

Executive Summary

This Report contains the Joint Standing Committee on Treaties review of the following two treaty actions:

- *Paris Agreement* (Paris, 12 December 2015); and
- *Doha Amendment to the Kyoto Protocol to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change* (Doha, 8 December 2012).

As the obligations for Australia under the agreements are closely related, the Committee chose to examine these two treaty actions together.

The *Paris Agreement* has received overwhelming support both internationally and within Australia. It will come into force on 4 November 2016, thirty days after the date on which it was ratified, adopted or accepted by at least 55 Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, accounting for at least an estimated 55 per cent of the total global greenhouse gas emissions. This is an unprecedented response to such an agreement.

In Australia, the Agreement has been welcomed as a positive step forward, supporting collective action on an issue that is considered of global concern. The Agreement provides an inclusive, common framework, sets clear goals and establishes a realistic process and pathway to move forward.

Australia has committed to reducing emissions by 26 to 28 per cent below 2005 levels by 2030. There is some concern that this target may not be sufficient to contribute to meeting the global target of below 2°C, and ideally 1.5°C, set by the Agreement.

Questions were raised regarding the ability of Australia's current climate change policy framework to meet the demands of the country's commitments under the Agreement. The need for a stable, scalable framework with broad political support was stressed to provide confidence to stakeholders going forward.

The proposed review of Australia's climate change policy framework in 2017 is seen as an early opportunity to provide the groundwork for the mandated five yearly reviews due to commence in 2023, particularly with regard to setting Australia's future Nationally Determined Contributions or NDCs.

Despite the concerns a range of opportunities were identified for Australia to successfully adapt to the changing conditions and to take advantage of the transition to a global low-carbon economy. These include the expertise Australia has developed responding to extreme weather events, ongoing demand for its mineral resources in the manufacture and development of renewable technology and its abundant renewable power resources.

However, the transition to the low-carbon economy will require careful planning to ensure that the benefits of Australia's advantages are spread evenly across the population. Practical solutions have to be found to address the social and economic changes faced by Australia as a user and exporter of carbon intensive commodities.

The Committee recommends that both the *Paris Agreement* and the *Doha Amendment to the Kyoto Protocol to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change* be ratified as soon as possible.