



Parallel Report submitted by

Global Initiative for Economic, Social and Cultural Rights

Oxfam Australia

Center for International Environmental Law

to the

**Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination
Against Women**

on the occasion of the consideration of the
8th Periodic Report of **Australia** during the
Committee's 70th Session,
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1. Submitting organisations

This Parallel Report is submitted to the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women jointly by the following organisations:

Global Initiative for Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (GI-ESCR)

GI-ESCR is an international non-governmental human rights organization which seeks to advance the realization of economic, social and cultural rights throughout the world, tackling the endemic problem of global poverty through a human rights lens.

Oxfam Australia

Oxfam Australia is an independent, not-for-profit, secular development agency whose vision is of a just world without poverty. Oxfam Australia undertakes long-term development programs; provides emergency response; and conducts research, advocacy and campaigns to advance the rights of poor and marginalised people, including women, and works with them to achieve equality.

Center for International Environmental Law

The Center for International Environmental Law (CIEL) uses the power of law to protect the environment, promote human rights, and ensure a just and sustainable society.

2. Introduction

The adverse impacts of climate change constitute **one of the most significant global threats for the enjoyment of human rights** – especially the rights protected under the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (ICEDAW). The magnitude of these impacts will keep increasing as temperatures continue to rise – governments must therefore ensure that they reduce emissions of greenhouse gases in a manner that prevents more dangerous levels of temperature increase and avoids the very serious threats to human rights.

In a joint report to the UN Climate Change process, several UN Special Rapporteurs to the Human Rights Council highlighted the grave human rights harm that will be caused by even a two degree Celsius increase in average global temperatures and that therefore **human rights legal obligations require that States take actions to mitigate the causes of climate change so as to limit the increase in global average temperature to a maximum of 1.5°C.**¹

In the Paris Agreement States committed to take emissions reduction measures to keep global temperature rises ‘well below 2°C’ and to pursue efforts to limit to 1.5°C², recognizing that this would significantly reduce the risks and impacts of climate change. Such emissions reductions can only be achieved if emissions from fossil fuel are significantly reduced and if the majority of the fossil fuels reserves remain unexploited.³ Achieving these emissions reductions targets require, in particular, the phasing out of coal extraction and consumption, since it is the most carbon intensive source of energy.

¹ *The Effects of Climate Change on the Full Enjoyment of Human Rights*, Joint paper by five mandate holders of the HRC (2015), available at http://www4.unfccc.int/Submissions/Lists/OSPSubmissionUpload/202_109_130758775867568762-CVF%20submission%20Annex%201_Human%20Rights.pdf

² Paris Agreement, Article 2.1.a

³ See McGlade, C., & Ekins, P. (2015). The geographical distribution of fossil fuels unused when limiting global warming to 2 [deg] C. *Nature*, 517(7533), 187-190

Australia ratified the Paris Agreement on 9 November 2016 and committed, through its first Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC), to a target of 26 to 28 per cent reduction (from 2005 levels) of greenhouse gas emissions by 2030, including land use, land use change and forestry (LULUCF). **Australia is a significant global emitter of greenhouse gases (GHGs). While home to only 0.3% of the world's population, it is responsible for about 1.4% of global emissions.** In 2016 its per capita emissions amounted to 17.22 metric tons of CO²eq, giving it a global ranking of 10th behind the oil rich Gulf countries and Canada and Luxembourg.⁴ Australia thus contributes to severe climate related impacts within, and especially outside, the country, since GHGs emitted anywhere, contribute to global warming everywhere. Furthermore, these figures do not account for the emissions from the burning of coal that is mined in Australia and exported. To put this in perspective, emissions from the burning of Australian coal overseas amount to around twice Australia's total domestic emissions.⁵

This joint Parallel Report addresses the ICEDAW obligations of Australia with respect to its climate change commitments and actions. In particular, it focuses on:

