

Current state of the Australian climate commitment

Written by Jingjing Ye - HOPE researcher NSW

This article provides a summary of the current climate commitments at different levels of governments in Australia. It also includes a brief analysis of these commitments in relation to the Paris agreement.

Federal government

Although the Australian Federal Government is committed to the Paris Agreement in 2015, but it has not committed to net zero carbon emissions by a specific date.

The Paris Agreement aims to strengthen the global response to the threat of climate change by:

- limiting global temperature rise this century to well below 2°C above pre-industrial levels
- pursuing efforts to limit temperature increase to 1.5°C

Under the Paris Agreement, Australia must submit emissions reduction commitments known as [Nationally Determined Contributions \(NDCs\)](#) Australia first communicated its NDC in 2015, then recommunicated in 2020 with the same level of commitments as shown in Table 1 below.

Base year	2005
Target period	Emissions target for the period 2021-2030
Target	The current indicative value of the emissions budget is 4832 – 4764 mt CO ₂ -e, corresponding to 26%-28% reduction
Scope	Economy-wide
Gases covered	Carbon dioxide (CO ₂); Methane (CH ₄); Nitrous oxide (N ₂ O); Hydrofluorocarbons (HFCs); Perfluorocarbons (PFCs); Sulphur hexafluoride (SF ₆); Nitrogen trifluoride (NF ₃)

Table 1. Australia's NDC 2020, sourced from [UNFCC 2020 communications](#)

State and territories

In Oct 2021 ClimateWorks Australia released a report researching state and territorial governments' climate action. As shown in the figure below, all Australian state and territory governments are now committed to net zero emissions by 2050 or earlier.

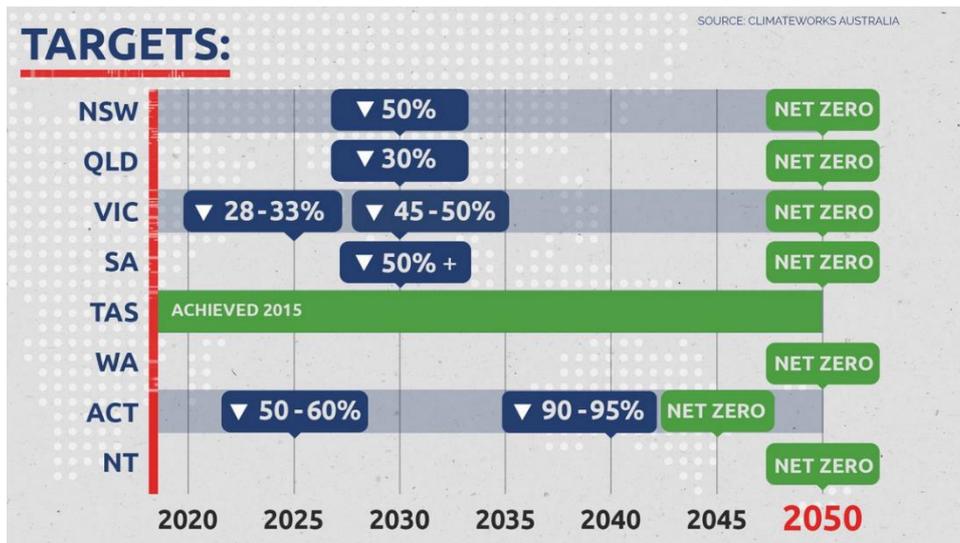


Figure 1. Subnational governments' commitment, source [SBS news](#)

ClimateWorks modelled pathways for Australia to reach net zero emissions in order to achieve the goals of the Paris Agreement. The modelling shows that this decade needs to be one of transformational action if these goals are to be achieved. Emissions need to be reduced rapidly, and net zero emissions achieved well before 2050.

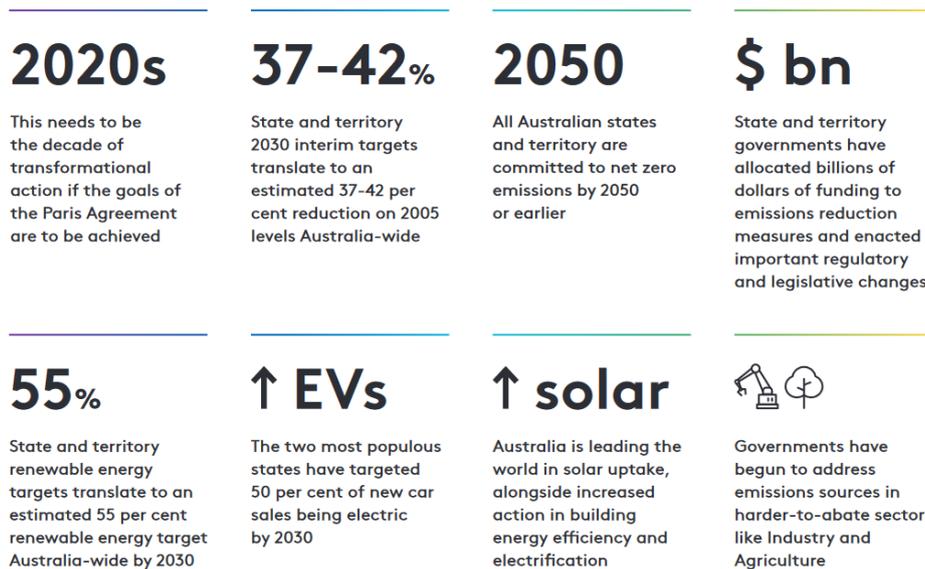


Figure 2. Key findings of the report, [source ClimateWorks report](#)

Despite the progress in state and territory climate action, this report highlights much more needs to be done in this decade to meet the goals of the Paris agreement. The figure below shows ClimateWorks modelled 2030 targets aligned to 2°C and 1.5°C of warming, respectively. By 2030 the Australian annual emissions need to reduce by 48%-53% in the 2°C scenario and reduce by 74% in 1.5°C scenario. However as shown in Figure 2, current state and territory 2030 emissions reduction commitments only translate to 37% to 42% below 2005 levels Australia-wide.



Figure 3. Requirements under 1.5°C and 2°C scenarios, [source ClimateWorks report](#)

The adoption of renewable electricity generation and electric vehicles also need to accelerate. To limit the warming to 1.5°C, 79% of the electricity should be generated from renewable sources in 2030. This is compared to 55% renewable energy target set by all the subnational governments.

In summary, our current climate commitments fall short of what is required in order to meet the goals of the Paris Agreement. Subnational governments cannot tackle the challenge and threats of climate change alone. The window to address these threats is narrowing, and an economy-wide commitment and transformation in this decade is of the utmost importance.