



Renew Australia

Policy Agenda



AUSTRALIAN
CONSERVATION
FOUNDATION

Our Vision

Australia is a special place, blessed with resilient communities and incredible nature. Today we are living through difficult times but our future can be so much better. With the right choices, Australia can lead the world in clean energy, pollution-free travel, secure jobs and a healthy economy, climate and natural world we can pass on to our children.

If we want this future,
**we need a plan to
Renew Australia** with
climate and nature
solutions that will cut
climate pollution by more
than half this decade.

In the last few years we've lived through a series of crises: extreme climate fuelled bushfires that harmed people and wiped out forests, towns and billions of animals. Floods and storms across the country. A Covid-19 pandemic that continues to disrupt our lives and our livelihoods.

Climate damage is here, now and getting worse. The action we take now as we rebuild our economy from Covid-19 will determine our future.

We have a choice to make. Will we continue with the destructive industries of the past? Or will we seize the huge opportunities to cut climate pollution, restore nature and have resilient communities with good, future-proof jobs?

Countries around the world are stepping up to take action. Australia must do its fair share.

Scientists tell us we need to cut pollution by 75% by 2030 and at an absolute minimum our Australian government must commit to cutting climate pollution by more than half this decade. We already have the solutions to ensure a safe and healthy future and new jobs in growing industries.

With our abundant sunshine and wind Australia can become a clean energy superpower. We can create energy independent communities with solar, wind and batteries. Our transport can be powered with clean energy. We can send our sunshine around the world through green hydrogen and manufacturing.

Our lives and livelihoods depend on thriving nature. We need strong national nature protection laws to protect our big backyard, and support nature as a climate solution.

We can strengthen our democracy by capping corporate donations to political parties, getting coal and gas money out of politics and putting people back in.

Everyday Australians are doing their part.

Send our sunshine around the world.

Australia can become a global clean energy superpower in the next decade by replacing coal, gas and uranium exports and use with renewable energy. We have plentiful sun and wind. A valuable export industry that secures and creates great jobs through products manufactured using 100% renewable energy like green hydrogen, batteries, steel and aluminum, is within our reach.

Create energy independent communities.

Power schools, hospitals, government offices, public and social housing, remote Indigenous communities, sporting clubs, halls and libraries with affordable, clean energy by 2025, and replace coal and gas-burning power stations with renewable energy and storage by 2030.

Travel clean.

Take pollution out of transport. Save our health and climate with more accessible buses and trains running on clean energy; make electric vehicles cheaper; and install electric vehicle charging stations across the country.

Move the money.

Banks and super funds must move our money from funding polluting coal, gas and nuclear projects to clean renewable powered industries and jobs. Political parties must stop accepting dirty donations and giving public funding to coal and gas companies and ban big political donations to reduce their influence on decision making.

Save our big backyard.

Create strong national nature protection laws that stop Australia's worsening extinction crisis, and support nature as a climate solution. New laws must be enforced by an independent regulator. Our forests, wetlands and bushlands store greenhouse gases, provide homes for our unique animals and birds, and are places where people restore and revive.

Five big actions



1. Send Our Sunshine around the world

The challenge

Mining, burning and exporting coal, oil and gas is the single biggest cause of climate damage. Demand for coal and gas exports will decline as Australia's major trading partners and allies aim for net zero emissions.

- In 2021, the Group of Seven (G7) leaders - Canada, France, Germany, Italy, the United Kingdom, United States, Japan and the European Union - committed to a "green revolution" to create jobs, cut emissions and limit global temperature rise to 1.5 degrees. The G7 committed to halving emissions by 2030 and reaching net zero emissions by 2050, while the larger G20 committed to ending finance for overseas coal power generation-a move that is likely to reduce demand even further over the coming decade.
- China has pledged to achieve net zero by 2060; Japan and South Korea by 2050.
- New Zealand has legislated its target to achieve net zero emissions by 2050- these countries make up the vast majority of Australia's export economy.

In spite of a short, sharp increase over 2021/2022, the International Energy Agency expects demand for thermal coal, oil and gas to plummet under a net zero emissions future, with projections showing coal declining by 90 percent, oil by 75 percent and gas by 55 percent before 2050 (compared to 2020), with the beginnings of this decline to be felt as soon as 2025. Australia is one of the world's largest exporters of polluting coal and gas.

