretty much exclusively in PNG. It actually had its forest carbon permits canceled by the previous minister may have been influenced by logging. It's a complex picture but the the cancellation said that it had to cease all activity. It still been going on attempting to get consent of landowners. Another Indian company which had the delightful name of connection management services, which resonates really well with Pacific it's been pressing ahead with two projects. So the moratorium was not enforced by the climate change and development authority or the government, which is one of the problems so when you turn to for oversight with this stuff, climate active does no due diligence on the projects, which is a context climate activist,

Polly Hemming 23:09

government body that certifies the businesses in Australia who are buying the credits, and then claiming that they're carbon neutral. Yes, most of

Unknown Speaker 23:17

the Australian buyers do so through climate active. There is an international effectively a sort of privatized regulator registry for any issuer of the carbon credits with a voluntary carbon market called Vera faced in Washington. Vera doesn't go on the ground and do any research it it appoints third party auditors to do in the case of the Night Project auditors to do remote audit from Spain and and when I looked at the list of people they'd spoken to, you can see they've been hand picked by the project developer. There are a group that he did sign to deal with, that other community members argued had no authority, and those people who are in dispute were completely excluded and the contracts were just manifestly unfair, ambiguous, confusing, and the kicker was the guy who ran this country that previously been deported from PNG. He had a real I don't want to call this story if any young people that understood the price and we just thought that probably wouldn't be the carbon baggers, because this guy was a classic carpetbagger in PNG, with a company called Vagon. Build development trying to do timber, chop down forest there and exploit the underlying minerals,

and then an idea of making scrap metal from the remnants of the optenni mine and none of it went anywhere. He also had been previously had law enforcement action by the US companies regulator to a project that was supposed to convert palm oil to biofuel. claim they had finance have factory had nothing. He was he was done in a court found that he had recklessly and or knowingly defrauded investors by issuing a series of false and misleading statements such as six press releases that wrapped up the stock price. of a company. When we raised with grace this with Vera we raised a whole lot of questions about projects and that was one of the things we raised and they sent us through a written response and their initial response. This oversight body for the voluntary carbon market was and I'm quoting, the personal background of a company executive will not be taken into account when certifying a project unless it leads to project activities that lead to the violation of any applicable laws. And I'm just gonna stop there

Polly Hemming 25:50

before we get too deep into the weeds. of the fraud and we might circle back. Sure on that, and I just I shouldn't we shouldn't have been so clear, but I just wanted to give context of what this project is. So majority of carbon credits around the world are not from planting trees. They're from not cutting trees down. So red cost is reduced emissions from deforestation and degradation. So that's

Unknown Speaker 26:11

not being cut down. So

Polly Hemming 26:14

the idea is that the all the imminent threat of logging and what not who is the company that's running this project? What they did is they obtained the logging permits and said, Oh, we won't use them. So they like Australia, they never had any intention of lobbying anyway. Just bringing it back, you know, you were talking about sort of, I will start this and it will have other benefits. This is what what night was saying. As in for the for the community. There's this narrative that carbon credit projects are critical for sustaining white liberals like we don't even we've started to abandon the idea that they need to even be about carbon. And it's, we need carbon markets to get climate finance to developing countries we need, you know, if we didn't have carbon credit projects, then communities in PNG would have to choose logging within their choosing. And if they don't choose logging, then they choose starvation. So carbon there's this sort of higher moral purpose it's been Neverland scene of carbon offsets developments. But then, of course, if the carbon credits are fake, and they're being and they're exposed as they are, in this case, I mean, the community wasn't getting any money, but in the instance that a community is getting money and the carbon credits are fake, then that money stops coming to the community. Pamela, I'll ask you this first, and I'd like Steven to weigh in as well. But your organization is involved with carbon credits in quite in quite a different business model. Very fair arrangements, and obviously because it's community owned, the free prior and informed consent is done. The carbon credits you know robust in terms of what they're doing environmentally. What happens if a business buying those credits? Or what happens if a coal mine can open because a business buys your credits like the credits necessary for your community? That's it seems like a really unfair choice to have to make things. So

