

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

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Hearing: Additional Estimates
Outcome: Outcome 2
Programme: Climate Change and Renewable Energy (CCARE)
Topic: National Pollutant Inventory
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Senator Ludlam asked:

Senator LUDLAM: ... What are we going to do about the fact that our greenhouse gas emissions are back on the rise? That is why I thought I should put the question to you rather than to the officials.

Senator Ruston: I am quite happy to take that question on notice and ask the minister to respond. I was merely trying to make the point that there are some very obvious reasons why this has occurred in this particular year. That supports the line of reasoning that this is not necessarily a trend; it is just something that has happened in this particular 12-month period. However, I will take your question on notice and I will have the minister respond to it—whether the government has made any policy decisions in this area.

Answer:

The Government is committed to its unconditional target to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 5 per cent below 2000 levels by 2020 and by 26-28 per cent below 2005 levels by 2030. The Government caring for the unique Australian landscape through direct and practical policy measures under the four pillars of clean air, clean land, clean water and national heritage. Further information on these four pillars can be found at the Department of the Environment's website: www.environment.gov.au/topics/cleaner-environment.

As part of the clean air pillar the Government is implementing its Direct Action Plan on climate change. The Direct Action Plan includes the \$2.55 billion Emissions Reduction Fund (ERF) to provide incentives for cleaning up our environment through activities such as revegetation, investing in soil carbon, cleaning up power stations, capturing gas from landfill, and increasing energy efficiency. The ERF is already providing the impetus for businesses and the community to improve practices, invest in new technologies, and reduce our emissions. In the two successful ERF auctions so far the Government has contracted to purchase over 92 million tonnes of emission reductions from 275 projects at an average price of \$13.12 per tonne of abatement. This is the largest emissions reduction commitment by business ever in Australia and will be built upon in subsequent ERF auctions. The full results of both auctions are available on the Clean Energy Regulator's website at www.cleanenergyregulator.gov.au.

The Government is committed to supporting a sustainable renewable energy sector, and has recently settled on reforms to the Renewable Energy Target (RET) following careful consideration and extensive consultations. These reforms will provide certainty to industry, encourage further investment in renewable energy and better reflect market conditions. The new target for large-scale generation of 33,000 GWh in 2020 is estimated to double the amount of large-scale renewable energy being delivered by the scheme and lift the share of renewables to around 23.5 per cent of Australia's electricity in 2020.

On 4 December 2015, the Council of Australian Governments Energy Council released the National Energy Productivity Plan (NEPP) and initial Work Plan of measures. The NEPP provides a framework and an initial economy-wide work plan designed to accelerate action to deliver a 40 per cent improvement in Australia's energy productivity by 2030. In better coordinating energy efficiency, energy market reform and climate policy, it brings together new and existing measures from across the COAG Energy Council's work program, as well as from the Commonwealth and industry.

On 31 October 2015, the Australian Government announced a whole of government review of vehicle emissions through the establishment of a Ministerial Forum chaired by the Minister for Major Projects, Territories and Local Government, the Hon Paul Fletcher MP. On 11 February 2016, the Vehicle Emissions Ministerial Forum released a Discussion Paper for public comment to examine ways to reduce the health and environmental impacts from motor vehicle emissions. The Vehicle Emissions Discussion Paper seeks views on measures to achieve the Australian Government's greenhouse gas emissions reduction targets, air quality objectives, and improvements in energy productivity in the context of road vehicles.

A strong and effective global climate agreement was achieved at the recent climate change conference in Paris, with Australia playing an active and constructive role in delivering the final outcome. Australia's efforts at Paris build on the Government's announcement in August 2015 that Australia will reduce its emissions to 26-28 per cent below 2005 levels by 2030. The target will see Australia's emissions per capita halved and emissions intensity reduced by two-thirds. Australia's per capita emissions reductions, in particular, will be the largest of all major developed economies – up to 52 per cent below 2005 levels by 2030.

It is up to each country to determine how best to achieve its emissions reduction targets under the Paris Agreement. The Government has stated that it will undertake a review progress towards the 2030 target in 2017.