Australia is one of the world's largest exporters of polluting coal and gas

The opportunity

- Develop new clean export industries – which could include green aluminium, steel and hydrogen all made from 100 percent renewable energy, exporting renewable energy directly via undersea cables or creating value-add to our critical minerals assets by manufacturing batteries and other components right here at home. These all provide substantial future export opportunities for Australia as the world transitions to net zero emissions.
- Many new clean export industries could be located in Australia's existing industrial zones. This will create economic opportunities, particularly for regions currently reliant on coal and gas.

How to make the Change

Australia can become a global clean energy superpower in the next decade by replacing coal, gas and uranium exports with renewable energy and the products the world needs to get to net zero. With world-leading solar and wind resources and access to critical minerals like lithium and copper, Australia has a unique opportunity to build a future based on clean, green exports.

Tests of Success

- Australia, led by government and supported by business, implements a roadmap with targets, policies and investments to decarbonise our export economy away from polluting coal, gas and uranium to clean, renewable energy over the next decade.
- The Australian government establishes a National Just Transition Authority to coordinate economic diversification for regions currently reliant on jobs in coal and gas, like Victoria's Latrobe Valley, NSW's Hunter Valley and Central Queensland.
- Government and business implement free, prior, and informed consent principles by Traditional Owners for all major clean export infrastructure projects. If consent is granted, First Nations Peoples should be provided the opportunity to acquire equity stakes in projects occurring on country, so that they benefit from Australia becoming a clean energy superpower.

Benefits

- Australia replaces coal and gas exports which are equivalent to 3.6% of global emissions, with renewable exports.¹
- Future-proof Australia's economy and industries, attracting around \$25 billion annually in private investment and adding 1 to 2% to GDP through zero carbon projects.²
- Create over 100,000 direct jobs in the renewable energy led recovery.³
- By creating a National Just Transition Authority, impacted communities are supported with community-based planning, investment in worker re-skilling, retraining and redeployment, and investment in economic diversification.

¹ https://climateanalytics.org/media/australia_carbon_footprint_report_july2019.pdf

² <https://bze.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/Million-Jobs-Plan-Economics-Impact.pdf>

³ <https://www.wwf.org.au/what-we-do/climate/renewables/renewable-export-covid-19-recovery-package#gs.6sxgqb>





Case Study

South Australia's plans to reach 500 percent renewable energy and develop a world-class renewable hydrogen industry

South Australia is a world leader in renewable energy, with 66 percent of the state's electricity coming from renewables. It's home to one of the world's biggest batteries - the Tesla and Neoen Hornsdale Power Reserve - and boasts Australia's largest 'virtual power plant' connecting thousands of residential solar and battery systems, a project that benefits low income households, energy retailers and the electricity grid.

The state's five-year Climate Change Action Plan and Hydrogen Action Plan set new goals to grow its renewable energy and hydrogen industries and electrify the state's transport system. These include:

- 100 percent renewable energy by 2030
- 500 percent renewable energy by 2050
- 50 percent cut in climate pollution by 2030
- net zero emissions by 2050.
- 20 key actions across five key areas to help scale-up renewable hydrogen production for export and domestic consumption.

South Australia has also outlined ambitions to become a clean energy export superpower and has provided significant funding for green hydrogen projects. In 2020, it launched its Hydrogen export prospectus, which identified a number of green hydrogen hubs, each of which would double the current installed capacity of solar and wind farms in South Australia. Soon after, it announced plans to provide \$37 million in funding for upgrades to the \$240 million Eyre Peninsula Gateway Hydrogen Project, as part of South Australia's plans to become an exporter of green energy. In December 2021, the South Australian Government and Trafigura unveiled a milestone \$750 million green hydrogen project, which will be integrated with the Nyrstar Port Pirie Smelter. This is part of a broader plan to create a Renewable Energy Industrial Precinct in the Spencer Gulf.

2. Create Energy Independent communities

The challenge

Most of Australia's electricity still comes from coal and gas, our largest source of climate pollution.

The transition to renewable energy is underway and the Australian government projects 50 percent of our electricity will be from renewable energy by 2030. But to protect our climate, we must power our lives and economy with 100 percent renewable energy.

Major corporations, countries and Australian states and territories are already committed to this goal.

More than 300 major global corporations including the 'big four' Australian banks and Woolworths have committed to go 100 percent renewable.

