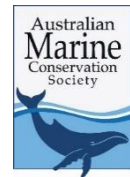


Australian Marine Conservation Society
Submission to the Climate Change Authority
Updating the Authority's Previous Advice on Meeting
the Paris Agreement



Climate Change Authority
GPO Box 787
Canberra ACT 2600
12 August 2019

Dear Sir/Madam

Thank you for the opportunity to provide a submission to the review of the Climate Change Authority's previous advice on meeting the Paris Agreement.

The Australian Marine Conservation Society is Australia's only national charity dedicated solely to the protection of Australia's oceans, the third largest marine estate in the world. AMCS is an independent charity that was formed more than 50 years ago and is staffed by nearly 30 scientists, educators and other professionals.

Our interest in climate change policy is due to the impact of climate change on Australia's ocean ecosystems and wildlife. In the last few years, we have seen profound impacts on corals in the Great Barrier Reef, mangrove ecosystems in northern Australia and seagrass communities in Shark Bay. These impacts are the tip of the iceberg with respect to more profound and long term changes in the ocean, which are projected to grow significantly in coming decades.

Australia's Commitments Under the Paris Agreement

Australia has agreed to limit global warming to well below 2°C and to pursue efforts to limit the temperature increase to 1.5°C. Australia's commitment is to reduce emissions by 26-28% below 2005 levels by 2030. However, since the Climate Change Authority prepared its previous advice to government, the IPCC has released its Special Report on 1.5C. It is now clear that Australia's Paris commitments need to be strengthened.

The IPCC SR1.5C report makes it clear that at 2C, by 2050 the world will lose 98% of coral reefs, and by 2100, 99%. This is a projection made with high confidence. At 1.5C, the loss can be limited to 70-90%, a still devastating scenario. According to the IPCC:

B4. Limiting global warming to 1.5°C compared to 2°C is projected to reduce increases in ocean temperature as well as associated increases in ocean acidity and decreases in ocean oxygen levels (*high confidence*). Consequently, limiting global warming to 1.5°C is projected to reduce risks to marine biodiversity, fisheries, and ecosystems, and their functions and services to humans, as illustrated by recent changes to Arctic sea ice and warm water coral reef ecosystems (*high confidence*).¹

¹ SR1.5 Headline Statements

As the custodian of the Great Barrier Reef – one of the world’s most iconic marine ecosystems, which supports 64,000 jobs and generates over \$6 billion a year - Australia has a responsibility to its citizens and all humankind to protect, conserve and transmit the Great Barrier Reef to future generations. To do so, **Australia must advocate for the strengthening of the Paris Agreement to limit global average temperature to no more than 1.5C**. It must also radically strengthen its domestic emissions reduction target to be consistent with doing our fair share of the global effort. Our emissions reduction target should reflect our common but differentiated responsibilities to present and future generations, and our capability to be more ambitious.

AMCS believes it would be unconscionable to carry over Australia’s Kyoto Protocol credits, effectively nearly halving our 26-28% target. According to [Climate Analytics](#), the real target amount to 17-18% below 2005 emission levels. **The federal government must rule out using “carry over” units from the Kyoto Protocol.**

To give the Great Barrier Reef a chance of surviving into the future as a functional ecosystem – despite losses in beauty and biodiversity – **Australia’s national emissions reduction target must be in the Paris Agreement “fair share” range of 55 – 87% by 2030, with 50-55% being made up of domestic emissions reduction and the remainder being made up of Australia’s contribution to meeting emissions reductions overseas.**

We also need to commit to a longer term target of net zero emissions target by 2050 to provide business and industry, state and local governments and the community an unambiguous signal that Australia is moving with the world to decarbonise our economy and society.

International Context

Given the heavy influence of fossil fuel industries over successive Australian governments, Australia has stood in the way of progressive negotiations to accelerate the transition to a post-carbon world. Australia punches above its weight in hindering progress. Our diplomatic efforts should be repositioned to support the rapid transition to renewable energy and the integration of biodiversity and climate policy. **Australia should play a progressive role in international climate diplomacy.**

Australia is risking its international reputation in the Pacific by ignoring calls from Pacific Island States for a rapid shift from coal to renewable energy. Australia’s diplomatic efforts with respect to climate change need to take a progressive stance that reflects the risks to the Pacific region, as well as the risks to our domestic marine estate. Pacific States are at risk from climate induced disasters including cyclones and sea level rise, the economic effects of these and disaster induced migration. **It is in Australia’s long term national interest to pivot away from coal.**

Policy Toolkit

AMCS is an organisation of marine specialists, rather than energy industry analysts. However, in order to preserve a functional Great Barrier Reef and so much else of our marine estate – the most biodiverse in the world – we need the government to commit to a mixed toolkit of progressive climate mitigation policies, including:

- An immediate end to fossil fuel subsidies
- The closure of all coal fired power plants by 2030, consistent our fair share to limit to 1.5C
- A 100% renewable energy power sector by 2030

- The further development and deployment of storage technology
- An immediate commitment to rule out any new coal mines or the expansion of existing coal mines
- A plan to transition coal dependent communities
- A price on carbon to accelerate the shift away from coal and gas to apply to major polluting industries
- An ambitious target and timeline for electric vehicles and much higher fuel efficiency standards for petrol and diesel fuelled vehicles
- A major reforestation program designed to achieve biodiversity and climate outcomes

The window is closing fast for Australia to preserve our unique biodiversity which is essential to our national identity. If we are to pass on a Great Barrier Reef and many other marine treasures to our children and their children, we must act fast. There is no time to lose. In the words of the UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres, "Climate change is running faster than what we are". We need to speed up.

Thank you again for the opportunity to make a submission to this important review.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Imogen Zethoven', with a long, sweeping horizontal stroke at the end.

Imogen Zethoven AO
Director of Strategy
Australian Marine Conservation Society