

26 November 2013

GetUp Submission

Climate Change Authority Targets and Progress Review

Introduction:

GetUp welcomes the opportunity to present a submission on the Climate Change Authority's "Targets and Progress Review Draft Report."

We endorse the Climate Change Authority (CCA) in calling for higher targets than currently exist. Nevertheless, the science and current climate impacts show that even a target of 25% by 2020 is a bare minimum. Australia needs to aim higher, both leading up to 2020 and beyond.

About GetUp:

GetUp represents a community of more than 650,000 members, the vast majority of which care deeply about tackling the threat of climate change head-on with more ambitious targets. In the past year, GetUp members have taken more than one million actions asking for stronger domestic policy solutions for climate change that will move Australia away from fossil fuels and towards a 100% renewable energy future. More ambitious action on climate change and renewable energy investment has continually ranked as the number one issue for GetUp members in bimonthly membership surveys.

GetUp members have also taken this sentiment to the streets, demonstrating their strong support for action on climate change with strong community action. On Sunday 17 November 2013, GetUp led the *National Day of Climate Action* mobilisation of more than 60,000 Australians demanding stronger climate action, in over 130 metropolitan and regional locations across the country, from Alice Springs to Hobart.

Since the 2013 federal election, GetUp members have also met with their local MPs to stress the importance of continued climate ambition. Dozens of meetings have taken place to date in electorates around the country. Right now, GetUp members are gearing up for a summer of climate action, spurred on by an early start to bushfire season and an unprecedented summer in 2012 that broke more than 120 extreme weather records.

Overview:

1. The majority of Australians want stronger action on climate change, and that means stronger targets.

The majority of Australians want stronger action on climate change that is in line with protecting Australian's health, environment and economic prosperity. In exit polling conducted by GetUp after the 2013 Federal Election, it was found that a clear majority of voters, across the political spectrum, want stronger action on climate change. The results showed that 67% of all voters, and 61% of Liberal voters, were in favour of more ambition.

GETUP LTD
ABN: 99 114 027 986

PO Box A105
Sydney South, NSW,
1235
info@getup.org.au
www.getup.org.au

This majority support has been demonstrated time and time again through many other polls and research; notably, ABC's Vote Compass showed that 61% of Australians believe the Government should do more to tackle climate change[1].

Furthermore, on Sunday November 17, GetUp led the organisation of a *National Day of Climate Action*, giving Australians the chance to publicly demonstrate their support for climate action. An overwhelming 60,000 individuals came together in more than 130 locations from capital cities to rural and regional areas - making their demands for more ambitious targets and stronger action clear[2].



2. The science tells us that we need more ambitious targets.

Big business and big mining are making submissions to the CCA purporting that Australia does not need stronger targets. This defies the science, public opinion and the national interest

The Climate Authority's report offers an overview of the science and states that its "considerations start with the science".

Getup supports this approach, noting that climate policy should be based on authoritative science.

Getup notes that the IPCC report, released in September 2013 and peer-reviewed by 800 of the world's leading scientists, made clear, yet again, that the world is warming rapidly, humans are the primary cause of this warming, and very substantial action is immediately required. In particular,

the IPCC report finds that a hotter climate is already increasing the frequency and severity of many extreme weather events and is changing rainfall patterns, creating risks for human well being, the global economy and the environment.

The Climate Commission's report, 'The Critical Decade', published in June 2013, states that:

"We are already seeing the social, economic and environmental consequences of a changing climate. Many of the risks scientists have warned us about in the past are now happening."

The report outlines that already in Australia, the duration and frequency of heat waves and extremely hot days has increased, the risk of bushfire weather has increased, rainfall patterns have shifted and sea level has risen. These changes are already being felt by everyday Australians, particularly those most vulnerable groups. The risks for the future to human health, property and infrastructure, agriculture, and our natural environment are significant.

The IPCC report also makes clear that if emissions continue to track at the top of the IPCC scenarios, global temperature could rise by up to 5.4°C by 2100, relative to pre-industrial levels. This sort of extreme temperature rise this century serves to further highlight the risks of not getting the policy right today.

The latest science demands that Australia and the world take stronger action to reduce emissions and do so as quickly as possible.

Throughout the Climate Authority's Draft Report, assessments were based on the "2 degree goal". This goal has been agreed upon globally as it is considered a threshold that should not be crossed in that the risks beyond 2 degrees are unacceptably high.

3. Australia needs to limit global warming to below 1.5 degrees.

GetUp recommends that the Authority also consider in its modeling limiting global warming to below 1.5 degrees.

The Climate Authority notes that Australia has a clear national interest in limiting global warming to no more than 2 degrees. Getup agrees, but goes further. Australia has a clear national interest in limiting global warming as much as possible.

The Climate Commission's Critical Decade report notes that 2 degrees is an arbitrary figure and is not necessarily the dividing line above which climate change is considered "dangerous". The consequences below 2 degrees are likely to be severe. The Authority includes a table from the IPCC's draft report (p. 31) that includes some of the expected consequences before 2 degrees, including the risk of water stress to up to 1.7 billion people. Further, there is also a risk that some of the tipping points in the climate system could be crossed before a two-degree rise in temperature.