Unknown Speaker 28:20

prior to answering your question. Steven talked about the mortar to the bathroom was in place the implementation of the ones recommended in the bureau true was not implemented. So we saw the approved by the this carbon credit bias or equal themselves, common developers. The approach is socio cultural inappropriate for community. We saw our land owners are being exploited. And like you see the documentary, they're still logging going on. And then there are like I mentioned, there are businesses in Australia. Buying grades for all the common developers, brokers in selling their products to businesses in Australia. The question now is what accents can these, like we respect it? May be due respect to these common Coronavirus wires or businesses in Australia. We can't really blame them. It is the project developers on how they do their job with utilities. So the question now is what accents can the credit buyers take us the investigations are being revealed. So going back to your question, for say what the organization is I hope we've been working with communities for almost 20 years. And we've tried the project we've tried the red plus project will it be a designer for red plus, is

Unknown Speaker 30:05

reduced deforestation emissions from before?

Unknown Speaker 30:09

Do this? Yeah, yeah.

Unknown Speaker 30:11

So we've tried

Unknown Speaker 30:12

that the red plus project and further there's a carbon sales, carbon credit sales policy in place and the policy sets as a guide for for us for for set as an organization on engaging with political bias that we anticipate to go into common business with or did we anticipate to work with to reduce the MSS of deforestation and degradation? We have this problem says policy because we felt we have to set the trend of ways to solve the big government. We asked to be really committed to our country's commitment, and we asked to ever sales, carbon product sales policy. We can't just end people we can't just load into money and go into business with fossil fossil fuel companies. When we when our communities are more committed to conserving their forests, but this was for fossil fuel companies. So coal companies still emit greenhouse gas emissions. So the policy includes that policy includes our big community, selling their credits straight to the end users. No, no, like a lot of middle peasants. And then those finances call it biases to be responsible and ethical. And also, the second one is this the critics has to be seen that it came up for more property in the communities who are very committed in conservation, resource management planning, land use planning, and their credits from our minutes forest, over minutes community and they they look at the hopes instead of looking

after the forest, and the findings or is the Saudis commitment, so notice using our our communities or the carbon credits to clean up the mess. For example, like we saw, the problem with month 99 is not following the status quo is not following what is in the parameters management expert properly they exploiting our pupils right. But they say selling credits to some Australian companies for bikes. For example, the Sydney student visited in the document documentary but I didn't really serious about greenhouse gas emissions. And then also in the documentary, there is a company may or company who is also very interested in coal mine called porosity Park and there are research done by some research NGOs in Papua New Guinea on the impacts of this coal company. So the question is really asking is, are these public finances really serious about climate change in the impacts? Or they just want to continue with the innocence and in the potential of climate change, mitigation and adaptation, but they still continue with the emphasis Are they really serious older and they day really committed to seeing rural communities growing in a sustainable manner? Or because they won't manage them, they want to make profit, and they throw all their rubbish to people in their communities to offset their colleagues and they then they can still continue with environmental stress.

Polly Hemming 34:25

I should add my own resources, which is one of the other project proponents in Stevens episode is in partnership with Santos in developing credit, so whatever

Unknown Speaker 34:37

form of exclusivity to yourself, but if it goes, Santos, who will be their partner? And we can just so so this is the problematic thing. The issue you raised actually, I was just going to

Unknown Speaker 34:56

throw to All right, because there's so many questions I have here. We're going

Polly Hemming 35:01

to we're going to go over time. Yes, let's point out that he guesses but Santos of course, I've got pages best interest at heart so instead of being so cynical, it's an Australian gas company. No, I am clearly joking. Sophie, I just want to zoom out again. Quickly, you've you've recently been to p&g which was not I know for climate related reasons. But you know better than anyone that climate and health are so intrinsically linked. These days Australian government, at one point was proposing an official carbon trading scheme with png. So not just these voluntary credits, but these imports Indo Pacific carbon offset scheme, and as far as I know, it's still happening. It's just sort of on the Download hasn't been progressed. Generally putting that aside, is the government acting in good faith with its specific neighbors when it comes to climate, whether it's climate finance, or fossil fuels or