- **Australia's insufficient goals and targets for a global strategy to stay well below global temperature increases of 2°C and to strive to limit to 1.5°C;**
- **Australia's insufficient policies to meet its weak targets;**
- **Australia's continuing support for coal, most notably coal exports.**

3. Climate change and women's human rights

It is clear that the consequences of climate change will have significant adverse impacts on human rights, including the rights protected by the ICEDAW. The IPCC's Fifth Assessment report stated: *'future impacts of climate change, extending from the near term to the long term, mostly expecting 2°C scenarios, will slow down economic growth and poverty reduction, further erode food security, and trigger new poverty traps, the latter particularly in urban areas and emerging hotspots of hunger.'*⁶ In his 2016 report the Special Rapporteur on human rights and the environment stated that *'climate change threatens the full enjoyment of a wide range of rights, including the rights to life, health, water, food, housing, development and self-determination'*⁷.

It is also well documented that the impacts of climate change are not gender neutral.⁸ The effects of climate change are felt most acutely by those segments of the population that are already in vulnerable situations⁹. The IPCC Fifth Assessment report noted: *'People who are socially, economically, culturally, politically, institutionally or otherwise marginalized are especially vulnerable*

⁴ <http://edgar.jrc.ec.europa.eu/booklet2017/countries/AUS.pdf>

⁵ Greenpeace, 'Exporting Climate Change, Killing the Reef' (April 2016)

<https://www.greenpeace.org.au/wp/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/Exporting-climate-change-killing-the-reef.pdf>

⁶ IPCC Working Group II, *Climate Change 2014: Impacts, Adaptation, and Vulnerability*, p. 796.

⁷ A/HRC/31/52 - Report of the Special Rapporteur on the issue of human rights obligations relating to the enjoyment of a safe, clean, healthy and sustainable environment, February 2016. *ibid*.

⁸ UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women, General Recommendation No. 37 *'the gender-related dimensions of disaster risk reduction in the context of climate change'*, (2018) UN Doc CEDAW/C/GC/37;

Oxfam Australia, *'Uprooted by Climate Change: Responding to the growing risk of displacement'*, (Nov 2017) pp30-31.

Accessible here: <https://www.oxfam.org/en/research/uprooted-climate-change>

⁹ Human Rights Council, 30 June 2015, A/HRC/29/L.21,

http://ap.ohchr.org/documents/E/HRC/d_res_dec/A_HRC_29_L21.docx ; IPCC Fifth Assessment Synthesis Report (2014)

to climate change and also to some adaptation and mitigation responses.¹⁰ Women are frequently more vulnerable due to pre-existing, intersecting discrimination and gendered roles and stereotypes. Women will suffer the impacts disproportionately - more frequently and more severely than men - in part because they make up the vast majority of the world's poor, they are more dependent for their livelihood on natural resources that are threatened by climate change, they have unequal access to resources and decision-making processes and they often have limited mobility¹¹.

For example, water scarcity means travelling increasing distances to collect heavy water loads. Not only is this physically damaging, it is also time-consuming and therefore reduces women's ability to participate in income-generating activities and education, further limiting opportunities for gender equality.¹²

We also know that women are more vulnerable to the negative impacts of disasters, which will become more and more frequent as a consequence of climate change.¹³ In climate-induced disasters, such as tropical storms, flooding, heatwaves and fires, women were more likely to die than men.¹⁴ Further, both the World Bank and the UN Development Program have warned that development and poverty reduction efforts will be seriously undermined as a consequence of unabated climate change. Not only are women and girls commonly the poorest, or the last to reap advantages from development and poverty reduction efforts, but climate change risks undoing hard-won development gains and progress towards gender equality.¹⁵

The CEDAW Committee has also highlighted the disproportionate impacts on women in its new General Recommendation on *'the gender-related dimensions of disaster risk reduction in the context of climate change'*:

'Women, girls, men and boys are affected differently by climate change and disasters, with many women and girls experiencing greater risks, burdens and impacts.¹⁶ Situations of crisis exacerbate pre-existing gender inequalities and compound the intersecting forms of

¹⁰ IPCC Working Group II, *Climate Change 2014: Impacts, Adaptation, and Vulnerability, Summary for Policymakers*, p. 6.

