

Social Sector Climate Change Statement



We are calling on all parties and candidates at the upcoming federal election to support stronger action to tackle climate change and build greater resilience to the climate change already locked in.

We represent leading social justice and community organisations. We advocate for an Australia free of poverty, inequality and exclusion, where everyone participates in and benefits from social and economic life, and can exercise their human rights.

Climate change and a slow, poorly managed transition to zero net emissions is a major threat to achieving our vision.

Climate change is not only a threat to our environment, it threatens people's homes, livelihoods, health, quality of life, employment and increases risks and burdens for future generations. It is a social justice and intergenerational equity issue.

Climate change hits people living on low-incomes or experiencing disadvantage first and hardest. They have the fewest protections from climate change impacts and live in the most affected places. People with fewer resources and capabilities have less money, choice, power and social connections to cope, adapt or recover. Failing to halt climate change will cause greater poverty and inequality in the future.

People who experience poverty and disadvantage are also worse off if the transition to a clean economy is poorly managed and inequitable. This is because they always pay disproportionately more of their incomes on essential services and have less choice and control to reduce costs.

Australia has committed to achieving the Paris Agreement to limit global temperature increases to well below 2 degrees Celsius and pursue 1.5 degrees. As a developed nation, we have a responsibility to lead by responding more rapidly than less developed countries. Australia is currently not on track to meet this goal.

While there are likely to be some costs as we transition to a clean economy, delaying action now will require faster, more expensive and more disruptive change in the future, creating intergenerational inequity and heightening risks of more dangerous climate change.

The well planned transition can be achieved in a low-cost, equitable and inclusive manner, with targeted support, to make sure that people on low incomes or experiencing disadvantage are not left worse off.

We call on our political leaders and the next federal parliament to take the following steps as a high priority.

Rapidly reduce emissions

- Set emissions reduction targets of zero net emissions before 2050 and at least 45% by 2030. Our energy system has the greatest capacity to reduce emissions rapidly using current technology, and must be prioritised for fast, early emissions reductions.
- End subsidies for fossil fuel production and use, starting with the removal of fuel tax credits for off-road vehicle use (except agriculture).

Ensure a just transition

- Implement a credible, low-cost and equitable plan to transition to a clean economy that includes a polluter pays principle, direct government investment and targeted support for people on low incomes or experiencing disadvantage and affected workers and communities.

Provide adequate incomes to support the transition and people's resilience

- Improve the capacity of people on low incomes to meaningfully manage the transition and deal with climate change impacts by increasing Newstart, incorporating the Energy Supplement into the base payment, and improving the uptake and adequacy of energy concessions.

Ensure people live in affordable, climate-safe homes

- Reduce energy bills and strengthen resilience to climate change through targeted investment in home energy efficiency and production, including mandatory energy efficiency standards for rental housing, energy efficiency and solar for social housing and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, and support for low-income homeowners to access solar and energy efficiency measures.

Help communities respond to climate change

- Support communities to develop local climate change adaptation and resilience plans, including funding development of an Australian climate change social vulnerability map.
- Support community and health sector organisations to adapt to climate change, be better prepared for emergencies and disasters, improve the resilience of their clients, and ensure continuity of care for vulnerable people.

Our response to climate change must support and coincide with other efforts to end poverty, inequality and exclusion and build a fairer, more sustainable future.