

THE

# SONGSHEET:

A speaker's guide to climate,  
energy and a changing world



## HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

This practical guide is for people who speak publicly about climate, energy and global change – including politicians, senior officials, commentators and trusted public voices.

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**Messaging advice is based on the most up-to-date research on:**

- › how Australians hear and interpret climate, energy and global change;
- › which messaging builds confidence vs what causes friction; and
- › how to speak in ways that sound practical, grounded and credible.

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The Climate Council acknowledges the Traditional Owners of the lands on which we live, meet and work. We wish to pay our respects to Elders, past and present, and recognise the continuous connection of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to land, sea and sky. We acknowledge the ongoing leadership of First Nations people here and worldwide in protecting Country, and securing a safe and liveable climate for us all.

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# CLIMATE 101: FIVE KEY THINGS TO REMEMBER

1

## Treat climate action as the responsibility it is

This is a core government responsibility – like energy, balancing the budget or education – not a debate.

2

## Meet people where they're at

Connect with people's personal experience, and what they care about (i.e. A disaster they've lived through, or rising power prices, or rising insurance costs).

3

## Name climate pollution, then talk risk

Be explicit: Climate pollution from coal, oil and gas is pushing up costs and driving risk – to power prices, stability and households.

4

## Be clear about direction, calm about pace

Australians broadly support our shift to renewable energy, but want to understand how this will be managed. So be clear on what the outcome/goal is. For example: we are rolling out clean renewable energy and storage so we can phase out polluting and unreliable coal-fired power stations.

5

## Talk like a human

If you wouldn't say it to a friend then find a clearer way to say it.



Talk more about...	Less about...	Why?
Opportunity or risk.	Moral responsibility.	Most people are not motivated by a moral imperative.
Shaping the global rules.	Targets or frameworks.	People don't understand or connect with targets or other policy language.
Global climate summit.	COP30, COP31.	Many people don't know what COP31 is, so it's better to explain what it is.
Coordinating the global response.	Australia 'leading' on global climate action.	Avoids Australia being seen as getting ahead of other nations.
Natural advantages in wind and sun.	Investment costs.	Focus on our known advantages.
People of the Pacific or our Pacific neighbours.	Pacific islands.	Centres people.
Climate pollution (i.e. pollution from burning coal, oil and gas).	Greenhouse gas emissions.	Pollution from extracting and burning coal, oil and gas is the problem that needs fixing. This is shorthand for making that connection, and understood by most people as solvable.

## Section I

# Global Climate Action

People are (rightly) feeling anxious about the state of the world, and Australia's place in it as we enter a phase of deeper uncertainty, rivalry, and fragmentation. This section advises on how to position what's happening, and the important role of global summits and our country in all of this.

### THE WORLD IS CHANGING

#### What to say

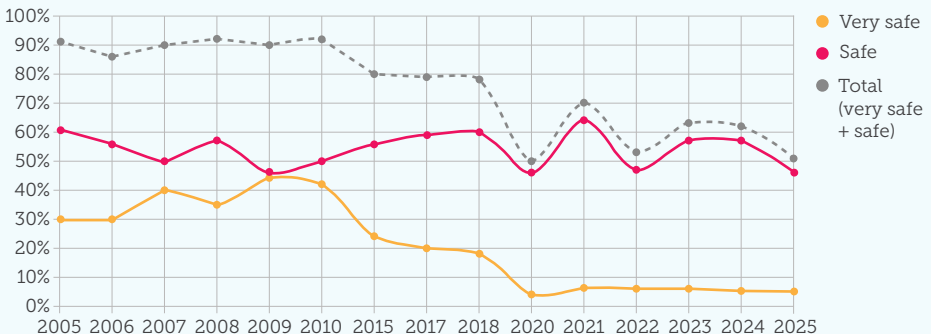
*"The world is changing – and pretending it isn't won't protect Australians."*

*"In an uncertain world, Australia should be at the table helping shape the rules – not just living with the consequences."*

#### Why this works

Research shows that resistance to change is lowered among Australians when the change is presented as an external reality vs a contested choice.

