



Diplomats for Climate Action

Latest Developments for our Group

Dear Colleagues

Our group has achieved much since we were established at the end of 2021, but the urgency of the climate crisis remains and I believe our group must continue to constructively critique and contribute to the climate policies of all sides of politics.

During our recent Board Meetings we have engaged in some robust, productive and I must say enjoyable discussions about our [mandate](#), and what areas of work we can usefully pursue in the time we have available (see below for our future work plan). You can read the minutes of our latest Board meeting [here](#).

As former diplomats, we come from across the political spectrum, but we all share the same desire to accelerate the energy transition and implement our climate change mandate. We all want to ensure a livable future on this planet for humanity and all living things.

The Board relies on volunteer members to carry out our work, and so we need to focus on what is the most effective use of our time and resources. Our approach is to promote sensible, well-thought out policy actions that will accelerate the transition to a net-zero emissions economy and society. I encourage everyone to become involved in discussions of where we should best put our efforts. It is sometimes hard to gauge how much input members would like to have in the work we do.

What strikes me is that Diplomats for Climate Action Now has the skills and experience to cut through the rhetoric and show what policies will work. Politics is important, and ambitious ideas are critical to keep the pressure on political leaders. Our unique contribution is the ability to distinguish between political slogans and policies that can genuinely deliver the outcomes we seek.

I personally would like to see a clearer plan from the government, supported by state governments, major industry and business groups, on how Australia will more rapidly decarbonise. I don't want to see or hear any more "greenwashing".

As President and Founder of Diplomats for Climate Action Now, I am also keen to ensure that our group remains relevant and effective. Once our charity registration is approved (see below on Governance and Administration), we will hold an annual general meeting where we will again invite new nominations to the Board, particularly from those of you who would like a greater influence on our direction.

Finally, thank you to those people who have written to us to share ideas, raise questions or support our efforts. This is your organisation and I strongly urge you to step up and share your ideas.

Richard Mathews, President, Diplomats for Climate Action Now

Governance and Administration

Following pro-bono legal advice from law firm Herbert Smith Freehills, we have changed our corporate structure and incorporated as a not-for-profit company limited by guarantee (we are now formally called “Diplomats for Climate Action”, ABN 23 670 913 176). We are now waiting for the Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission to approve our status as a charity. This will make us eligible to receive philanthropic funding from organisations.

As a registered charity, we will then apply to the ATO for tax deductible status (i.e. as a designated gift recipient - DGR). This final step would enable us to accept donations from supporters which they can claim as a tax deduction.

For legal reasons, the Board Members of the new body will be designated “members”. Eligibility to join the Board (and hence become a legally-designated “member”) will remain limited to former DFAT, AusAID and Austrade officers and those who have served abroad on an Australian government posting, and who share our commitment to climate action.

Those in our wider membership who are eligible to join the Board will be called “patrons”. Other people or groups who may wish to support our activities would be called “supporters”. These are just nomenclature issues and generally throughout this newsletter I will also refer to us as a “group” and “the membership”, even though most of you are officially now “patrons”.

I acknowledge the support of Herbert Smith Freehills for the complex work that has enabled us to develop a more appropriate corporate structure.

Recent activities and priorities

Diplomats for Climate Action is collaborating with a range of other environmental advocacy groups to push the government to incorporate climate concerns into the national environment laws, which are currently under review.

We have also been working for some months with a range of environmental groups to urge the government to sign the Glasgow Statement which commits signatories to end public subsidies for international fossil fuel projects. This would require a government mandate to Export Finance Australia precluding funding for fossil fuel projects.

Earlier this year Richard Mathews wrote on how the [government should work more closely with Indonesia](#) on climate issues.

Director Alan March outlined [proposals for the development program](#) in an article published in the Canberra Times, including urging the government to place a greater emphasis on - and more funding for - climate finance, particularly for small island developing states. The government’s recent decision to rejoin the UN’s Green Climate Fund is a welcome outcome of advocacy by groups such as ours, many Pacific Island states and others.

In August Executive Director Janaline Oh co-authored an important report [with Climate Energy Finance](#) calling on the government to amend regulations to unlock significant finance for the clean energy transition and align

government financing more explicitly with its climate goals.

Richard Mathews also made a submission to the DFAT Southeast Asia Economic Strategy Review, conducted by Nicholas Moore AO. This review resulted in the recently released report *Invested: Australia's Southeast Asia Economic Strategy to 2040*, available [here](#). Richard's submission was one of several that encouraged a focus on green industry collaboration, green energy exports and renewable energy/energy transition education and training for our partners across our region. The new strategy adopted by the government includes a full chapter on the green energy transition.

Climate Action Network Australia (CANA)

Board members recently decided that Diplomats for Climate Action will join the Climate Action Network Australia. The Board will review the value of membership after one year. [CANA](#) is a collective of not-for-profit organisations which collaborate to advocate for better climate solutions. Board members agreed to a generous offer of discounted membership. This will give us access to a wide network of other climate-focused organisations and resources. It does not tie us into any specific policy stance. It would also give us the opportunity to share our expertise in climate action discussions. For example, many member organisations in CANA may have a limited idea of how the government actually works, e.g. regarding letter writing campaigns and the policy making process.

Future Work Plans

Over the next few months, we will continue to work with other climate groups on practical ways to incorporate climate concerns into the national environment laws. We will also continue to seek opportunities to place opinion pieces into credible media outlets on issues that align with our mandate. We strongly encourage our patrons to share with the Board the work that they are doing that is relevant to our mandate. In considering any proposal for association with Diplomats for Climate Action, the Board will take into account our mandate, and the principle of practicality: does the proposal promote sensible, well-thought out policy actions that will accelerate the transition to a net-zero emissions economy and society?

We will also be leaning into the need to assess policies in relation to their practical outcomes, including any potential unintended consequences. In doing so, we will prioritise support for policies that will genuinely lead to emissions reductions, particularly, in the short term, in transitioning the electricity sector to renewable energy.

Future Funding requirements

Under the new structure, Diplomats for Climate Action is a not-for-profit company limited by guarantee. The Board thought it best not to request annual membership fees or donations, but will occasionally reach out for donations to cover operating costs. Once we obtain tax-deductible status, we will alert you.

We reiterate our thanks to all patrons who have donated so far: everything we have achieved to date, as well as administrative costs relating to governance and maintenance of the website, has been possible only because of your

generosity.

If you are interested in making a donation please contact us via email at dip4can@gmail.com.

Regular costs include domain name and website hosting fees, membership fees for Climate Action Network Australia and potentially other useful like-minded organisations (see section above re CANA), and modest costs of travel if Board members or patrons represent our group at conferences or meetings. One-off costs could include contracting experts to write reports on specific issues of concern to our membership, or placing an advertisement in papers on issues of concern to our membership.

A financial statement of income and expenditure for the 2022-23 financial year can be found [here](#).

Your Board of Directors

Short bios of Board Members can be found [here](#). Denis Blight AO has now left the board, and we thank Denis for his great contribution to the growth of the group. In his place we welcome Luke Brown, a former DFAT officer who has served in Indonesia, Samoa, Fiji and San Francisco. He is currently Head of Engagement and Partnerships at the Climateworks Centre.

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