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Introduction:

Baw Baw Sustainability Network (BBSN) congratulates the Climate Change Authority (CCA) on its draft report on *Reducing Australia's Greenhouse Gas Emissions – Targets and Progress Review* and welcomes the opportunity to make this submission on its draft recommendations and conclusions.

BBSN in Gippsland, Victoria is working locally to promote and achieve sustainable living. The BBSN is a group of everyday people getting together to do extraordinary things today and for the future.

BBSN started up in 2007 when a group of ordinary people from around the West Gippsland and Baw Baw Shire area were concerned with the environmental situation of the planet and decided to form a sustainability group. The Network has since flourished with over 100 members and hundreds of interested people across our region. We are an independent not-for-profit group bridging the gap between talk and action on Sustainable Living. As part of our concern about the environmental situation of the planet we would like to put in this submission to the Climate Change Authority Caps and Targets Review.

Overall Message:

BBSN supports the CCA and its role in policy making, with this draft report being a good example of the valuable addition the Authority makes to policy making. We agree with the carbon budget approach and strongly agree that a 5 per cent target is inadequate for Australia's national interest. However, we view the draft report as a

conservative analysis – with the the long-term carbon budget proposed significantly more generous than those estimated by other studies, the 15 per cent target pushing too much of the required effort to reduce emissions further into the future and the 2030 target range not properly reflecting the carbon budget.

Our call is for a target of at least **25 per cent** by 2020, a tighter carbon budget, and we recommend that longer term targets should be based on the carbon budget - not a trajectory to 80 per cent by 2050.

We need to act on climate change for our national interest

- Australia is expected to be one of the developed countries most affected by climate change – particularly because of the likelihood of increased water stress which would have major knock-on effects for agriculture.
- Growth in emissions is expected to have a severe and costly impact on agriculture, infrastructure, biodiversity and ecosystems in Australia. There will also be flow-on effects from the adverse impact of climate change on Australia’s neighbours in the Pacific and Asia.¹
- It is in the interests of our national security: As Jeffrey Mazo summarised in the Australian Strategic Policy Institute report on the issue: *“Climate change is a threat multiplier, it has the potential to generate and exacerbate destabilising conditions that could reshape the regional security environment.”*²
- Global warming has emerged as the single greatest threat to Australia’s biodiversity. Scientists predict that even a 2°C global temperature rise may see 25 per cent of the Earth’s animals and plants disappear.³
- Australia will be expected to consider increasing the ambition of our target to 2020 as part of UNFCCC processes from April 2014 and for targets beyond 2020 in time for the Ban Ki Moon Leaders’ Summit in September 2014.

We need to increase our targets and set a carbon budget that is appropriate to the risks we face

- We agree with the CCA assessment that the current 5 per cent unconditional target is inadequate.
- Australia's economy is more emissions-intensive than many of our trade partners and comparable countries – which means we have more to do to make our industries ready for a carbon-limited future. Every year of slow, insufficient action means more missed opportunities to spur innovation, and transform Australia into a dynamic leader in the rapidly growing clean technology sector.
- The costs of inaction are substantial. The Garnaut Review found that at the global level unmitigated climate change would probably cause global economic output to fall by around 8 per cent by the end of the twenty-first century.⁴
- The economic benefits of acting strongly and quickly far outweigh the costs. Numerous studies, including modelling by the Australian Treasury, have shown that early action is more economically efficient.⁵ If Australia waits to act, required actions will result in higher costs.
- The economic case against acting strongly is extremely weak because moving to a stronger target has very low additional macroeconomic costs. Climate Change Authority's modelling shows that the cost to the economy of choosing a 25 per cent target over a 15 per cent target is equivalent to 0.02 per cent of economic growth. This is in line with other modelling,⁶ when some usage of international permits is allowed.
- The environmental case for a stronger target is compelling. The risks of loss of species, degradation of productive habitats, high levels of ecological disruption and impacts to infrastructure increase as effort is weakened.
- Our most important trading partners will expect Australia to do our fair share of a successful effort to tackle climate change. It is therefore in Australia's interest to send a clear signal to the world that we will act strongly on pollution reduction, rather than contribute weakly to a currently inadequate global response.

- It is in our national interest to galvanise international action, not inhibit it – showing leadership by increasing our target to at least 25 per cent by 2020 will help encourage more ambitious targets and action by other countries. Even if our contribution to global emissions is not as high as those of China and the US, we can help strengthen global emissions reductions, which will reduce the impacts we face in the future. If action is not increased we are on a path to global warming of 3.5-6°C with devastating social, environmental and economic consequences.

