



COMMON AGENDA

ACTION PLAN TO RAPIDLY CUT AUSTRALIA'S CLIMATE POLLUTION

September 2017

This plan was developed and endorsed by Australia's leading environment, climate and development organisations, including: 350 Australia; Arid Lands Environment Centre; Australian Conservation Foundation; Australian Marine Conservation Society; Australian Youth Climate Coalition; Beyond Zero Emissions; Climate for Change; Climate and Health Alliance; Community Power Agency; Environment Victoria; Friends of the Earth Australia; Getup!; Greenpeace Australia Pacific; Nature Conservation Council of NSW; Oxfam Australia; Solar Citizens; The Wilderness Society; WWF Australia

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By burning polluting fuels like coal and gas, using dirty industrial processes and destroying Australia's natural ecosystems, we are putting the planet, people and places we love at risk.

To give our children a liveable world, Australian governments must make a national plan to rapidly cut climate pollution and pursue a limit to warming of no more than 1.5 degrees above pre-industrial levels.

We call on our government to take six key actions to rapidly replace polluting fuels with clean energy and remove pollution from the atmosphere by restoring natural ecosystems.

By doing these critical actions, our government will make our communities and country more resilient in a warming world. It will strengthen the rights of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders to determine what happens on country. It will give those who work in polluting industries and their communities certainty so they can plan for the future, as well as supporting our neighbours in the Pacific as they adapt.

It will take back the power from big polluting companies and end their undue political influence. It will enable everyone, everywhere to power their lives with energy from the sun and wind – energy that's clean and good for our communities and the planet we call home.

1. Transition to 100 percent clean energy

As it's dominated by companies burning coal and gas, Australia's energy system is dirty, outdated and inefficient. But we have the technology and knowledge to replace these polluting fuels with energy from the wind and sun.¹

Our government must make laws and remove barriers to power 100 percent of Australia's electricity with clean energy by 2030 and make sure the transition is inclusive and fair, especially for people with low incomes and those living in vulnerable households.

To transition Australia to 100 percent clean energy, we call on our government to:

- Introduce policies like reverse auctions and public investment to make sure the right clean energy infrastructure is built in the right places, particularly “on demand” or “dispatchable” renewables. This includes supporting community-owned and decentralised renewable energy projects and hubs. It must not allow companies to construct power plants that burn polluting fuels like coal and gas.
- Dedicate financial and business support for renewable energy research, development and deployment, including continuing and expanding the role of the Australian Renewable Energy Agency (ARENA) and the Clean Energy Finance Corporation (CEFC).
- Empower a national authority, with accompanying policies, to deliver a national energy transition, including a plan for the orderly and predictable closure of coal-fired power generation by 2030 with support for people and communities impacted by closure to transition to jobs with a future.
- Reform energy market rules and institutions to improve energy system stability and drive down power bills with renewable energy and storage technology.

¹ http://cdn.getup.org.au/1499-Homegrown_Power_Plan_-Full_Report.pdf

2. Clean up industry and transport and use energy wisely

It's not only industries that burn coal and gas that must clean up – other industries and Australia's transport sector must also stop using dirty, polluting processes and start running on clean energy. Industry and business must also stop wasting energy and use it more efficiently – another critical way to cut climate pollution.

To clean up industry and transport and use energy wisely, we call on our government to:

- Provide strong price and investment signals across the economy to encourage companies to rapidly cut climate pollution and invest in clean energy.
- Introduce strong regulatory and financial incentives to encourage industries, companies and universities to research, develop and use low polluting technologies, especially in industries that cannot immediately shift to clean energy, like gas manufacturing processes, aviation, steelmaking and cement.
- Double Australia's energy productivity by 2030 and implement an ambitious national energy efficiency plan.
- Make strong vehicle fuel efficiency standards to clean up the transport sector and create incentives to encourage companies to quickly switch from oil and gas to clean, renewable energy.
- Introduce a National Air Pollution Control Act to prevent companies from polluting the air we breathe.

