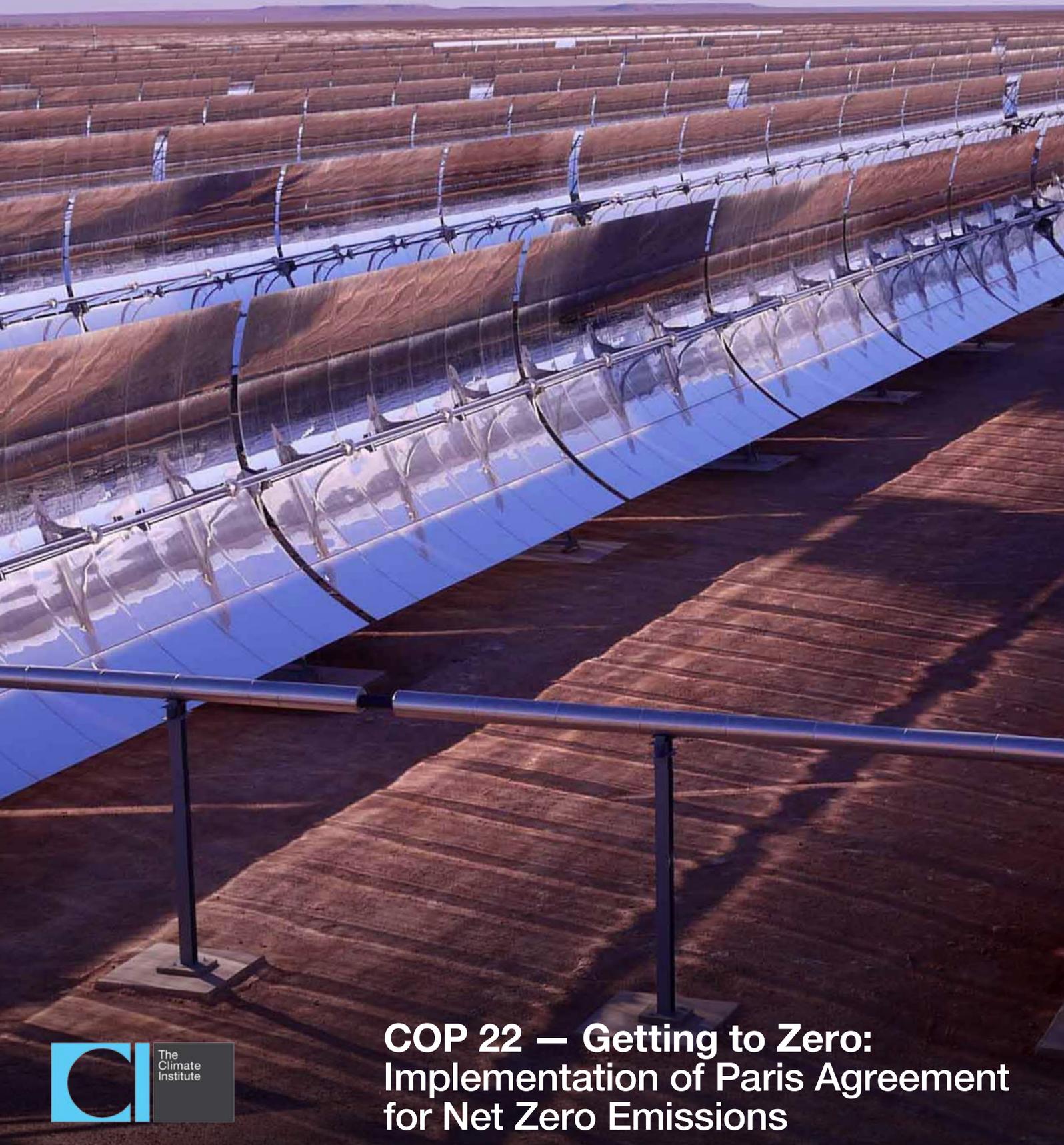


The Climate Institute



**COP 22 — Getting to Zero:
Implementation of Paris Agreement
for Net Zero Emissions**

COP 22 – Getting to Zero

Implementation of Paris Agreement for Net Zero Emissions

November 2016

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Summary

The central commitments governments, including Australia, made in Paris were to limit long-term warming to 1.5-2°C, achieve net zero emissions, and increase resilience to the emerging impacts of climate change.

Momentum

In August 2015, Australia put forward an initial target of a 26-28 per cent reduction in emissions, below 2005 levels, by 2030. If other countries followed this example, it would lead to warming of 3-4°C above pre-industrial levels.

In December 2015 in Paris, Australia and all countries – rich and poor, large and small – agreed to take action to limit long-term warming to 1.5-2°C, achieve net zero emissions of greenhouse gases and increase resilience to the emerging impacts of climate change.

Australia's initial target will need to be revisited in 2019-2020, at the latest, as part of the process agreed in Paris that increases ambition towards the central objectives of the Agreement. Achieving these warming goals will require countries like Australia to be at net zero emissions before 2050.

Since Paris, momentum to implement the Paris Agreement – and take other global action to reduce emissions – has been unprecedented (See Timeline).

