

A CLIMATE EMERGENCY PLAN

A series of massive projects are needed to tackle the problem sector by sector. The technology for a zero-emissions economy already exists. The fundamental block to action is government and industry.

A serious response to the climate emergency would have to include these steps:

Phase out coal, build renewables

Electricity generation, mostly through burning coal, makes up about 33% of Australia's greenhouse gas emissions. Mining, handling and exporting coal adds even more: our coal exports are responsible for even more than Australia's domestic emissions. A plan for rapidly phasing out coalmining and export must be developed, and this must involve creating new jobs for miners in sustainable industries. No new coalmines or coal-fired power plants should be approved.

Australia could meet all its energy needs from a combination of renewable energy sources, especially solar and wind power. Biomass from agricultural wastes and geothermal power could also be used. Energy storage technologies such as concentrating solar thermal, pumped hydro and batteries can provide the backup to make 100% renewables as reliable as our current supply.

The potential for 100% renewable energy has been demonstrated in repeated studies by Beyond Zero Emissions, the University of New South Wales and the Australian Energy Market Operator. Importantly, these studies find the costs of renewable energy are lower in the long run, as their "fuel" is free. Australia should set a target to source all its energy from renewables within 10 years or sooner.

Set strong targets to cut emissions fast

Current atmospheric carbon dioxide levels are at 400 parts per million (ppm), compared with a pre-industrial level of about 280ppm. Other greenhouse gases such as methane add the equivalent of about 80ppm extra to the atmosphere. To avoid triggering dangerous tipping points, it is vital that we move to zero emissions as fast as possible. If we stop adding greenhouse

gases, there will still be a dangerous level of warming of the Earth's climate for centuries. Adapting our society to the dangerous weather and climate that results, and helping to heal the damage to vulnerable ecosystems, will be an ongoing responsibility.

Immediate economy-wide and sector-by-sector planning is required to move as rapidly as possible to eliminate all greenhouse pollution. Australia's yearly emission reduction targets must be at least 5% and may need to be higher.

Businesses, local councils and government departments should all be required to commit to reducing their emissions to zero as soon as possible as part of a national plan.

Rich countries must take the lead

Australia produces only 1.3% of global emissions, but our coal-powered economy has the highest emission rate per person in the industrialised world: about five times the global average. Australia has a moral obligation to take the lead on actions to combat climate change as it has financial and natural resources that countries with less economic and political power do not.

The rich countries have created the problem, so we must contribute the most to fixing it. A new international treaty should aim for 90% emissions cuts (from 1990 levels) by 2030, with rich nations leading the way.

Rich nations must help exploited nations develop without high-pollution industries and energy. Australia must also accept a fair share of the environmental refugees who are already being displaced by climate change. This assistance is just part of repaying our ecological debt.

No to nuclear

Nuclear power is not a safe, clean, sustainable or viable energy solution. The nuclear industry has huge problems not faced by renewables;

including rising costs and no known safe waste disposal method. Significant too, it also encourages nuclear weapons' proliferation.

We oppose the plans for a new nuclear reactor at Lucas Heights in NSW (or anywhere) and the HIFAR reactor currently operating there should be shut down. There are cleaner and safer technologies for nuclear medicine, such as cyclotrons.

There should be no dumping of nuclear waste — domestic or international: waste producers must manage their own waste in secure monitored facilities at their own expense.

As the nuclear cycle begins with uranium mining, we should end it immediately. That means closing down the operating uranium mines (Ranger in the NT, Roxby Downs in SA and Beverly in SA) and ensuring that no new mines are approved.

Increase energy efficiency — aim for zero waste

One of the easiest ways to reduce emissions is to increase efficiency and reduce waste. More efficient home appliances, insulating homes, less packaging, better recycling, improved and more efficient public transport replacing private car trips, locally-produced goods are some of the simple but effective changes we can make right now.

To begin the transition to sustainability, we must set energy and resource efficiency as a national goal. A street-by-street program of fixing the nation's mostly energy-wasting buildings is needed. Redesigning production, supply and disposal chains for food and other consumer goods can remove more wasted energy and unnecessary emissions.

The ultimate aim should be a zero-waste economy, whereby products are designed as much as possible so that they can be repaired, re-used and disassembled for recycling. Industry and business must

undergo systematic energy audits and achieve compliance deadlines. Firms that do not upgrade to low-emissions technology and processes would have to close or be taken over by the public to make the required changes.

Boost organic farming and reforestation

Agriculture accounts for 15% of Australia's greenhouse gas emissions by government estimates, but much more if all aspects are considered. Our current agricultural practices consume huge quantities of fossil fuels. Livestock farming is extremely energy and water intensive.

