



Nature Conservation Council

The voice for nature in NSW

NCC Climate Change Policy 2020

1. Principles

1.1 Climate change refers to long-lasting changes to world climate patterns such as average temperatures, rainfall and incidence of severe weather events. Changing weather patterns, including increased droughts, fires and floods, pose existential risks for natural ecosystems and people.

1.2 The current level of anthropogenic emissions of greenhouse gases is the biggest driver of changing climate patterns including more extreme weather across the world and is ecologically unsustainable.

1.3 The urgent nature of the global threat posed by climate change was recognised by 195 countries plus the European Union at the 2015 Paris Climate Agreement, under which the parties, including Australia, have committed to reaching the global peaking of greenhouse gas emissions as soon as possible in an effort to hold the increase in the global average temperature to 'well below 2°C above pre-industrial levels with a view to limiting the temperature increase to 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels'.

1.4 Australia has a special obligation to act given that we are responsible for the highest greenhouse gas emissions per capita in the OECD, and given that our wealth has been partly built on emissions-intensive activities. The result of these now threaten life on the planet and especially many poorer nations, including nearby island nations that are the least responsible for emissions.

1.5 The main human sources of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere and ocean are:

- energy production
- mining
- transport
- agriculture
- forestry and other land use
- manufacturing
- decomposition of organic material

1.6 Solutions to reduce greenhouse gas levels and combat changing climatic conditions include:

- tackling Australia's emissions at source - stationary energy, transport, mining, land use
- sequestering greenhouse gases from the atmosphere through increasing biomass and soil carbon
- using renewable energy sources in preference to fossil fuel sources
- increasing energy efficiencies
- preventing habitat loss such as native forests and wetlands and supporting their restoration where possible, to increase the carbon dioxide (CO₂) sink
- reducing meat consumption
- reducing population growth and consumption per capita to environmentally sustainable levels

1.7 NSW has a key role to play in combating climate change and there are a number of solutions that can be implemented at a state level, to help keep global warming preferably below 1.5 degrees and definitely below 2 degrees:

- Protect our forests, bushland, wetlands and coastal and marine environments as carbon stores and wildlife havens
- Keep coal and gas in the ground
- Implement a strong renewable energy target for NSW to drive clean energy investment, and introduce appropriate mechanisms for reaching this target

About 3000 Australian deaths per year are attributable to air pollution, as well as considerable illness with the resultant health cost estimated to be over \$11 billion annually. NCC advocates for stronger national standards of airborne particle levels that cause both lung and heart diseases. All communities should be protected from air pollution irrespective of size and location.

1.8 Coal is harmful to health when it is burnt. Although air quality standards for electricity generation are comparable to world standards they are not enforced. However our fuel quality standards are below world standards. If power station owners had to pay to have the right technology to meet overseas standards our coal fired electricity would be a lot more expensive.

1.9 We are currently in a climate emergency and should urgently mobilise resources to restore a safe climate.

2. Objectives of this Policy

2.1 to recommend legislation and policy changes by which all levels of government will be able to implement the suggested solutions

2.2 to recommend ways our society and its economy can achieve these solutions as well as measures to mitigate the effects of climate change

2.3 to recommend ways our member groups can address climate change in their communities

3. Call to Governments on Emissions Policies

Strong emissions targets

The Nature Conservation Council calls on the Federal Government to:

3.1 urgently work with the international scientific community to identify the best ways to keep global warming below 1.5-2°C, to meet Australia's obligations under the 2015 Paris climate agreement. these pathways will be based on the best available science and with a low probability of overshooting this temperature

3.2 commit to reducing Australia's greenhouse gas emissions, and aim for national net zero carbon dioxide equivalent (Co2e) emissions by 2040

3.3 ensure that any long-term targets are supported by specific interim targets for periods of between one and three years

3.4 include the need to reduce emissions in all considerations of energy policy

The Nature Conservation Council calls on the State Government to protect nature and people by:

3.5 bringing forward the target date for net zero emissions for NSW to 2040

3.6 setting an Emissions Reduction Target for NSW at least 45-65% below 2005 levels by 2025, at least 65-85% below 2005 levels by 2030, culminating in net zero emissions by 2040

The targets set out above must be seen as minimum and precautionary and may need to be further tightened if subsequent scientific evidence demands.