- + On 4 November, the Paris Agreement will enter force within a year of being adopted. This is historic speed for an agreement of this scope. It took the Kyoto Protocol around eight years to come into force.
- + Outside the central United Nations (UN) climate change process, Paris sparked momentum for countries to come to separate agreements to reduce emissions from international aviation, and phase down the use of hydrofluorocarbons (HFCs), a super-greenhouse gas.
- + National governments and investors are responding to the Paris Agreement. For example, the United Kingdom (UK) has agreed to reduce emissions by 57 per cent by 2030 and the Canadian government is imposing a nation wide carbon price floor. In a “landmark” paper published in September, BlackRock, the world's largest asset manager, said investors should incorporate climate change risks into their portfolios.
- + Conservative estimates from the International Energy Agency now indicate that world renewable energy capacity now exceeds coal electricity capacity, and renewable output is expected to provide over 60 per cent of total growth in electricity generation to 2021.

Despite this rapid progress, the world is still not on track to achieve the central objectives of the Paris Agreement. Current commitments would lead to an estimated 3°C of warming.

Last month's State of the Climate report from CSIRO and the Bureau of Meteorology highlighted Australia's growing, costly, climate impacts with even 1°C of warming since 1910 (see Box 2). Our national interest lies in all countries stepping up, and strengthening, their 2030 and later emissions reductions policies and targets as part of the Paris process (see Key elements of the Paris Agreement).

Defining the rule book

The Paris Agreement set the framework for global action towards achieving net zero emissions. It also outlined what elements of a detailed rulebook for global cooperation were to be defined over the coming few years. These include the transparency of policies to reduce emissions and provide financial support for poor nations, the operation of global carbon markets, and tracking the impact of collective action towards the objectives of the Agreement. By making good progress on these rules, and plans to assist poorer countries facing climate impacts, Marrakech is an important opportunity for governments to ensure that the details of the Paris Agreement can be agreed to by 2018.

Building a net zero emissions future

While the government has declared the Paris Agreement is in our national interest, the long-term implications of the Paris Agreement have yet to sink into Australia's mainstream political and media discourse, or into domestic policy making.

There are some positive exceptions, Australia has agreed to participate in the international emissions trading mechanism for international aviation and is implementing policies to phase down HFCs in advance of international agreements.

However, overall, policy makers and the media continue to largely focus on the short-term, or at best, just the initial 2030 targets Australia put forward in 2015. This is increasing major transition risks for Australia's community and economy. For example, recent controversy over renewable energy and energy security has largely failed to recognise Australia's commitment to the Paris Agreement requires the modernisation and decarbonisation of our electricity system before 2050.

Box 1: Australia in the spotlight

On 12 November at Marrakech, Australia will take its turn in what is known as the multilateral assessment process where other countries ask questions of each other. This is an important process to build trust and ambition between countries. Pre-published questions show many other countries – like many Australians – are interested, if not unclear, about Australia's current climate and energy policy direction. Countries are awaiting key data, like the 2030 emissions projections which it promised in 2016.

In 2015, the Abbott government committed internationally that the 2017 review of climate policies would also consider Australia's post-2030 target. This review of policies and the post-2030 emissions pathway represents the first chance for a credible national policy conversation in five years, and the first chance for a bipartisan outcomes in almost a decade. It is a critical opportunity to properly integrate climate, energy and economic policy, and fully participate in international climate efforts.

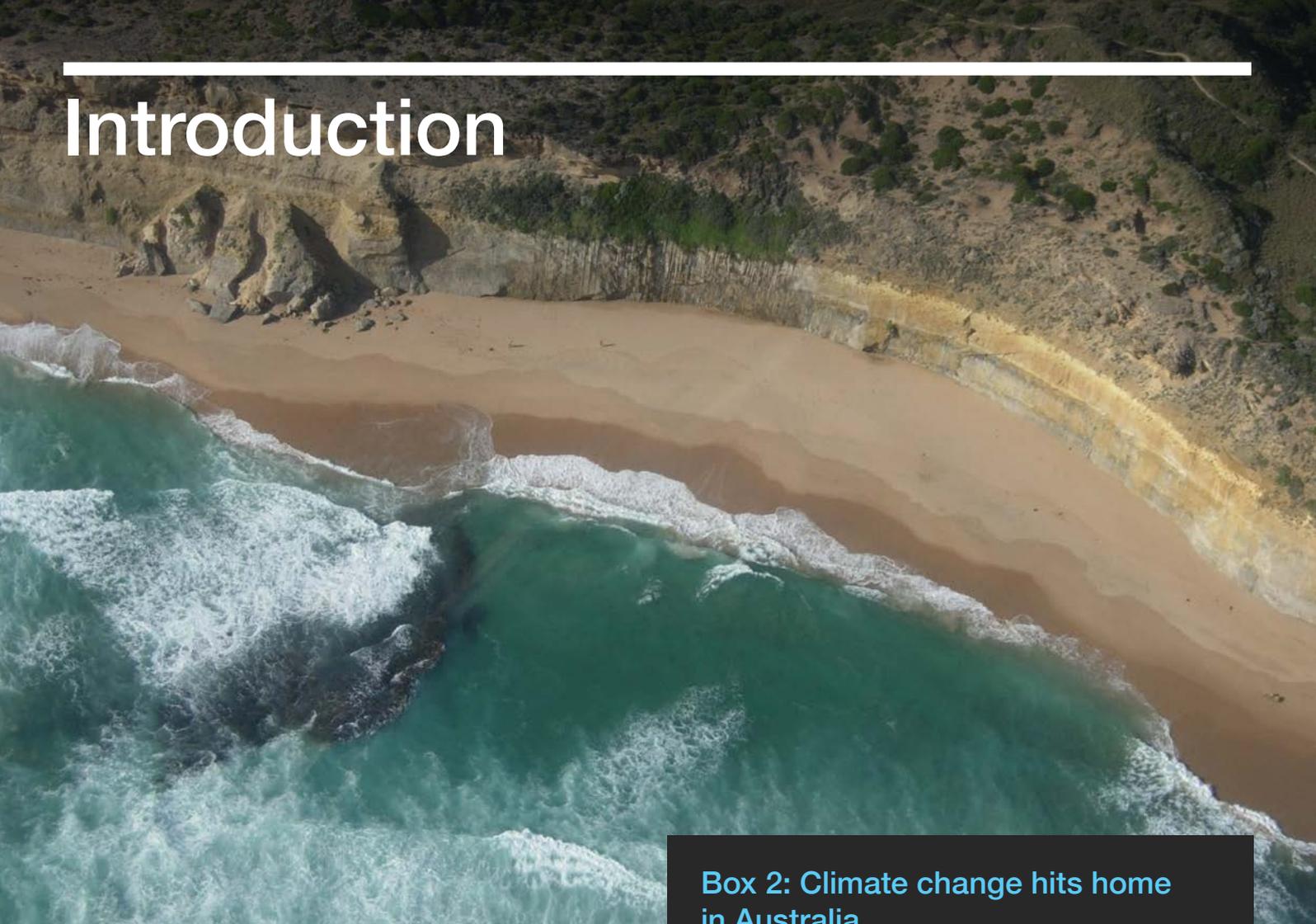
This can be achieved, but will require policymakers to put aside the politics and division of the last few decades and acknowledge we need to face the realities of a net zero emissions world.