The Australian Energy Market Operator wants the nation's main electricity grids to be capable of running on 100 percent renewable energy for periods of time by 2025.⁴

Our once in a century transformation from coal to renewables and storage will require a nine-fold increase in large-scale renewable energy capacity, and a five-fold increase in solar photovoltaics (PV). In short, we need to build lots and lots of renewable energy.

Many comparable countries and major economies have much higher shares of renewable power than Australia, for example:

- The United Kingdom sources 42 percent of its electricity from renewable sources and the UK Prime Minister has said 100 percent of the country's electricity could come from renewables by 2035.
- California - the world's fifth largest economy - has committed to reach 60 percent by 2030 and 100 percent by 2045.
- New Zealand is at 84 percent and aiming for 100 percent by 2035.

At home, the Australian Capital Territory (ACT) and Tasmania are already at 100 percent renewable energy. South Australia is aiming for 100 percent by 2030 and 500 percent by 2050, and recently set a record with the state's solar and wind farms and rooftop solar supplying over 100 percent of their electricity for almost one week. Victoria, the Northern Territory and Queensland are aiming for 50 percent by 2030.

The Australian government has only promised to cut emissions by 26 to 28 percent by 2030, which is in line with over 3°C of global heating. The government has committed to net zero by 2050 but is delaying action to align with this goal and leaving a huge burden to future years.

The opportunity

Australia can move to 100 percent renewable energy, cutting pollution and electricity bills at the same time. Wind and solar are the lowest cost new power sources, even when energy storage and new transmission is taken into account.

Australian governments and businesses can make this happen by investing in unprecedented growth in renewable energy, updating our national energy grid to make it fit for purpose for a distributed energy future and avoiding investment in flawed options like carbon capture and storage that perpetuate the risky use of fossil fuels and nuclear power.

There are many ways to go renewable, from government renewable energy targets and reverse auctions, to businesses installing or directly contracting wind and solar power, to households and organisations installing solar panels or buying GreenPower.

Governments should prioritise and support renewable energy for government operations, homes (including rentals), community buildings and remote communities across Australia.

⁴ <https://reneweconomy.com.au/new-aemo-boss-wants-australias-grid-to-handle-100-pct-renewables-by-2025/>

How to make the Change

- Power schools, hospitals, government offices, public and social housing, remote Indigenous communities, sporting clubs, halls and libraries – with affordable, clean energy by 2025.
- Install big batteries and more pumped hydro to store sun and wind so it can be released when needed.
- Replace coal and gas-burning power stations with renewable energy and storage by 2030.

Tests of Success

- The Australian government commits to achieve 100% renewable energy by 2030.
- The Australian government sets policies and commits funds to power schools, hospitals, government offices, public and social housing, remote Indigenous communities, sporting clubs, halls and libraries – with affordable, clean energy by 2025.
- Every priority Renewable Energy Zone identified by AEMO is unlocked with an injection of new government funding and low cost finance to provide the necessary transmission infrastructure to connect high quality wind and solar to energy demand.⁵
- The Australian government maintains the renewable energy focus of the Clean Energy Finance Corporation (CEFC) and the Australian Renewable Energy Agency (ARENA), doubles the CEFC’s funding and increases ARENA’s funding by at least \$2 billion.
- The Australian Government doubles the current \$100m commitment for large-scale batteries to store renewable energy and support the clean energy transition.
- The Australian government powers remote Indigenous communities with renewable energy and resources Indigenous training providers to skill up an Indigenous workforce to participate in the renewable energy economy.

Benefits

- Cut Australia’s climate pollution by over 167 million tonnes a year.⁶
- Clean air quality for communities living in and around coal and gas plants and mines. For coal alone this avoids around 800 premature deaths and 14,000 asthma symptoms among children each year.⁷
- Reliable, low-cost electricity - wind, solar and storage technologies are by far the cheapest forms of electricity for Australia.⁸
- Employ 44,000 people by 2025, many in regional and rural Australia.
- Ease financial stress on the most vulnerable Australians by reducing electricity bills for those living in social and public housing and remote Indigenous communities.