¹¹ UN Women Watch Fact Sheet 'Women, Gender Equality and Climate Change', (2009), accessible here: http://www.un.org/womenwatch/feature/climate_change/downloads/Women_and_Climate_Change_Factsheet.pdf

¹² Georgetown Institute for Women, Peace and Development, 'Women and Climate Change: Impact and Agency in Human Rights, Security, and Economic Development' (2015), accessible here: https://www.climateinvestmentfunds.org/sites/default/files/knowledge-documents/georgetown_women_and_climate_change_2015.pdf

¹³ UNDP, Issue Brief 'Gender, Adaptation and Disaster Risk Reduction', (2016), accessible here: <http://www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/librarypage/womens-empowerment/gender-and-climate-change.html>; Georgetown Institute for Women, Peace and Development, 'Women and Climate Change: Impact and Agency in Human Rights, Security, and Economic Development' (2015), accessible here: https://www.climateinvestmentfunds.org/sites/default/files/knowledge-documents/georgetown_women_and_climate_change_2015.pdf

¹⁴ Eric Neumayer, Thomas Plümper (2007). The Gendered Nature of Natural Disasters: The Impact of Catastrophic Events on the Gender Gap in Life Expectancy, 1981 – 2002. The London School of Economics and Political Science. *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, 97 (3). pp. 551-566. Accessible here: [http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/3040/1/Gendered_nature_of_natural_disasters_\(LSERO\).pdf](http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/3040/1/Gendered_nature_of_natural_disasters_(LSERO).pdf);

International Union for the Conservation of Nature, 'Disaster and Gender Statistics Fact Sheet', accessible here: https://www.unisdr.org/files/48152_disasterandgenderstatistics.pdf

¹⁵ World Bank Group, *'Shockwaves: Managing the impacts of climate change on poverty'* (2016). Accessible here: <https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/bitstream/handle/10986/22787/9781464806735.pdf>

The World Bank Group *'Turn Down the Heat: Confronting the New Climate Normal'* (2014), Washington DC, especially pp 24, 28, 40 & 228-235. Accessible here:

<https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/handle/10986/20595>

¹⁶ See Commission on the Status of Women, resolutions 56/2 and 58/2 on gender equality and the empowerment of women in natural disasters, adopted by consensus in March 2012 and March 2014.

discrimination against, among others, women living in poverty, indigenous women, women belonging to ethnic, racial, religious and sexual minority groups, women with disabilities, refugee and asylum-seeking women, internally displaced, stateless and migrant women, rural women, unmarried women, adolescents and older women, who are often disproportionately affected compared with men or other women.¹⁷

‘gender inequalities limit the control that women and girls have over decisions governing their lives, as well as their access to resources such as food, water, agricultural input, land, credit, energy, technology, education, health services, adequate housing, social protection and employment. As a result of those inequalities, women and girls are more likely to be exposed to disaster-induced risks and losses relating to their livelihoods, and they are less able to adapt to changes in climatic conditions.’¹⁸

These disproportionate impacts on women will increase their substantive inequality in respect of their human rights to food, water, sanitation, housing, health and life. As the impacts of climate change worsen, women’s enjoyment of their rights will be undermined more frequently and more severely than men. The inevitable result of unabated climate change is the further impoverishment of women and, particularly for the poorest women and women in developing countries, progress on substantive equality will go backwards.