Next steps

The immediate next steps for the government should be:

- + Ratification of the Paris Agreement in Marrakesh.
- + Deliver on its promise to release 2030 emissions projections this year, and do so well before Christmas.
- + Ensure the 2017 review, and related COAG energy processes, will consider credible policy to help grow a net zero emissions economy before 2050. This will need to include inclusive social and economic strategies to steadily replace coal fired power stations over the next 15 years.

Introduction



In December last year, the world negotiated and adopted the historic Paris Agreement on climate change.¹ For the first time, all countries – rich and poor, large and small – agreed to take universal action to limit global warming to 1.5-2°C, to achieve net zero emissions, and to increase resilience to the emerging impacts of climate change (see Key elements of the Paris Agreement, page 5).

The first formal meeting of parties to the Paris Agreement will take place in Marrakech, Morocco from the 7th to the 14th of November. This brief gives context to this meeting, outlines key issues that will need to be addressed, and discusses the implications for Australia.

Momentum, momentum, momentum

Momentum to implement the Paris Agreement, and take other global action to reduce emissions, has been unprecedented.

In February, over 170 nations, including Australia, signed the Paris Agreement at a high level ceremony in New York, an event unprecedented in the history of multilateral agreements. By October, 87 countries accounting for 61 per cent of global emissions had ratified the Agreement.⁴ This means the Agreement will enter legal force within a year of being made. During negotiations it was widely assumed that it would take until at least 2018 for this to happen, as historically it can take some time for countries to ratify international agreements through their domestic processes.

Box 2: Climate change hits home in Australia

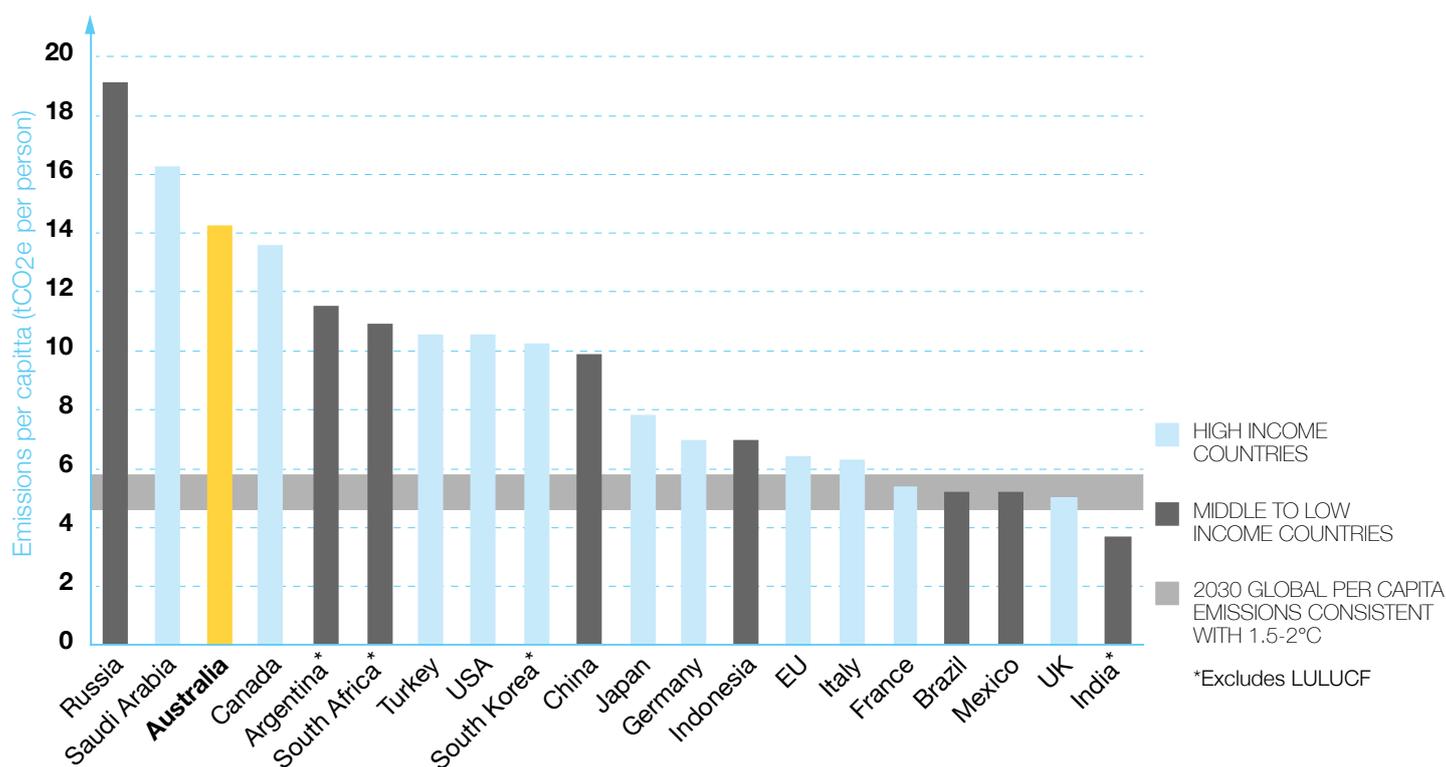
The most recent State of the Climate report from CSIRO and the Bureau of Meteorology² clearly demonstrates why climate action is in Australia's interests. Some key points in that report include:

- + Australia has warmed by around 1°C since 1910.
- + The number of days per year over 35°C has increased in recent decades, except in parts of northern Australia.
- + There has been an increase in extreme fire weather, and a longer fire season, across large parts of Australia.
- + April–October growing season rainfall has reduced by around 11 per cent since the mid-1990s in the continental southeast of Australia.
- + The overwhelming contribution to the additional carbon dioxide in the atmosphere is from human activities, mainly the burning of fossil fuels.
- + The atmospheric CO₂ increases in 2015 were the highest ever observed.

In August, The Climate Institute released research on the implications for Australia of the 1.5°C and 2°C warming goals in the Paris Agreement.³ That research indicated warming of 1.5°C would see current extreme heat waves, droughts and mass coral bleaching events on the Great Barrier Reef becoming the new normal. At 2°C, our global climate system would move from the upper end of present day climate variability into uncharted territory, resulting in extreme, costly and dangerous impacts for Australia.

FIGURE 1

G20 countries' per capita emissions in 2030, compared with the per capita emissions range associated with Paris Agreement.



Outside the central UN climate change process, Paris sparked momentum for countries to come to an agreement on reducing emissions from international aviation, which will commence in 2021. Over 190 countries, including the world's two largest emitters, the United States (US) and China, have signed up to limit emissions from international airline travel. Over 65 countries, including Australia, have agreed to participate in the global emissions trading scheme associated with this agreement.⁵

A few weeks later, countries agreed a phase down the use of HFCs, a super-greenhouse gas, to levels that would knock off nearly half a degree of possible future global warming.⁶

Financial authorities are also taking note of the Paris Agreement. The G20's Financial Stability Board in December 2015 announced a taskforce to develop a set of standard climate-related disclosures.⁷ This financial disclosure framework, which will be released in draft form in December, will be an unprecedented demonstration from the world's biggest financial authorities that climate change has considerable implications for markets and investors which need to be understood and disclosed to minimise risks the global financial system.

From words to action

The impact of the Paris Agreement has been felt outside formal multilateral governmental processes.

Investors are increasingly incorporating carbon and climate change risks into the decisions they make. Norway's oil fund, the world's largest sovereign wealth fund, has ceased investing in 52 companies that are heavily reliant on thermal coal.⁸

In a "landmark" paper published in September, BlackRock, the world's largest asset manager, said investors should incorporate climate change risks into their portfolios.⁹ BlackRock manages assets with a value around five times the size of the Australian economy.

National governments are also responding. For example, the UK, even after the Brexit referendum, has agreed to reduce emissions by 57 per cent by 2030¹⁰ and the Canadian government is imposing a nationwide carbon price floor (See Timeline, page 6).¹¹

