

Climate Policy

1. Background

Warming of the climate system (global warming) is unequivocal. Global greenhouse gas emissions (GHG) due to human causes have grown at an increased rate since pre-industrial times. The body of scientific evidence states that most of the observed increase in global temperatures since the mid 20th century is very likely caused by the observed increase in human-induced GHG concentrations. If preventative measures are not effective, the average rise in temperature is expected to be between 1.1 and 6.4 degrees centigrade with a rise in sea-level of 1 metre or more by the end of the 21st century.

Victoria has one of the highest per capita emissions of greenhouse gases in the world, and the Victorian environment has already proven vulnerable and at risk from both recent and future climate change. Water shortages (caused by droughts), bush fires and heatwaves will increase both in frequency and severity over the current century putting human lives and investments and many species at risk. Sea level rise of 1 metre will put many parts of our coastline at risk of erosion and subsidence. The Wonthaggi Desalination Plant, North-South Pipeline, Victorian Bushfire Royal Commission and the increased use of air-conditioning could all be viewed as examples of costly adaptation to Climate Change.

This policy document encapsulates the Australian Greens Victoria philosophy with regards to Climate Change, and sets out a general strategy to reduce greenhouse emissions and make the shift to a low carbon economy. Detailed measures for the different sectors known to emit greenhouse gases are documented in the policies relevant to that sector (e.g. Energy, Transport, Agriculture). The burning of brown coal to produce electricity is responsible for at least 50% of the state's emissions and immediate steps need to be taken to reduce these. To reach the overall emission targets recommended by the scientific community emissions from other sectors also need to be reduced.

2. Principles

The Australian Greens Victoria believe that:

1. Climate change poses the greatest threat to our world in human history and requires urgent local, national and global action.
2. The human race has only 10-15 years to use our collective intelligence to address the crisis of climate change in order to prevent catastrophe.
3. The amount of greenhouse gases already in the atmosphere necessitates not only prompt mitigation but also adaptation to climate change.
4. Early action to reduce pollution is cheaper and fairer than delaying action.
5. Climate Change should be the overarching policy on which all other policies are based.
6. Victoria's long term energy needs must be met from renewable and sustainable sources.
7. The lack of a Global (or Australian) GHG emissions agreement must not prevent Victoria from reducing its emissions.

3. Goals

The Australian Greens Victoria will work towards:

1. Victoria achieving net zero greenhouse gas emissions as soon as is feasible and by no later than 2050, with a minimum 40% reduction on 1990 levels by 2020.

2. The provision of support to those regions, businesses and communities particularly vulnerable to a carbon tax or emissions trading scheme, and in particular support for the Latrobe Valley.
3. Victoria being positioned, through innovation, to capitalise on the new jobs, skills, technologies and markets available in a low carbon economy.
4. Public and private action supporting adaptation to a changing climate.
5. Government support for adaptive actions on behalf of the Victorian community to protect the environment and key public assets, and to manage major public risks.
6. Public recognition that the provision of goods and services are a major energy user, and that the greenhouse gas emissions used in producing them must be reduced.
7. The biological sequestration of carbon being promoted and effected.
8. A guarantee that carbon already captured by the oil and gas industry will not be released again.

4. Key Priorities

The Australian Greens Victoria will work towards:

1. Enacting regulations so that no more coal fired power stations will be built in Victoria.
2. Establishing binding Victorian emission targets for 2020 and 2050 supported by a detailed strategy to reduce emissions from the energy, transport, industry, waste and land management sectors.
3. Ensuring that carbon already captured (or to be captured in future) by the oil and gas industry is safely sequestered in some way, while requiring the industry to do everything possible to reduce GHG emissions of all kinds, in all its operations.
4. Developing and then implementing a plan to reduce the Victorian economy's reliance on fossil fuels, by shifting to a low carbon economy.
5. Assisting the Agriculture sector to adjust to reduced water availability, to make itself more self-sufficient in energy, and to reduce emissions from ruminant livestock production.
6. Ensuring that coastal zone planning regulations allow for expected rise in sea levels, which could be 1.1 m by 2100 (see Land Use Planning Policy).
7. Supporting the maintenance of good health, by ensuring the maintenance of adequate supplies of clean water and nutritious food, and also protect against insect-borne diseases (see Health Policy).
8. Investigating the potential for carbon forestry and bio-energy while eliminating carbon emissions from land clearing and waste as far as practicable (see Agriculture, Forests and Waste policies).