4. Climate change and State obligations under the International Convention on the Elimination of All forms of Discrimination Against Women

These foreseeable adverse impacts on women enliven States’ obligations under the ICEDAW to prevent harm to women’s rights.¹⁹ The Special Rapporteur on human rights and the environment has underlined that: *‘The foreseeable adverse effects of climate change on the enjoyment of human rights give rise to duties of States to take actions to protect against those effects. Human rights obligations apply not only to decisions about how much climate protection to pursue, but also to the mitigation and adaptation measures through which the protection is achieved.’*²⁰

The CEDAW Committee has clarified State obligations:

‘the Committee has underlined that States parties and other stakeholders have obligations to take specific steps to address discrimination against women in the fields of disaster risk reduction and climate change, through the adoption of targeted laws, policies, mitigation and adaptation strategies, budgets and other measures.’²¹

In relation to State mitigation obligations, the Committee stated:

‘Limiting fossil fuel use and greenhouse gas emissions and the harmful environmental effects of extractive industries such as mining and fracking, and the allocation of climate financing,

¹⁷ UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women, General Recommendation No. 37 ‘the gender-related dimensions of disaster risk reduction in the context of climate change’, (2018) UN Doc CEDAW/C/GC/37, paragraph 2.

¹⁸ *Ibid.* paragraph 3.

¹⁹ Human Rights Council, Analytical Study at paragraphs 32 and 48

²⁰ A/HRC/25/53

²¹ CEDAW General Recommendation #37, paragraph 8.

are regarded as crucial steps in mitigating the negative human rights impacts of climate change and disasters.²²

Specifically, CEDAW recommends that States:

‘Take effective steps to equitably manage shared natural resources, in particular water, and limit carbon emissions, fossil fuel use, deforestation, near-surface permafrost degradation, soil degradation and transboundary pollution, including the dumping of toxic waste, and all other environmental, technological and biological hazards and risks that contribute to climate change and disasters, which tend to disproportionately negatively affect women and girls’²³

CEDAW has also made it clear that States’ Convention obligations extend to impacts of their actions on the rights of women outside their territory. The General Recommendation No. 37 confirms:

‘States parties have obligations both within and outside their territories to ensure the full implementation of the Convention, including in the areas of disaster risk reduction and climate change mitigation and adaptation.’²⁴

Therefore, as a State Party to the ICEDAW, Australia has Convention obligations to take steps to avoid contributing to climate change and its disproportionate adverse impacts on women both in Australia and abroad. Those steps include pursuing strong mitigation policies and limiting carbon emissions and fossil fuel use.

5. Australia’s climate change commitments and targets

Inadequacy of Australia’s emissions targets

Australia has committed to a target of 26 to 28 per cent reduction (from 2005 levels) of greenhouse gas emissions by 2030, including land use, land use change and forestry (LULUCF). Analysts explain that the level of ambition of Australia’s targets *‘if followed by all other countries—would lead to global warming of over 2°C and up to 3°C. In addition, if all other countries were to follow Australia’s current policy settings, warming could reach over 3°C and up to 4°C.’*²⁵

Climate experts in Australia also agree that the current targets are inadequate for Australia to meet its Paris Agreement commitments. For instance, the Australian Climate Change Authority recommends a 2030 target of between 45-65 per cent on 2005 levels for Australia to contribute its equitable share to limit global warming to 2 degrees.²⁶ Contributing an equitable share of global efforts towards limiting warming to 1.5°C would require a still stronger 2030 target.

According to the international ‘Climate Change Performance Index’²⁷ for 2018 Australia is ranked 57th (‘very low performing’ - out of 59 countries and the EU):

²² CEDAW General Recommendation #37, paragraph 14.

²³ CEDAW General Recommendation #37, paragraph 46(a).

²⁴ CEDAW General Recommendation #37, paragraph 43.

²⁵ Climate Tracker, <http://climateactiontracker.org/countries/australia.html>

²⁶ Climate Change Authority, ‘Reducing Australia’s greenhouse gas emissions: Targets and progress review’, (2014) Melbourne.

²⁷ The Climate Change Performance Index - On the basis of standardised criteria, the index evaluates and compares the climate protection performance of 56 countries and the EU, which are together responsible for more than 90 percent of global greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions.