Unknown Speaker 35:58

health impacts? Well, I would say no, because we know as I said, Before, the the evidence is absolutely clear. There needs to be no new oil or gas mines anywhere, you know, if we are to reach that 1.5 degrees of warming to keep it at that. So the PERT the people who will be most impacted by this and some of the poorest people in the world and of course, our Pacific neighbors and they have been ignored. They're ignoring them when we can continue to export our missions overseas. One of the things that struck me about Papua New Guinea is it's the most beautiful country and there is this incredible biodiversity the rainforest is absolutely stunning. This this resource that should be protected. It's unbelievable. But also it is one of the poorest nations in the world, right on our back doorstep. And I was quite startled, actually, in the health outcomes. Have some of them some of the worst health outcomes globally, up there with Afghanistan and things like that. So there's a lot that we should be doing as a partner and at the moment, I think where if we do continue to expand our gas and our coal and our exports, then we are doing a disservice to our neighbors because they will be hit the hardest by climate change. Already our understanding by the wheel there's been a population that has had to move out from their their island in Bergen. Builder had to move so there will be climate refugees. We also know that a country that has some of the worst health outcomes, if we, if they start having more extreme weather events, climate events, then you start to impact things like the security of people's housing, it's already the security of the infrastructure. There's very little infrastructure there already the roads and things get washed away. People are already having to walk days to get to medical hub quite often. So you really will, the impacts of climate change will hit the Pacific Islands harder than a lot of other places. And they're already struggling. And it really hit the foundations of you know, those things that we all rely on security. Sorry, housing security, food security. The other thing that I found really amazing was that there been a drought recently as well. In Papua New Guinea. So things are changing or where do the impacts are being felt as a country that's already struggling in many ways they're gonna be impacted very hard.

Polly Hemming 38:21

Could you add to what Sophie saying, Do you think the Australian Government is taking the threat of climate change in PNG seriously?

Unknown Speaker 38:29

Thank you for the tasks or the area. Referring back to work, Sophie said, Yes, popularity is rich in natural resources, but we very much the best indicator indicators that solve the property needs to be improved on is, for example, our basic services. Our L system is we don't have put road networks our growth rate is triple cheapest. And we we very much doable to aides of assistance from developed countries. And we have a good like a relationship with Australia. The in terms of assisting with development, are we sort of going to be developed in the next 10 to 20 years, opening a new year or visit 2050 stock about sustainable? We, we have these, we, we have these Sustainable Development Goals under the United Nations Framework. Anyway, the the the very thing is lacking in Allegany. is in in this is, this is this is iMovies copious picture of our we have good systems in place but our systems are being manipulated. Our systems have been corrupted because the people who are in the system operating system we have we have all our goals. And if if the if the basic services with our rural population, for example, roll in case in health, then our our people will not be signing they're forced into loving people will not be jumping into any opinions, the left the left time to really sit down and verify are they if they are going into a political type of business, but with this lack of

basic services with this leg off from the arm of the government reaching the people with these seen the system being corrupted in all levels, with our leaders, not really stretching out to our population, then our people have been lured into money into signing all these things. So take going back to his last really, really serious about assisting properly meaning if Osceola is serious about assisting PiFan II in terms of climate change them, why are they contradicting the agenda on a stupid png in terms of adaptation mitigation projects into climate change, and at the same time promoting poor mining in PNG to the mail project. And with the from observation, seeing the presentations in the morning and listening to to all the presenters in the morning saying Australia is the 10th largest exporter of fossil fuels. I I can assume that Australia is not very serious in cutting down properly. We have we signed under the Paris Agreement. We have a commitment to reduce our greenhouse gas emissions. And if we have this type of deals restore with Australia we feel like we feel all the time saying yes to Australia to clean up its mess. How can we fulfill our commitment to cutting down on innocence to the Paris Agreement. So the point I want to stress is the author has to take a step back or to validation and verification on the fossil fuel projects in the country. And also take a step back on giving aid for when you've been given funds to Papa New Guinea to to combat climate change, but at the same time pushing the agenda on coal mine. There are there are few fans of proposed projects and bubbling it is in the middle of a province in God's province on call in my own experience, investigation revealed all the findings on what my agenda in the country's so let's let's see our services, policy development and see public any other smaller Pacific Island countries is someplace to clean up arms. That's that's it we will have

Polly Hemming 43:59

some questions but I'm just very quickly Stephen just wanted to ask. Super quickly. What was the overwhelming response of businesses in Australia when you contacted them about the mining project or the carbon credits, they bought? shock and dismay.

