

UNAA Position on Climate Change November 2019

The UNAA believes in the vital importance of protecting the environment, the world's oceans and combating climate change as part of creating a safer, fairer and more sustainable world.

Under the Paris Climate Agreement, all signatories acknowledged current targets for reducing greenhouse gas emissions are insufficient to combat climate change. All countries agreed to enhance these targets progressively. All countries were invited to submit their new targets to the UN Climate Action Summit in September 2019. This was a good opportunity for countries to make new commitments and develop ambitious global solutions to combat climate change.

The UNAA notes:

- The International Panel on Climate Change has recently called for global emissions as a result of human activity to be no greater than emissions removed by greenhouse gas sinks by the year 2050. Countries such as Norway, Sweden and New Zealand are already planning to achieve this net zero target by 2050 or earlier. California aims to reach net zero emissions by 2045. The European Union is looking at changing its goal for 2050 from an 80% reduction to net zero.
- The Australian Government has not yet set a long-term goal for net zero emissions or emissions reduction. Queensland, NSW, Victoria, South Australia and ACT governments and the city councils of Sydney, Melbourne and Adelaide have already adopted net zero by 2050. Over 85% of Australians are in jurisdictions with that goal.
- By adopting net zero emissions by 2050 as our common, nation-wide goal, Australia would be responding more credibly to the urgency of climate change, with a greater unity of purpose and with increased certainty for longer term investments and other commitments.
- On 17 May 2019, the Australian Capital Territory became the first state or territory government to declare a climate emergency.

The UNAA urges all political parties to:

- Adopt a national framework to combat climate change and implement stronger initiatives to, as a minimum, reduce Australia's emissions to 26-28% below 2005 levels by 2030, in accordance with the Paris Climate Change Agreement.
- Develop and implement reform to meet the Paris Climate Change target of net zero emissions by 2050, including supporting the NT and WA to commit to and achieve net zero emissions.
- Engage in more collaborative efforts by better supporting countries in the region and leading global powers to combat climate change.

- Establish an independent body to assess progress, promote collaborative activities and facilitate the periodic review of climate mitigation and adaptation plans. This includes extending monitoring and reporting at a local level to provide the community with feedback on the effectiveness of climate reform.
- Minimise energy demand. Inadequately designed infrastructure and equipment lock in years of wasted energy and associated greenhouse gas emissions. Addressing these issues would be one of the most cost-effective ways of reducing emissions.
- Produce sufficient clean energy to meet demand for electricity and other purposes currently using fossil fuels including heating, other stationary energy, and transport. Australia produces 20% of its electricity from renewables. The current renewable energy target of the Australian Government is equivalent to 23.5% by 2020. The targets of Australian States range from 20% to 100% within the period 2020 to 2030.
- Switch to clean energy. The transition from vehicles fuelled by petrol and diesel to vehicles using a renewable fuel source is one area in need of development. In Australia, some states already support reduced registration costs and the installation of charging stations for electric vehicles. The Electric Vehicle Council expects electric cars to be cheaper than traditional vehicles by 2025.
- Minimise emissions from other processes, such as cement production, aspects of agriculture, and leakages from waste and gas mining. This can be done by modifying processes, reducing demand for the products of these processes, and capturing emissions.
- Manage greenhouse gas sinks. Greenhouse gases must be absorbed to achieve net zero targets. Vegetation must be managed to retain what is there and to develop further sinks. Agricultural practices can help retain and absorb carbon. In Australia, the carbon captured by additional plantation only just exceeds that lost through vegetation clearance. Further assessment of the feasibility of permanent, underground storage of greenhouse gases is required.

The UNAA believes these initiatives should be the basis for collaborative, nation-wide programs of action involving all levels of government and the public and private sectors across Australia. This would provide much needed leadership and assist innovation and efficiency.