3. Rapidly stop companies digging up and burning coal, gas and oil

Digging up and burning polluting fuels like coal, gas and oil is one the most significant causes of climate change. To limit global warming to under 1.5 degrees, companies simply cannot dig up and burn the coal, gas and oil reserves we know exist – or search for new reserves to dig up and extract.² Uranium mining and nuclear power are dirty, dangerous and expensive and should not be expanded in place of polluting fuels like coal and gas.

To stop companies digging up and burning coal, gas and oil, we call on our government to:

- Release no more thermal coal, gas or oil acreage or exploration permits or extensions and cancel existing permits that lapse.
- Refuse any new thermal coal, gas and oil mining operations or the expansion of existing ones.
- Develop a clear plan and timeline to close all thermal coal mines, with properly resourced plans to help impacted communities transition to new jobs and industries with a future. Also phase out gas and oil mines to limit warming to 1.5 degrees.
- Stop using public funds to support polluting fuel projects, including all grants, concessional loans, direct investments, tax concessions and other subsidies, and provide appropriate transitional arrangements for affected small businesses.

² <https://www.carbonbrief.org/analysis-four-years-left-one-point-five-carbon-budget>

4. Care for nature to draw down climate pollution

*The science is clear. To limit warming to 1.5 degrees, we must draw down as much climate pollution from the atmosphere as possible by caring for and restoring our natural ecosystems and protecting our remaining natural stores of carbon.*³

To protect and restore nature, we call on our government to:

- Stop companies logging all old growth and high conservation value native forests and tighten and enforce regulations to end land clearing, as well as bolstering federal government powers to make strong regulations.
- Dedicate funding and make policies to strategically protect and restore natural landscapes so they can rapidly draw down climate pollution from our atmosphere. This includes making strategies and policies for biodiversity conservation, holistic carbon sequestration and regional development – although this must be in addition to, and not in place of, cutting Australia’s climate pollution.
- Rule out burning native forests as a form of renewable energy.
- Implement a new national system of environmental protection, including a new Environment Act, expand the scope of Commonwealth oversight, and create an independent national Environmental Protection Authority.

³ <https://www.pik-potsdam.de/news/press-releases/what-would-it-take-to-limit-climate-change-to-1-5degc>

5. Ensure our communities – not coal and gas lobbyists – control politics

By making donations to political parties, big polluting companies and coal and gas lobbyists are buying influence and special treatment. At the same time, they are attempting to prevent community groups from receiving tax deductible donations, objecting to polluting projects in court and protesting against their actions.

To protect our democracy and remove the unfair influence of vested interests, we call on our government to:

- Reform the rules on political donations, including capping political donations at \$1000, banning foreign donations to political parties and creating stringent reporting requirements.
- Establish an independent national corruption watchdog to ensure compliance and clean up the political system.
- Protect the rights of civil society groups and citizens, including making sure people continue to receive a tax deduction when they donate with registered NGOs; allowing standing for community organisations to challenge projects that threaten our environment, public health and safety; and safeguarding the right to safe public protest.
- Reform the native title legal framework and the broader legal system to ensure Traditional Owners have the power to reject harmful projects on their country and are supported to meaningfully decide what happens on their land.

6. Support the international community to cut climate pollution and adapt to a warming world

As a developed and wealthy nation, Australia has a responsibility to work closely with the international community to support poorer nations as they transition to renewable energy and adapt to a rapidly changing climate.

To play our part caring for people around the world, we call on our government to:

- Provide our fair share of international climate finance, including at least \$3.2 billion annually by 2020, in addition to existing aid obligations, with at least half being grants for adaptation and prioritising the needs of the most vulnerable communities.
- Develop and implement a comprehensive climate change strategy for Australia's aid program to build community resilience.
- Play a constructive and leading role in international institutions, including ensuring the Green Climate Fund is effective in meeting needs of vulnerable communities and no international public finance or credit is used to prop up fossil fuel projects overseas.
- Share expertise and resources to support other countries in our region to adopt renewable energy technology, strategies and adaptation initiatives.