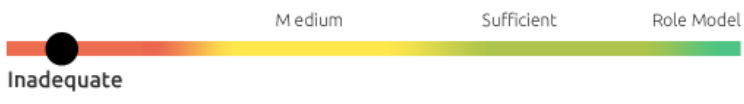
CLIMATE ACTION TRACKER

Australia

History: 2017 | 2016 | 2015 | 2014 | 2013 | 2012 | 2011

Page last updated: 30th November 2012

Rating



Australia makes a big step in the right direction, but more needed to get on 2 degree C track

The Climate Action Tracker performed its first assessment of policies impacting the greenhouse gas emission profile for Australia.

Download full report.

Australia's new climate legislation is a historic breakthrough and a substantial step in the right direction, but is still not stringent enough to help the world keep global warming to below 2 degrees C.

Australia has now set in place a legislative system that, if applied well and increased in stringency over time, can get it on the right track to a low carbon future:

- The renewable energy target of 20% by 2020 is the only policy that gets top marks. More stringent targets could help it achieve its long-term pledge of reducing total emissions 80% by 2050 (compared to 2000 levels).
- Largest impacts will be on the industry sector, where policies reducing GHG emissions were virtually non-existent in the past.
- There is a gap in policies for the transport sector. An emissions performance standard for light vehicles could be introduced relatively fast, but still is not formally on the table. Neither does the legislation address heavy transport and the Government would need to include it in the carbon price scheme by 2014 at the latest.

Domestic impact

- The legislation brings the emissions trajectory below BAU, and stabilises it.
- Stringency of actions under the plan would need to be increased to reach the pledged 15% and 25% targets domestically and to achieve the long-term target to reduce emissions by 80% by 2050.
- Australia is well on the way to achieving its energy intensity target of a 45% reduction below 2005 levels by 2035.

International impact

The new policies are not yet sufficient to meet its unconditional pledge through domestic action only.

It is also unclear how Australia would meet its conditional pledges of 15% and 25% by 2020 through domestic action.

Assessing the pledge

Australia's unconditional commitment of a 5% reduction relative to 2000 emission levels by 2020 is rated Inadequate.

In contrast to the majority of Annex I countries, Australia's targets are not set according to Kyoto architecture. The Kyoto architecture sets allowed emissions as a percentage of 1990 GHG emissions excluding LULUCF plus deforestation emissions in 1990 for countries with a net LULUCF source in 1990, which is the case of Australia.

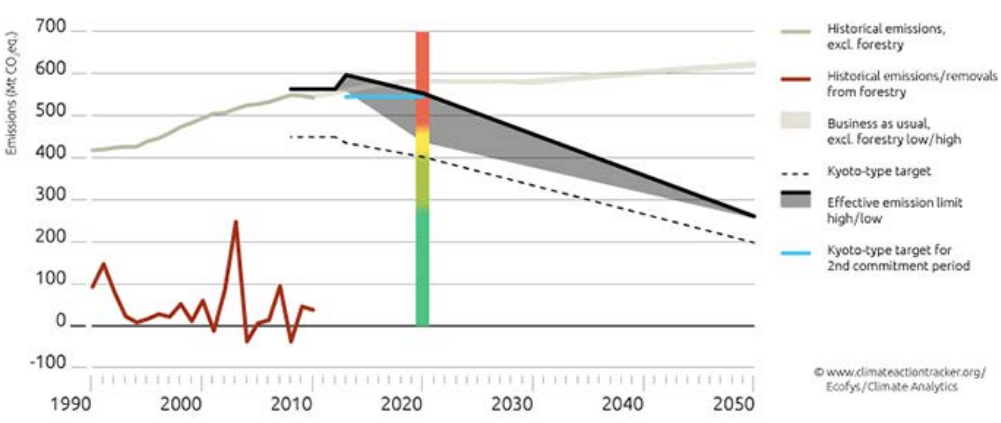
In April 2011, new information made clear that Australia's targets of -5%, -15% and -25% (the latter two being conditional) are to be calculated with respect to its 2000 GHG emissions (excluding LULUCF) plus afforestation, reforestation and deforestation (ARD) emissions in that year. The ARD emissions appear to be based on those reported under Kyoto Article 3.3.

Australia has provided absolute allowed emission level in 2020 of 530 MtCO2eq, 474 MtCO2eq, and 419 MtCO2eq for the -5%, -15% and -25% targets respectively. These can be converted to 1990 levels: the -5% goal would be -3% from 1990 (the Australian target in the first commitment period is +8%).

Taking into account projected ARD emissions 2020 and the benefits gained from Article 3.7 by Australia, this Kyoto equivalent target for the -5% pledge would permit an increase in GHG emissions excluding LULUCF of +17 to 26% above 1990 levels in 2020. The range is due to different estimates that can be made for likely future ARD emissions for 2020.

For the -15% goal the Kyoto equivalent target range is +3% to +13% from 1990 levels; and for the -25% goal the range is -1% to -10% from 1990 levels (GHG emissions excluding LULUCF).