⁵. <https://aemo.com.au/-/media/files/major-publications/isp/2020/appendix--5.pdf?la=en> p.10

⁶. <https://www.industry.gov.au/sites/default/files/2021-05/nggi-quarterly-update-december-2020.pdf>

⁷. <https://www.greenpeace.org.au/wp/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/GPAP-Lethal-Power-full-report.pdf>

⁸. <https://ieefa.org/new-australian-study-same-old-conclusion-renewables-are-cheaper-than-gas-coal/>



Case Study

Trailblazing territories

The ACT set and achieved its 100 percent renewable energy by 2020 target in five years using ‘reverse auctions’ for wind and solar power. The ACT has delivered 3MtCO₂e in greenhouse gas pollution cuts, delivered record low wind and solar prices, created price transparency and more than 1,000 jobs.

Victoria and Queensland have both adopted the ACT’s renewable energy reverse auction approach.

In the Northern Territory (NT), the Territory government has adopted a target of 50 percent renewable energy by 2030. With many remote communities relying on expensive diesel generators for power, the NT Government through the Power and Water Corporation has partnered with the Australian Renewable Energy Agency (ARENA) to bring solar to remote Territory communities. The cost of power from renewable energy and battery storage systems is significantly lower than diesel generation.⁹

⁹ <https://roadmapstorenewables.nt.gov.au/roadmap-to-renewables-expert-panel-report>

Melbourne renewable energy project

The Melbourne Renewable Energy Project led by the City of Melbourne is bringing together large energy users in and around the city to jointly purchase renewable energy, and to date has reduced the equivalent of five percent of the city’s emissions

The first round of the project included 14 organisations, companies and local governments like Australia Post and Zoos Victoria. The project supported 80 megawatts of capacity as part of the Crowlands Wind Farm (that’s 39 wind turbines), enough to meet the energy needs of the buying group, with zero greenhouse gas pollution. The wind farm now supplies energy to power town halls, bank branches, universities and street lights across Melbourne.

The City of Melbourne has now brought together a second purchasing group, including seven large energy users: CBUS Property, Citywide Asphalt, ISPT, Mondelez International, RMIT and Deakin Universities. Tango Energy will provide 110 GWh of renewable energy per year to the purchasing group, to power shopping centres, office buildings, educational campuses and manufacturing facilities across greater Melbourne. Energy will be produced by the Yaloak South Wind Farm near Ballan and other Victorian wind projects. The deal will reduce greenhouse gas pollution by 123,000 tonnes a year.

3. Travel Clean

The challenge

Transport is one of Australia’s largest sources of climate pollution. It’s also the third highest household expense after housing and food.

Continued reliance on petrol and diesel fuelled road transport drives air and noise pollution in our cities, inactivity, stress, and exacerbates inequalities.

Australia has one of the world’s most emissions-intensive road vehicle fleets.¹⁰ Australian cities have very low shares of travel by public transport, cycling and walking.

According to a report by ACF and Deloitte Access Economics, Australian taxpayers are expected to incur costs of \$864.9 billion between 2022-2050 under expected road usage patterns and current trends. This is made up of the costs of air pollution (\$488.2 billion - 56%), GHG emissions (205.4 billion- 24 percent), noise (\$95.4 billion - 11%), and water pollution (\$75.8 billion - 9 %).

Other countries are setting targets to rapidly scale up electric vehicles and sustainable transport solutions like public transport, cycling and walking, and setting dates to ban petrol and diesel vehicle sales. Sixteen countries (and major economies like California) have announced plans to ban the sale of fossil fuelled vehicles[v]. Thirty-five global cities will only buy zero emissions buses from 2025, including London, Los Angeles, Austin, Auckland and Moscow. Car companies are phasing out fossil fuelled cars - Volvo, Mercedes-Benz, Bentley and Mini have made commitments to only making electric vehicles by 2030.¹¹

At around 0.6 percent of new vehicles sold each year, Australia’s uptake of electric vehicles lags behind Norway (56 percent), China (5 percent), the United Kingdom and New Zealand (3 percent).

The opportunity

Sustainable, zero emission transport solutions are available today and are the future. Australia needs to accelerate the rollout of electric cars, trucks and buses and invest in infrastructure and services to support a shift to more sustainable travel modes like public transport, cycling, walking and rail and electric or renewable hydrogen powered freight.