Redirection of resources

The Nature Conservation Council calls on Federal and State Governments to:

3.7 reduce activities that contribute to an increase in greenhouse gas emissions, such as the clearing of native vegetation, including marine vegetation, and the draining of wetlands

3.8 abolish subsidies for fossil fuel, transport and energy-intensive industries, remove any financial assistance to coal-powered electricity generators and remove diesel fuel rebates for the mining sector

3.9 commit financial and human resources to developing performance indicators, precise milestones and ongoing monitoring of government performance on reducing emissions, with full public access and right to comment and review the effectiveness of the strategies in meeting the targets

3.10 ensure that the process and the results of any monitoring are open to the public with opportunity for comment and review

3.11 invest in research and development in low-carbon technologies

Carbon pollution pricing scheme

The Nature Conservation Council recommends that a carbon pollution pricing scheme should be introduced, incorporating the following design principles:

3.12 100% auctioning of permits, ie no free permits to be allocated

3.13 any imported international emissions credits must be additional to the emission cuts Australia needs to make domestically

3.14 exemptions for emissions-intensive trade-exposed (EITE) industries should ensure those industries still have an incentive to minimise emissions to meet or exceed international best practice for their products

3.15 revenue distribution should include measures to ensure households, especially low-income households, while receiving price signals to reduce carbon pollution, are not financially worse off. These could include energy efficiency support, renewable energy incentives and increased accessibility to public transport infrastructure

Just transition for affected workers and communities

Recognising the inevitable international shift in the energy sectors away from fossil fuels, the Nature Conservation Council calls on the NSW and Federal Governments to:

3.16 timetable the phase out of fossil fuel extraction and exploitation industries

3.17 involve as stakeholders political parties, unions, industry and affected communities in planning a just and orderly transition to a low carbon economy

3.18 provide a stable policy environment and active intervention in local economies to ensure exposed communities are not left behind

3.19 support structural adjustments and investment for affected communities to protect workers through a managed and predictable process of change

3.20 invest in training and redeployment strategies for workers to provide decent jobs and new opportunities in a sustainable economy

4. Sector Strategies to Reduce Emissions

Funding measures to promote action by government in specific sectors could come from:

- a carbon pollution pricing scheme (see section 3 above)
- abolition of subsidies to the fossil fuel industries
- an equitable tax regime

4.1 Stationary Energy – Electricity

The Nature Conservation calls on Federal and State Governments to:

4.1.1 implement a Clean Energy Target to progress us to 100% renewable electricity by 2030

4.1.2 ensure that any long-term targets are supported by specific interim targets for periods of between one and three years

4.1.3 update national energy legislation to require that the Australian Energy Market Commission (AEMC) must work to reduce carbon pollution from energy generation in general, and in particular to work towards the emissions reductions trajectory laid out by the government

The Nature Conservation Council recommends:

4.1.4 decreasing reliance on thermal coal or gas by supporting the development of renewable energy and non-fossil-fuel-based, low-emissions technologies

4.1.5 prioritising the orderly closure of coal power plants starting with the oldest and most polluting, with the goal of closing all NSW coal-fired power plants by 2030

4.1.6 closing gas fired power stations, and opposing the opening of new ones, as renewable energy and storage replaces the need for them

4.1.7 vigorously promoting low risk, renewable sources of energy, such as solar, wind, wave and tidal, by fiscal, regulatory and marketing strategies

4.1.8 planning for and encouraging the use of energy storage in homes, microgrids and the main network, while noting that pumped hydro schemes, like any other development, must satisfy all other environmental criteria

4.1.9 adopting other zero emissions technologies such as green hydrogen and geothermal power as they become technically and economically feasible

4.1.10 retaining complementary measures such as large-scale renewable energy targets and small-scale renewable energy schemes

