

#CLIMATE ACTNOW



Climate Act: Frequently Asked Questions ... and their Answers

Questions

Why do we need the Climate Act?

Climate change is real for Australia, with immediate and deepening risks to our natural environment, economy and way of life. Last summer's unprecedented bushfires are a mark of the worst of those risks, and how they will affect some communities more than others. But there are also opportunities to prosper, given our enormous natural, human and financial wealth.

This Act would ensure Australia has a clear and positive national response to the challenges of climate change. That is what a large and growing majority of Australians call for, and what Australia needs.

How will it work?

The proposed Climate Act will mandate:

1. A Net Zero target by 2050
2. National Adaptation Plans and National Risk Assessments
3. Technology Readiness Assessment and;
4. An independent advisory commission

What is framework legislation?

Framework legislation is tried and proven legislation that has worked in overseas jurisdictions like the United Kingdom, France and Ireland. It has reduced emissions, helped those countries adapt to climate impacts, and progressed emissions reduction taking the partisan politics out of the debate. It works by setting a long-term pathway to net zero and helps guide decision-making to meet that target. It does this by requiring interim targets or emissions budgets which set a cap on economy-wide emissions.

By setting statutory targets, rather than just policy-based targets, it signals a greater level of commitment to emission reduction. Setting targets in legislation will also provide parliamentary scrutiny.

Framework legislation secures long-term policy, planning and ensures climate change action with changes of government. It does this by mandating the Government of the day develop and implement plans to meet those budgets and adapt to warming. This ensures that plans are not shelved and forgotten. All plans are made with overarching principles like intergenerational equity, transparency, fiscal responsibility and the best available science to ensure these plans are fair, equitable and consistent with best practice.

What will the Climate Act do?

The Climate Act will:

- Shore up Australia's commitment to long-term climate action and reset the policy debate in Australia
- Make an immediate positive contribution to the world's action on climate change and bolster our standing internationally
- Put Australia on a course towards a long-term goal of net zero by 2050
- Ensure action on climate change is equitable, transparent and leads to the best outcomes for all Australians
- Help protect Australians by ensuring there are plans to assess risks to all sectors and communities, adapt to climate impacts and;
- Position Australia to take advantage of the economic opportunities that will come from climate action

Why a Net Zero by 2050 target?

- Net Zero by 2050 is a science-based target consistent with the advice of climate science academia and the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change literature¹
- It is consistent with targets set in other developed countries around the world²
- It would bring the Commonwealth into alignment with the Australian States and Territories the majority of which have Net Zero targets in policy or legislation
- Built into the legislation are 5-yearly reviews which are consistent with the 'pledge and review periods' of the Paris Agreement and;
- The targets can be changed if there are significant developments in the science, international agreements and/or technology

Who will introduce it into parliament?

Zali Steggall, the Independent MP for Warringah in NSW will introduce the Bill. The United Kingdom Climate Change Act (2008) was also first introduced by a private member.

What's the difference between a bill and an Act?

A bill is a formal document prepared in the form of a draft Act. A bill becomes an Act—a law—only after it has been passed in identical form by both Houses of the Parliament and assented to by the Governor-General.

Who will vote for it?

As a non-partisan Bill, all MPs should reflect their communities' wishes and vote for the Climate Act as they did for Marriage Equality - not hide behind party lines.

¹ <https://www.ipcc.ch/2018/10/08/summary-for-policymakers-of-ipcc-special-report-on-global-warming-of-1-5c-approved-by-governments/>

² <https://eciu.net/netzerotracker>

Objection Handling

Isn't this just more government red tape and bureaucracy?

Australians expect the government to step up on climate change and this includes with laws. The Act provides a proven law to guide the transition to a net zero emissions economy and adapt to climate impacts already locked in.

Economically, it will position us to take advantage of the boom in low emissions technology, provide the business sector with certainty that we are on the right track, as well as the option to pursue new opportunities.

But there are no actual policies in here? Why don't you put in a carbon tax or emissions trading scheme?

Governments are elected on the priorities they bring to the electorate and this Act respects that. The Climate Act's key strength is its flexibility. It allows the government of the day to come up with policies depending on their priorities. Importantly, there will be close oversight by an independent advisory commission scrutinising whether those policies are working towards these goals or not.

Why now?