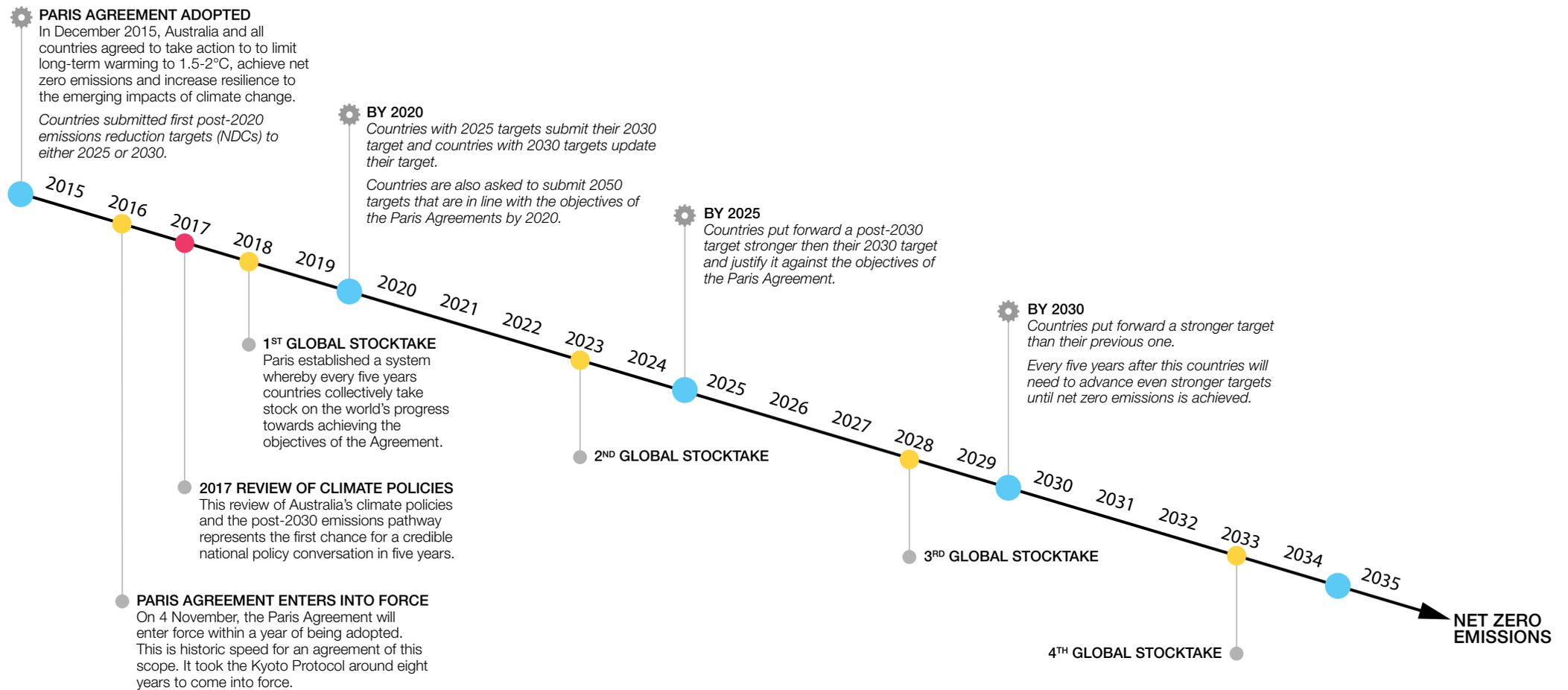
Global investments, technology innovation and cost reductions continue in clean energy. In 2015, for the first time, renewable energy overtook coal in terms of cumulative installed capacity around the world.¹² Conservative estimates from the International Energy Agency now indicated that world renewable energy output is expected to provide over 60 per cent of total electricity generation growth to 2021.

More work to do

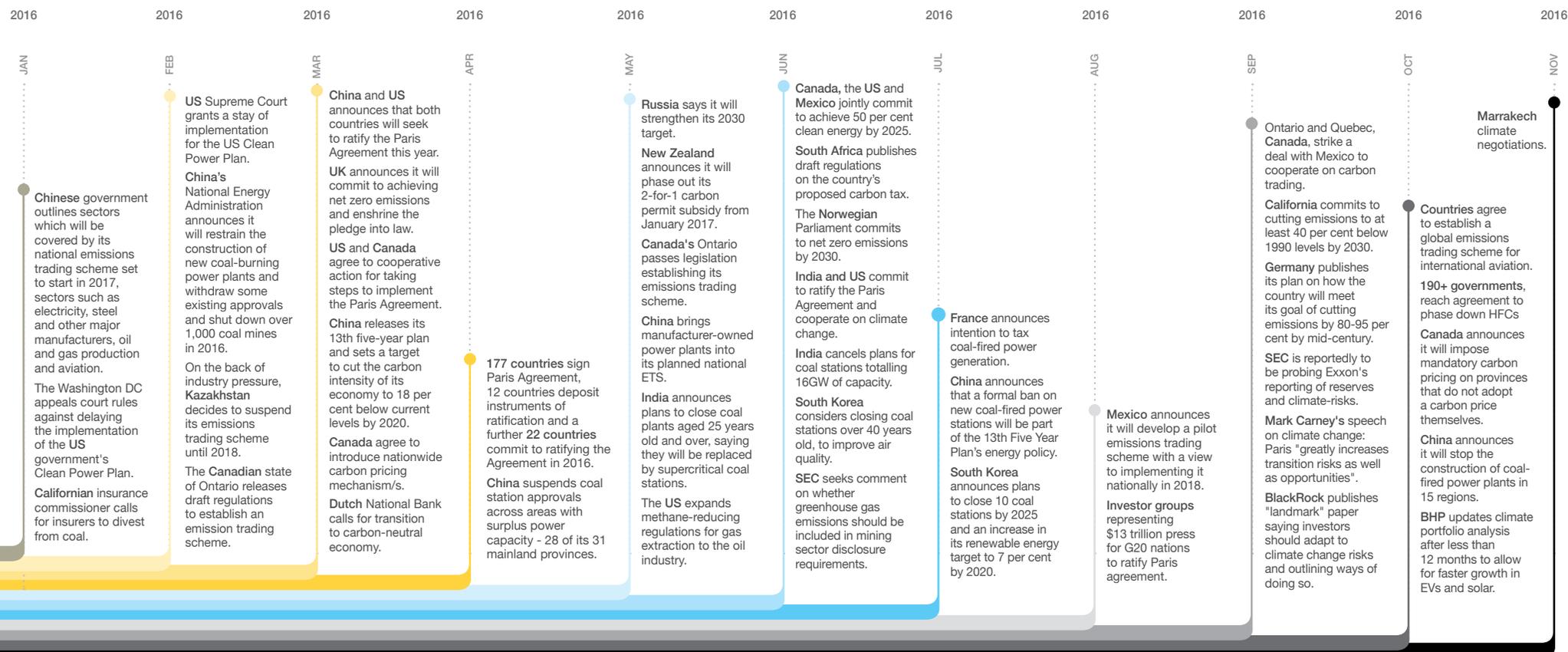
Despite this rapid progress, the world is not on track to achieve the objectives of the Paris Agreement. Countries current commitments would see the world warm by around 3°C.¹³ Although this is better than the 4-6°C degrees of warming projected prior to the Paris talks, the world is still well above the objectives of the agreement to limit long-term warming to 1.5-2°C.