In climate scientist James Hansen's 2008 paper 'Target Atmospheric Co2: Where Should Humanity Aim?' he concludes:

"If humanity wishes to preserve a planet similar to that on which civilization developed and to which life on Earth is adapted, paleoclimate evidence and ongoing climate change suggest that CO2 will need to be reduced from its current 385 ppm to at most 350 ppm. The largest uncertainty in the target arises from possible changes of non-CO2 forcings. An initial 350 ppm CO2 target may be

achievable by phasing out coal use except where CO₂ is captured and adopting agricultural and forestry practices that sequester carbon. If the present overshoot of this target CO₂ is not brief, there is a possibility of seeding irreversible catastrophic effects.”

Getup notes that the Authority assesses the challenges of staying below a 2 degree rise in global temperature. Clearly limiting warming to 1.5 degrees would be significantly harder and some would say it is now physically impossible. Regardless, Getup believes we should be as risk averse as possible to changing the climate of the world and base our targets on what is necessary – rather than what we believe to be feasible now.

Getup supports the Authority using a carbon budget approach. It is incredibly useful for Australia to understand what its carbon budget is from now until 2050.

The Draft Report states that:

“Keeping within a global emissions budget of 1 700 000 million tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent (Mt CO₂-e) between 2000 and 2050 is estimated to give a 67 per cent chance of staying below 2 degrees – emitting less would improve these odds; emitting more would reduce them.”

GetUp recommends increasing the odds in the Climate Authorities modelling, as a 67% chance of staying below 2 degrees is simply too low. Other organisations, such as the Climate Commission and the Gratham Institute, have based their carbon budget analysis on a 75% chance of staying below 2 degrees.

Given the risks of climate change to Australians’ health and prosperity, Getup recommends that the Authority analysis should model a better than 75% chance of staying below 2 degrees.

The Authority has articulated two options for emission reduction targets.

4. Australia should adopt a 25% emission reduction target by 2020 as a minimum short-term target.

GetUp recommends that the CCA adopt a 25% emission reduction target by 2020 as a minimum short-term target.

There are three reasons for this:

- It is clear that the risks of a 2 degree world for Australia are significant, putting Australians, our natural environment and key industries, like agriculture, at risk.
- Early action is critical if we are to meet the long term objective of reducing emissions to near zero by 2050.
- The scale and pace of international action suggests that Australia should be pursuing a stronger target.

For reasons outlined above, Getup believes that the 2020 target of 25% is still too low.

Getup strongly supports the Authority’s finding that a 5% target is inadequate to meet our international responsibilities, and to prepare Australia for future emission reductions. Effectively a 5% target condemns Australia to lagging behind the world in the transition to clean energy. As the Authority notes:

“A 5 per cent target would require an implausibly rapid acceleration of effort beyond 2020.”

Choosing a strong target will allow Australia to begin the long process of transitioning Australia away from reliance on high-pollution technologies. Australian Treasury modelling has shown that the longer Australia waits before acting, the higher the costs will be of cleaning up Australia's economy. Every year we wait before acting means more missed opportunities to spur innovation and transform Australia into a dynamic leader in the rapidly growing clean technology sector.

As the largest polluter per capita in the world, Australia needs to do its fair share. Australia should clearly signal to the world that it is a leader in pollution reduction. Australia's current approach to setting targets presumes the world fails in their attempts to combat climate change, by setting targets that mirror inadequate global progress that will result in +4 degrees of warming. Australia should set targets that presume success. Targets should reflect our fair share of a successful effort to tackle climate change, rather than our fair share of an inadequate global response.

5. Australia should adopt a 100% emission reduction target by 2050.

GetUp recommends that the Climate Authority adopt a 100% emission reduction target by 2050.

It is now clear that emissions must be reduced to zero by 2050 at the latest. The Climate Authority should make this explicit in its recommendations to Government.

The climate action we need:

- To adopt tough short-term targets
- A price and limit on carbon emissions
- Strong and ambitious policies that move us beyond coal and gas towards a renewable energy future

In conclusion:

The GetUp movement is wholly committed to campaigning for an Australia that makes its climate policy determinations based on what the science dictates, what the public wants and what is best for our future environmental, economic and personal health and security.

Australia is currently in a position where science, events and public opinion are on our side and GetUp members will continue to campaign to ensure Australia comes out on the right side of history in terms of how it faced the great challenge of climate change.

We believe the CCA should give frank and fearless advice to government about the targets that are in Australia's national interest. Stronger, more ambitious targets are in the national interest. **GetUp recommends that the Climate Change Authority make the strongest recommendation that the science demands – not that today's politics allows.**

GetUp members in every community around this great country will be watching to see if our government steps up to the challenge and aims higher on climate.

Here is a great visual reminder of the real people, the everyday Australians, who we represent and whose futures we are determining when we make these critical recommendations and decisions:



We hope that you will serve them well.

Check out more photos, media and stories from the recent
2013 *National Day of Climate Action* by visiting
www.getup.org.au/ndca-photos

[1] <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2013-11-11/vote-compass-full-data-explorer/5016244>

[2] https://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player_embedded&v=Y_hJL7hfH2M