4.2 Energy use and efficient design

The Nature Conservation Council urges the Federal Government to set a national energy efficiency target for each year and State and Local Governments to initiate improved efficiency, design and planning in line with the following principles:

4.2.1 introduce or improve energy reduction standards for:

- housing
- cars
- appliances
- public transport
- manufacturing

4.2.2 install solar panels and other technologies which reduce emissions on public housing, schools and hospitals

4.2.4 improve planning guidelines for urban consolidation to include vegetation as a carbon sink and to reduce heat island effects

4.2.3 reduce, reuse and recycle waste products and process suitable waste to manufacture products

4.2.4 increase rigor and scope of new building standards, including facilitation of electric car charging and provide appropriate fiscal and other economic incentives and disincentives to accelerate their implementation

4.3 Transport

Emissions from transport are responsible for about 15% of Australia's national greenhouse pollution.

The Nature Conservation Council calls for emissions from transport to be reduced through:

4.3.1 a national fuel efficiency standard for vehicles

4.3.2 town planning and on-line work practices to reduce commuting

4.3.3 encouraging walking and cycling through safe footpaths and cycleways

4.3.4 encouraging public transport vehicles powered by renewable energy or green hydrogen through incentives for the purchase of vehicles powered by renewable energy or hydrogen, or disincentives for purchase of vehicles producing carbon pollution

4.3.5 switching the fleets of all levels of government to vehicles powered by clean renewable energy

4.3.6 rapidly increase infrastructure for recharging electric vehicles, including at all new and existing car parks

4.3.7 installation of solar panels on all new large structures, such as car parking stations, to provide direct solar power for EV charging points

4.3.8 more railways within and between cities, including high speed intercity rail links to reduce the use of road and air transport

4.3.9 evaluation of all government grants for transport to include an assessment of their greenhouse gas emissions

4.3.10 use by the federal government of conditional federal rail grants (under section 96 of the constitution) to promote and immediately prioritise the expansion of rail freight systems

4.4 Agriculture

Agriculture is responsible for 17% of current greenhouse gas emissions in Australia, including most of the methane emissions and a significant proportion of the nitrous oxide.

The Nature Conservation Council calls for:

4.4.1 promotion of alternative non-fossil fuel based energy within the agriculture sector

4.4.2 introduction of land stewardship payments and other economic incentives to encourage higher levels of sustainable production in an increasingly variable climate and open markets

4.4.3 a legislated end to broad-acre clearing of native vegetation

4.4.4 further research, made publicly available, on the relative contributions of greenhouse gases from different sectors of agriculture, and on how these emissions can be measured and reported with a view to including agriculture within the scope of a carbon pollution pricing scheme. this would encourage farmers to use methods that reduce greenhouse gas emissions, including regenerative farming.

4.4.5 large-scale revegetation of agricultural lands in the context of total catchment management (tcm)

4.4.6 development of ways to convert genuine waste biomass (e.g. stubble) into energy products or biochar

4.5 Forestry

Retaining and enhancing forests and other native vegetation communities has the effect of storing carbon.

The Nature Conservation Council calls on the NSW Government to:

4.5.1 restore native habitat and legislate an end to broad-acre clearing of native vegetation

4.5.2 end native forest logging and transition to a 100% sustainably managed, plantation-based resource

4.5.3 only obtain biomass energy from annual crops such as sugar cane and wheat waste, not from forest

4.6 Planning

The Nature Conservation Council calls on all levels of government to:

4.6.1 establish comprehensive zoning plans to coordinate development and habitat conservation, including appropriate zones or development controls that protect areas of high conservation value including marine areas

4.6.2 ensure there is an adequate conservation system of parks, reserves, buffer zones, corridors, botanic gardens, zoos and gene banks for the purpose of maintaining biodiversity in response to climate change

4.6.3 develop integrated land-use planning systems that enable the sustainable use of present natural resources and limit the expansion of urbanisation and infrastructure development in outer suburban areas

4.6.4 review local health, building and development codes in terms of their relation to climate change mitigation and adaptation

4.6.5 adopt greenhouse gas reduction strategies at a local level including land use and planning, energy efficiency in buildings, vegetation conservation and tree planting, waste reduction and transport infrastructure.