Solutions include:

- Shifting to renewable powered electric vehicles for government fleets and private vehicles- cars, trains, trams, buses and trucks.
- Improving infrastructure and services to encourage passengers to shift from private car trips to public transport, cycling and walking
- Shifting freight from trucks onto rail and transition the truck fleet to electric or renewable hydrogen fuel.
- Prioritising sustainable, zero emissions transport in infrastructure and land use strategies as well as infrastructure project decisions and funding.
- Supporting the development of solutions for air, shipping and long-haul transport (such as electric vehicles, renewable fuels and more efficient alternatives).

How to make the Change

Take pollution out of transport. Save our health and climate with more accessible public transport running on clean energy; make electric vehicles more affordable; and install electric vehicle charging stations across the country.

Tests of Success

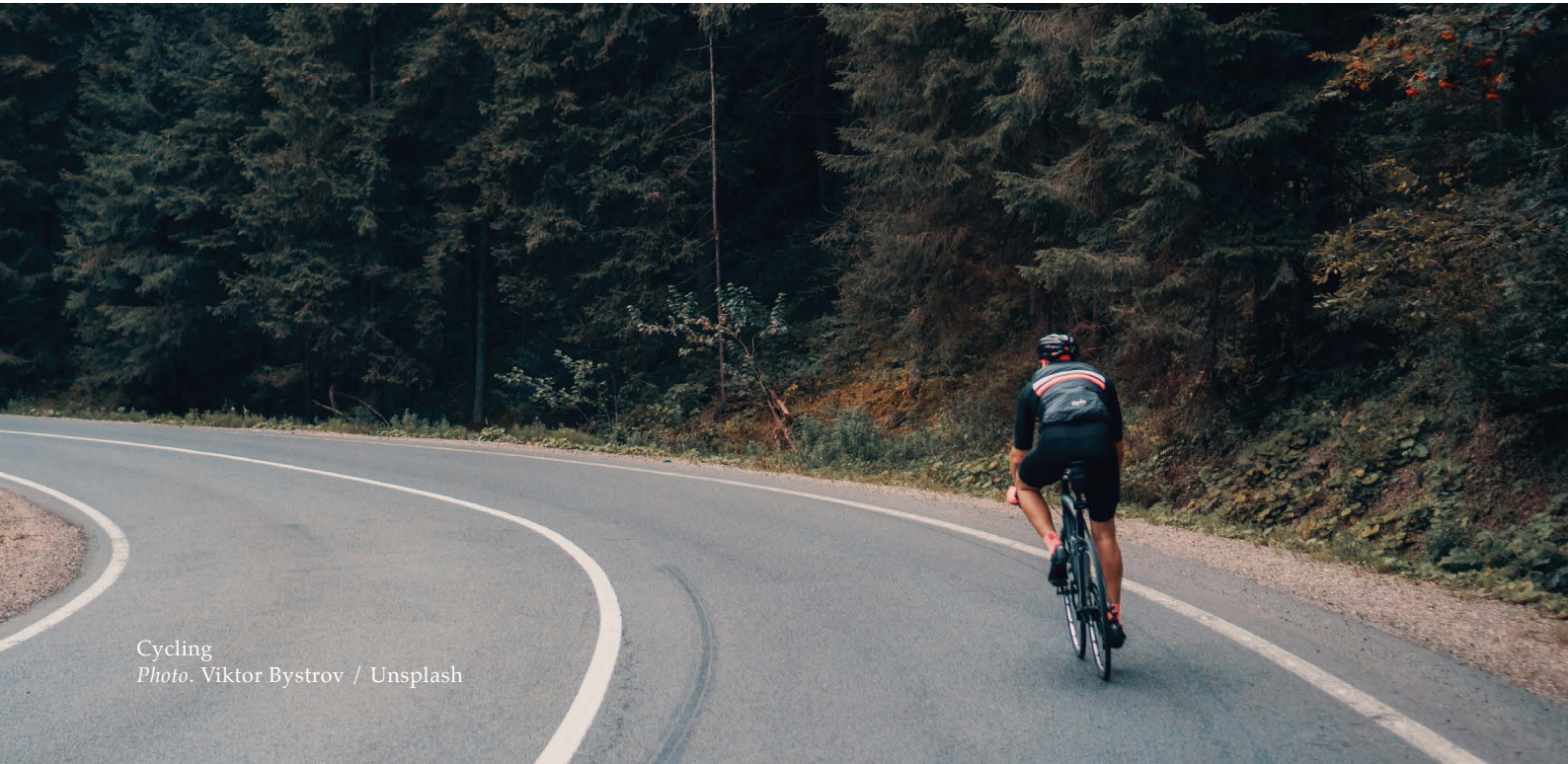
- Governments commit to zero emissions transport by 2035, including transitioning to renewable powered electric vehicles and more efficient transport by investing in public and active transport like walking and cycling and electrified freight rail.
- Governments set targets for: electric vehicle uptake for government fleets and private vehicles; banning the sale of petrol and diesel fuelled vehicles; increasing mode share for public and active transport; and improving the ratio of rail to road funding.
- Governments and investors align infrastructure, transport and urban planning strategies, project decisions and budgets to zero emissions transport by 2035.
- Governments ensure all suburbs and all people have equitable access to affordable, reliable and frequent public transport services to improve employment, educational, cultural and community opportunities.

