

31 May 2023

The Hon Catherine King MP  
Minister for Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Local Government

The Hon Chris Bowen MP  
Minister for Climate Change and Energy

Dear Minister King and Minister Bowen,

**RE: Australian Government's Consultation on a Fuel Efficiency Standard**

First, I want to thank you both for your government's leadership in committing to stronger emission reduction targets, and in line with this, after a decade of inaction, starting the process to introduce a **New Vehicle Efficiency Standard (NVES)** – otherwise referred to as a fuel efficiency standard.

It is incredibly heartening to know that we finally have a federal government that is taking the challenge of emissions reduction seriously and that is committed to supporting the shift to a **net zero economy** that captures the enormous associated **economic benefits**.

While I have led the development of a submission to this consultation in my capacity as Head of Policy for the Electric Vehicle Council, and I fully endorse the recommendations outlined in that submission, I write to you here in a personal capacity as a transport scientist.

I have been fortunate to work on sustainable transport policy for the past 15 years, including completing two PhDs in low and zero-emission vehicle policy at KTH in Stockholm and QUT in Brisbane, writing electric vehicle policy for governments, analysing global road pricing schemes, chairing the expert group FACTS (a Framework for an Australian Clean Transport Strategy<sup>1</sup>), being a member of the International EV Policy Council, and more recently, representing Australia as a lead-author of the transport chapter for the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change's (IPCC's) 6<sup>th</sup> Annual Report.

As outlined above, I currently have the privilege of being Head of Policy at the Electric Vehicle Council, working with close to 100 Australian businesses to support the electrification of transport. In parallel, I run my own mobility-as-a-service company (MaaS), ODIN PASS, which in partnership with the Queensland Government, The University of Queensland and iMOVE CRC, has recently celebrated 1 million public transport trips being booked through our platform - which provides unlimited transport subscriptions for travel across South East Queensland<sup>2</sup>.

Over the course of these experiences it has become abundantly clear to me that we face a mammoth task in reducing emissions, and the transport sector is not immune from this significant challenge.

Australia's transport sector must follow the AVOID-SHIFT-IMPROVE framework<sup>1</sup> to decarbonise in line with our emission reduction targets. While I am an active supporter of AVOID and SHIFT strategies, including expanding schemes like MaaS to encourage a shift from private vehicles to public, active and share transport, in line with the IPCC, International Council on Clean Transportation, and others, I also recognise that electric vehicles, including cars, buses and trucks, are the single most important technology for decarbonising transport.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://transportfacts.org/>

<sup>2</sup> <https://odinpass.com.au/>

In the Australian context, the **single most important policy** at present for supporting the decarbonisation of the Australian car fleet is a **globally competitive, robust and ambitious New Vehicle Efficiency Standard (NVES)**. This looks like Australia achieving a fleet average emissions rate for all new light vehicles of less than 60 grams of CO<sub>2</sub> per kilometre by 2030 – in line with global markets like the US, EU and New Zealand – with minimal concessions/bonus credits.

Without a NVES that aims to catch up with markets like the US, EU and New Zealand by, or ideally before 2030, Australia will continue to be a lower priority for the supply of low and zero-emissions vehicles, including electric vehicles.

Every additional year we lag these other markets is another year that Australians are forced to pay higher fuel bills, breathe in more transport pollution, and continue to be dependent on imported, foreign fuel for transport.

As a soon-to-father, I want my daughter to grow up in a country that is actively moving towards a net zero economy, and as an integral part of this, a zero-emission vehicle fleet.

When she turns 7 years old in mid-2030, I want Australia to have achieved over 50% of all new vehicles sold being electric, and for us to have exceeded our 43% emission reduction target.

When she turns 17 years old in mid-2040 I want her first car to be a zero-emission vehicle, which she will be able to choose from an abundant second-hand zero-emission vehicle market. I also want her to have the opportunity to choose a career working in a thriving domestic renewable energy industry that includes a local EV value chain – enabled thanks to Australia supporting a strong, local EV market via a globally competitive NVES, which will in turn provide the necessary confidence to attract private investment in this sector.

And when my daughter turns 27 years old in mid-2050, I want Australia to have already achieved its target of a net zero economy – including a zero-emission vehicle fleet, and that she will have the confidence to consider raising her own family in a prosperous nation, that has embraced the enormous economic opportunities presented to us through a cleaner, greener future.

There are some voices that will argue for a **weaker new vehicle efficiency standard out of selfish, commercial interests**.

These parties won't be honest and won't tell you or the public that **they don't support your government's emissions reduction targets**.

They won't be honest and tell you **they want Australians to continue to be dependent on imported, foreign fuel** instead of using Australian-made energy for transport.

They won't be honest and tell you **they don't care if Australians have to continue breathing in carcinogenic vehicle pollution**, because they don't have to pay the public health costs.

I am driven by the fact that I can honestly say to you both that **all of my work firmly supports the Australian Government in achieving its climate targets**, and even more importantly, **supports the development of a sustainable and prosperous Australia for my family, and all other Australians**.

I am imploring both of you as Federal Ministers to act in the interest of all Australians, including future generations, and not be swayed by **vested interests who are simply trying to protect their bottom line while asking the government to shift the burden of harder and faster emissions reductions from global carmakers onto Australian farmers, manufacturers, energy suppliers, households, and other local businesses**<sup>3</sup>.

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<sup>3</sup> <https://influencemap.org/briefing/The-FCAI-and-Australian-Climate-Policy-22253>

Ultimately, I am asking both of you to **support the introduction of a globally competitive NVES** that will deliver the wide range of low and zero-emission vehicles that all Australians deserve to have access to.

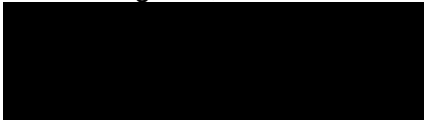
At this moment in history, you both have the opportunity to make a major difference to the future direction of the Australian transport sector, and your decision will have a material impact on whether or not Australia achieves its emissions reduction targets, including net zero, over the coming decades.

As a result, it is not an overstatement to say that your decision on this policy will shape what the future of Australia looks like for us and future generations to come.

Thank you for your time and your continuing hard work for our country.

I look forward to continuing to support the government in its goal to decarbonise Australia's transport sector, including the introduction of a globally competitive new vehicle efficiency standard.

Best Regards,



Dr Jake Whitehead

BEng (Civil)(Hons) MEng LicEng(TransportSystems) PhD(TransportEng) PhD (TransportScience)