Australia needs to reduce its flocks of sheep and cattle drastically, as part of a comprehensive reduction in methane emissions that will aid in rapidly cooling the Earth. We must start a transition to carbon-neutral and organic farming.

Existing farming communities should be encouraged with financial support, resources and training to make the transition to sustainable, low-emissions agriculture.

Land management and agriculture should aim to use methods that maintain or increase carbon storage in soils and ecosystems, while maintaining food supply and biodiversity. Land clearing and outdated forestry practices such as old-growth logging, which account for 2% of national emissions, must end now. Farm forestry and plantation forestry can supply timber and fibre needs sustainably.

Native forests that have not been logged store up to three times more carbon than forests that have been logged. To increase this "carbon sink" capacity, extensive programs of native forest revegetation must be started. Food production should be decentralised and localised where possible, to reduce the energy needed to transport and refrigerate foods.

Government-subsidised urban agriculture should be developed in our cities. Organic waste, including green waste and sewage, should be composted and the methane gas by-product harnessed for energy or industry.

Make public transport free, frequent and accessible

Transport is responsible for 17% of Australia's greenhouse gas emissions. Road transport makes up about 90% of that share. To reverse this, we have to put public transport at the centre of our urban development plans.

Urban design and redesign to promote active transport (walking and cycling), and living closer to workplaces, shops and schools can reduce the need for the time, space and energy wasted on road-dominated transport systems. Public transport and electric cars can provide an energy efficient system for moving people longer distances as needed.

We need a huge investment in public transport and rail freight to make it a real option for commuters and industry. A successful public transport system will have reliable, free and frequent services within five minutes walk of most homes, including outer metropolitan regions.

Electric cars can fill the inevitable gaps in such a system to provide 100% renewable

energy transport.

The Socialist Alliance supports a publicly owned, integrated system of heavy rail, light rail, ferry and bus services.

Public ownership and democratic control

The "polluter pays" principle means that polluting companies should have to clean up the mess they have made. Industries that will not stop polluting, or do not have the resources to clean up, should be placed under public ownership and control. In this way, services that are essential can be identified and cleaned up or replaced, while non-essential services can be scaled back or shut down until a sustainable alternative is found.

Public ownership and control over energy generation and distribution in particular is essential to bringing this industry under an overall plan for greenhouse gas reduction and environmental sustainability.

Guarantee green jobs

To be successful, a climate emergency plan must protect the welfare of workers and affected communities. Workers are critical to identifying and eliminating waste and pollution in the workplace, closing down old industries and opening new ones.

The Socialist Alliance supports a massive program of converting energy infrastructure and rehabilitating land used for mining, that will create thousands of green jobs. We will also need an expansion of free public education to provide sufficient numbers of skilled professionals to achieve the transition.

Change the system, not the climate

A safe climate is not possible unless an informed and mobilised community fights for it. Australia's powerful fossil fuel industry has shown it will not accept these measures. For years, it has backed the climate deniers in both major parties to prevent change.

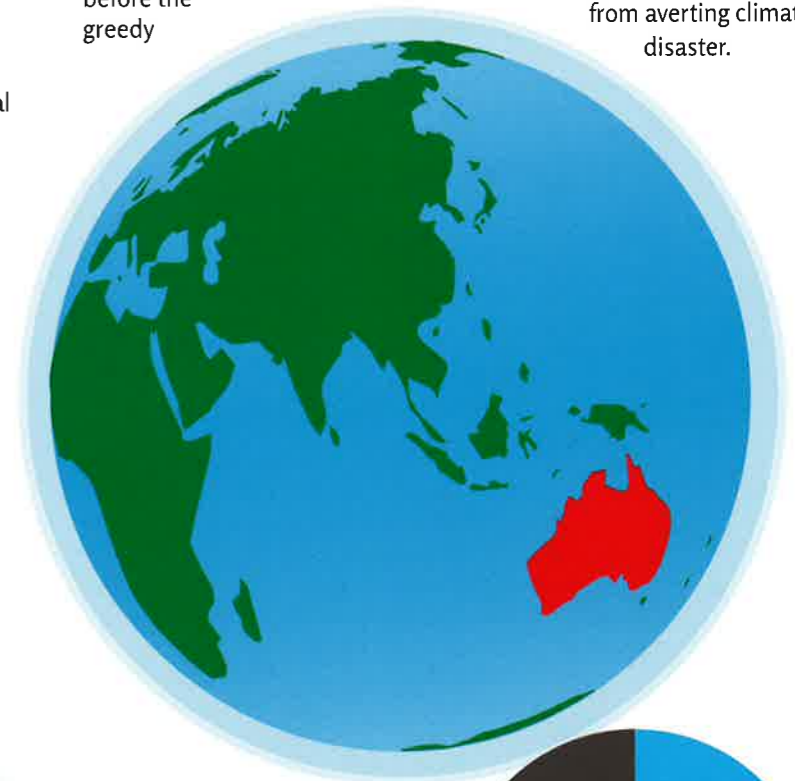
But the planet and the welfare of future generations must come before the greedy

corporations that have resisted change.