Benefits

- Cut Australia’s climate pollution by around 100 million tonnes a year.¹²
- Create jobs - in public transport infrastructure and services and local manufacturing of electric buses, trams, trains and cars. Public and active transport infrastructure investment can generate 12,000 jobs and expanding the electric vehicle charging network can generate 500 jobs over a three year period.¹³
- Reduce transport costs, congestion and harmful air and noise pollution.

¹² <https://www.industry.gov.au/sites/default/files/2021-05/nggi-quarterly-update-december-2020.pdf> (note: reference is to 2019 transport emissions, which is more representative than 2020 due to temporary covid-19 drop)

¹³ <https://www.climatecouncil.org.au/resources/clean-jobs-plan/>



Cycling
Photo. Viktor Bystrov / Unsplash

¹⁰ <https://www.climateworksaustralia.org/resource/moving-to-zero/>

¹¹ <https://www.caradvice.com.au/930060/volvo-to-go-all-electric-by-2030/>

4. Move the Money

The challenge

Finance:

Banks, superannuation funds and other investors directly influence Australia's greenhouse gas pollution through their investment and lending.

Australia's major banks and superfunds publicly support the goals of the Paris Agreement, however they continue to lend to and invest in coal and gas projects. The big 4 banks in particular are increasingly engaging in greenwashing rather than producing plans to stop funding coal and gas this decade.

The Climate Targets Panel - an independent group of senior climate scientists and policy makers - warns Australia does not have until 2050 and must make steep reductions in emissions *this* decade.¹⁴ The coal and gas industry relies on corporate finance to survive and without strong divestment commitments from banks and superfunds, these projects will continue burning.

By financing coal and gas companies, projects and infrastructure, banks and super funds are fuelling the climate crisis. Moving money from coal and gas to climate solutions like renewable powered industries can fund the future and help Australia transition to a cleaner, more sustainable economy.

Global financial institutions and networks are already committing to take action. For example, the Network for Greening the Financial System, a group of 105 central banks and supervisors, published recommendations for the financial sector's role in achieving climate goals.

Democracy:

A healthy democracy should be able to solve some of our greatest challenges - like ending climate pollution and the extinction crisis. However, the coal and gas industries have a major influence over political parties through political donations and lobbying that throw the democratic system out of balance.

For decades, political donation laws have allowed coal and gas companies to exert excessive influence over our political system — pressuring governments to continue investing in coal and gas, rather than what is best for people and the planet.

Big donations by coal and gas companies provide them greater access to our elected representatives and lead to undue policy influence, capture of political parties and bad policy outcomes. It's why the Australian government chose a 'gas-fired recovery' rather than a renewable one, and why we have an inadequate national climate policy.

No one, let alone corporations with a primary objective of making profits from extracting and burning coal and gas, should be able to skew democratic processes in their favour.

The opportunity

Finance:

Australia's four big banks have publicly committed to stop financing coal by 2030 or 2035. But all four still invest billions in other polluting industries like gas. People power got the banks to commit to quit coal. Now, the community, customers and shareholders have the power to get the banks and super funds out of all coal, gas and nuclear projects.

Democracy:

Australia's democracy needs people to reclaim their role in it and to remind our representatives who they are meant to fight for. Our democracy works best when governments put the interests of the community and the planet at the heart of every decision.