'Experts emphasize the need to strengthen the country's 2030 targets especially in terms of emissions reduction and renewable energy and demand that their government sufficiently implement credible policies for meeting these targets.'²⁸

Australia should increase the ambition of its climate change targets and its climate and energy policies to ensure that it is doing its fair share of required global emissions reductions. This should include legislated targets for emissions reduction and clean energy on the basis of 100% renewable energy by 2030 and zero emissions before 2040.

Australia's emissions trends – incompatible with its mitigation targets

In contrast to almost all other developed countries,²⁹ Australia's absolute emissions are increasing.³⁰ The Australian Department of the Environment and Energy's latest National Greenhouse Gas Inventory report shows that in 2017, Australian emissions for the year to December 2017 increased 1.5 per cent on the previous year, the third yearly consecutive increase.³¹

Under present policy settings, Australia's emissions are projected to increase from 2005 levels (excl. LULUCF) 6% by 2020 and 9% by 2030.³² This would mean that Australia would not achieve its 2030 target, (contained in its Nationally Determined Contribution), a target which is itself regarded by analysts as a woefully inadequate contribution to the Paris Agreement (see above).

According to international analysts, '*Australia's current policies in 2017 are not consistent with holding warming to below 2°C, let alone limiting it to 1.5°C as required under the Paris Agreement, and are instead consistent with warming between 3°C and 4°C*'³³.

Both the UN Environment Programme³⁴ and the International Energy Agency also consider that Australia's policies are not sufficient to achieve its modest Paris Agreement targets:

While Australia is on track to meet its 2020 target by offsetting reductions in other sectors, after 2020, however, emissions are likely to rise to 592 MtCO₂-eq. in 2030, with projected economic growth and in the absence of additional policies.'³⁵

²⁸ Jan Burck, Franziska Marten, Christoph Bals, Niklas Höhne, 'Climate Change Performance Index: Results 2018', November 2017, p 7; See Summary for Australia here: <https://www.climate-change-performance-index.org/country/australia>

²⁹ According to The Australia Institute, Australia and Turkey are the only developed nations in which emissions are rising. The Australia Institute, September 2017 'Climate outliers: Australia and Turkey the only developed nations breaking emissions records', <http://www.tai.org.au/content/climate-outliers-australia-and-turkey-only-developed-nations-breaking-emissions-records>

³⁰ See data from Australia's National Greenhouse Gas Inventory: <http://ageis.climatechange.gov.au/NGGI.aspx> Data is also available from the European Commission Emissions Database for Global Atmospheric Emissions here: <http://edgar.jrc.ec.europa.eu/overview.php?v=CO2andGHG1970-2016&dst=CO2pc&sort=des9>.

And from the World Bank here: <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/EN.ATM.CO2E.PC?locations=AU&view=map>

³¹ Australian Government Department of Environment and Energy, '*Quarterly Update of Australia's National Greenhouse Gas Inventory: December 2017*', <http://www.environment.gov.au/climate-change/climate-science-data/greenhouse-gas-measurement/publications/quarterly-update-australias-national-greenhouse-gas-inventory-dec-2017>.

³² Climate Action Tracker, <http://climateactiontracker.org/countries/australia.html> accessed 23 May 2018

³³ Climate Action Tracker, <https://climateactiontracker.org/countries/australia/fair-share/> accessed 23 May 2018

³⁴ UN Environment Programme, '*Emissions Gap Report: 2017: A UN Environment Synthesis Report*' (Nov 2017), Nairobi, p 20, 23.

³⁵ International Energy Agency, '*Energy Policies of IEA Countries: Australia 2018 Review*', p 191. Accessible here: <http://www.iea.org/publications/freepublications/publication/EnergyPoliciesofIEACountriesAustralia2018Review.pdf>

‘Australia’s current policies fall far short of the emissions reductions required to meet the 2030 target put forward in its NDC. Under current policies in place, Australia’s total GHG emissions excl. LULUCF are projected to rise to 533 MtCO₂e by 2020 and 548 MtCO₂e by 2030. This is equivalent to an increase in emissions from 2005 levels (excl. LULUCF) of 6% and 9% by 2020 and 2030 respectively (when compared to 1990 levels (excl. LULUCF) this results in an increase of 33% and 37% respectively). To meet its 2030 emissions targets, Australian emissions should *decrease* by an average annual rate of 1.3 to 1.5 per cent until 2030; instead, with current policies, they are set to *increase* by an average annual rate of 0.4% per year.’

