

28/01/2025

Ms. Alicia Payne MP  
221 London Circuit,  
Canberra, ACT, 2601  
[Alicia.Payne.MP@aph.gov.au](mailto:Alicia.Payne.MP@aph.gov.au)

Dear Ms. Alicia Payne MP for Canberra,

In May 2024, we welcomed your decision to establish a Climate Reference Group in the ACT, made up of local environmentalists and climate advocates. We believe in the importance of working with the government to ensure a safe climate for all Australians.

It is with deep disappointment that we now write to you to inform you of our joint resignation from the Climate Reference Group. We cannot, in good conscience, continue to participate in, and implicitly endorse, the Labor Government's continued disregard for genuine and science-aligned climate action. The Labor Government's approval of 32 new or expanded coal and gas developments since taking office is a betrayal of the values of Canberrans and the urgent need to phase out fossil fuels to avert climate disaster.

Canberra is one of the most progressive cities in Australia. We are a community that loves our environment and cares for our children and future generations. Canberrans expect our elected representatives to stand up for our beautiful nature, and to do everything they can to stop runaway global warming.

The Albanese Labor Government's election platform in 2022 emphasised the importance of responsible environmental and climate action. This Government has taken some important steps forward, including the commitment to zero extinctions and reducing greenhouse gas emissions by 43% by 2030. Yet, when it comes to tackling Australia's largest contribution to the climate crisis - its major fossil fuel extraction and export sector - this Government continues to prioritise the interests of coal and gas corporate profits over our communities, environment and planet.

The Labor Government's continued approval of fossil fuel projects shows that you are not serious about tackling the climate crisis. At the end of 2024, just before Christmas, the Environment Minister approved the expansion of four major coal mines to enable continued coal extraction until the 2060s. Cumulatively these mines will produce more than 850 million tonnes of carbon pollution in their lifetime. That is equal to twice Australia's annual emissions.

In 2025, the Albanese Government has before it a number of major coal and gas approvals awaiting government sign-off, including Woodside's [Burrup Hub/North West Shelf Extension gas project](#). If approved, the project would produce over 6 billion tonnes of carbon pollution to 2070. This project cannot go ahead.

Approving new fossil fuel projects is climate denial. There can be no new coal mines or gas projects if we are to avoid the worst of climate collapse.

It is for this reason that we cannot in good faith continue to be on your Climate Reference Group.

Words and meetings, without action, are not good enough. While we appreciate the intention of this group, participating in these meetings takes away from the limited time we have to make impactful change.

2024 was the hottest year on record and the first time that the globe experienced over 1.5C of global warming. There is no interest, nor fossil fuel corporate profit, that justifies continued Government approval and support for climate wreckers.

We call on you to uphold your election mandate from the Canberran people - urgent and ambitious climate action. We are happy to discuss our concerns with you and would be willing to reconsider re-joining the Reference Group if and when the Government commits to the science and agrees to no future coal or gas approvals.

Kind Regards,

Dr. Simon Copland (Executive Director, Conservation Council ACT Region)

Hannah Vardy (Australian Youth Climate Coalition Canberra Facilitator)

Ruth Ragless (Rising Tide Canberra organiser)

Anne Gunn (People's Climate Assembly, committee member)

Margaret Clough (climate activist with Extinction Rebellion, Rising Tide, previously resigned following the government's 'New Gas Strategy, May 2024)

Amy Blain (Chair Peoples Climate Assembly, Co-Lead of ACF Community Canberra and Electrify Canberra previously resigned on 25 September 2024 following approval of coal mines)

Geoffrey Nelson (previously resigned on 16 October 2024 due to coal mine approvals)