Case Study

New South Wales streets ahead with electric bus transition target

New South Wales has committed to transitioning its entire 8,000 fleet of buses to electric by 2030, with some to be manufactured locally. The roll out has begun with 40 new zero-emission buses currently in the process of being deployed under a new pilot program the Inner West.

The state has also set a target for all Sydney Trains and NSW TrainLink rail to run on zero emissions electricity by 2025. Its NorthWest Metro rail project is already powered by the Beryl Solar Farm.

In its electric vehicle strategy, the state has outlined a fleet of measures to fast-track electric transport and to increase EV sales to 52 percent by 2030, including:

- \$490 million to encourage households to buy electric vehicles through tax cuts and incentives.
- \$171 million investment in new charging infrastructure for public and private electric vehicles.
- A target to transition the NSW government's passenger vehicle fleet to fully electric by 2030.
- Incentives for local councils and businesses to buy electric vehicles.

The NSW government has also emphasised the health, environmental and social benefits of shifting travel from private vehicles to public transport, walking and cycling.

¹⁴ Hewson, J., Steffen, W., Hughes, L., & Meinshausen, M. (2021). Australia's Paris Agreement Pathway: Updating the climate change authority's 2014 emissions reduction targets. Retrieved January 24, 2022, from <https://www.climatecollege.unimelb.edu.au/files/site1/docs/%5Bmi7%3Aami7uid%5D/ClimateTargetsPanelReport.pdf>

Farmer Bruce Currie – Jericho QLD
Photo. Louise Gronold

Right. Renewable Energy
Photo. Karsten Würth



How to make the Change

Banks and super funds must move our money from funding polluting coal and gas to climate solutions like clean renewable powered industries and jobs.

Political parties must reduce the influence of money in politics by banning big donations, including from coal and gas companies. Clear and simple reforms could be enacted today to improve integrity and make the system more transparent. There are currently stronger laws regulating donations in almost every state and territory than there are at the federal level.

Tests of Success

- Federal and state governments immediately stop funding coal or gas projects and redirect this investment to clean energy and zero emissions transport.
- Banks and superfunds commit to stop funding new and expansionary fossil fuel projects now and cut all lending to existing coal, oil and gas projects, infrastructure and companies by 2030 and invest instead in clean energy.
- Political parties refuse to accept donations from coal and gas companies.
- The Australian government improves the integrity and transparency of the political system by capping political donations to political parties, candidates, and associated entities at between \$5000 to \$10,000; lowering the threshold for revealing donations to \$2500, and requiring more regular disclosures

Benefits

- Speed up our energy transition, cut climate pollution and help Australia play our part to stop climate damage.
- Make our democracy stronger, ensuring elected representatives are acting for people and the planet.



Case Study

Finance:

In June 2020 Superannuation fund HESTA committed to reducing carbon emissions in their investments by 33% by 2030, 'net zero' by 2050, and an immediate end to investments in thermal coal mining.

HESTA manages over \$50 billion in assets for over 860,000 members. Most of their members are in the healthcare and community services sector. HESTA is the first Australian fund to set a net zero target across its portfolio.

HESTA's plan is outlined in their Climate Change Transition Plan. CEO Debby Blakely said the plan "can help protect and enhance the long-term performance of our members' investments, while driving meaningful change and contributing to a healthier planet and society,"

Melbourne renewable energy project

Victoria, New South Wales, and Queensland have laws to cap big donations to political parties.

Most recently, Queensland passed some of the strongest political finance laws in the nation, modelling what legislation at the federal level could look like. Donations are capped over the 4 year electoral period at \$4000 per political party and \$6000 to candidates of the same party from a single donor.

Coal and gas companies have been some of the biggest spenders in Queensland politics. Caps on donations mean that harmful industries can no longer gain extraordinary access to politicians through fundraising dinners and other 'cash for access' events, and politicians no longer are beholden to their biggest donors.

5. Save Our Big Backyard

The challenge

Australia is a global leader on the extinction of mammals. Our environment is in an unsustainable rate of decline and critical ecosystems are collapsing.

Habitat destruction, invasive species and climate change remain one of the primary drivers of biodiversity decline and extinction risk in Australia.

The loss of nature in cities and regional Australia is making people vulnerable to dangerous heat waves and extreme weather events. Nature destruction affects our health and wellbeing, as well as our economy.

Despite the worsening state of ecosystems and nature in Australia, spending on biodiversity projects by the federal government has declined by almost 40 percent since 2013. Adequate investment is essential to save our big backyard.