Source: Climate Action Tracker - Australia

Considering the magnitude of the economic and societal restructuring required to achieve science-based emissions reductions, governments must develop long-term and comprehensive climate policies to set a framework directing all actors under their jurisdiction to contribute to the progressive decarbonization of society. In the Paris Agreement, all governments have explicitly committed to ‘*formulate and communicate long-term low greenhouse gas emission development strategies, mindful of Article 2*’.³⁶ **Australia has yet to begin the process of developing such a long-term vision for its energy and climate policies.**

6. Australia’s coal consumption and exports

Coal is the biggest source of greenhouse gas emissions. All scenarios consistent with keeping global temperature increases to below 2°C, require the decarbonisation of the power sector and a phase-out of coal.³⁷ Australia is the world’s 4th largest producer of coal, with the majority of it being exported.³⁸ Australia’s reliance on coal for domestic electricity generation is declining as renewable energy options become more affordable and this will impact Australia’s direct emissions. However, Australia continues to export approximately 400 million tonnes of coal each year, which is contributing significantly to global carbon pollution. In Australia:

‘Coal is also the largest energy source, accounting for 34% of total primary energy supply and 63% of electricity generation. While the share of coal in electricity generation has declined in the past decade, coal production as a share of total energy production is increasing, as Australia is a major and growing coal producer and world-leading exporter.’³⁹

The Australian government is continuing to promote coal for domestic energy consumption and exports, most infamously through its support for the huge Adani Carmichael coal mine in Queensland. Federal Resources Minister, Mr Matt Canavan, recently said that the coal mining industry will continue to be an important part of Australia’s future and Australia does not need to prepare for a coal transition. He has established a new ‘2030 Resources Taskforce’ whose mandate is to bolster the case for coal in Australia and ‘*ensure the competitiveness and longevity of Australia’s*

³⁶ Paris Agreement on Climate Change (2015), article 4.19.

³⁷ UN Environment Programme, ‘*The Emissions Gap Report 2017 – Bridging the gap – Phasing out coal*’, (2017) Nairobi, p 38-39

³⁸ International Energy Agency, ‘*Energy Policies of IEA Countries: Australia 2018 Review*’, p 176. Accessible: <http://www.iea.org/publications/freepublications/publication/EnergyPoliciesofIEACountriesAustralia2018Review.pdf>

³⁹ International Energy Agency, *op. cit.*, p176

*resources sector in the face of criticism from those concerned about the impact of continued exploitation of fossil fuels’.*⁴⁰

According to Adam Walters of Energy Resource Insights, Australia exports approximately 1 billion tonnes of carbon dioxide per year in coal, gas and oil exports, making it the world’s third biggest exporter of carbon pollution.⁴¹ According to Greenpeace, *‘in addition to not reducing Australia’s domestic CO2 emissions since 1990, coal export volumes have more than tripled in the same period to 400 million tonnes per annum’* and *‘with every Australian tonne of coal emitting 2.5 tonnes of CO2 on average wherever it is used, this means Australia’s CO2 exports through coal have increased by a massive 253% since 1990.’*⁴²

Arguments from the Australian Government and coal industry that Australia’s coal exports are essential to raising living standards in developing countries have been forcefully challenged by development agencies including Oxfam, who have stressed not only the impacts of coal and climate change on the world’s poorest communities but also the distinct advantages of renewable energy sources over coal and other fossil fuels in increasing energy access, upholding women’s rights and reducing inequality.⁴³

