



DIPLOMATS FOR
climate action now

Monday 30th May 2022

DIP4CAN Update 3

Welcome to our post-election update reporting on the work and activities of *Diplomats for Climate Action Now*.

Richard Mathews, Convenor

<https://www.diplomatsforclimate.org>

The 21st May 2022 was our Climate Action Election

You have probably read thousands of words of post-election analysis by now, so there is little that your Convenor or Steering Committee can add that would be of value.

Suffice to say that we agree with the many analyses that argue this was finally the time when the Australian electorate spoke up on climate change. Whichever way you voted at the election, as a member of **Diplomats for Climate Action Now** I hope you feel relieved, as do I, that our government will now take climate action seriously. Our group was one of many that spoke up cogently about the need to take climate change seriously and rapidly get on track to building a safer, better future.

In his first statement to the Australian media after the election, PM Albanese indicated that responding strongly on climate change would be a top priority for his government. At the Quad meeting in Tokyo PM Albanese reiterated his government's commitment to work with others to meet the challenge of climate change. A few days later Senator the Hon Penny Wong, Minister for Foreign Affairs, visited Fiji where again she emphasised Australia's new commitment to climate action and recognition of its importance to regional security. The new government's position on climate change was quickly welcomed by regional and global leaders, such as Fiji's PM Bainimarama, who tweeted:

“Congratulations, @AlboMP! Of your many promises to support the Pacific, none is more welcome than your plan to put the climate first – our peoples' shared future depends on it.”

The outcomes of the Quad meeting in Tokyo are significant, showing that Australia is finally coming to the table on climate action. Our new government recognises climate change as a **national security issue** and has made it a **core focus of foreign policy**, in line with our Quad partners. In Tokyo the Quad leaders announced a Quad Climate Change Adaptation and Mitigation Package: [Q-CHAMP](#). The Q-CHAMP is a technical overview of the climate-focused actions that our four countries are taking and have committed to undertake in collaborating on climate ambition, clean energy, and adaptation/resilience. Much remains to be done and the Q-CHAMP will certainly have its critics for being too limited and perhaps even lacking a sense of urgency, but it is an important start to accelerated regional collaboration in responding to climate change.

Congratulatory Letter to the 31st Prime Minister of Australia

Now a week has passed, your Steering Committee felt it was appropriate to write to the new Prime Minister (copied to the new Foreign Minister), congratulating him and his team on the election and expressing our support for their approach on climate change. We also emphasised the continuing relevance of our [Climate-Focused Foreign Policy for Australia](#), and offered to “support the government in implementing a foreign, trade and development policy with climate action at its core”, and said we would welcome an opportunity to engage with the government

on this over the coming months. The text of the letter is attached at the end of this newsletter.

Recent Activities

Throughout April our members were busy on a range of activities, most of which were posted on our website under our “Latest News” link (https://www.diplomatsforclimate.org/latest_news).

On 12th April, together with four other former and current professional groups, we issued an open letter to the incoming Prime Minister of Australia calling on the future government to recognise climate change as an existential threat requiring immediate national mobilisation. The letter was launched in Martin Place, Sydney, and received wide coverage in the Australian Community Media network, as well as on social media. You can [read the letter here](#).

On 18th April, Janaline Oh published an opinion piece in the **Canberra Times** titled "Australian action on climate change and why our national security and future prosperity rely on it". The article highlighted the nexus between climate change, national security and our future prosperity, emphasising that climate change is a global issue requiring international collaboration and urgent global action. The article is [on-line here](#).

On 21st April an article titled [Solomons security pact: Sogavare, China and Australia](#), written by our member Peter Hooton (former High Commissioner to Solomon Islands) was published in the Lowy Interpreter. This was a timely piece, as you can imagine from the title: Peter's article emphasised that Australia's “greatest ever foreign policy failure” in the Pacific was its failure to address climate change at both a national and international level.

The following day on 22nd April, we issued a media release highlighting that Australia's inaction on climate change was costing us friends and influence in the Pacific, adding that our refusal to increase emission reduction commitments at the last COP in Glasgow had contributed to our declining standing among our neighbours in the Pacific.

Janaline also represented Dip4CAN as a panellist on Monday 16th May at a forum on climate change and the Pacific hosted by the Smart Energy Council. Other speakers included former President Anote Tong of Kiribati, then-Shadow Minister for Development and the Pacific Pat Conroy MP, Greens candidate for Canberra Tim Hollo, independent ACT Senate candidate David Pocock, several Canberra-based Pacific Island diplomats and representatives of renewable energy companies. Janaline took this opportunity to outline the principal thesis of our Climate Focused Foreign Policy, ie that climate action is essential to our international credibility and influence.

Future of Diplomats for Climate Action Now

With the new government's direction on climate change becoming clear, your Steering Committee is focusing on the future of our group and what we can usefully do to ensure our goals are achieved. As summarised on our website we aim to:

- ensure Australia makes climate the central focus of its foreign, trade and development policies
- ensure Australia takes an international leadership role in meeting the challenge of climate change
- promote our Climate-Focused Foreign Policy as a pathway for Australia to a new foreign policy fit to meet the challenges of climate change.

The Steering Committee feels **Diplomats for Climate Action Now** has a useful, continuing role to play, but is seeking feedback from our membership. The consensus of the SC is that henceforth we will need to incorporate and become a legal entity and to charge an annual membership fee to cover costs such as our website, google workspace fees (we have a lot of documents that need managing...) and other incidentals. We have so far relied on the hard work of a group of dedicated volunteers, and generous donations for some of our high-cost

activities. This will continue to be the case, but we can establish a more permanent existence if we incorporate and charge an annual membership fee.