This highlights the importance of countries stepping up their 2030 emissions reductions targets as part of the Paris process in 2019-2020. This is particularly relevant to Australia, whose current 2030 target is consistent with global warming of 3-4°C and would leave us as one of the highest per capita emitters in the G20 in 2030 (Figure 1).¹⁴

Key elements of the Paris Agreement



2016: A year of unprecedented climate action



Key issues at Marrakech



Sorting out the rulebook

The Paris Agreement set the framework for global action towards achieving net zero emissions but did not decide the detailed rulebook for global cooperation (see Box 3).

In Paris, the expectation was that it would take until around 2018 for this to be completed. The very rapid entry into force of the agreement has created a sense of urgency to define the rules, and also created a number of procedural challenges. This is because the first formal meeting of the parties to the Paris Agreement will take place after the treaty becomes international law, and many of the detailed rules for the implementation of the agreement are yet to be agreed as countries have not had time to finalise them. This is the backdrop to Marrakech.

The situation is more complicated by the fact that, formally, only those countries that have ratified the agreement can be involved in decision making. To date, 86 of the 197 parties to the convention will have ratified. The government has stated that ratifying the agreement is in our national interest and will be in a position to do so by the end of the year.

As a result, the initial days of Marrakech are likely to focus on two core issues:

- 1 Establishing a formal process** to allow negotiations on the rulebook to continue so they can be agreed upon at a future meeting in, say, 2018. This could be done, for example, by extending for first formal meeting of the Paris Agreement beyond Marrakech and establishing a deadline to conclude negotiations in 2018.
- 2 Establishing an inclusive process** that will allow countries who have not yet ratified the agreement to participate in decision making. Excluding, the 110 countries who have, in many cases for good reasons, not yet finalised their domestic legal processes of ratification would be very damaging to the development of the agreement and future participation by these countries.

In addition to the detailed negotiations of rules, Marrakesh will also host a Ministerial forum which will celebrate entry into force of the agreement. It will also discuss progress on scaling up financial and other support for poor nations, and the progress being made on addressing Loss and Damage.¹⁵

Box 3: Defining the Paris Agreement rulebook

Marrakech is a crucial opportunity for governments to step up the pace of negotiations to define the elements of the detailed rulebook for global cooperation. Below are examples of the detailed rules that were to be drafted before the first meeting of the Paris Agreement. Assuming the procedural issues outlined above are resolved, these will be some of the key issues that countries will negotiate in Marrakech:

- + **Clarity on emissions targets:** Before Paris, countries broadly outlined what nations should report to the international community when they submit their emissions reductions targets. For example, countries are expected to outline how their target is consistent with the objectives of international agreements (i.e. limiting warming to the less than 2°C). When countries advanced their post-2020 emissions targets many nations did this but others, like Australia, did not. In Paris, it was agreed that more detailed rules would be developed on what countries should and should not report when they advance emissions targets.
- + **Transparency of national actions, emissions and progress toward achieving targets:** The Paris Agreement builds on the current framework which sees countries report on their emissions and actions to meet targets every two years. Paris established a single framework that applies to all nations, and the detailed rules for transparency were to be developed by the first meeting of the agreement.
- + **Rules for scaling up and ensuring there is transparency around financial and other support to developing countries for adaptation and net zero emissions development:** Scaling up financial and other support (e.g. capacity building, technology transfer) to poor nations so they can adapt to emerging climate change impacts, and align with a net zero emissions pathway, are central elements of the Paris Agreement. Rules and procedures for these issues are to be developed.
- + **Global stocktakes:** Paris established a system whereby every five years countries collectively take stock of the world's progress towards achieving the objectives of the Agreement. By the first meeting of the Paris Agreement, sources of scientific inputs, how to measure the overall effectiveness of national emissions targets and other technical rules and procedures were to be drafted.
- + **International emissions trading:** The use of carbon pricing and markets continues to grow at a national level. In Paris, it was agreed that a mechanism would be developed to allow nations to meet their targets through international emissions trading. For example, if one country is overachieving its target it could trade excess credits to another country to help it meet its target. Again, by the first meeting of the Paris Agreement detailed rules for this new global market mechanism were to have been drafted.

Implications for Australia

In some respects, given the nature of the current political debate on climate and energy policy in Australia, one could be forgiven for thinking the Paris Agreement does not exist. The government has stated that the Agreement is in Australia's national interest,¹⁶ but the long-term implications of the Agreement have yet to sink into mainstream political and media discourse, and domestic policy making.

For example, the government has signed and is expected to soon ratify the treaty which aims to accelerate action towards net zero emissions. However, discussions around energy and climate policy have a tendency, at best, to only focus on what is needed to achieve the government's current, inadequate 2030 target.¹⁷

Implementing the Paris Agreement

Australia is yet to ratify the Agreement. The government is observing the normal process for excepting international treaties through the parliamentary Joint Standing Committee on Treaties. At the outset of that process Ministers Bishop and Frydenberg stated that the Agreement is in Australia's national interest. Australia should be in position to ratify the Agreement during the Marrakech meeting as our domestic process should have been completed.

