



CLIMATE EMERGENCY DEMANDS SYSTEM CHANGE

‘Why is it so important to stay below 1.5°C? Because even at 1°C, people are dying from climate change ... because that is what the united science calls for and so we have the best possible chance to avoid setting off irreversible chain reactions. Every fraction of a degree matters.’

Greta Thunberg at the World Economic Forum, Davos, 2020.

**Socialist
Alliance**

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We are living in a climate emergency

Governments' responses to the drought and bushfire crisis show they are prepared to let people and whole ecosystems die rather than change their fossil-fuel expansionist course. We have less than 10 years to reverse this course.

Record heat, devastating bushfires, long-term drought, as well as floods from cyclones and storms are impacting our lives now. Climate change most impacts those who have the least – Indigenous peoples, women, workers, small farmers and those living in exploited and poor countries.

Capitalism has created the climate emergency. Private companies' profit-making and capital accumulation occur regardless of the needs of society and nature. It is a system of social, economic and ecological irrationality.

Capitalism will not resolve the climate crisis because it cannot. This is why, despite decades of warnings, the fossil fuel giants still dominate: they decide what Australia exports and our energy system. Corporations decide what price to put on our natural resources, such as water.

Capitalism, in which global inequality is the norm, also avoids real democracy. This is why, to overcome the climate crisis we have to transform society. We must affirm Aboriginal sovereignty, reduce poverty and expand refugee rights, gender equality and workers' rights.

No amount of greenhouse gas emissions is safe. More emissions bring us closer to the risk of crossing "tipping points" where

temperatures rise further and faster, compromising the Earth's life support systems. Many species cannot adapt, our food and water supplies are becoming compromised and disease and wars fought over resources are growing.

The emission cuts we need will require fundamental social and economic change at every level – international, national and local.

Change the system not the climate

Tackling the climate emergency requires more than a vote for change. Only informed, organised and mobilised communities can succeed in winning a safe climate.

The powerful fossil fuel corporations, backed by corporate media outlets, are supporting the saboteurs of climate action in Australia's major parties. Without a sustained climate movement that is independent of the major parties, we will not be able to break their hold on power.

We cannot let the market decide because, while private corporations may come up with some "green" solutions, they will always prioritise making a profit.

We need to reduce greenhouse gas emissions in every sector of the domestic economy, military activity and exports.

The changes we need require putting energy and transportation back into public hands to give communities a real say on what is to

be mined, how energy is produced and how much it should cost.

Australian capitalism is one of the world's worst climate culprits. It has the highest per-capita rate of greenhouse gas emissions among advanced economies, is the third-largest exporter of fossil fuels and has led the way in arguing against global agreements to reduce emissions.

Coalition and Labor policies are woefully inadequate: their emissions' targets are too low and do not include serious implementation plans. Meanwhile, polluting industries continue to be heavily subsidised.

Carbon trading schemes are riddled with loopholes and are dangerous distractions from genuine measures to cut emissions. They are designed to allow polluters to delay implementing emission cuts.

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

We can develop a renewable energy industry and other appropriate technologies. Through sun, wind and hydro we can provide our energy readily. We can also provide these technologies to other countries as repayment for Australia's climate debt.

We can also create the transport, land management and industrial systems we need.

Such a program would revitalise Australia's manufacturing industry and rehabilitate urban and regional ecosystems. It would provide quality, skilled jobs for tens of thousands of people.

We can be an important part of the solution

The Socialist Alliance has been developing this charter for climate action since it was first published in 2010. The international debate about how to achieve climate justice took a step forward when Bernie Sanders' US presidential campaign and the British Labour Party proposed a "green new deal". Socialist Alliance is committed to forging unity across diverse sectors that agree Australia needs an action plan that combines ecological and social justice measures that challenge the political and economic power of the fossil fuel corporations. This is a contribution towards that.

What are some radical measures adequate to the challenge?

Here we outline the climate emergency policies of the Socialist Alliance and the strategies needed to implement them

A CLIMATE EMERGENCY PLAN

A series of huge projects are needed to tackle the problem sector by sector. The technology for a zero-emissions economy already exists. Corporations and the governments that serve them are the fundamental block to real action. A serious response to the climate emergency must include these steps:

Set targets that cut emissions fast

Current greenhouse gas levels have brought us close to or even past dangerous tipping points. Moving to zero emissions as fast as possible is vital, even as we adapt to extreme weather and climate and take up our responsibility to help heal the damage to vulnerable ecosystems.