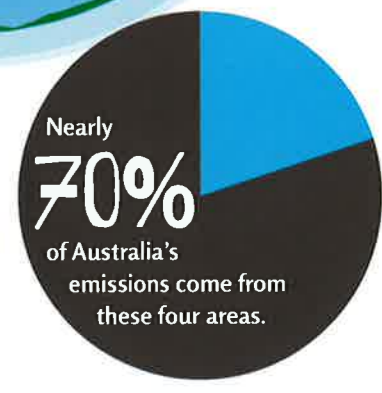
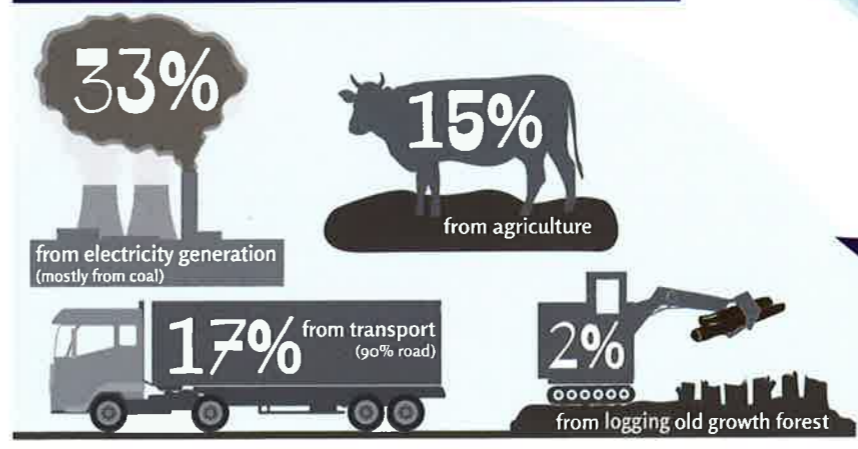
To take on the vested interests, we need a much stronger climate action movement, that is independent of the major parties and won't compromise on the steps needed to stop the process of global warming.

The movement to avert climate catastrophe must mean more than just voting for change. The campaign must also happen in the streets, workplaces, schools and universities to win wide public support and become an unstoppable force for sustainable change.

Making those changes also means challenging the capitalist market, which is failing to protect future generations and cannot be allowed to stop us from averting climate disaster.



EMISSIONS IN AUSTRALIA



THE SOCIALIST ALLIANCE 11-POINT CLIMATE ACTION PLAN

1. Set immediate emissions cuts targets to reduce net emissions to zero as soon as possible, including a target to achieve 100% renewable energy within a decade. Introduce emissions reduction targets of at least 5% a year. Nuclear power is not a clean energy solution.



3. Start the transition to a zero-waste economy. Legislate to end industrial energy waste. Improve or ban wasteful consumer products, such as those with built-in obsolescence. Engage with workers and their unions to redesign their products and jobs so they are sustainable.



5. No to nuclear. End uranium mining. Close Ranger (NT), Roxby Downs and Beverly (SA) and no new mines to be approved. No dumping of nuclear waste. Shut down the Lucas Heights nuclear reactor and switch to clean, safe medical technologies.



7. Redirect heavy industry, including remaining steel, aluminium and traditional car manufacturing industries, to manufacture essential products and infrastructure for the transition such as renewable energy generators, public transport vehicles and infrastructure and electric cars.



9. Ban the logging of native forests and move to tree plantations and alternative crops for fibre and timber. Begin an urgent program of revegetation to sequester carbon and restore and protect biodiversity in the face of a changing climate. Promote decentralised farm forestry instead of industrial plantation monocultures where practical.



11. Transition to free public transport, starting with elimination of fares for concession holders, and expand services to enable all urban residents to use it for their regular commuting. Electrify all public transport networks. Encourage urban bicycle use through more cycleways and better facilities for cyclists. Nationalise and upgrade interstate freight, passenger train and ferry services including high-speed rail from Adelaide and Melbourne to Sydney and Brisbane. Transition to making all new private cars and other road vehicles electric other than special-use vehicles, such as long distance vehicles for remote areas. Replace petrol stations with charging stations.



2. Begin new international treaty negotiations aimed to get all countries to agree on a global target aiming for 90% emissions cuts on 1990 levels by 2030. Prioritise emissions cuts to rich industrial nations, and increase aid to exploited countries to help them to use clean energy for their development.



