



Australian Coral Reef Society Inc.

Promoting scientific study of Australian Coral Reefs austcoralreefsoc@gmail.com

24 July 2017

To: The Honourable Malcolm Turnbull, Prime Minister, Commonwealth Government of Australia

Re: Immediate action to reduce carbon emissions to protect the Great Barrier Reef

On the occasion of the Australian Coral Reef Society Conference, 16 – 18 July 2017, Townsville, Queensland, I am writing to you on behalf of our members and delegates, including over three hundred coral reef scientists, managers, policy makers and stakeholders. The Australian Coral Reef Society is the world's oldest organisation concerned with the study and conservation of coral reefs, and the leading organisation that represents and communicates scientific understanding of coral reefs in Australia. As is well known, coral reefs are among the most biologically diverse ecosystems on the planet and provide coastal protection, livelihoods, food security and many other ecosystem services to over 500 million people worldwide. Globally, coral reefs are valued at over \$1 trillion, with Australia's Great Barrier Reef having a net worth of \$56 billion. Importantly, the Great Barrier Reef is priceless to Australia's indigenous and cultural heritage, and our national identity.

Australian coral reefs are now collapsing under ongoing and rapid climate change. The past three years have seen the worst mass coral bleaching in history occurring across the globe. For the first time we have seen back-to-back bleaching events on the Great Barrier Reef resulting in the loss of more than half of shallow-water corals. The devastating damage from climate change is irrefutable, and will be exacerbated if the proposed mines in the Galilee Basin go ahead; they alone would become the world's biggest and most harmful sources of atmospheric pollution. These impacts directly threaten Australia's responsibilities for stewardship of the Great Barrier Reef under the World Heritage Convention.

It is not too late to step up action to reduce carbon emissions in line with the Paris Agreement (COP21), but we must act now. Corals may survive if global warming is kept well below 2°C from pre-industrial levels. We call upon the Australian Government to lead action on this critically important global issue. We ask that you stop endorsing the export of thermal coal and revoke the approval of any new mines. Any thermal coal extracted from Australia will greatly add to global carbon emissions, whether it is burned here or elsewhere. We need to take responsibility for this and act now. Indeed, we would like to arrange a meeting to discuss your plans on this issue as a matter of urgency. The Australian Coral Reef Society would like to work together with you to restore Australia's reputation as a world leader in environmental governance.

Yours faithfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "A. S. Hoey".

Andrew Hoey, PhD
President, Australian Coral Reef Society

cc: Hon Josh Frydenberg MP, Hon Bill Shorten MP, Hon Mark Butler MP