Immediate economy-wide and sector-by-sector planning is required to move as rapidly as possible to eliminate all greenhouse gas emissions. Australia's yearly emission reduction targets must be rapidly raised to at least 10%.

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

Guarantee green jobs

A successful climate emergency plan would place the burden of change on corporations responsible for carbon pollution. It would ensure that workers in the fossil fuel industry would be retrained and guaranteed jobs with no loss

in pay or conditions. It would devote resources to managing the landscape and responding to weather emergencies.

Hundreds of thousands of new jobs could come from government investment in the construction and operation of renewable energy plants and public transport systems. With planning, this could happen where it is most needed, including in coal-dependent regional areas.

Low-energy sector jobs, such as academic and technical education and aged and health care, also need more public investment to grow. Workers are critical to any successful transition, which means closing down old fossil fuel-driven industries and opening new ones. Their power in the workplace needs to grow.

Build renewables

Electricity generation makes up a third of Australia's greenhouse gas emissions. Australia should set a target to source all its energy from renewables within 10 years or sooner.

Australia can meet all its energy needs by building a combination

of renewable energy sources, especially solar and wind power, and a national smart grid. Energy storage technologies such as concentrated 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. These studies also find renewable energy means the lowest electricity bills of all in the long run. All coal and gas-fired power plants must be taken off-line and new ones should not be built.

Nuclear power is not a viable or ecological solution. The nuclear cycle begins with uranium mining: all operating mines have a history of radiation leaks, spills and accidents. The desperate attempts to make nuclear power plants safe, which failed at Fukushima, mean they take more than a decade to build and they are ever more expensive. There is no known safe nuclear waste disposal method and nuclear power encourages nuclear weapons proliferation. Nuclear medicines can be produced in cyclotrons.

End coal and LNG mining and exports

Mining and handling coal, oil and conventional and unconventional gas also contributes to greenhouse gas emissions. These processes produce accidental and deliberate "fugitive"

emissions (leaks, venting and flaring) that amount to more than 10% of Australia's total emissions. Coal and liquefied natural gas (LNG) exports profit from the failure to control emissions globally and cover up the extent of Australia's contribution to emissions when manufactured goods are produced overseas and imported.

Coal, unconventional gas and LNG mining and export must be rapidly phased out, with no new mines or wells opened. A plan for new jobs and guaranteed incomes for miners and seafarers should be developed and implemented. This could include new manufacturing export industries powered by Australia's abundant renewable energy.