Analysis of global carbon budgets prepared by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) shows that achieving the 1.5°C goal will require the very rapid decarbonisation of the global economy. It would only take another few years of current global carbon pollution to exhaust a budget that provides a fair (66%) probability of limiting warming to 1.5°C.⁴⁴ In other words, global carbon pollution will need to begin declining very rapidly and reach zero in the coming decades. To remain within a global carbon budget that provides a 50% chance of limiting warming to 2°C, 80% of the world’s known coal reserves — including over 90% of Australia’s coal reserves — would need to remain unburned.⁴⁵ To ensure a strong chance of limiting warming to 1.5°C and avoiding the serious damage to women’s rights noted above, the available carbon budget is considerably smaller and very nearly exhausted. Therefore limiting warming to 1.5°C means no space for new coal.⁴⁶ Opening-up new coal reserves in Australia is incompatible with avoiding a future of more dangerous climate change, and would risk increasing dangers and hardships for poor women around the world.

Australia must immediately put in place policies to phase out coal both for domestic use and for exports.⁴⁷

⁴⁰ <http://minister.industry.gov.au/ministers/canavan/speeches/speech-national-press-club-long-mining-boom>; The West Australian, ‘Minister Matt Canavan’s resources task force to boost the case for coal’, 28 May 2018, <https://thewest.com.au/business/mining/minister-matt-canavans-resources-task-force-to-boost-the-case-for-coal-ng-b88788473z>

⁴¹ <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2018-04-14/coal-industry-in-transition/9644812>

⁴² Greenpeace, ‘Exporting Climate Change, Killing the Reef’ (April 2016) <https://www.greenpeace.org.au/wp/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/Exporting-climate-change-killing-the-reef.pdf>

⁴³ Oxfam Australia, ‘More Coal Equals More Poverty: Transforming our world through renewable energy’ (May 2017). <https://www.oxfam.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/More-Coal-Equals-More-Poverty.pdf>

⁴⁴ Analysis: Just Four Years Left of the 1.5C Carbon Budget (Carbon Brief, April 2017) <https://www.carbonbrief.org/analysis-four-years-left-one-point-five-carbon-budget>

⁴⁵ Christopher McGlade & Paul Ekins, ‘The Geographic Distribution of Fossil Fuels Unused When Limiting Global Warming to 2°C’, Nature, January 2015. <http://www.nature.com/nature/journal/v517/n7533/abs/nature14016.html>

⁴⁶ Oxfam Australia, ‘More Coal Equals More Poverty: Transforming our world through renewable energy’ (May 2017). Accessible here: <https://www.oxfam.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/More-Coal-Equals-More-Poverty.pdf>

⁴⁷ UN Environment Programme, ‘The Emissions Gap Report 2017 – Bridging the gap – Phasing out coal’, (2017) Nairobi, p 44.

7. Australia's renewable energy policies

Considering that the electricity sector is the largest source of Australia's domestic emissions, any credible strategy for tackling Australia's contribution to climate change must include rapidly accelerating Australia's transition to renewable energy. Despite Australia's abundant renewable energy potential and the co-benefits of renewables in reducing energy costs, creating new jobs, and providing long-term energy security, Australia's national policies on renewable energy are discouraging.

The 'Renewable Energy Target' (RET) commits Australia to at least 33,000 gigawatt-hours of energy in the electricity sector to come from renewables, by 2020. This is equivalent to about 23.5% of Australia's electricity generation. The Federal Government reduced the RET in 2015 (from 41,000 GWh) and significantly cut funding to the main renewable energy body (the Australian Renewable Energy Agency - ARENA) in September 2016 and has criticized State governments for setting their own renewable energy targets.⁴⁸

Despite action by States and Territories to set more ambitious and long-term emissions reduction and renewable energy targets, the Federal government has failed to put in place a credible policy post-2020, to encourage renewable energy generation. It rejected the key recommendation of the government appointed 'Finkel Review': to establish a 'Clean Energy Target' to encourage new low emissions energy generation after the end of the RET in 2020.⁴⁹

Instead the government has proposed the 'National Energy Guarantee' (NEG) which has been described as woefully inadequate to meet even Australia's existing and very weak 2030 target under the Paris Agreement, in particular as offering little to encourage investment in renewable energy.

