

The Hon. Tanya Plibersek MP  
Minister for the Environment and Water  
PO Box 6022  
House of Representatives, Parliament House  
Canberra ACT 2600  
[jobsroundtable@environment.gov.au](mailto:jobsroundtable@environment.gov.au)

26 September 2022

Dear Minister Plibersek,

Thank you for convening the roundtable on 29 August 2022 to gather views from stakeholders about how to transform the Australian economy to value the environment and drive new industries.

My colleague and I, Professor Stuart White (Director of the Institute for Sustainable Futures), agree with the view expressed by a majority of colleagues at the roundtable that the problem definition is how to rewire the Australian economy so that natural systems are properly valued and how to get an economic return so that investment will flow into this area. In partnership with Government, Industry and the Third Sector, we are committed to finding solutions to tackle this global challenge.

By way of background, the University of Technology (UTS) leads by example in cultivating sustainability values in our students and staff by demonstrating leadership in our research, learning, campus operations and community collaboration. Sustainability is a key foundation to UTS's distinctive identity and is integrated across all areas of the university. As a university and public institution that exists for societal benefit, UTS provides national leadership and best practice in greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions reduction. For example:

- In 1997, the Institute for Sustainable Futures was established as a flagship research institute of the newly formed UTS.
- In an Australian first in 2015 UTS signed a Power Purchase Agreement with a solar farm in Singleton.
- In 2016 the university was one of the first five Australian universities to commit to the UN Sustainable Development Goals.
- In September 2019 UTS was the first Australian university to declare a **Climate Emergency**.
- UTS is now exploring options for how we can become a carbon neutral university. Each year UTS publishes on its sustainability performance which can be found here: <https://www.uts.edu.au/partners-and-community/initiatives/uts-sustainability/governance/our-performance>.

With regards to the roundtable, Professor White and I offer the following observations and recommendations, acknowledging that this is a complex policy space where the health of the environment and the wealth of the economy are often juxtaposed unhelpfully as competing priorities:

- The increasing risks to the economy and public good from climate and environmental changes means that Government needs to take a leading role in reversing the decline in natural systems.
- The complexity of the increasingly extreme impacts means that Government cannot face the challenge alone and requires a strong democratic approach to reverse the decline in the nature environment – not only in relation to carbon, but also nutrients, soil and

water. Tackling these issues together offers considerably greater benefits than if addressed individually [\\_\\_\\_\\_\\_ \(https://www.nature.com/articles/s41559-020-1242-2.pdf?origin=ppub\)](https://www.nature.com/articles/s41559-020-1242-2.pdf?origin=ppub).

- There are huge financial opportunities in the environment space, particularly in supporting entrepreneurial activities that have the potential to scale globally, providing growth and employment for the Australian economy.
- UTS (and the university sector more broadly) is a problem solver. We partner with industry, government and communities to tackle challenges together, and scale research that can create economic and employment opportunities. In this arena, there is an urgent need to invest in solutions for deployment beyond 2030 if we are to reach net zero by 2050; solutions that require immediate and long-term investment so that the community will be able to maintain the momentum after 2030 (for instance, blue carbon).
- Sadly, given the delays in action, the scale of environmental decline means we must now invest (and train the Australian workforce) to live (resiliently) in a disrupted world.
- With declining economic diversity in Australia, we need to grow a broader-based economy. But in many sectors (for instance, energy, financial services, and AgriTech), the market is not sufficiently mature, requiring us to partner with other regions, such as Europe, that will allow us to accelerate the development and deployment of solutions in Australia.
- Importantly, UTS also offers valuable training and upskilling across all different levels of the Australian workforce, not just through degrees, but also tailored microcredentials and enterprise learning. This will include supporting communities at risk, through a [Just Transition](#), but also entrepreneurial support.

At the conclusion of the roundtable we noted your ambition for Australia to become a world leader for the developed world and a trailblazer for developing worlds. We commend this ambition and draw your attention to [UTS's Pacific Connect Program](#), delivered on behalf of the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, which aims to facilitate greater exchange of ideas and expertise between Australia and the Pacific, fostering enhanced collaboration and business opportunities, especially in the application of digital technology to support sustainable development.

We appreciate the opportunity to contribute and would welcome future engagement over this important issue. Please do not hesitate to contact Professor White and myself should you wish to discuss further.

Yours faithfully,

Professor Christian Turney  
Pro Vice-Chancellor, Research