The opportunity

- Protecting and restoring nature reduces greenhouse gas emissions, absorbs carbon, and helps us adapt to the impacts of climate change.
- Opportunities to support regional and urban communities, Indigenous Australians and farmers to create economic wealth from regenerating nature.
- Nature helps regulate the climate, provides us with clean water, productive soil, and ensures we can grow crops to feed the world.
- Protecting the natural world is essential to human health. It lowers the risk of further deadly disease outbreaks like the coronavirus and protects plants, animals, and microbes which help supply our modern medicines.
- Nature is fundamental to the Australian experience and to our identity. It is where we go to escape, and it is home to the animals we love that live nowhere else.
- Research shows that spending \$2 billion annually for 30 years could restore almost all (99.8%) of Australia's degraded terrestrial ecosystems to 30% vegetation coverage. This would help to recover critical ecological functions and abate almost one billion of carbon dioxide equivalent.

How to make the Change

Create strong national nature protection laws that stop Australia's worsening extinction crisis, and support nature as a climate solution. New laws must be enforced by an independent regulator.

Tests of Success

- The Australian government:
 - sets strong national environmental standards enshrined in law to protect and restore Australia's nationally threatened wildlife and ecosystems and our nationally and internationally significant wetlands and heritage places.
 - creates a well-resourced independent compliance regulator to safeguard Australia's environment.
 - creates an independent and well resourced national Environment Assurance Commission to audit performance and oversee implementation of national environmental standards.
 - provides community access to justice and participation in environmental decision making, including ensuring open standing and merits review for environmental decisions, providing for third-party enforcement rights to hold decision-makers to account.
 - ensures Indigenous knowledge, customs and interest are recognised and valued under national environmental laws.
- The Australian government allocates adequate funding to restore and protect nature, including \$2 billion per year for three years toward a national conservation and land management program, which supports the the role of nature in sequestering climate pollution.
- The Australian government supports ambitious global goals for nature to halt and reverse biodiversity loss and achieve a Nature Positive world by 2030 backed by the domestic commitments needed for Australia to contribute its share to achieving those targets.

Benefits

- Stem the extinction of our species like the Koala and platypus so they are around future generations
- Our forests, wetlands and bushlands store greenhouse gases, provide homes for our unique animals and birds, and are places where people restore and revive.
- Nature helps cool cities where the majority of Australians live, reduces the impact of deadly heatwaves and improves mental health.
- Healthy ecosystems are the foundation for our economy. Investment in our natural environment creates direct jobs in industries like tourism and land management. A \$4 billion investment in a national conservation and land management program could restore our degraded forests, rivers, coastlines, manage invasive animals and weeds and generate an estimated 53,000 jobs over the next four years
- Transitioning our food, built environment, and energy systems to be nature-positive could deliver \$US10 trillion a year in economic value and 400 million jobs by 2030, according to the World Economic Forum.

Nature helps cool cities where the majority of Australians live, reduces the impact of deadly heatwaves and improves mental health

It's time for a **new generation of national environmental laws** and an independent national environment regulator to enforce them. 🌱

Case Study

More nature laws focused replacement:

Experience in other countries demonstrates that strong national nature protection laws are effective in reversing the decline of species threatened with extinction.

For example, the US Endangered Species Act has much stronger protection for habitat critical to the survival of threatened species than Australia's national environmental protection laws.

The overall track record of the Endangered Species Act shows that effective implementation of strong nature protection laws makes a difference:

- From 1973 to 2013, the Act prevented extinction for 99 percent of species under its protection.
- The Act has shown a 90 percent recovery rate in more than 100 species - including grizzly bears, humpback whales and bald eagles - throughout the United States.
- The Act has allowed the designation of millions of acres of critical habitat, which is crucial to species' survival and recovery.

We love **our beautiful planet**

Australian Conservation Foundation

Level 1, 60 Leicester Street
Carlton VIC 3053

Phone 1800 223 669

Email acf@acf.org.au

Web www.acf.org.au

f Australian Conservation Foundation

t @AusConservation

ABN 22 007 498 482

ACF publications can be found at:

www.acf.org.au/reports

Printed on 100% post-consumer recycled paper



**AUSTRALIAN
CONSERVATION
FOUNDATION**