*Over the past two decades, the number of Australians who feel safe when they think about world events has dropped dramatically: from 91% to 51% ([Lowy Institute Poll 2025](#), 2025 trend data)*



## CLIMATE IS THE GLOBAL BACKDROP

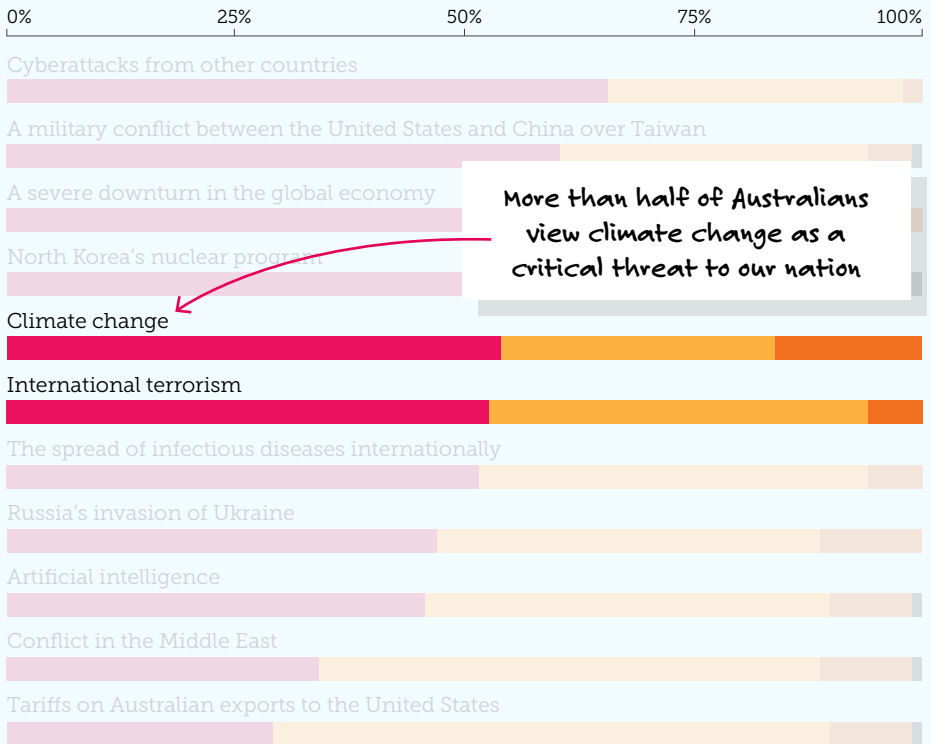
### What to say

*"Climate change now shapes global trade, investment and energy markets as the world shifts towards renewable energy."*

### Why this works

More Australians are receptive when climate change is described as a systemic backdrop affecting trade markets and global rules, rather than a moral or identity issue.

#### Australians rank threats to our nation



Source: [Lowy Institute Poll 2025](#), found 54% of Australians ranked climate change as a critical threat to Australia's interests in the next 10 years (above terrorism) with another 30% ranking it as an important threat.

## CLIMATE SUMMITS

### What to say

*"Climate summits are where countries shape the rules – so global markets work and households are protected."*

*"As President of Negotiations for the next global climate summit, Australia has a golden opportunity to..."*

- › shape the rules and drive demand for renewable technologies.
- › support new business and trade opportunities for Australia.
- › coordinate global efforts to cut climate pollution and protect our region from worsening bushfires, floods and sea level rise."

### Why this works

Define COP31 as a practical event given many people have never heard of it.

Research also shows strong support for coordination by Australia when this is framed as "rule-setting" in the face of global upheaval.

### Evidence



~45% of Australians surveyed hadn't heard of COP (Essential, September 2025)

- › About 80% of Australians support key pillars of a rules-based global order (the US-Australia alliance and free trade).

Source: [Lowy Institute Poll 2025](#).

## WHEN BIG COUNTRIES BREAK THE RULES, WE PAY THE PRICE

### What to say

*"When big countries ignore the rules, smaller countries feel it first. That's why shared global rules matter — including on climate and energy."*

### Why this works

Australians don't like feeling pushed around by big countries. They prefer messaging that says, "We need rules so we're not exposed/at risk" versus inferring that "X or Y countries are bad".

### Evidence

- › Most Australians (57%) don't think the world is doing enough to address climate change (*Essential*, Sept 2025).
- › Confidence in the US "acting responsibly in the world" has fallen sharply since mid-2010s ([Lowy Institute Poll 2025](#), Global powers & trust sections).

## RISK EXPOSURE

### What to say

*"Failing to plan for global change means higher bills for Australians."*

### Why this works

Risk-management framing consistently outperforms urgency or ambition framing, particularly among soft and undecided voters.

