

Social and Economic Justice

10. CLIMATE, ENERGY AND JUST TRANSITION

CLIMATE

1. Congress declares that Australian unions will fight for decisive action to reduce emissions, improve energy efficiency, expand renewable energy capacity, and rapidly develop low carbon technologies while creating secure jobs.
2. Failure to take action to limit dangerous climate change will result in rising sea and air temperatures that will have serious implications for communities around the world, including increased frequency of drought and extreme weather patterns, disruption to food production, inundation of low-lying areas and widescale environmental damage.
3. There are already scientifically credible reports of irreversible damage to the Great Barrier Reef, a key part of Australia's natural estate and a major tourist destination, and flooding of Pacific Islands like Tuvalu and Kiribati which will soon make them uninhabitable. Increased frequency of drought and other extreme weather events is the most significant risk facing Australian agriculture and food production.
4. The costs of inaction are profound compared to the cost of effective action on climate change. Congress affirms that climate change action must be delivered in a way that ensures the cost is shared fairly in the Australian community and economy. The workers and families in the regions and industries that will be disproportionately impacted must be able to secure good jobs and opportunities in new industries which will emerge as part of our response to climate change.
5. The international community, through the Paris Agreement, has committed to limiting the rise in temperatures to below 2°C above preindustrial levels and to pursue efforts to limit the temperature increase even further to 1.5 degrees. This will require a reduction in emissions of 80% from 1990 levels by 2050. This target will require significant reductions in global emissions, and eventually require a net reduction in emissions to zero or below.
6. Congress notes that Australia's current target is to reduce emissions by 26-28 per cent on 2005 levels by 2030, which is below those recommended by the independent Climate Change Authority of 30 per cent below 2000 levels by 2025 and does not compare favourably to the targets set by other developed and many developing nations, including the United Kingdom, Germany, Canada, China, New Zealand and the European Union.
7. The target Australia sets should be strong, legally binding and consistent with the goal of reducing Australia's emissions by at least 80% below preindustrial levels by 2050.
8. Congress notes the failure of the current Government to effectively address climate change. The Government was elected after mounting a campaign based on damaging public confidence in the overwhelming scientific evidence for the proposition that human

activity is causing accelerating and harmful climate change. By creating fear about the consequences of climate change action, science has been denigrated and the objectivity of research irrationally challenged. The Federal Government's failure to deliver a coherent approach to climate change policy has resulted in:

- a) A chaotic approach to energy policy which damages the confidence of firms considering investing in environmentally sustainable Australian jobs;
 - b) Reduced investment in low-emissions technology, which has hurt consumers and put Australian industries at risk;
 - c) Public hostility to our world-leading public scientific research institutions;
 - d) Lost opportunities in the global race for low emissions technology and jobs, in particular with Australian solar, battery and wind inventions being produced off-shore, and;
 - e) A diminished the capacity for Australia to shape the global response to climate change.
9. Australia, has much at stake if the world fails to act effectively. As a leading per-capita emitter, Australia must lead by example on this global commitment by remaining actively engaged in negotiations at the international level and delivering credible targets at a domestic level without the use of international offsets. Such climate leadership should extend to the Asia - Pacific region, particularly advocating for those nations which will be most affected by climate change.
 10. Congress believes that national emission reductions must occur at a domestic level without the use of international carbon offsets.
 11. The ACTU calls for concerted national and international agreement and investment, both public and private, to avoid catastrophic climate change and to reduce emissions to levels recommended by the most recent scientific evidence from the United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change.
 12. Congress recognises that Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander communities, along with Indigenous communities globally, are the most severely impacted communities when it comes to climate change. There is therefore a need to consult and work in partnership with Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander communities to ensure these impacts are reduced and reversed for all Australians.
 13. Congress supports the proper resourcing of Australia's publicly-funded research organisations to enable their critical contribution to improving Australia's environment and tackling climate change.

ENERGY

9. Congress notes that while all sectors of the Australian economy need to contribute to emissions reductions, decarbonising the electricity system is critical to meeting commitments under the Paris Agreement.

10. This is particularly important when considering the energy sector has developed technology and a lower economic abatement cost per unit compared with most other industries.
11. Due to our abundant world class renewable energy resources, Australia should be at the forefront of the global clean energy industry, reaping the significant social, economic, employment and environmental benefits that are on offer and capitalising on our inherent renewable advantages.
12. Australia, like the rest of the globe, is changing how we produce and use our energy and use resources as part of our efforts to respond to the threats posed by climate change, and there is no doubt that the Australian energy and resources sector is currently in a period of evolution.

