



THE HON CHRIS BOWEN MP
MINISTER FOR CLIMATE CHANGE AND ENERGY

MC24-002135

Ms Susan Templeman MP
Chair
Standing Committee on Petitions
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

petitions.committee.reps@aph.gov.au

Dear Chair *Susan*

Thank you for your referral of 12 February 2024 of a petition for a ceasing of all activities related to solar radiation management and geoengineering (EN5667). I appreciate the time you have taken to bring this matter to my attention.

The Australian Government is firmly committed to taking action on climate change. The government has legislated targets to reduce Australia's emissions by 43 per cent below 2005 levels by 2030 and achieve net zero by 2050 and committed over \$40 billion to decarbonising our domestic economy. Current emissions projections, based on implementation of policies such as the reformed Safeguard Mechanism and the expanded Capacity Investment Scheme show that Australia is in striking distance of the 2030 target. The government is also committed to transforming Australia's electricity system to achieve its goal of 82 per cent renewables by 2030.

The government is also working with states and territories and industry on emissions reduction across the economy.

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) is a trusted source of scientific advice, and its work continues to inform the government. The recent IPCC Sixth Assessment Report provides an update on the latest climate science, and options for mitigating and adapting to climate change. In this report, the IPCC concluded that all proposed forms of climate geoengineering are 'speculative technologies' (section 1.4.3 of www.ipcc.ch/report/ar6/wg3/chapter/chapter-1/), and that there are no available technologies that could be used to affect the global climate (section 4.6.3 of www.ipcc.ch/report/ar6/wg1/chapter/chapter-4/).

The government's stance on climate geoengineering, including solar radiation management (SRM), is based on the best available science and commitment to international cooperation and leadership.

As a party to the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity, Australia has agreed to restrict all climate geoengineering, including SRM, unless it is for small-scale scientific research or unless the risks and scientific basis are appropriately considered (Decision X/33, 2010).

Additionally, in October 2023, the government successfully secured a decision under the *United Nations Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer* for researchers to consider risks and uncertainties for the ozone layer in any scientific studies or assessments related to high-altitude climate geoengineering (stratospheric aerosol injection), where small particles are released high in the atmosphere to reduce solar radiation and warming (Decision XXXV/4, 2023). Under this decision, member countries will also be provided updates on developments in stratospheric aerosol injection to assist with understanding of the potential impacts of this technology on the ozone layer.

Currently, Australia does not have a specific domestic regulatory framework for geoengineering activities. There is however legislation at the national and state level that provides protection for the environment against unacceptable environmental impacts of all types of activities. This includes the Commonwealth *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* and the *Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Act 1975*.

As part of the government's commitment to protecting the World Heritage-listed Great Barrier Reef, the government is currently funding one research project into SRM. Climate change is the biggest threat to the Reef, and many World Heritage sites globally. The Reef Restoration and Adaptation Program (RRAP) is investigating the use of marine cloud brightening, where salt from sea water is sprayed into the air to help form clouds, to prevent or reduce localised bleaching stress on coral reefs by reducing the amount of sunlight reaching the Reef. More information on this program is available on the RRAP website at gbrrestoration.org/program/cooling-and-shading/.

Thank you for bringing the petitioners' concerns to my attention.

Yours sincerely

CHRIS BOWEN