4.6.6 develop strategies to cope with predicted climate change effects such as increased bushfire risk, drought, flooding and promote the efficient use of water and the mitigation of the adverse impact of flooding, urban run-off and stormwater disposal in response to predicted instability of rainfall patterns

4.6.7 develop adaptation strategies that recognise that rising sea levels, increasing extreme weather events, ocean acidification, changing ocean currents and temperatures affect coastal erosion, ocean ecosystems and Aboriginal cultural heritage

4.6.8 acknowledge quantities of water used in extractive industries in planning for water sharing and catchment management

4.7 Industry

The Nature Conservation Council recommends:

4.7.1 setting mandatory energy-use reduction targets for all industrial and commercial energy consumers

4.7.2 requiring all such energy consumers to carry out an energy audit at least every five years

4.8 Mining

The Nature Conservation Council calls for:

4.8.1 a moratorium on the startup of new coalmines and extensions of existing coalmines, and on new coal seam gas development

4.8.2 changes to discourage expansion or continuation of existing coal export operations

The Nature Conservation Council calls on the Federal Government to:

4.8.3 legislate to ban political contributions from mining companies and developers

4.9 Waste Minimisation

4.9.1 As a guiding principle, waste minimisation must apply to resources, energy and humans and energy from waste should not include any native forest materials

4.9.2 Rather than incinerating waste we should go one step further and be aiming for a zero-waste circular economy

5. International and Global Strategies

Following the commitment of 195 countries plus the European Union to keeping the global average surface temperature rise to well below 1.5- 2°C at the 2015 Paris Climate Agreement, the Nature Conservation Council urges the Federal Government to:

5.1 show international leadership in exceeding the commitments made in the 2015 Paris Climate Agreement

5.2 urgently work with the international community to identify emissions pathways for developed and developing countries to keep global warming below a 1.5-2°C increase from the pre-industrial levels, based on the best available science

5.3 restore funding and focus Australian aid programming to prioritise for energy efficiency, renewable energy and climate change adaptation funding to developing countries, particularly in the Pacific Region

5.4 provide assistance to developing nations to move to renewable energy systems and to benefit from investment in renewables and carbon offsetting

5.5 support debt-for-nature swaps with developing countries

5.6 support large-scale international afforestation and habitat restoration programs

5.7 participate in aid projects that provide sustainable protection of tropical forests and other endangered habitats through ecotourism, carbon offsetting and other bio services

5.8 heed the plea from Pacific Islands governments that Australia adopt a No New Coal Mines Policy, to help prevent their islands being inundated by sea-level rise and wave surges

6. Community Awareness

The Nature Conservation Council urges all member groups:

6.1 to promote community awareness that individuals can make a difference by:

- reducing the amount of energy used in the home
- using renewable sources of energy
- decreasing their emissions from cars
- using public transport instead of cars wherever possible
- walking or riding a bicycle
- avoiding products that produce large amounts of emissions in manufacture, e.g. aluminium, or give off GHG, e.g. aerosols
- refusing, reducing, reusing and recycling products/materials - in that order of priority
- rejecting unnecessary packaging
- eating fresh food rather than food produced with excessive emissions, e.g. refrigerated, heated, or preserved foods
- reducing the amount of meat eaten
- addressing population and related consumption per capita to achieve environmentally sustainable levels
- divesting their investments and superannuation away from fossil fuel industries and their financiers
- joining a local community climate action group, No Coal or No CSG group, or a community power group

6.2 to encourage and support local organisations in developing programs to help people become aware of the environmental and social implications of climate change, including in their own communities.

6.3 to sign the Climate Emergency Declaration petition calling on all Australian federal, state, and territory parliaments and all local councils to declare a climate emergency and mobilise required resources to restore a safe climate and transform the economy to zero greenhouse gas emissions.

NCC Climate Change Policy

As Agreed : NCC Annual Conference 31st October 2020