### Evidence

- › Majority of Australians agree government should "plan ahead for long-term global risks" rather than react case-by-case.
- › Concern about great-power conflict is **at its highest level in decades**.

Source: [Lowy Institute Poll 2025](#), Global powers & trust sections.

## Section II

# Energy, Global Trade and National Interest

### ENERGY SECURITY MEANS STABILITY

#### What to say

*"As the world shifts to a clean economy, energy security means moving away from coal and gas markets we don't control. Renewables backed by storage can provide the power and security we need."*

#### Why this works

Australians prioritise reliability and cost over ideology. This language avoids nostalgia while anchoring energy change in lived experience.

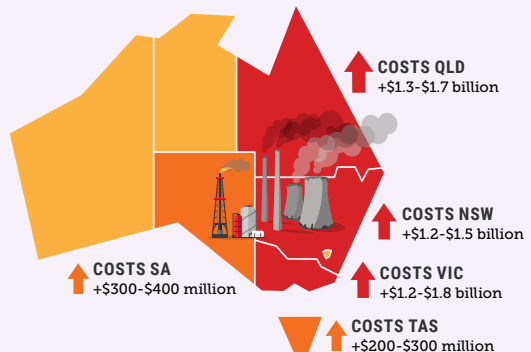
- › Without renewables, average household power bills would have been ~\$400+ higher in recent years.

#### CLINGING TO COAL & GAS IS COSTLY

**\$4.5-6BN EXTRA ON POWER BILLS**

Additional costs to power bills in 2030

- Orange square: up to \$1 billion
- Red square: \$1 billion +



#### Evidence

Source: [Clean Energy Investor Group](#) (2025) – The cost of no renewables.  
[ACCC Inquiry into the National Electricity Market report](#) (Dec 2024).

## GLOBAL MARKETS DRIVE VOLATILITY

### What to say

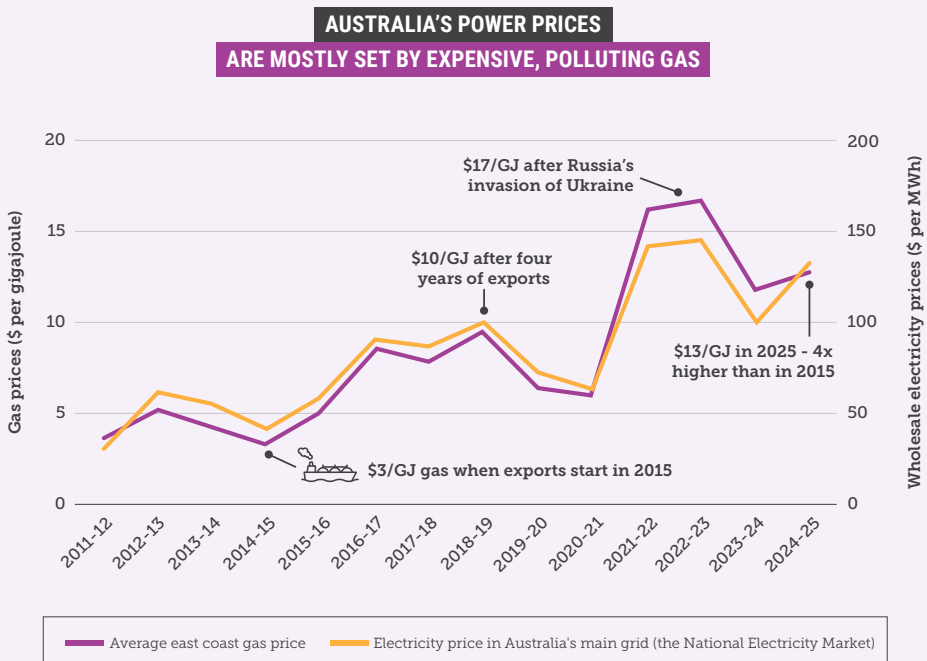
*“Australia produces more gas than we use — yet Australians still pay higher prices because our exports anchor us to international markets.*

*This means Australians wear higher costs even though the resources are ours.”*

### Why this works

This corrects a common misconception without blaming the government or voters.

- › Domestic gas prices have surged since Australia began exporting gas.
- › Gas prices and wholesale electricity prices rise and fall together. Although gas provides only around 5% of electricity in Australia’s main grid, it [sets the wholesale electricity price up to 90%](#) of the time.