A recent report found that the government's proposed National Energy Guarantee risks derailing Australia's booming renewable energy and storage sector.⁵⁰ It will stifle investment in the clean energy sector and undermine the more ambitious renewable energy and emissions reduction goals set by the majority of the Australian States and Territories.

'In essence, the NEG would lock in the electricity sector to an inadequate 26% target until 2030, and ensure the continued operation of nearly all polluting coal and gas power plants for at least two decades.'⁵¹

As the opportunities for reducing emissions within the electricity sector are greater than for other sectors of the economy, the NEG should set a target for emissions reductions from the electricity sector that is significantly higher than Australia's economy-wide emissions target. A target to reduce emissions from the electricity sector by only 26% by 2030 is therefore an inadequate contribution to achieving even Australia's existing and very weak economy-wide emissions reduction target of 26-28% by 2030.

⁴⁸ <https://www.cleanenergycouncil.org.au/policy-advocacy/renewable-energy-target.html>

<https://theconversation.com/australian-renewable-energy-agency-saved-but-with-reduced-funding-experts-react-65334> ; <https://www.cleanenergycouncil.org.au/news/2016/September/arena-funding-cuts.html>

⁴⁹ Independent review into the future security of the National Electricity Market (the 'Finkel Review')

<https://www.energy.gov.au/government-priorities/energy-markets/independent-review-future-security-national-electricity-market>

⁵⁰ Climate Council, 'Clean and Reliable Power: Roadmap to a Renewable Future', (2018)

<https://www.climatecouncil.org.au/uploads/2281dea087b8f3360bb96b6cad17edf7.pdf>

⁵¹ *Ibid.* p 14

In order to meet its Paris commitments and avoid the foreseeable harms to women's rights that greater climate disruption will cause, Australia must put in place strong policies to ensure the swift decarbonisation of the electricity sector and encourage a shift to renewable energy sources.

8. Conclusion & Recommendations

Australia has ICEDAW obligations to avoid foreseeable harms to women's rights, including by taking strong measures to address climate change. Australia is not doing its fair share in terms of the global emissions reduction effort and should increase the level of ambition of its Paris Agreement targets and urgently put in place energy and climate policies that will move Australia to a zero-carbon, 100% renewable energy system, and will ensure Australia contributes to keeping global temperatures to 1.5C of warming. Australia must acknowledge its significant contribution to global carbon emissions through its huge coal exports and commit to a transition away from coal, including by committing to no new coalmines or coalmine expansions in Australia and ruling out public funding for new coal infrastructure. This must be accompanied by measures to ensure a just transition for affected communities in Australia, and increasing support for renewable energy plans in developing countries.

We urge the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women to:

- Express concern related to the foreseeable adverse impacts on women's rights of global warming exceeding the most stringent temperature increase targets provided in international climate agreements and the incompatibility of the climate and energy policy of Australia with its obligation to promote the substantive equality of women and men.
- **Recommend that Australia increase the ambition of its climate change targets in line with science and with the objectives of international climate agreements and review its climate and energy policies to ensure that it is doing its fair share of required global emissions reductions. This should include legislated targets for emissions reduction and clean energy – particularly in the electricity sector - on the basis of 100% renewable energy by 2030 and zero emissions before 2040, in the context of a long-term low greenhouse gas emissions development strategy.**
- Express concern regarding the emissions of greenhouse gases that inevitably result from the extraction of coal and other fossil fuels – whether generated by the consumption of coal in Australia or embedded in its exports, and note that these extraction and exports contribute to climate change and thereby undermine progress made towards substantive equality of women in Australia and extraterritorially.
- **Recommend that the government of Australia commit to a managed phase-out of coal extraction, consumption and exports, including committing to no new coalmines or coalmine expansions in Australia and no public funding for new coal infrastructure, whilst ensuring a just transition for affected communities.**