



Australian Government
Climate Change Authority



CLIMATE CHANGE AUTHORITY RELEASES DRAFT “TARGETS AND PROGRESS REVIEW”

Statement by the Chair, Mr Bernie Fraser

30 October 2013

The Climate Change Authority has called for tougher targets for reductions in Australia's greenhouse gas emissions in a Draft Report released today.

The Authority is inviting public submissions on this and other preliminary recommendations contained in the Draft Report. These submissions, together with consultations to be held with major stakeholders, will be considered by the Authority in preparing its final recommendations to Government.

Background

The Climate Change Authority is an independent statutory body established to provide expert and balanced policy advice on a range of climate change issues. The members of the Authority possess expertise in relevant disciplines, including climate science and economic policy, and are supported by an experienced and independent secretariat.

The Authority is well aware that the present Government is proposing climate policy approaches which differ in significant respects from those followed in recent years. It is also aware, of course, that draft legislation has been prepared to rescind the carbon price arrangements and abolish the Authority.

That said, this Review is being conducted in conformity with existing legislation. Until Parliament changes that legislation, the Authority proposes to pursue its statutory obligations.

The Authority has taken the Government's different policy approach into account in the analysis for this Draft Report. In the Authority's view, this Report remains highly relevant despite the changing policy landscape. Its primary focus is Australia's goals for reducing emissions. The setting of these goals raises the same critical questions, whatever the particular policies adopted to meet them.

Both the present and previous governments committed to the same target range and conditions for Australia to reduce emissions by 2020. The Authority has assessed these conditions, together with the broad considerations outlined in its legislation, including the latest climate science, the responses and efforts of different countries, and the costs (economic and other) involved in doing more (or less). It has also considered possible longer-term developments beyond 2020 – out to 2050 and beyond.

The Authority's views on these issues, and its draft recommendations, are elaborated in the Draft Report. As noted earlier, it believes these views are relevant to the Government's reconsideration of future emissions reductions targets for Australia (which, incidentally, it will be expected to confirm in international forums over the next couple of years).

Major conclusions and recommendations

The Authority's major conclusion is that the minimum unconditional 2020 target of a 5 per cent reduction from 2000 levels is inadequate on a number of grounds. For one thing, the Government's own conditions for moving beyond 5 per cent have been met. Most tellingly, a 5 per cent target implies very rapid reductions in emissions in the period after 2020, if Australia was to play its part in concerted international action to limit the increase in global temperatures to no more than 2 degrees Celsius (above pre-industrial levels).

Evidence is also mounting that several other countries Australia is often compared with are gearing up to reduce their emissions more aggressively by 2020. A 5 per cent target would leave Australia lagging behind others, including the United States.

At this stage the Authority has not made a final recommendation on what that tougher 2020 emissions reduction target for Australia should be beyond believing that the 5 per cent target is not a credible option. Instead, two illustrative options – a 15 per cent reduction and a 25 per cent reduction – are canvassed in the draft report and their implications assessed.

This is a critically important issue for the whole Australian community and its airing in the Draft Report is expected to elicit substantial feedback, including on the extent to which Australia might have recourse to use international emissions reductions to achieve its targets. The Authority will weigh up that feedback in coming to its final recommendations.

Progress in reducing Australia's emissions

The existing legislation also requires the Authority to report on Australia's progress in reducing emissions. Given that past experience is part of the context for considering future reductions in emissions, the Authority has incorporated its response to this requirement in this Draft Report.

The Draft Report outlines the emissions experiences and outlook for different sectors of the Australian economy. It provides insights into the opportunities and challenges for effecting further sectoral reductions in emissions in the years ahead. It highlights several areas where future reductions in emissions might be pursued.

At the macro level, and relevant to the consideration of appropriate emissions reduction targets for 2020 and beyond, the Review indicates that over the past two decades Australia has achieved solid economic growth while halving its emissions intensity (emissions per unit of GDP).

Call for submissions

As occurred in the preparation of its first review (on the Renewable Energy Target), the Authority is planning to have extensive public consultation on this Draft Report.

Interested parties can also lodge submissions on the Authority's website: www.climatechangeauthority.gov.au. Submissions should be lodged by 29 November 2013; this deadline is regrettably tight but unavoidable, given the requirement in existing legislation for the Authority to submit its final report to the Government by the end of February 2014.