Unknown Speaker 44:16

And the point that a lot of businesses made is that they actually don't. I mean, there are some businesses large enough and well the businesses buying credits. Actually don't have the ability to do so they'd be making a bigger carbon footprint. By doing so then they're trying to offset and so they have to have critical oversight systems and great disappointment and I think what it comes down to is they want it to do what it says on the label. Not not have technical rules that mean you can go for years without having a deal to the oversight body. They just think that's completely wrong. Yeah, we've got Alan fells.

Polly Hemming 44:57

I think he's going to elaborate. Later. I will take questions from Paul I just really quickly so I wanted to add that Australian government to build out using international credits that businesses under the safeguard mechanism combined to offset their emissions. So we've had this big debate about quality of Australia's carbon credits but as part of the safeguard reforms, the government is also changing the legislation to enforce international credits that can be used by safeguard facilities to offset their emissions. And unless you're like Steven, and you can spend a month on the ground, you have no idea what sorts of carbon credits are going to be coming into Australia that Woodside and Santos

can be using. To meet their safeguard obligations. So I just wanted to point out that that is something that to watch to be aware of. It's it's not being rolled out at all. Alright, so finally, I will take some questions from the floor if anyone would like to Oh, I'm sorry. Yeah, I wasn't at there are microphones on either side. Just at the midpoint of the stairs, the gentleman in the beautiful green suit.

Unknown Speaker 46:07

Thanks, Polly. My name is John Schilling. I'm just a harmless retiree camera. I'd like to panels, comments on just a few points. Two points I want to make. One is that it seems to me to be a corollary of much of what's been said this morning about offsets that the net zero concept is basically meaningless. I say that because I think what's the real concept that's lurking behind it is the need to drive down industrial emissions, turn an irreducible minimum, beyond which we can't go. The concept of net was introduced to wipe that bed out. But it's going to be up to the environment to soak up whatever. We're never going to get to absolute and so it seems to me that we should stop using the phrase net zero because it really doesn't have any meaning when you talk about it. You see the reason for it is political. Because if you drive down emissions to a minimum, how do you know when you've got that you don't know you never will. Whereas if you have net zero, you can toss in calculations that as you said, you could drive a Coach and Horses through. So that's that's the first time I'd like some comments on that. The other point is that Global Zero is a real concept. Because we can measure directly when we get to using those instruments on the top of Mauna Kea. We can measure the concentration of co2 in our atmosphere. So why are we saying global netzero? Why wouldn't it be simpler to say peak concentration of co2 in the atmosphere so readily understandable, and they can be measured

Polly Hemming 48:15

in largely as a marketing tool now, and that's, you know, no matter what concept you come up with, it will always be gamed by industry, whether it's you know, if we don't have net zero we'll have climate positive or climate. You know what I mean? Doesn't matter. Yeah, climate ready climate ambitious. It doesn't matter. It will always be gamed I will, because there's a few questions and I went over with my own comments. I will just hand over now to to this person up here. Thank you. Rose grant.

Unknown Speaker 48:46

I'm a grassroots member of farmers for climate action. In agriculture broadly. Carbon the voluntary carbon market is seen as an opportunity. Beyond having an oversight body, is there a credible way that we can actually have a voluntary carbon market that benefits farmers rather than actually putting them at their enterprises of risk? Sophie,

Polly Hemming 49:21

do you think I mean, that's a tricky one. I mean, is there a Do we even need a carbon market wouldn't direct incentives to farmers to store carbon bait? I don't know. Yeah, I think I feel your best place to

