



JOINT STATEMENT on Australia's Methane Emissions

4 Oct 2022



The Hon. Anthony Albanese, MP
Prime Minister of Australia

The Hon. Chris Bowen
Minister for Climate Change and Energy

Senator the Hon. Penny Wong
Minister for Foreign Affairs

Senator the Hon. Jenny McAllister
Assistant Minister for Climate Change and Energy

4 October, 2022

Dear Prime Minister, Ministers,

Request for Australian Government to sign the Global Methane Pledge and take urgent action on methane emissions

Thank you for your renewal of climate leadership, and early progress towards Australia stepping up to the challenges posed by climate change. The floods in Northern New South Wales and Southern Queensland, and the Black Summer bushfires are searing reminders of the urgency of reducing warming, echoed internationally with the catastrophic floods in Pakistan.

Methane powerfully heats the climate as a greenhouse gas over its 12 year lifetime. The latest science warns that over the short term a tonne of methane warms the planet almost 100 times more than a tonne of CO₂.ⁱ Methane emissions are responsible for around 30% of global warming to date.ⁱⁱ This intense but short lived impact creates an opportunity: UNEP's Global Methane Assessment has shown that strong action on methane in the next seven years has potential to avoid 0.3C of global temperature rise by the 2040s, making this the biggest and fastest form of mitigation available.ⁱⁱⁱ

The IPCC 6th Assessment Report clearly states that rapid cuts to methane of over a third by 2030 are vital to keep to the 1.5C target pledged under the Paris Climate Agreement. The IEA says to achieve Net Zero by 2050, energy methane emissions must fall 75% by 2030.^{iv} Mitigation measures like stopping gas venting and flaring, and capturing and utilising ventilated air methane are available and ready to deploy.

Australia's methane emissions from coal and gas are skyrocketing beyond official numbers. The IEA updated its energy methane estimate for Australia to be almost double our current nationally reported figures in the Global Methane Tracker 2022 update.^v Satellites are showing evidence of problematic methane super-emitting mines. These discrepancies pose an unacceptable risk to Australia's climate policy integrity, and risk our national emissions target.

At COP26, the Morrison Government resisted international pressure to join the now 122 countries that have signed the Global Methane Pledge, making Australia a remarkable outlier. The Albanese Labor Government signing the Pledge is an essential step to continue rebuilding our international reputation.

On behalf of the Australian NGO community here undersigned, we request that the Australian Government rapidly reduce methane and take the following ten actions:

Establish a national framework & commitment to reduce methane

1. Join 120+ other countries and sign the Global Methane Pledge (GMP) by COP27.
2. Establish a national methane target and include this in Australia's Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC).
3. Develop a national methane action plan, with specific targets and critical pathways for rapid methane emissions reductions, prioritising action to reduce emissions in the domestic energy sector, and across coal and gas, and accelerating R&D investment in the agricultural sector for methane emissions reductions.
4. Work with states and territories to ensure scientific methane emission pathways are reflected in law and state and territory emissions reduction regulation. Coordinate funding and policy to ensure accurate methane measurement, emissions limits, and mitigation.

Restore integrity to Australian methane measurement

5. Ensure actual measurement of coal and gas methane emissions by updating National Greenhouse and Energy Reporting methods for measurement to continuous measurements on all drainage and ventilation systems for underground coal mines sensitive enough to measure 20 parts per million, and continuous methane measurements at all open cut coal mines and gas wells and infrastructure. Default emissions factors should be removed.
6. Build Australia's scientific methane assessment capability to develop robust national accounts, baseline studies, reporting and verification - including investing in satellite and on-site verification.
7. Increase transparency in corporate reporting of methane emissions to state and federal regulators and the market, including publication.
8. Develop a comprehensive national database of all inactive and abandoned coal mines, to enable mitigation at abandoned coal mines, and ensure proper rehabilitation to prevent methane leakage upon closure. Methane measurements should be taken at all abandoned point sources.

Limit and mitigate methane emissions

9. Ensure federal policy such as the safeguard mechanism restricts methane emissions from coal and gas facilities and the sectors overall in line with a 1.5C target.
10. Catalyse mitigation by requiring the deployment of all feasible technologies across the energy sector, and cost-recovering government investment in mitigation and monitoring from industry.

This is the time for the nation to push hard to preserve a safe climate, and to rejoin the international community who have pledged rapid global efforts to cut methane during this critical decade.

Yours faithfully,

- i Passing Gas: Why Renewables are the Future, Climate Council (2020), p17. https://www.climatecouncil.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/FINAL-CC_MVSA0245-CC-Report-Gas_V5-FA_Low_Res_Single_Pages.pdf#page=17
- ii IPCC Press Release, Climate Change (2022): Mitigation of Climate Change. Contribution of Working Group III to the Sixth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change 'The evidence is clear: the time for action is now. We can halve emissions by 2030', <https://www.ipcc.ch/2022/04/04/ipcc-ar6-wgiii-pressrelease/>
- iii UNEP Global Methane Assessment, (2022), <https://www.unep.org/resources/report/global-methaneassessment-benefits-and-costs-mitigating-methane-emissions>
- iv IEA: Curtailing Methane Emissions From Fossil Fuel Operations, (2021), <https://www.iea.org/reports/curtailing-methane-emissions-from-fossil-fuel-operations/executivesummary>
- v International Energy Agency (2022), Methane Tracker Database - Australia <https://www.iea.org/articles/methane-tracker-data-explorer#total-comparison-sources>

Kelly O'Shanassy
(Point of Contact)
Chief Executive Officer
Australian Conservation
Foundation



Maggie Wood
Acting Executive Director
Conservation Council of Western
Australia



Amanda McKenzie
CEO
Climate Council



Dave Jones
Global Programme Lead
Ember



Jacqui Mumford
Chief Executive
Nature Conservation Council
of NSW



Dave Copeman
Director
Queensland Conservation
Council



Dr Richard Denniss
Executive Director
The Australia Institute



David Morris
CEO
Environmental Defenders Office



Larissa Baldwin
CEO
GetUp!



Glen Klatovsky
CEO
Climate Action Network Australia



Dr. Barry Traill
Director
Solutions For Climate Australia



Carmel Flint
National Coordinator
Lock the Gate Alliance



Mark Wakeham
Australian Program Director
The Sunrise Project



David Ritter
Chief Executive Officer
Greenpeace Australia Pacific



Lucy Manne
Chief Executive Officer
350.org Australia



Fahimah Badrulhisham
Spokeperson
Move Beyond Coal

