



Think Globally. Act Locally!

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**MEDIA RELEASE**

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**Re: Government Inaction on Climate Change**

With the recent widespread floods in parts of Australia, attention has been again focused on human-induced climate change, and the initiatives – or lack thereof – to mitigate against it.

The following could be considered a (partial) list of key climate change issues (adapted and expanded from Hughes, 2014):

- Commit to deep and rapid cuts in greenhouse gas emissions
- Embed climate adaptation planning into all levels of landscape and resource management
- Focus on conservation not preservation
- Expand, protect and adequately resource the national reserve system
- Stop clearing native vegetation
- Ensure revegetation schemes utilise more appropriate species mix for the environment
- Take a long-term approach to land use planning around urban environments
- Restore degraded landscapes to increase connectivity
- Increase resources allocated to reducing other environmental threats
- Recognise the carbon-storing potential of landscapes, but not at the expense of biodiversity conservation
- Promote ecosystem-based adaptation strategies to reduce risk to human sectors from climate change
- Do not rely solely on carbon offset credit schemes

Successive Australian governments have, sadly, lacked the drive to implement policies and initiatives to address these and other issues.

As Australia has multiple layers of democratic government – Federal, State and Local – this gives the population an opportunity to press for change. Very broadly, the three levels of government have following levels of responsibility:

<b>FEDERAL</b>	<b>STATE / TERRITORY</b>	<b>LOCAL</b>
Post, telephones and the internet	Public transport	Rubbish collection and recycling
Money	Schools	Parks, sports fields, swimming pools
Immigration	Hospitals	Pet control
Defence	Public Housing	Parking

The Federal government is also responsible for signing and abiding by various international agreements; including many environmental ones.

Therefore, when considering issues such as climate change, all three levels of government can – and should - be involved in policies and strategies that are within their control and, can be lobbied and pressured into taking long-term solutions to the problems we face.

For example, only 2% of goods transported between Sydney and Melbourne are done so by rail. This needs to be addressed and lobbying of State and Federal government to enact initiatives to encourage more freight between Australia's two largest to be carried by rail.

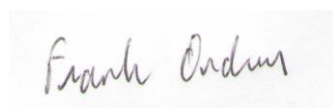
Local governments should be lobbied to take longer-term views of land use planning. When one drives through the new suburbs and housing estates, there seems to be little forethought to ensuring appropriate infrastructure. Road systems quickly become clogged with traffic, with limited room for expansion or realignment; public transport is almost non-existent; bike lanes are an afterthought, and, in the haste to build, little consideration is given to ensuring areas of native vegetation are left; or, indeed, the opportunity for small-scale community farms to be created

Many issues and initiatives have cross-sectorial impacts: planting or expanding native vegetation will help not only with climate change, but, also, ecosystem and habitat management, biodiversity conservation, and water and soil conservation, as well as cultural impacts with the indigenous communities across Australia.

The opportunities for engagement and action across the three levels of government are almost limitless. Unfortunately, it could be that people just don't care enough about environmental matters when faced with rising costs of living. Indeed, certain influential political figures – who hold anti-environmental views – play on fears that environmental policies (such as enhanced emissions controls; transition to cleaner energy and so on) will lead to job losses and higher costs.

It is time to put appropriate pressure on the various levels of government to take a long-term and sustainable approach to mitigating climate change.

(Hughes, Lesley. 'Climate Change' in *Ten Commitments Revisited: securing Australia's Future Environment* Edited by David Lindenmayer, Stephen Dovers and Steve Morton. Pages 217-225. Collingwood: CSIRO Publishing. )

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Frank Ondrus". The signature is written in dark ink on a light-colored, slightly textured background.

Frank Ondrus, President – HOPE Inc., ph. 07 4639 2135  
Written by Jason Dingley, Media Officer (Vic)