## EXPORTS BRING VALUE – AND RISK

### What to say

*“Coal and gas exports generate revenue, but they expose us to greater climate and economic risks.”*

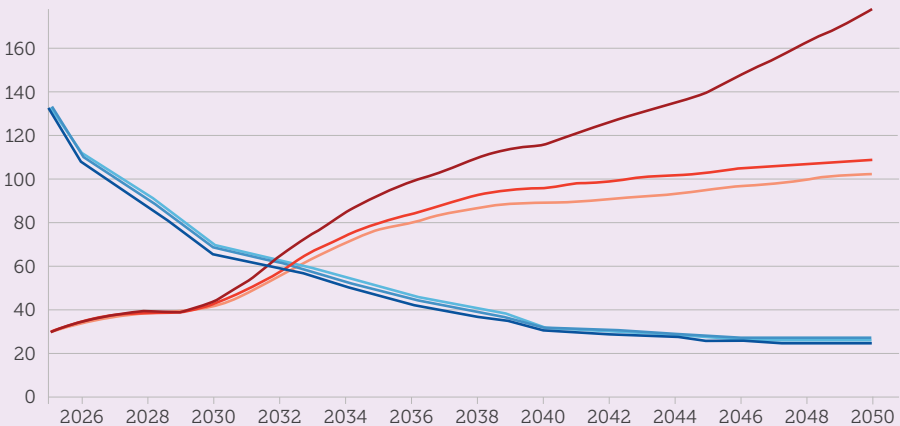
### Why this works

Polling shows Australians want to see stronger economic and risk management of exports.

### Evidence

- ▶ **Australian Treasury** modelling shows long-term risks to export revenues and government finances as global demand for coal and gas declines.
- ▶ **More than 90% of Australia’s coal and gas export partners have net zero commitments**, signalling a structural shift in future demand. (Climate Council analysis)

### Fossil fuel exports value will decline while green commodities increase



#### Legend

Renewable Exports Upside Scenario (REUS)  
The Baseline Scenario (Baseline)  
Disorderly Transition Scenario (Disorderly)

#### Fossil fuels

REUS  
Baseline  
Disorderly

#### Green commodities

REUS  
Baseline  
Disorderly

Source: [Australian Government – The Treasury](#) (Sep 2025).

## FAIR RETURN RESONATES

### What to say

*"Australians expect a fair return from our resources – especially as climate risks grow and global markets shift."*

*"Right now, we're exposed to global energy markets without seeing enough of the benefit, so people are rightly asking whether the system is working in their interests."*

### Why this works

There is a growing sense in the community that the economic contract is broken; that working hard no longer guarantees getting ahead.

Fairness framing consistently outperforms "phase-out" or "leadership" framing across political and demographic groups.

- › 87% of Australians agree Australia should get a better return from its resources like coal and gas exports.
- › Top 100 polluters produce ~80% of Australia's climate pollution.

## GOVERNMENT'S ROLE

### What to say

*"The government's job is to protect Australians by managing climate risks and keep energy affordable. The only way to do that is to make sure the system works in our national interest."*

### Why this works

A plurality of Australians expect governments to do more on climate change. Trust rises when the government is framed as a competent referee.

*"The government's job is to protect Australians by managing climate risks and keep energy affordable. The only way to do that is to make sure the system works in our national interest."*

### Evidence:

Source: Redbridge Group (2025), Community Sentiment Study, p.7.

## Section III

# Fossil Fuels Without the Culture War

### CLIMATE POLLUTION IS DRIVING RISK

#### What to say

*"Climate pollution from burning coal, oil and gas is driving risk – to power prices, energy security and households."*

*"It also raises a broader question about whether a system built on fossil fuels and rising costs is working in the long-term interests of Australians."*

#### Why this works

Climate pollution is shorthand for connecting the problem (fossil fuels) to the issue (climate change) and the impact. In this case, that impact is showing in price volatility, exposure to global shocks, and growing economic risk if systems aren't managed well.

#### Evidence

- › Analysis shows renewables reduce price volatility and have already lowered household bills – by around \$400 on average in recent years.
- › Australian regulators and analysts consistently find that coal and gas prices are the main driver of power price volatility, while renewables reduce exposure to those swings.

## AUSTRALIA IS A MAJOR EXPORTER OF CLIMATE POLLUTION

### What to say

*"Australia exports around three times more climate pollution than is burned at home, from digging up and sending coal and gas overseas."*

*"At the same time, climate pollution is worsening floods, fires and heat which increases costs for households, from insurance to repairs."*

### Why this works

- › Australia is the world's largest coal exporter (by volume).
- › one of the top LNG exporters globally.

