



Brotherhood
of St Laurence

Working for an Australia free of poverty

Australia's emissions reduction targets

Submission to Climate Change Authority, June 2023

The Brotherhood of St. Laurence (BSL) welcomes this opportunity to comment on the *Setting, tracking and achieving Australia's emissions reduction targets* issues paper published by the Climate Change Authority (CCA).

Australia must set and achieve ambitious emissions reduction targets to do its fair share of the global effort to limit climate change, and earlier action is preferable. Domestically, ambitious emissions reduction efforts are vital to protect people from the worsening effects of climate change – such as the fires, floods, and extreme heat we have already seen. People facing disadvantage are likely to be hit hardest by climate change as they lack the resources to avoid or adapt to its impact. On the other hand, ambitious, well-coordinated climate action will also set workers in Australia up for the jobs of the future, creating new opportunities for people and communities to thrive.

Acknowledging that climate change will affect virtually all aspects of Australian society, this submission focuses on people facing disadvantage and a few key issues in selected areas in which the BSL has expertise, such as home energy efficiency and the implications for employment.

1 What do you think Australia's 2035 target should be and why?

Australia's 2035 emissions reduction target should be consistent with limiting global warming to 1.5 °C, in line with our Paris Agreement commitment to keep warming 'well below 2 °C above preindustrial levels and [pursue] efforts to limit the temperature increase to 1.5 °C' (United Nations Climate Change 2016).

A 2035 target of 90% below 2005 levels (Meinshausen & Nicholls 2023) or net zero emissions (Climate Council 2021; ClimateWorks Australia 2020) has been identified as compatible with limiting warming to 1.5 °C by numerous credible authors and thus warrants serious consideration.

While others have identified less ambitious targets as consistent with limiting warming to 1.5 °C (e.g. Climate Analytics 2022; Climate Action Tracker 2020), we encourage the CCA to recommend a more ambitious target given the high risk that climate change poses to Australia and the benefits of acting sooner rather than later. As the CCA itself notes, 'it no longer makes sense to think about lowering carbon emissions as a cost. It is a source of competitive advantage' (Climate Change Authority 2021).

2 What are the risks and opportunities for households, business, workers and communities affected by the transition?

Equitable plans and policies for jobs are critical

The equity of Australia's climate action, as well as its social licence, depends on workers having confidence in their livelihoods. Inevitably, certain industries – such as fossil fuels – will need to be wound down. In consultation with communities and industries, governments should develop plans for affected regions, industries and occupations (coal workers) including efforts to establish new industries and support for retraining.

A weak transition away from household gas will hurt vulnerable people

To eliminate their emissions, households will need to stop using fossil gas yet many households, particularly renters and those on low incomes, will be unable to make this shift without significant policy and program efforts from government,. As households disconnect from gas, the cost of gas networks will be borne by progressively fewer people, increasing the cost per household, and this cost may fall disproportionately on people facing disadvantage if they are 'stuck' on gas.

The CCA should encourage the Australian Government to provide financial and program support to electrify for households facing barriers as part of its climate plans. Governments should also develop plans for the gas networks that allow them to be wound down quickly enough to meet emissions goals without creating undue burden on households.

Energy efficiency can reduce emissions while creating jobs and lowering bills

Improving the energy efficiency of Australia's homes presents an opportunity to reduce emissions while reaping other co-benefits. Energy efficiency upgrades can lower energy bills (helping to smooth the effects of the current volatility of the energy market), improve health and comfort (IEA 2014), and create jobs for installers and manufacturers. The CCA should recommend that the Australian Government prioritises home energy efficiency upgrades, particularly for households who face barriers to accessing them, such as renters and people with low incomes.

3 Further information

We welcome the CCA's work in this space. Ambitious and fair action on climate change is essential for Australia's future wellbeing and prosperity.

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