Janaline Oh has drafted some useful discussion points which we share below for your consideration. Feedback would be most welcome, either to our dip4can@gmail.com email address, or direct to Janaline: janaline.oh@gmail.com or both.

Further Reading

As noted above, much has been written over the previous few weeks on Australia's changing position on climate change. So we won't give you a long reading list here. But we have been asked to bring your attention to one interesting article that was published recently in Pearls and Irritations, titled [The Dominoes are falling fast, we face a climate emergency](#), written by David Spratt and Ian Dunlop. Ian is a member of the Australian Security Leaders Climate Group, and a former CEO of the Australian Coal Association (we worked with Ian and others on the [Joint Letter to the Incoming PM of Australia from Professional Groups](#), which we launched in Martin Place, Sydney, on 12th April 2022).

Ian has encouraged us to read the report referred to in this article, which he wrote with David Spratt: [Climate Dominoes: Tipping point risks for critical climate systems](#). This 24-page report outlines the scientific evidence that critical climate tipping points present grave risks in Antarctica, the Arctic, Greenland Ice Sheet, Amazon rainforest and coral reefs (including the GBR). A sobering read.

Request from ICAN – the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons

We have been contacted by Tim Wright, the Treaty Coordinator for ICAN (and an Australian based in Melbourne), about an open letter to the new Prime Minister urging him to follow through with his pre-election commitment for Australia to sign on to the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons. More detail about the treaty can be found here: <https://www.icanw.org/> where you can also find a page about Anthony Albanese's commitment to nuclear disarmament.

Tim is looking for former HOMs to sign on to this letter. He tells me that fifteen former HOMs (including several of our members) have already agreed to be signatories to the letter.

While this is not our core business, we thought some of our members might be interested in this. If you are, please contact Tim Wright directly via email: tim@icanw.org.

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Janaline's discussion paper on the future of Dip4CAN:

Dip4CAN - what role (if any) do we have under a Labor government?

The Steering Committee had a preliminary discussion about options for our role after the election. The election looks likely to deliver a Labor government with a slim majority and a greatly expanded cross-bench, most of whom have been elected on a platform of ambitious climate action.

Threshold questions

Before considering what role we should play, we should consider whether there is a role for the group post-election. It might be useful to frame this in two questions.

Relevance

Does the group still have a role after the election? Are we set up to play this role?

Exhaustion

Do we have the human resources (ie willing volunteers) to take on post-election tasks?

Election outcome

Labor in government will implement the climate policies already announced - Powering the Nation, Rewiring the Nation, the National Reconstruction Fund, etc.

Labor also has an interest in the success of the teal independents: if they can demonstrate to their electorates that they have delivered their key election promises - climate, integrity and gender equality - they are highly likely to be re-elected and, if the experience of Cathy McGowan, Bob Katter and Andrew Wilkie are indicative, are likely to entrench in those seats, thus significantly narrowing the Liberal National Coalition's future paths to electoral victory. Labor will deliver on a genuine national integrity commission and on gender equality - it has already committed to those outcomes and outlined policies and principles to implement them. Climate will be an important test. In particular, an important question will be whether Labor can deliver sufficiently ambitious climate outcomes to satisfy teal demands.

Dip4CAN can still play a useful role in holding a Labor government to account. This will involve a much less active role than would have been required in the event of a Coalition return, but could still be valuable in ensuring that a Labor government fulfilled its election commitments and, where possible, in pushing them to take more ambitious action and to integrate those policies fully into their foreign, trade and development activities.

Dip4CAN could also seek to work constructively with Coalition members who, after an election loss, may be more open to discussion. This could help to build bipartisan consensus on climate action and a bipartisan understanding of the international dimensions of the issue, particularly in relation to the risks and opportunities for Australia in a decarbonising world, not only in trade and investment, but also in national security and development.

The crossbench

Dip4CAN can usefully work with the teal independents to offer international policy expertise to assist them in framing their policy demands. Some of the teal independents have significant international experience: Zoe Daniel was a foreign correspondent and Allegra Spender has run an international business. Nonetheless, Dip4CAN could provide advice on both the international implications of domestic climate policy and potentially on international opportunities arising from domestic climate action.

Dip4CAN congratulatory letter to the 31st Prime Minister of Australia:

To the Hon Anthony Albanese MP

Cc Senator the Hon Penny Wong, Minister for Foreign Affairs

Dear Prime Minister

Diplomats for Climate Action Now congratulate you on your election as Australia's 31st Prime Minister and wish your team a successful and smooth transition into government.

The more than 110 former Australian Ambassadors, High Commissioners, foreign, trade and development officers concerned about climate change that comprise our group were heartened to hear in your first press conference as Prime Minister that responding ambitiously and rapidly to climate change is a top priority for your government.

We welcome the emphasis on climate change in the joint statement at the Quad meeting in Tokyo, and particularly the newly announced Quad Climate Change Adaptation and Mitigation Package (Q-CHAMP). We look forward to seeing your government build on this to broaden its collaboration on climate change with regional partners in Southeast Asia – such as Indonesia – in addition to our important partners in the Pacific.

Many of our members who have previously served in the Pacific were pleased to hear Foreign Minister Senator the Hon Penny Wong articulate to the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat on 26th May 2022 your government's commitment to the Boe Declaration of 2018 and the steps you will take to meet this challenge.

Our group agrees with Senator Wong that climate action is a core aspect of modern diplomacy, and that modern diplomats need the expertise, knowledge and a commitment to solving the climate crisis. This premise underpins our [Climate-Focused Foreign Policy for Australia](#), published in The Australian newspaper on 8th December 2021.

We stand ready to support your government in implementing a foreign, trade and development policy with climate action at its core to create a better future for all Australians. We would welcome an opportunity to engage with your government on how we might do this over the coming months.

Yours sincerely

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28 May 2022