Australia is the only country to quantitatively define its conditions for moving to higher levels of ambition with specific values for the joint efforts by developed countries group and developing countries group. This provides more detail than before Bangkok 2011, but is still open to interpretation and appears to move away from the commitment to hold warming to below 2°C by referencing only concentration levels of 450 ppm of CO2eq, which has a 60% chance of exceeding 2°C in the long term.



Description

Australia's Kyoto Protocol target (2008-2012) is +8% relative to 1990 emission levels.

For 2020, Australia has proposed three targets with different conditionality, -5%, -15%, and -25% relative to 2000.

The -5% target stands as their unconditional pledge.

The -15% target is conditional on a global agreement which implies atmospheric stabilisation at between 510 and 540ppm CO2eq and under which major developing economies commit to substantially restrain emissions in aggregate, in the range of 15 to 25% below 1990 levels, and advanced economies take on commitments comparable to Australia's. The condition requires substantive measurable, reportable and verifiable commitments and actions by major developing economies, in the context of a strong international financing and technology cooperation framework, but which may not deliver significant emissions reductions until after 2020 and progress toward inclusion of forests (REDD) and the land sector, deeper and broader carbon markets, low carbon development pathways (see Source).

Adoption of the most ambitious target of -25% is conditional on an ambitious global deal capable of stabilising levels of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere at 450 ppm CO2eq or lower. The condition includes the need for a clear pathway to achieving an early global peak in total emissions with a nominated early deadline year for peak global emissions not later than 2020. It also requires major developing economies slowing the growth and then reducing their emissions over time, with a collective reduction of at least 20% below business-as-usual by 2020 and a nomination of a peaking year for individual major developing economies. It further requires advanced economies taking on reductions and commitments comparable to Australia, in aggregate, of at least 25% below 1990 levels by 2020, and access to the full range of international abatement opportunities through a broad and functioning international market in carbon credits.

'Advanced economies' has beed defined by Australia to include Annex I parties to the UNFCCC and at least some other high/middle income economies; 'major developing economies' refers to non-Annex I members of the Major Economies Forum.

Despite the existing and added conditionality, even this last level falls short of what would be Australia's contribution to move the developed countries as a group into the IPCC range of a 2020 reduction to 25-40% below 1990, agreed in Bali in 2007.

In April 2011, Australia provided an illustration which showed that the targets should be applied to emissions excluding LULUCF plus afforestation, reforestation and deforestation emissions. These targets are not set according to Kyoto architecture (see above), hence in contrast to the other analyzed countries, we depict Australia's unconditional pledge of -5% by a dashed line.
Latest legislation passed has increased Australia's 2050 target to reduce emissions to 60% below 2050 from 2000 levels.

In November 2012, Australia submitted a provisional QELRO for the second commitment period of the Kyoto Protocol. It proposes a level of 99.5. This translates to average yearly emissions of 99.5% of 1990 levels during the period of 2013-2020 . Australia's preparedness to join the second commitment of the Kyoto Protocol and confirmation of its provisional QELRO are conditional on a number of requirements: an 8-year commitment period and appropriate rules for carry-over of surplus AAUs from the first commitment periods, among others.

Status

Official announcement

Date of pledge: May 2009

Source

Australia (2012) Information by Parties included in Annex I listed in annex 1 to decision 1/CMP.7 on their quantified emission limitation or reduction objectives for the second commitment period under the Kyoto Protocol

Australia (2012) Fact sheet: Australia's emissions reduction targets

Australia (2010) Australia to 2050: Future Challenges

Australia's Projections 2010 (includes a quantification of the target)

Australia's pledge to the Copenhagen Accord

Submission by Australia (2009) Strengthening Australia's National Ambition for 2020 Submission to the AWG-LCA and AWG-KP May 2009

Australia (2009) Text to be included in the Draft conclusions proposed by the Chair. (FCCC/KP/AWG/2009/L.3) 24 April 2009, FCCC/KP/AWG/2009/MISC.11

References for the Climate Action Tracker Australia report: see full list

Assumptions

Targets for 2020 were calculated from the most recent national inventory submissions (2012).

We have applied LULUCF accounting to Australia's pledge, following special criteria in line with the definition of their pledges. As of COP 17 in Durban, it has been decided that forest management is a mandatory activity under article 3.4 and shall be accounted by all Annex I parties. We have therefore interpreted Australia's pledge as a target including ARD and forest management.

Party-provided ARD projections have not been used, instead 2020 ARD value was obtained by linear trend over 1990-2010 period. We calculated LULUCF accounting quantities for forest management using a net-net approach with a projected reference level for 2013-2020. While Australia provided a range of possible outcomes on the force majeure (natural disturbances) provision, the reference level calculated here is without this provision and would change if this provision is included.

To keep consistency with the first commitment period, for post 2012 we assumed Australia will continue to use Article 3.7. Art. 3.7 allows deforestation emissions to be included in the base year for those Parties with a net source of emissions from the land use change and forestry sector and applies to the target in the first KP commitment period. Some Parties have proposed amending Article 3.7 to remove this provision. Australia wishes to retain it.

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