Measures to Reduce Emissions in the Energy Sector

13. Congress notes with alarm that the energy crisis in Australia has continued unabated under the Coalition Government, with the pinnacle of dysfunction being the continued policy paralysis around measure to reduce emissions in the energy sector.
14. Congress supports the renewable energy target (RET) at least 33,000 Gigawatt-hour (GWh) of electricity from renewable sources by 2020 and notes with alarm that the current RET is due to close to new entrants in less than two years and there is no stable policy framework to continue to drive renewable investment and deployment.
15. Congress calls for a workable emissions reduction mechanism for the electricity sector that will allow Australia to meet its commitments under the Paris agreement whilst equitably distributing benefits and costs of the mechanism.
16. We note the current bipartisan target of 33,000 gigawatt hours is the mandatory minimum target for renewable energy, but consider it is in the best interests of industries to exceed this target where possible through additional investment and deployment.
17. Congress calls for increased investment, both public and private, in renewable energy, energy efficiency and clean technologies to drive new industries and jobs whilst decarbonising our energy generation sector.
18. Congress notes that the nation is on the cusp of an energy storage boom and believes that increased energy storage is critical for transitioning to a reliable, modern, and sustainable energy system. Affordable and reliable clean energy will be provided through the use of renewable energy with energy storage technologies.
19. Congress calls for supportive policies and greater investment to accelerate the nationwide deployment of energy storage at both a household and industrial level.
20. The energy market should serve the needs of the community, not deliver profits to a few large companies.
21. Congress considers that the privatisation of electricity generation, distribution and retail is a failed neoliberal experiment that has resulted in rising electricity prices, critical job losses in regional areas and a diminished government capacity to invest directly in clean energy production.

22. Energy companies need to be, where necessary and appropriate, restructured and reclaimed to the public sector to allow for such democratic involvement of those affected and public oversight, including that of workers' participation.
23. Congress calls for governments to democratise the energy market and the rebuilding of publicly owned capability in the generation of renewable energy and storage. Government policy should also support household investment in solar, encourage cooperatives and other local modes of energy production.
24. *Government action to create good jobs in renewable energy, low emission and energy storage and in regions and communities affected by climate change*
25. Australian unions are committed to driving the shift to a clean energy economy by representing the interests of workers in carbon-intensive, trade-exposed industries, and supporting job growth and industry viability through private and public sector investment.
26. Congress is concerned at the proliferation of low paid, insecure work mainly delivered through labour hire practices, that is currently present in the private renewable sector. Making these jobs well paid, decent and secure must be a priority.
27. Government has a role to play through both direct investment in renewables and storage as well provision of employment through ongoing public ownership. Government, through the energy transition authority, must also work to ensure minimum labour standards in the private renewable sector.
28. Congress calls on all governments to adopt procurement policies that promote local production of low carbon goods and services.
29. Government must outline its vision and set the direction through comprehensive industry policy that leads the way in investment in new technologies and industries. Substantial public sector investment in freight and public transport infrastructure, building energy efficiency and the production of large-scale renewable energy is needed to shift to a low carbon economy.

Skills and Training

30. As Australia moves towards a clean energy future, it will require additional measures to assist the transition of people and skills between sectors and into emerging technology sectors, including through industry and workforce planning, development, skills and training. Care should be taken to minimise skills shortages that may emerge as a barrier to investment in new industries.
31. In consultation with unions and business, Governments at all levels must significantly increase up-skilling opportunities for existing workers and develop a comprehensive 'workforce development plan' for a low carbon economy and invest in the capacity of TAFE and publicly funded vocational education institutions to deliver this training.

Worker Engagement

32. It is vital that workers be engaged and empowered to make changes to energy and resource consumption patterns within their own workplaces.

33. The union movement is committed to empowering workers to participate in environmental campaigns and we are committed to representing workers' interest in our policy and advocacy efforts.
34. Workers have an inalienable and democratic right to participate in the decision-making related to environmental concerns in their workplace both through formal industrial mechanisms in general and specifically through their elected Health and Safety Representative.
35. Australian unions will lead by example by ensuring our own workplaces reduce their environmental footprint.
36. Congress calls on government to create new clean industries, new secure jobs, new investment and to seize on the opportunity for a more equal and just economy which must include removing all legal and practical barriers to workers bargaining in energy use and related matters.

