

Climate Change Authority members publish minority report

TWO members of the Australia's independent Climate Change Authority have criticised a report published by the Authority on Wednesday, warning that the actions recommended in the report are manifestly inadequate to meet Australia's international obligations.

Climate scientist Professor David Karoly and economist Professor Clive Hamilton have taken the unprecedented step of publishing a minority report in response to what they say are major flaws within the CCA report.

The report accepted as the basis for its recommendations Australia's current 2030 emissions reduction target rather than recommending action consistent with the goal of limiting global warming to well below 2°C.

Professor Karoly said the recommendations of the majority report were a recipe for further delay in responding to the urgent need to reduce Australia's greenhouse gas emissions.

"Even if Australia reduces its emissions by 28 per cent by 2030 as our current targets dictate, more than 90% of Australia's current carbon budget will be used up by then," he said.

"To meet the budget constraint, Australia's emissions would have to decline steeply from the current 2030 target and reach net zero by 2035. This is clearly impossible and means that the majority report, by accepting the government's targets, lacks credibility.

"Put simply, the actions recommended in the report will not put Australia on a path to playing its role in limiting global temperature rise to less than 2°C."

"The majority report gives the impression that Australia has plenty of time to implement measures to bring Australia's emissions sharply down," Professor Clive Hamilton said.

"This is untrue and dangerous. Given this, we felt we had no choice but to write our own report."

The minority report:

- Argues for the adoption of a carbon budget as the basis of all of Australia's climate policies, as recommended by the Climate Change Authority itself in 2015. (A carbon budget specifies the upper limit of Australia's total emissions between now and 2050.)
- Calls for a cap-and-trade emissions trading scheme for electricity and other sectors with the option for an emissions-intensity baseline in the electricity sector.
- Urges consideration of the closure of selected brown-coal power plants through a bidding process, with closure payments funded by a mandatory charge on other generators.

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- Calls for an increase in the Renewable Energy Target so that renewables account for 65% of electricity generation in 2030.
- Recommends abolition of the Emissions Reduction Fund, while supporting the Carbon Farming Initiative.

Professor Karoly said that the majority report fails to meet the Review's terms of reference.

“It makes recommendations that are not soundly based on climate science,” he said.

Professor Hamilton said it was disappointing that the majority report had chosen to frame its recommendations around what is seen to be politically possible rather than what needs to be done to protect the nation.

“The evidence suggests that most Australians want stronger action on climate change, and we hope that policy makers are not spooked by the fear campaigns of the recent past. Climate change is too big and too important,” he said.

For media enquiries, please contact Jessica on 0400 424 559. The report can be found at www.climatecouncil.org.au.