Australians care deeply about climate change and want their Government to do more

- The majority of Australians are in favour of stronger action on climate – 61% according to VoteCompass which polled 1.2 million people.⁷ Other polling which included questions on targets show that most people support at least a 5 per cent target. There is also substantial support for increasing targets – varying on how the precise question is of between 41 per cent⁸ and 53 per cent.⁹ Whilst support varied by voting patterns, there is a strong bipartisan element.
- Recent rallies for the Climate Action Day had hundreds of local people showing their support for greater action in Inverloch and Traralgon.

Current draft report is a valuable, but relatively conservative, analysis

In our view setting a carbon budget to 2050 based on a reasonable allocation of the global carbon budget is the correct approach. However we consider the actual budget set which gives a 67 per cent chance of limiting mean global warming to two degrees does not set an appropriate level of response to risk.

We consider a 1 in 3 chance of exceeding 2°C an excessive risk to take which is not in our national interest. A more measured and prudent approach would be to set a budget that has at least a 75 per cent chance of avoiding the chosen temperature limit. And even allowing for the probability chosen for setting a carbon budget, the

analysis sets an over-generous carbon budget in our view as compared to other analyses¹⁰.

We also think that setting emission reduction to only 15 per cent by 2020 results in a reduction trajectory beyond 2020 which is steeper than is prudent and, as the CCA report notes, would make it very difficult to increase ambition further should global developments deem it necessary.

Given the scale of action which will be required to limit climate change to a safe level, it would be better to start acting strongly more quickly. This would help avoid more dramatic and costly emission reductions at a later date in order to avoid dangerous climate impacts.

Our suggested recommendations

Australia should move to an unconditional target of at least 25 per cent by 2020. This would help avoid more dramatic and costly emission reductions at a later date to avoid dangerous climate impacts.

The carbon budget proposed should ensure that Australia is doing its fair share within a global carbon budget that gives at least a 75 per cent certainty of limiting climate change and using the more stringent limit of 1.5°C of warming by 2100 from pre-industrial levels.

The CCA should set 2025 and 2030 targets based on the carbon budget selected and not a trajectory to 80 per cent by 2050. It is the carbon budget which reflects the impact of our emissions on the climate – rather than a spot target for pollution reduction.

Submission prepared by Joan McColl and Amanda McLeod on behalf of Baw Baw Sustainability Network.

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- ¹ Synopsis of key points Chapter 6 www.garnautreview.org.au/synopsis.htm#chp6 accessed 26/11/13
- ² Cited p16: www.aspi.org.au/publications/special-report-issue-49-heavy-weather-climate-and-the-australian-defence-force accessed 26/11/13
- ³ IPCC report (2007) Working Group II: Impacts, Adaptation and Vulnerability Chapter 19.3.4 http://www.ipcc.ch/publications_and_data/ar4/wg2/en/ch19s19-3-4.html accessed 26/11/13
- ⁴ [The four types of benefits of climate change mitigation](http://www.garnautreview.org.au/update-2011/update-papers/up1-weighting-costs-benefits-climate-change-action.html) Garnaut Review Update Paper <http://www.garnautreview.org.au/update-2011/update-papers/up1-weighting-costs-benefits-climate-change-action.html> accessed 26/11/13
- ⁵ Overview Key points p1 cache.treasury.gov.au/treasury/carbonpricemodelling/content/report/downloads/Modelling_Report_Consolidated.pdf accessed 26/11/13
- ⁶ p3 http://awsassets.wwf.org.au/downloads/cl045_costs_and_benefits_of_greater_australian_emissions_reduction_ambition_3jun13.pdf accessed 26/11/13
- ⁷ www.abc.net.au/news/2013-08-26/vote-compass-climate-change-environment/4908224 accessed 26/11/13
- ⁸ www.afr.com/p/national/coalition_honeymoon_cut_short_eadplvJYy2dBZubXuxRaeO accessed 26/11/13
- ⁹ Survey of 1,034 Australians from 7-11 November 2013 by Essential Research Data on record with GetUp!
- ¹⁰ E.g. Ecofys for WWF awsassets.wwf.org.au/downloads/fs067a_australia_carbon_budget_based_on_global_effort_sharing_24oct13.pdf Accessed 26/11/13; TCI Section 9 www.climateinstitute.org.au/verve/resources/TCI_OperatingInLimits_PolicyBrief.pdf accessed 26/11/13