In line with the decisions made in Paris, the government must reconsider and resubmit its 2030 target by 2019-2020 at the latest. It is worth noting in this context that the ALP have committed to at least a 45 percent reduction on 2005 levels by 2030. Regardless of whether at this time it puts forward a more credible 2030 target consistent with the objectives of the Paris Agreement, in 2024 it will need to put forward a stronger post-2030 target. And every five years after this Australia will need to advance an even stronger target until we achieve net zero emissions.

Decisions in Paris also ask governments to submit 2050 targets that are in line with the objectives of the agreements by 2020. The Abbott government committed internationally to consider its post-2030 emissions pathway in its 2017 policy review.¹⁸ Other countries, including the US, are developing 2050 plans to help guide long-term planning and decision making by investors and the community (Box 4).

Box 4: Defining long-term emissions pathways

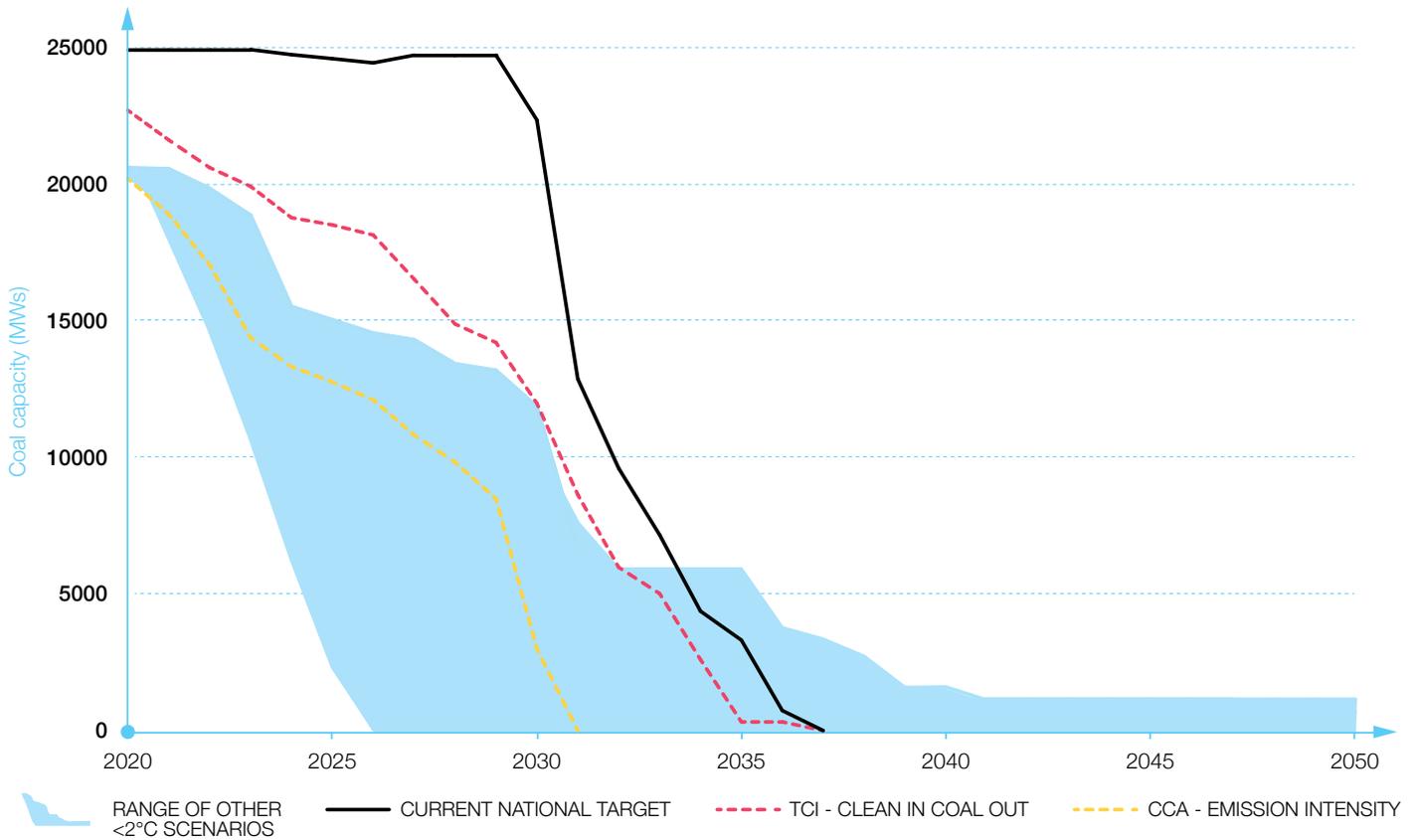
In 2015, the Abbott government committed internationally to "consider a potential long-term emissions reduction goal for Australia, beyond 2030". In addition, under the decisions made in Paris, countries have been invited to define long-term emissions strategies to 2050 that take into account the objectives of the agreement (limiting warming to 1.5-2°C and net zero emissions). Many countries already have long-term targets, and countries like the US, Canada and Mexico have committed to do so by the end of this year.

