



UNITED NATIONS ASSOCIATION OF AUSTRALIA

(VICTORIAN DIVISION INC.) ABN 59 485 457 115

Patron: Her Excellency the Honourable Linda Dessau AM, Governor of Victoria

NET ZERO:

Towards a nation-wide, inclusive, climate management framework

June 2016

WHY?

The United Nations Paris Climate Agreement 2015 was endorsed by almost every country in the world, including Australia. It stresses the urgency of keeping the rise above the pre-industrial levels of global temperature to less than 2 degrees and preferably below 1.5 degrees. It emphasizes that, for this to happen, the global emissions of greenhouse gases must be rapidly reduced over the next few decades such that they do not exceed their rate of absorption i.e. emissions must be net zero. All countries must therefore strive to achieve net zero as a matter of urgency.

The Paris Agreement highlights the need for all countries to “mobilize stronger and more ambitious action by all stakeholders, including civil society, the private sector, cities and subnational authorities, local governments and indigenous peoples”.

Over the last two decades consecutive Australian federal governments, all state and territory governments, all capital cities and many other local governments have introduced measures that were intended to control emissions and reduce the use of fossil fuels. Many businesses have adopted constraints voluntarily and there has been widespread training, research and monitoring by many organizations, including most of Australia’s universities. Some of this work has been highly ambitious. There have been some remarkable, individual achievements.

Despite this, Australia, overall, has not sustained a reduction in emissions. Total emissions rose from 1990, appeared to peak in 2006, then dropped back to 1990 levels but are now rising again.

This lack of progress is attributable to many factors. Australia’s increasing population and fossil fuel dependent economy present major challenges. However, the necessary changes have also been inhibited by uncertain, inconsistent and, at times, conflicting policies of governments, short-term planning, and fragmented responsibilities. There has been only limited co-ordination between all levels of government. At times the issue has divided the nation rather than united it.

WHAT?

As a matter of national importance a framework now needs to be agreed upon which will address these impediments. It will need to build upon the achievements to date, reflect the urgency of the issue and help all Australians work effectively together to achieve net zero within the next few decades. It must be able to accommodate changes in policy and approach that will invariably result from the differences in ideology and priorities of successive governments.

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The purpose of the UNAA's *Net Zero* endeavour is to promote the design and introduction of such a framework.

Elements of the framework might include:

- Cross-party pledges to achieve the net zero target
- A rolling, nation-wide, inclusive strategy
- Nation-wide, multilateral action programs
- Universal monitoring and reporting
- Nationally agreed triggers for further action

HOW?

Supported in the initial phase by the Reichstein Foundation, the UNAA is working with a wide range of experts and interested parties to prepare a discussion paper for public comment later this year. The responses will be taken into account in formulating recommendations. In November the UNAA will co-host the first of a series of Climate Collaboration Forums to showcase examples of best practice.

WE WOULD WELCOME YOUR SUPPORT AND INVOLVEMENT.

If your organization would like to be a partner with the UNAA in this project, or you would like to volunteer your expertise and time to be:

- a member of the high-level advisory committee, or
- a project contributor and reviewer, or
- a member of the research and drafting group,

Please contact:

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