

Senate Standing Committee on Environment and Communications
Legislation Committee
Answers to questions on notice
Environment portfolio

Question No: 104

Hearing: Supplementary Budget Estimates

Outcome: Outcome 7

Programme: Emissions Reduction Fund Taskforce

Topic: Carbon Budgets

Hansard Page: N/A

Question Date: 27 November 2013

Question Type: Written

Senator Urquhart asked:

Why is it important countries like Australia have a carbon budget and transparently report progress against that budget?

Answer:

Global emissions budgets set an overall limit on emissions by estimating, within a probability range, the likely global average temperature increase that will result from a given level of greenhouse gas emissions over time. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, for example, quantified a cumulative global emissions budget in the first part of its Fifth Assessment Report (2013).

While budgets identify the overall limit on global emissions, they do not assume a particular timing of peak emissions or the rate at which emissions will be reduced. This means that, within an overall budget, policy makers at the national level can consider different rates of emissions reductions based on economic, social and technology considerations. Each nation's 'share' of any global emissions budget would also be subject to equity considerations.

Australia is party to a number of international agreements on emissions reduction, but none of these directly incorporate the concept of a national emissions budget. Any future agreement involving an emissions budget would need to take into account the considerations mentioned above, including the nature of associated reporting obligations.