Combined, this makes Australia one of the largest exporters of fossil fuels in the world. So what we do makes a big difference.

## FOCUS ON RISK, NOT VIRTUE

### What to say

*"The risk is over-reliance on coal and gas markets we don't control."*

*"And those markets are already changing as other countries use less coal, oil and gas."*

### Why this works

Research shows that framing fossil fuels in terms of risk and exposure builds broader agreement, while moral condemnation increases backlash.

### Evidence

Source: [Climate Outreach](#), *Talking About Fossil Fuels Without Polarising*, 2023, Yale, and others.

***"There are no price spikes for sunlight. No embargos on wind."***

United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres.

## PAYING A FAIR SHARE

### What to say

*"This is about having a clear plan so Australia's resources deliver lasting benefits to Australians."*

### Why this works

Polluter-pays approaches gain majority support when framed as fairness and modernisation.

Australians expect large companies to contribute fairly, especially when costs are rising. When that doesn't happen, people get angry about a system that's working for too few, not everyone.

### Evidence

- › Essential Media & Oxfam, *Make Big Polluters Pay* (2024–2025).
- › [Superpower Institute](#) polling (Dec 2025).

## SEPARATE PEOPLE FROM SYSTEMS

### What to say

*"Back workers, and upgrade our energy system."*

### Why this works

This framing avoids identity threat and maintains support for policy change.

### Evidence

- › Essential COP Research (2025) (not public).
- › [Superpower Institute](#) workforce transition analysis (2025).

## BE CLEAR ABOUT OUR DIRECTION

### What to say

*"The destination is clear: more clean energy, less ageing coal and expensive gas. The job is managing it well."*

### Why this works

Australians broadly support the shift to renewable energy, but want reassurance it will be managed responsibly. Being clear about the destination – and calm about how it will unfold – builds confidence.

### Evidence

- › Essential Research shows strong support for renewable energy alongside concern about energy reliability and cost.
- › Climate Outreach (2022) finds that "pace, not panic" framing builds trust and reduces backlash.

## TALKING TO AUSTRALIANS ABOUT GLOBAL DEBATES

### Guidance

Australians respond better when global climate and energy debates are framed in terms of:

- › exposure to external shocks.
- › fairness.
- › stability.
- › planning.

They disengage when debates are framed as moral tests or races to lead.

### Evidence

- › *Essential COP Research* (2025) (not public).
- › Lowy Institute Poll 2025.
- › Essential Research climate trend data.

## Section IV

# Language That Works

### FIVE LINES THAT CUT THROUGH

1. *"The world is changing – and pretending it isn't won't protect Australian interests."*

.....

2. *"When big countries ignore the rules, smaller countries pay the price."*

.....

3. *"This is about keeping power affordable and available as the world shifts."*

.....

4. *"Australians are feeling rising costs and want the system to work in their interests."*

.....

5. *"Australians shouldn't carry the risk while others take the upside."*

## WHEN THEY SAY...

1. *"Australia's too small to matter."*

**You can say**  
*"We have a small population, but we export about three times more climate pollution than we burn at home."*

.....
2. *"But the US or China isn't acting, so there's no point."*

**You can say**  
*"When big countries make a mess, smaller countries pay the price, which is what Australians are experiencing right now. We need to shape the global rules, and become more self reliant."*

.....
3. *"This is all ideology."*

**You can say**  
*"This is about keeping costs down and staying in control as the world changes. The more we power Australia with our own sun and wind, the more control we have."*

.....
4. *"This is just an expensive talkfest."*

**You can say**  
*"This is where countries shape the global rules that influence markets, prices and risks. Australia should be at the table making sure those rules work in our interests."*

.....
5. *"This will push up power prices."*

**You can say**  
*"Coal and gas are pushing power prices up while renewables push them down. The less we rely on fossil fuels the less exposed we are to higher prices and fuel shortages."*

## RESETTING AN INTERVIEW

*"The world is changing, whether we like it or not. Failing to plan for that means higher bills for Australians, and a weaker economy over time."*

Governments can act now to stabilise prices and reduce exposure over time.


The Climate Council is a fearless champion of the climate solutions that Australia needs. People power got us started and we are proudly community-funded and independent.

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