4. Require advanced energy efficiency measures and solar photovoltaic panels be fitted to existing buildings with measures to subsidise owner-occupiers for excessive costs. Require landlords to progressively install the same technology in rental properties. Improve mandatory energy efficiency standards for all new buildings.



6. Ban fracking. Shut down and cap unconventional gas wells. Begin phasing out coalmining and coal-fired power immediately. Provide replacement jobs and retraining on full pay for affected communities. Build new sustainable industries in these areas.



8. Bring power industries under public ownership. Set up public bodies to coordinate local, regional and national energy networks/grids. Plan and build a mix of renewable energy and energy storage technologies to supply 100% renewable energy. Technologies to be used include wind turbines, solar photovoltaic, solar thermal and storage, pumped hydro storage and batteries. New technologies such as wave or geothermal power should be included as they become available. Support community-owned renewable power generation and grids and upgrade the national grid to facilitate the new renewable energy system.



10. Create measures to support farmers to revegetate, starting with less productive land where practical, for carbon sequestration and biodiversity. Provide education, research and direct assistance to move to "carbon farming", which stores carbon in soils, or causes reduced carbon loss from soils. Encourage new farming practices including organic and urban food production. Oversee the process to enhance regional employment and maintain or improve food sovereignty.



FEMINISM
SOCIALISM
QUEER RIGHTS
ANTI-RACIST
ENVIRONMENTALISM
STUDENT AND WORKER RIGHTS



WE NEED TO CHANGE THE SYSTEM, NOT THE CLIMATE



'Climate change is a civilizational wake up call. A powerful message — spoken in the language of fires, flood, droughts and extinctions — telling us that we need an entirely new economic model and a new way of sharing this planet.'

*This Changes Everything:
Capitalism vs The Climate
- Naomi Klein*

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Alliance**



Climate change is already impacting our lives. As it gets worse, we will be affected by more floods and storms, bushfires and droughts. Globally there will be less clean water and farmland available. This disproportionately affects those who have the least — women, Indigenous people and those living in exploited nations.

Climate change is a result of an economic system — capitalism — in which private companies' profit-making is privileged over the real needs of communities and their environments.

Capitalism will not resolve the climate crisis because it cannot. It cannot because of its structured social and ecological irrationality. This is why, regardless of what the science tells us we should do, fossil fuels are still being burnt and sustainable energy systems still have to be fought for.

Capitalism, in which global inequality is the norm, also avoids real democracy. This is why, to overcome climate change, we have to transform society into one based on democracy and economic equality. Central to this is expanding Aboriginal land rights, poverty reduction, refugee rights, gender equality and workers' rights.

There is already too much carbon in the atmosphere. The warming already in the system risks the crossing of various natural "tipping points" that would change the earth's life support systems irreversibly on human timescales, and could raise

temperatures further and faster.

If these points are crossed, it would raise average temperatures to levels that have not existed for millions of years, at a speed that many species would not be able to adapt to. The already dangerous rate of extinction of species would accelerate.

In this warmer world, maintaining large-scale agriculture would be difficult or impossible. Without a secure food supply, we can expect outbreaks of famine, disease and war.

Bringing greenhouse gas emissions under control will require fundamental changes and concerted efforts at every level — international, national and local.

As world temperatures are already creating dangerous climatic events, there is no amount of new greenhouse emissions that is safe. We must stop greenhouse gas emissions as soon as possible.

Australia is one of the world's worst culprits, with the highest per-capita rate of greenhouse gas emissions among advanced economies: it has a disproportionate responsibility for the historic emissions that have caused the current dangerous warming.

The policies adopted by both Labor and the Coalition are too weak: both have set targets too low to reduce emissions at the rate needed.

Carbon trading schemes in general are not a solution. These schemes are riddled with loopholes and are a dangerous distraction from genuine measures. They

are designed to allow some polluters to delay emissions cuts, when we need all emissions to be cut as fast as possible.

Nuclear power is not a safe, clean, sustainable or viable energy solution. The nuclear industry has huge problems not faced by renewables.

The nuclear cycle begins with uranium mining. All the operating mines have a history of leaks, spills and accidents.

However, real options do exist. Australia has the economic power to change quickly: it could abandon fossil fuels.

We have enough sun and wind to provide all our energy many times over. We also have the wealth to develop a renewable energy manufacturing industry and other appropriate technology. We can also provide this technology to countries with underfunded infrastructure, as a repayment of Australia's climate debt for its historically high emissions.

Such a program would revitalise Australia's dying manufacturing industry. It would provide quality, skilled jobs for tens of thousands of people. It would also put Australia in a position to go from one of the worst climate offenders in the world to being an important part of the solution.

Business-as-usual, pro-capitalist politics cannot solve this crisis. We need to look at radical measures adequate to the challenge. Here we outline the climate change policies of the Socialist Alliance, and the strategies needed to implement them.

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