

Appendix One

Dear Dr Ryan

I refer to your email of 29 August 2013 to the former Department of Industry, Innovation, Climate Change, Science, Research and Tertiary Education lodging a complaint against the Department for Climate Change, that the department has misrepresented the characteristics of both carbon dioxide as a greenhouse gas and emissions of carbon dioxide from coal-fired power stations. The Department of the Environment now has responsibility for domestic climate change policy matters. I apologise for the delay in replying to you.

Carbon is an essential part of natural and man-made systems. However, carbon dioxide becomes a pollutant when the concentration in the atmosphere results in harm to the functioning of the Earth's climate system. The current global concentration of carbon dioxide is almost 400 parts per million (ppm), well beyond the natural range of the last 800,000 years of between 172 and 300 ppm. While many pollutants occur naturally, it is not until they reach a certain level of concentration that they become harmful. The harmful impacts of increases in carbon dioxide are already being observed, including warming of the Earth's climate system and increasing acidity of the oceans. Coal-fired power stations are a major source of anthropogenic carbon dioxide emissions globally.

The terms 'carbon' and 'carbon pollution' have often been used in the public discourse about climate change in Australia and internationally. In some cases the term 'carbon dioxide' is simplified to the term 'carbon' to enable members of the community to better understand and engage with the discourse on climate change.

I note that your email included images from information products about climate change published by the former independent Climate Commission. As you would be aware, the Minister for the Environment, the Hon Greg Hunt MP, dissolved the Climate Commission on 19 September 2013. In deciding to dissolve the Climate Commission, the Minister explained that it was part of the government's commitment to streamline processes and avoid duplication of services. The Climate Commission's function to provide independent advice and analysis on climate change will be continued by the Department of the Environment, informed by the Australian Government's two principal climate science agencies the Bureau of Meteorology and CSIRO.

Regards

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A/g Assistant Secretary

Climate Adaptation Branch

Department of the Environment