

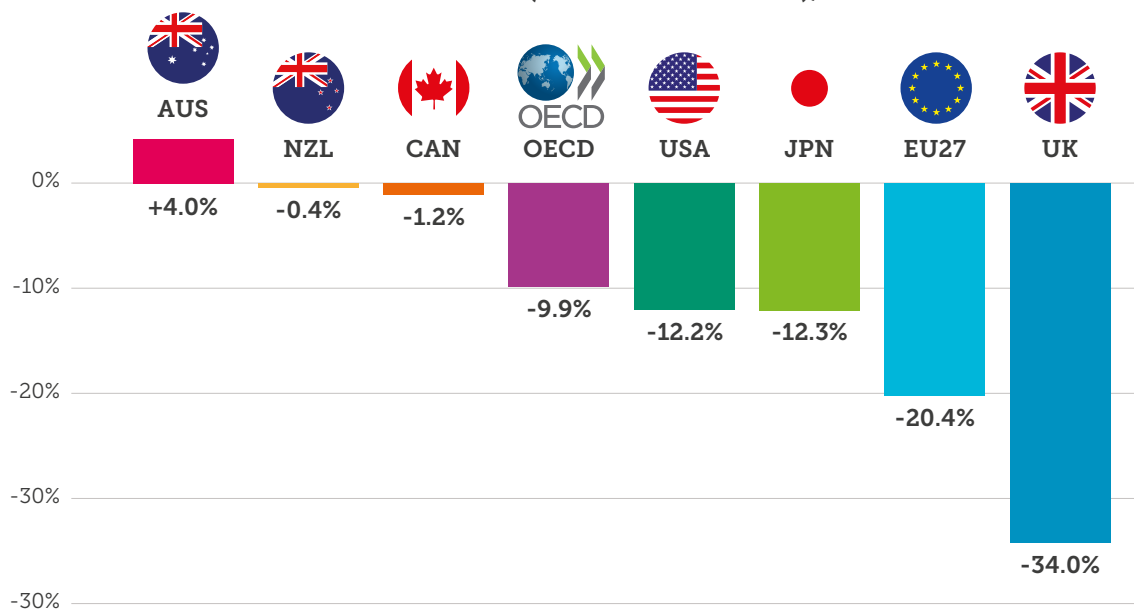


BEYOND THE SPIN:

AUSTRALIA'S EMISSIONS PERFORMANCE

This fact sheet responds to incorrect claims about Australia's emissions performance being made by the Federal Government. This includes claims made in the \$30 million taxpayer-funded 'Making Positive Energy' pre-election media blitz across print, radio, television and online (RenewEconomy 2022). Similar claims have also been made in taxpayer-funded promotional material sent by Liberal MPs to residents in their electorates since the second half of 2021.

CHANGE IN GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSIONS (EXCLUDING LAND USE), BETWEEN 2005 AND 2019



Change in greenhouse gas emissions (excluding land use), 2019 levels compared to 2005. Data source: Gütschow et al 2021. Due to ordinary delays in reporting via the UNFCCC, 2019 is currently the most recent year for which consistent, complete and internationally-comparable emissions data is available at the national level.

“Australia’s emissions have fallen more than those of New Zealand, Canada, Japan and the USA (since 2005).”

“Sorry, but no.”



AUSTRALIA LAGS BEHIND ITS INTERNATIONAL PEERS

When Australia’s emissions reduction performance is fairly compared to that of like nations by excluding emissions from land use and by using a common start and finish date for each country’s emissions, a very different - and more accurate - picture emerges, as shown in the figure on the first page.

The claim that Australia is outpacing the climate action taken by international peers is misleading for the following reasons:

1. At previous international climate negotiations, Australian diplomats successfully negotiated a considerable advantage over other nations in that Australia is permitted, under international accounting rules, to use an artificially inflated base year when determining its emissions reduction performance, through consideration of historical land clearing. While permissible under international accounting rules, the unique privilege Australia receives as a result of this inflated baseline means that responsibly comparing Australia’s emissions reduction performance to that of other countries requires thought and nuance not evident in the Liberal-National Government’s talking point.
2. To make a like-for-like comparison, it is necessary to assess Australia’s emissions reductions in sectors other than land use, and to compare this to the emissions reduction performance of other countries in the same sectors. Reliance on the raw data as reported to the UNFCCC overlooks the vast difference between how Australia reports its emissions and how other nations report theirs, and ensures a misleading representation of reality.
3. There are other reasons to be cautious with land clearing emissions. The land sector is the only sector where emissions can be recorded as negative, and as different countries have vastly different potential when it comes to using the land sector as a carbon sink, including the land sector can advantage some countries over others. Excluding the land sector gives a clearer picture when it comes to actual emissions reductions from sectors such as energy, transport and industry.
4. But this alone is not enough to justify the government's claim. Alongside the issue of land-clearing emissions, the Liberal-National Government also compares Australia’s emissions after a full year of the COVID-19 pandemic – with the resulting economic downturn and temporary emissions reduction – to every other nation’s pre-pandemic emissions. This further misrepresents Australia’s relative performance.



“Australia’s emissions are down more than 20 percent since 2005, the average for OECD countries is only 7 percent.”

“Still no.”



AUSTRALIA HAS MADE VERY LITTLE PROGRESS

This claim is highly sensitive to the base year selected, and relies heavily on emissions reductions in the land sector (including reduced deforestation). In fact, most of Australia’s emission reductions since 2005 have come from changes in land management.

Unlike the Liberal-National Government’s approach, a fair and principled assessment of national emissions reduction performance shows that between 2005 and 2019:

- > Emissions of OECD nations fell by 9.9 percent, with emissions from several of our developed country peers falling by much more.
- > Australia’s emissions increased by 4 percent.

When it comes to moving beyond fossil fuels, Australia has made almost no progress. In fact, apart from small declines during the operation of the carbon price, and during the COVID-19 pandemic, Australia’s fossil fuel and other industrial emissions have steadily increased overall since 1990 with reductions in the electricity sector being more than offset by increases in other sectors.

Climate change is accelerating with devastating consequences. The ecological systems that have sustained human life and societies for generations are being severely damaged by increasing heat and worsening extreme weather. We must do everything possible to deeply and rapidly cut our emissions, while also preparing for climate impacts that can no longer be avoided. Accordingly, we are calling on all parties and candidates to explain to the public how, in the next term of Federal Parliament, they plan to get national emissions plummeting by rapidly scaling up readily available renewable energy and building an economy that is free from fossil fuels.



For more information, please refer to the ABC Factcheck: [Scott Morrison says there are only four countries in the G20 with a better emissions record than Australia. Is that correct?](#)