Long-term targets matter because:

- 1 Private sector investment signals:** A credible international commitment to reduce emissions to a certain level over the long-term provides an important signal for long-term investment decisions. This in turn enhances the ability of companies and investors to develop strategies that deal with the risks and opportunities associated with the transition to net zero emissions. This is particularly the case for infrastructure with long lifespans, which risk becoming stranded if the need to achieve net zero emissions is not considered in investment decisions.
- 2 Signals to market regulators:** A long-term signal would aid the efficient functioning of public sector organisations with governance responsibilities across Australia's electricity, financial and other markets and systems. It helps ensure that they are taking into account long-term objectives as they exercise any oversight, planning or regulatory responsibilities.
- 3 International diplomacy:** Australia has made an international commitment to examine its post-2030 emissions pathway as part of the 2017 review. Backsliding on this commitment would harm Australia's interests in areas within the negotiations it is seeking to advance. Australia cannot avoid international pressure to define a 2050 emissions pathway. Other countries will update and define their 2050 targets over the next few years and if Australia joins these countries it will also increase pressure on major emerging economies, such as China and India, to define their long-term

FIGURE 2

Coal generation capacity under The Climate Institute (TCI) and Climate Change Authority's (CCA) commissioned modelling of the electricity sector under less than 2°C scenarios. The current national target scenario is consistent with the electricity sector reducing emissions by a similar amount as the national target. TCI – Clean in Coal out and CCA – Emissions intensity mimic the current policy frameworks proposed by the TCI and CCA respectively. A broader range of other scenarios based on different policy frameworks and other assumptions is shown for completeness.



By just focusing on the short-term, policy makers and the media risk building major community and economic transition risks into the outcomes of decision making. For example, the electricity sector is Australia's largest source of emissions and is key to reducing emissions in other sectors (e.g. electric vehicles and buildings based on clean electricity). It is also undergoing a major transformation driven by domestic and global technology trends. Limited action to accelerate and manage the transformation to a decarbonised electricity sector over the short-term means the sector would need to undergo very rapid and disruptive changes later on to ensure Australia acts in line the objectives of the Paris Agreement.

Figure 2, illustrates this based on modelling for The Climate Institute¹⁹ and, separately, for the Climate Change Authority.²⁰ Under all scenarios that are consistent with limiting global warming to less than 2°C, Australia's existing coal fired generators need to be replaced with clean energy over the next 15-20 years.

The pathway to achieve this matters. Delaying credible action to manage this transition would mean that nearly all of the existing generation fleet would need to be replaced in five years to be consist with the objectives of the Paris Agreement. This would be devastating to local communities and risk major shocks to electricity markets and prices.

Box 5: Australia in the spotlight

Australia will answer direct questions from countries on its progress to reduce emissions on the 12th of November at Marrakech. This “Multilateral Assessment” process was established to review 2020 emissions reductions targets.²¹

This process aims to transparently compare the efforts of developed countries, and track the impact of the actions they are taking. This process is the precursor to what will apply to all countries under the Paris Agreement after 2020. While possibly uncomfortable for nations when put under the spotlight, this process can help ensure that countries meet their commitments and avoid international criticism.

As part of this process other countries including the US, China and Brazil have already raised questions around the transparency of Australia’s reporting on the impact of policy decisions on Australia’s emissions projections, and have asked when Australia’s 2030 projections will be released.²² Additionally, the expert review of the report Australia provided to the international community on progress towards its targets raised similar questions. The review stated that in many instances the government has not been transparent with the international community on the impact of its domestic policies.²³

For over two decades, one of Australia’s priorities for the international framework has been to ensure it promotes transparency and accountability on all countries to do what they say they will. Australia will be better placed to encourage greater transparency from other countries if it is being transparent on its own emissions and projections. For example, the Australian government should deliver on its promise to the international community to release the latest 2030 emissions projections in 2016. This should not be done on Christmas Eve as the government has done in the past for other emissions reports.

2017: A chance for credible climate policies consistent with the Paris Agreement

The government’s promised 2017 review of climate policies and consideration of post-2030 emissions targets, represents the first chance for a credible national policy conversation in five years. It will be an important opportunity to integrate climate, energy and economic policy.

This review could deliver a suite of credible, bipartisan supported, long-term policies at the federal level. These can be fair and inclusive to communities impacted by the inevitable transition to clean energy, and can minimise unnecessary costs to business.

The Climate Institute’s National Agenda for Climate Action²⁴ provides a comprehensive roadmap for achieving these outcomes across three inter-related policy dimensions:

- 1 setting a credible emissions pathway to net zero emissions
- 2 ensuring investor, business and community confidence in clean energy; and
- 3 integrating climate costs and opportunities into mainstream decision-making.

The Australian Climate Roundtable – which comprises the Australian Aluminium Council, the Australian Conservation Foundation, the Australian Council of Social Services, the Australian Council of Trade Unions, the Australian Energy Council, the Australian Industry Group, the Business Council of Australia, the Investor Group on Climate Change, The Climate Institute and WWF Australia – has also published climate policy principles which address the goals of climate policy and the characteristics of policies to meet the goals.²⁵ The Australian Climate Roundtable has concluded that the most serious and immediate barrier to Australia’s successful transition is not the technical or economic challenges involved – substantial though they are – it is the absence of broad political agreement on a scalable approach to climate and energy policy.²⁶

This can be achieved, but will require policymakers to put aside the politics and division of the last few decades and acknowledge we need to face the realities of a net zero emissions world.

Next steps

The immediate next steps for the government should be:

- + Ratification of the Paris Agreement in Marrakech.
- + Deliver on its promise to release 2030 emissions projections this year, and do so well before Christmas.
- + Ensure the 2017 review, and related COAG energy processes, will consider credible policy to help grow a net zero emissions economy before 2050. This will need to include inclusive social and economic strategies to steadily replace coal fired power stations over the next 15 years.

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