Unknown Speaker 49:35

what I would say a couple of things is that buying offsets for your pollution or facilities pollution should be a last resort, rather than the first resort and 100% of what your what your pollution is doing. So I think the very first step should be encouraging facilities. To actually reduce their emissions. That's what we should be doing. I mean, it's pretty simple to actually get those emissions down to a level and then and then there's also I don't know if you know about the safeguard mechanism credits as well which actually went with the facilities that are under the safeguard mechanism. If they do come below their baseline, they can get a credit for that. So they're actually if they do reduce their emissions, then they get a credit. So buying those types of credits is probably more has more integrity to it as well. And then as a last resort, then you go for the Australian carbon credit offsets, but we do you need to be able to ensure the integrity so like you said, is it's going to be difficult to ensure the integrity of carbon credits that are international. As we can see here in New Guinea. We're having enough trouble in our own country as we know whether they've got high integrity or low integrity. There's a lot of debate about that. For farmers. Yes. Look, I don't have all the answers. I'm sorry. I'm sure there's a lot of people in the room that do but yes, I think that if, if there is land clearing is obviously a huge issue and, you know, the biggest the best way that we can reduce emissions is one to stop and then to notaries suck up a lot of co2. So there is I mean, I would be interested to hear what you have to say as well about the avoided deforestation. The problem that we have had up to date is that was that land ever actually going to be cleared and if it was never going to be cleared them to get a carbon credit for it is problematic. So there does have to be like you said, there does have to be more integrity, more oversight. We need to be able to trust the system to make sure that the credits that have been given to farmers or whoever do actually do the job that they're supposed to be doing that they're

Unknown Speaker 51:40

not actually empty. They're doing the task that they're supposed to do and

Unknown Speaker 51:43

that is opposite.

Unknown Speaker 51:47

I think one of the issues is that the underlying assumption in most of the debate is that you need a market mechanism. And you need to monetize first you need to find actualize the forests. That's the idea and this is part of the broader issue with financialization. And I'd like to see if we could imagine and develop non market mechanisms that reward the stewards of the forest in Papua New Guinea and good farmers that don't involve getting into the market that's actually almost the fading

Polly Hemming 52:30

Yeah, I think that's that's a really good point you have to choose between saving trends and a meeting. Why not just pay people, secretaries doesn't have to be a market mechanism. I think we've probably only got time for one more question, and I'm very sorry. gentleman in the blue shirt. Good afternoon, everyone.

Unknown Speaker 52:47

We've heard a lot about shonky finance today and Stephen in particular has been a champion for putting the spotlight on those shocking credits, but wanted to give you a good news story about Savannah burning methodology in northern Australia. I do agree that that that integrity of these credits and transparency go hand in hand and so I'm going to

Polly Hemming 53:10

I appreciate what you're saying. But don't feel like this is the forum to promote a certain type of carbon credit over another. This is sort of the bigger picture so if it's a super quick comment

Unknown Speaker 53:24

and transparency, so of course Northern Australia is happening. My project is strap burn station. It has 20 years of fire history. It's about suppressing fires, especially with 20 years of fire history online. 10 years of a project 10 years not a project. If you go stress, burn fire history. So I think this is the future where individual projects are going to have to show their data to convince people that it's not all a fraud. This is happening across all Northern Australia. Indigenous country in particular is under the savannah Bernie methodology. That mapping is the Success Project to some other point about the

Polly Hemming 54:05

data and the transparency. Thank you for making that one. And, and that's brilliant if all the data is there. That's That's fantastic. That's what we need more of, we probably how are we going for time? One more? Get a quick question from over this side.

Unknown Speaker 54:21

Again, look at a mention here about Net Zero. I believe that that's actually a term in the IPCC reports. And the reason it says net is because if you look at the profiles, what we have to do after we get to net zero we have to go into what's called negative emissions. This is to get to 1.5 target. This is at the order of 10 billion tonnes a year, extracted from the atmosphere and stored permanently underground for a number of decades. That's how we will get to 1.5. So it's not just about cutting what they do now. We've already built up enough that we're gonna have to actively take it back out at the end. So if you guys could make it negative. I don't. Yeah, absolutely.

Unknown Speaker 55:16

I mean, we got to get to net first and I think we have a lot of problems to deal with to get to net zero at the moment. And I keep coming back, but yes, yes, we can, as we know, we can get to net. I mean, sorry, negative as well. And that's an ambition that I think Tasmania has as well. With the exporting renewable energy and things like that.

Unknown Speaker 55:38

That's a good point, though.

Polly Hemming 55:39

Like let's let's just try and get reduce stop the bad things. But you're absolutely right. If we're going to do it, we have to take eventually about negative. I'm very sorry to the people who have questions I'm going to have to wrap up now. So wrap it up now so you can stick to time but thank you so much for this conversation could have gone on Quiz. thank our panelists.