As a signatory to the Paris Agreement, Australia has committed to action that would limit warming to a safe level, and that means getting to Net Zero by 2050. Australia is now behind many other OECD countries, as well as Australian States and Territories in committing to Net Zero by 2050. Last summer's bushfires have shown there is no time to waste. With the Climate Act we can put in law that target and plan a meaningful pathway to get there.

What about jobs and the economy?

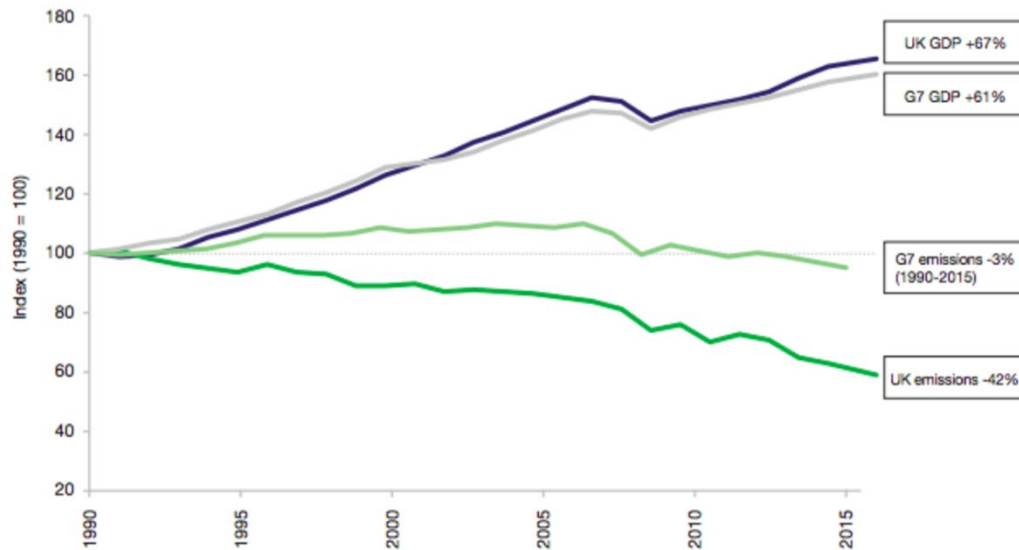
During the time the United Kingdom Climate Change Act (2008) has been in place, the UK's GDP has grown by 67%, while emissions have fallen by 42%. There are now more than 390,000 jobs³ in low-carbon businesses and their supply chains, employing people across the UK. The UK's low-carbon and renewable-energy economy was worth £43bn in 2016.⁴

A recent study from Oxford University has shown that clean technology projects create 8 jobs for every 1.6 million invested compared to 2.6 with old energy production like gas and coal.⁵

³ <https://www.ons.gov.uk/economy/environmentalaccounts/bulletins/finalestimates/2016#the-energy-efficient-products-sector-was-the-biggest-employer-in-the-uk-low-carbon-and-renewable-energy-economy-in-2016>

⁴ <https://www.ons.gov.uk/economy/environmentalaccounts/bulletins/finalestimates/2016>

⁵ <https://www.ox.ac.uk/news/2020-05-05-building-back-better-green-covid-19-recovery-packages-will-boost-economic-growth-and>



UK and G7 economic growth and emissions reductions. Source: Clean Growth Strategy, Oct 2017

Natural disasters like bushfires, droughts and floods are showing that the cost of inaction far outweighs the cost of action. The recent 2019-20 bushfires are projected to have cost the Australian economy up to \$100 billion dollars. Further, modelling has shown that if we miss our climate targets - keeping warming below 2 degrees and as close to 1.5 as possible - there will be cumulative economic cost of \$2.7 trillion by 2050 to the economy.⁶ The Climate Act aims to protect our economy against these impacts to ensure our prosperity into the future.

Why do we need a Climate Act when the Government have already got a Technology Investment Roadmap?

The goal of the Roadmap “is to bring a strategic and system-wide view to future investments in low emissions technologies.” It establishes a consultative process and governance structure that will assist in highlighting then developing the low emissions technologies that will be critical over the next several decades.

Regrettably, the Roadmap alone is insufficient to provide for comprehensive climate action. Namely the lack of emissions budgeting, a long-term target, adaptation plans and insufficient transparency and accountability measures. However, when integrated with the Climate Act it is complementary. The Roadmap will help assess low emissions technology readiness.

⁶ <https://sustainable.unimelb.edu.au/news/what-are-the-full-economic-costs-to-australia-from-climate-change>