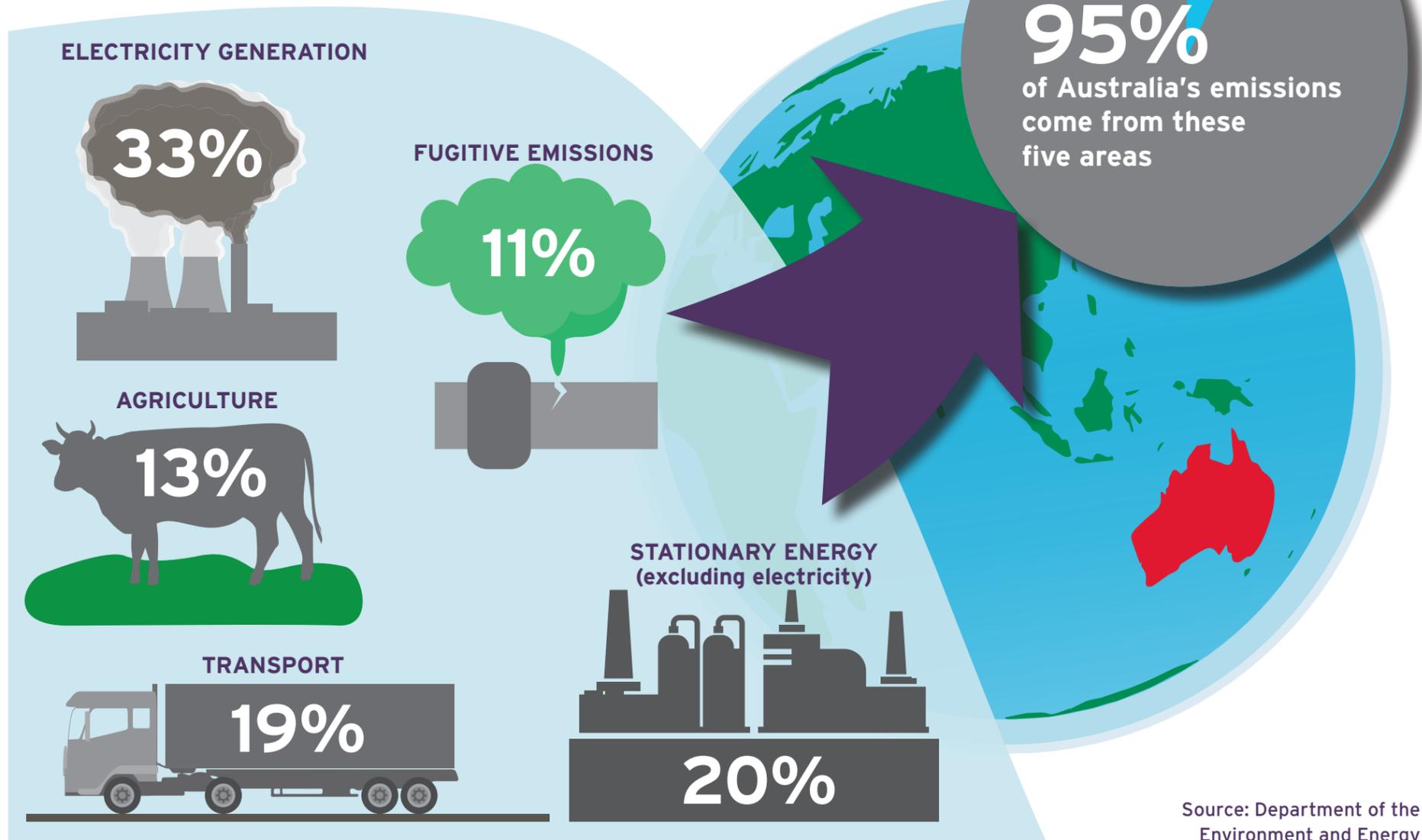
Australia could also research technologies for industrial processes, such as steelmaking, that don't use coal or gas, and provide these to countries seeking to transition away from reliance on fossil fuels.

Increase energy efficiency, aim for zero waste

Increased efficiency and reduced waste in production and consumption is an important way to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Insulating homes, efficient home appliances, less packaging, better recycling, improved public transport replacing the need to rely on private vehicles and producing goods locally are

EMISSIONS IN AUSTRALIA

Share of total emissions by sector for the year to March 2019



Source: Department of the Environment and Energy

effective changes the government should be promoting and funding.

We must set energy and resource efficiency as a national goal. A street-by-street program is needed to fix the nation's energy-inefficient buildings. Redesigning production, supply and disposal chains for food and other consumer goods can remove wasted energy and unnecessary emissions.

Industry and business must systematically undergo energy audits and achieve compliance deadlines. Failure to upgrade to low-emissions technology and processes would mean firms are taken into public ownership to make the required changes.

The ultimate aim should be a zero-waste economy, with products designed to be repaired, re-used or recycled.

Public ownership and democratic control

The "polluter pays" principle should be applied. Polluting companies should have to clean up the mess they have made. If they will not stop polluting, or do not have the resources to clean up, they should be placed under public ownership.

In this way, products and services that are essential can be identified and cleaned up or replaced. Non-essential services can be shut down or scaled back until a sustainable alternative is found.

The conversion of energy generation to renewables is the leading edge for any plan for greenhouse gas reduction. Public ownership and control of this industry is essential.

Indigenous-led land, fire and water management, organic farming and reforestation

Indigenous land, fire and water management of the continent was disrupted by colonisation. Conventional agricultural practices consume huge quantities of fossil fuels and damage soil. Livestock farming is energy and water intensive. Deforestation has also destroyed naturally-occurring carbon sinks, and over-allocation of privatised water resources has dried the landscape, exacerbating global-warming-intensified drought and fires.

Funding must be provided to custodians of traditional knowledge, to support Indigenous-led land management and the sharing of the skills needed to protect country – forests, grasslands, and farmlands.

Farming communities should be encouraged with financial support, resources and training to transition to carbon-neutral and organic agriculture, with an emphasis on methods that increase carbon storage in soils and ecosystems and protect biodiversity. Food production should be localised where possible,

to reduce the need to transport and refrigerate food. Urban agriculture and composting can be developed and expanded.

Over-allocation of water from stressed river systems to agribusiness irrigators must end, and water recovered for environmental flows and communities.

