

## Scott Morrison hits back after Fiji PM's lecture on climate change



Scott Morrison greets officers during a visit to the Blackrock Camp Project in Nadi, Fiji, yesterday.  
Picture: AAP

[Richard Ferguson](#), Reporter, 12:00AM January 19, 2019

Scott Morrison was forced to defend his stand on clean energy as he left Fiji last night, after receiving a lecture on climate change from his Fijian counterpart, Frank Bainimarama.

The Fijian PM told Australia not to put “one single industry” above the need to transition to renewables as it put lives at risk. Bill Shorten called the speech “embarrassing” for Mr Morrison. Pacific Island nations have led the international charge for climate change action as they say their islands are at risk of being destroyed by rising sea levels.

But Mr Morrison said in Fiji’s capital of Suva that Australia was keeping both its commitments on lowering carbon emissions and its promise to support the Pacific prepare for global warming.

“We keep our commitments as Australia, and we have made solid commitments when it comes to emissions reduction,” he said. “We have - already made financial commitments, some \$200 million already invested, \$100m further, here and in Fiji alone most recently. And into the future we will continue to fund these resilient works in the Pacific, and we’ll do it directly.”

In Vanuatu on Wednesday, Mr Morrison promised Pacific nations Australia would directly fund projects tackling the impact of climate change. But he said Vanuatu's leaders had not asked it to do more to curb emissions.

Fiji now gets 55 per cent of its electricity from hydro to offset its long reliance on diesel fuel.

Mr Bainimarama used a state dinner on Thursday night to deliver a stern warning on climate action. "I urged your predecessor (Malcolm Turnbull) repeatedly to honour his commitment to clean energy," he said. "We cannot imagine how the interests of any single industry can be placed above the welfare of Pacific peoples and vulnerable people the world over. "Fijian farmers are watching their crops perish in soil that has been spoiled by the heightened salinity that is associated with sea level rise ... And in Australia as well, where soaring temperatures have reached record highs in several major cities just this week."

Back in Australia, Mr Shorten said the Fijian leader's lecture was "embarrassing" for Mr Morrison, but Mr Bainimarama's sentiments were shared by "millions" of Australians. "It's embarrassing that he had to go to Fiji to be told that he's doing nothing on climate change ... millions of Australians could have told him that."