JUST TRANSITION

37. Congress calls for the establishment of a national Energy Transition Authority to oversee the orderly and equitable transition of the energy sector.
38. Communities that are facing transitions should flourish, not just survive.
39. If we manage the transition well, we can have a structured and equitable approach that could apply to any industry undergoing similar change in the future.
40. We have a practical and well-developed plan that will ensure a Just Transition for the workers and communities of our energy system. We have identified several key elements of a framework that will need to be implemented to ensure the transition occurs in a fair and just way.
41. Congress calls for a Just Transition in the energy sector that:
 - a) ensures equitable sharing of responsibilities and fair distribution of the costs: those who have contributed less to the problem should not bear the burden of the transition costs;
 - b) institutionalised formal consultations with relevant stakeholders including trade unions, employers and communities, at national, regional and sectoral levels;
 - c) the promotion of clean secure job opportunities and the greening of existing jobs and industries through public and private investment in low carbon development strategies and technologies in all nations and the appropriate educational qualifications that enhance workers' capacity;
 - d) formal education, training, retraining, and life-long learning for workers, their families, and their communities;
 - e) organised economic and employment diversification policies within sectors and communities at risk;

- f) social protection measures (active labour market policies, access to health services, social insurances, among others); and
 - g) respect for and protection of human and labour rights.
42. The delivery of these objectives needs to be proactively coordinated and planned at national level.
43. Congress calls for the establishment of a national Energy Transition Authority to oversee the orderly and equitable transition of the energy sector.
44. The key focus of the authority would be to minimise the impact of power plant closures on workers and their communities through managing this transition and delivering on plans for the future prosperity for affected regions.
45. For workers, we see the authority as having the following main responsibilities:
- a) Overseeing an orderly transition for Australia's coal-fired power plants, which ensures a Just Transition for workers, their families and communities.
 - b) Overseeing an industry-wide multi-employer pooling and redeployment scheme which provides retrenched workers with the opportunity to transfer to roles with remaining fossil fuel, renewable or low emission generators and other industries.
 - c) Administering and developing a labour adjustment package that supports workers transition into new, decent and secure jobs.
 - d) Coordinating social and economic planning for affected regions, including industry planning, as well as the distribution of government services of all kinds.
 - e) Assisting with the development of new industries and employment opportunities for workers in affected communities.
46. The Just Transition framework should be explicitly addressed in Australia's domestic policy measures and in any international agreements and should be based on the Just Transition measures in the preamble to the Paris Agreement and enshrined in ITUC, ILO and UN policies.
47. International experience shows that a transition can be done equitably with positive outcomes for workers and communities while forging new industrial growth and prosperity. Congress notes that governments in Canada, Scotland and New Zealand have already committed to transition bodies and initiatives. In Australia we are seeing communities and workers lead transitions in the coal generation sector – with Hazelwood and Port Augusta the most recent examples.
48. Congress calls upon all political parties, employer representatives, environmental advocates, educators and researchers, community groups and others, to work together with trade unions and their members, to ensure that Australia is able to meet the challenge of climate change and transition to a low carbon future, for the good of all, present and future.

TRANSPORT

49. It is estimated that transport contributes around 14.6 per cent of Australia's total greenhouse gas emissions, with passenger vehicles being the primary source of those emissions. A comprehensive approach to reducing Australia's contribution to greenhouse gas emissions would therefore include specific ambitions for the transport sector.
50. The transition to greater use of electric cars will play an important role in reducing transport-related greenhouse gas emissions. However, shifting more of the urban transport task from private passenger vehicles to mass transit alternatives will also reduce the number of private petrol-powered vehicles on our roads, while increasing the efficiency of road transport networks.
51. Congress calls for a new approach to reducing transport-related greenhouse gas emissions, including measures such as:
 - a) Significant increases in funding for passenger rail, tram and bus networks, as well as more efficient multi-modal freight infrastructure and services;
 - b) Investment in behaviour change campaigns to encourage modal shift to mass transit systems; and
 - c) Industry wide incentives to drive environmental innovation and reform in the sector.