Native forests that have not been logged store up to three times more carbon than forests that have been logged, so old-growth logging must end. Extensive native forest "re-wilding" with appropriate firestick management will then increase these carbon sinks. Farms and plantation forestry will need to meet fibre and timber needs sustainably.

Make public transport free, frequent and accessible

Transport's share of Australia's greenhouse gas emissions is rising. Road travel and freight account for 90% of that, and road-dominated transport systems waste time, space and energy.

We must put public transport at the centre of our urban plans, return to rail freight and build high speed rail links. Urban design and redesign should establish the primacy of a comprehensive public transport system and promote active transport (walking and cycling), and living closer to workplaces, shops and schools.

A successful public transport system will have reliable, free and frequent services within a five-minute walk, including in outer metropolitan suburbs. A publicly-owned, integrated system of heavy rail, light rail, ferry and bus services would reduce emissions. Electric cars can fill what gaps remain to provide 100% renewable energy urban transport.

We need huge investment in public transport, rail freight and high-speed rail to make these real options for commuters and industry.

Rich countries must take the lead

Australia's coal-powered economy has the highest emission rate per person in the industrialised world: with just 0.3% of the world's population, per capita Australia produces 1.3% of global emissions. That puts the onus on Australia to step up its game on addressing the climate emergency.

Rich nations must lead the way. We must contribute the most to fixing the problem and help exploited nations develop without high-pollution industries and energy. A new international treaty should aim for 90% emissions cuts by 2030.

Australia must also accept the environmental refugees who are already being displaced by the climate crisis. This is just part of repaying our ecological debt.

green left

Join the rebellion become a supporter

This is a climate emergency

greenleft.org.au/support

13-POINT CLIMATE ACTION PLAN



1 Affirm Aboriginal sovereignty across the continent and seek Traditional Owners' leadership of land, water, fire and resource management to protect country.



2 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, and annual emissions reduction targets ramping up to at least 10% a year. Plan and build a mix of renewable energy and energy storage technologies to supply 100% renewable energy. Upgrade the national energy grid to facilitate the new renewable system.



3 Bring power industries under public ownership. Support community-owned renewable power generation and grids. Set up public bodies to coordinate local, regional and national networks.



4 Ban fracking: shut down and cap unconventional gas wells. Immediately begin to phase out coal mining and coal-fired power. Ensure no affected worker is left worse off either via retraining and replacement jobs with no loss in pay or conditions or early retirement on existing pay. Build new sustainable industries in these areas.



5 Redirect heavy industry, including steel and aluminium, and re-tool empty car factories, to manufacture essential products and infrastructure for the transition, such as renewable energy generators, public transport vehicles, rail lines and power transmission lines.



6 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.



7 Retrofit energy efficiency measures in all buildings. Solar panels and hot water systems everywhere feasible. Public subsidies for owner-occupiers, public funding for public housing tenants; landlords to pay for rentals. All newly built buildings to comply.



8 No nuclear power plants. End uranium mining. No dumping of nuclear waste. Shut down the Lucas Heights nuclear reactor and switch to clean, safe medical technologies.



9 Ban the logging of native forests and move to tree plantations and alternative crops for fibre and timber. Begin an urgent program of agroecological revegetation to sequester carbon and restore and protect biodiversity in the face of a changing climate.



10 Support farmers to move to agroecology. Provide education, research and direct assistance to enable the move to "carbon farming" by storing carbon in soils, or reducing carbon loss from soils. Encourage new farming practices to end the need for chemical fertilisers, fungicides, pesticides and herbicides. Enhance regional employment and improve food sovereignty. Promote localised food production and distribution, including urban agriculture.



11 Expand public transport to enable all urban residents to use it for their regular commuting. Transition to free services. Electrify all public transport networks. Encourage bicycle use through better cycling facilities. Nationalise and upgrade rail freight, regional passenger trains and interstate ferry services. Build high-speed rail between capital cities. Subsidise electric vehicles, with charging stations replacing petrol stations.



12 Include emissions from the military in the national greenhouse accounts. Cut military spending and redirect it to fund real community emergency services and an economic transition plan. Climate crises should not be used to increase the power of the authoritarian state.



13 Australia should stop blocking international treaty negotiations and push instead for a binding international agreement for 90% emissions cuts by 2030. Rich industrial nations must lead the way with increased aid to exploited countries to help them to move straight to emissions-free technology.

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socialist-alliance.org