

The response from the Environment Institute of Australia and New Zealand to the Independent Panel's issues paper on *A Victorian emissions reduction target for 2035*

1. What do you think is most important when setting an emissions reduction target for Victoria for 2035? (Please rank the following)

- If the target is a fair contribution to help keep global warming well below 2°C / 1.5°C

Globally we must keep warming below 2°C and preferably as close as possible to 1.5°C to avoid even worse effects of climate change than we are already experiencing at 1°C (bushfires, floods, unaffordable insurance).

A "fair Victorian contribution" allows for consideration of the relative wealth of Victoria and its emissions reduction capability, and a 2035 target that drives for more aggressive emissions reductions up until 2035 than a straight-line path to net zero by 2050.

If we don't contribute fairly, we can't expect any other States or Nations to contribute fairly, or hold other States or Nations to account for their emissions. Effectively we lose relevance in the response to climate change.

2. What emissions reduction target do you think Victoria should set for 2035?

The target should be ambitious and the Environment Institute of Australia and New Zealand provides the following points in support of an ambitious target:

- The current global standard is net zero by 2050, though since the latest IPCC reports there is doubt about whether this will be sufficient.
- A straight-line trajectory from 2019 to 2035, on the net zero 2050 path, would require a 62% reduction relative to 2005.
- Assuming that harder to abate emissions will be abated later, we should allow for that and move more quickly over the next decade on the comparatively easier mitigation.
- We are a wealthy State and likely to have greater capacity to reduce emissions than developing nations, and we will still suffer the effects of climate change caused by emissions produced anywhere else.
- If we want to be able to take advantage of the economic opportunities that the transition to a net zero economy presents, we will need to be a leader.
- The issues paper to support consultation indicates the UK (including Scotland) and Germany have already set targets that are effectively around 80% for 2035.

3. What three things do you think will cut Victoria's emissions the most in the period 2031-2035? (If you represent a specific sector, you can focus on ways to cut emissions in your sector)¹

- A cooperative approach with the new Labor Federal Government, and like-minded State Governments, that achieves national alignment on ambition, solutions, and

¹ Many items stand out. EIANZ wishes to focus on five important areas.

opportunities and that avoids carbon leakage and disadvantage (i.e. displacement of emissions from Victoria to other jurisdictions).

- A very strong signal to all emitters and end users in Victoria, that the targets are “bankable” with regard to investment decisions and individual behaviours, underpinned by enforceable obligations for emissions reduction.
- Addressing the physical transitional challenges (e.g. electricity transmission and distribution system, charging stations) that need to be resolved early for targets to be achieved.
- Addressing equity issues so that impacts are ameliorated for the currently disadvantaged, and those adversely affected by the transition.
- Halting native forest logging earlier than 2032.
 - a) If old growth and aged growth forest is clear-felled and then burnt, releases of CO₂ are high (most of the wood is not sawlogs, but pulp for paper) (<https://johnwilliamson.com.au/lyrics/rip-rip-woodchip/>);
 - b) The regrowth encouraged after clear-felling dries out the once moist forests and replaces them with very dense, young regenerating stands that increase the risk of severe wildfires). (<https://indymedia.org.au/2011/10/11/logging-of-victorian-mountain-ash-forests-increases-bushfire-risk.html>)
 - c) Many hollow-dependent species (e.g. Leadbeaters (fairy) possum, greater glider) are pushed towards extinction, as it takes 80-120 years for mountain and alpine ash forests to create hollows.
 - d) The health of the environment, biodiversity, Melbourne’s water catchments, and the mental health of Victorians will also be negatively affected.

4. What benefits can you see in a low emissions economy for Victoria in 2031-2035?

- The Victorian economy has strong agriculture and manufacturing industries and if these can be transitioned to low emissions processes ahead of competitors they will be advantaged in the coming decades.
- Victoria also has strong services, education, and research sectors which can inform and support a rapid transition to carbon neutrality and derive economic benefit from helping other States and Nations to transition.

5. What challenges might Victoria face in reducing emissions in the period 2031-2035?

- The first challenge is to adapt energy transmission and distribution systems to meet the requirements of renewable energy sources, including dispatchable storage.
- Balancing the need to choose emissions reduction solutions to progress to plan, with waiting for expected technological and commercial developments that, in time, will make the targets easier to achieve.
- Developing a clear vision for net zero agriculture, that the whole community can get behind.

6. How could Victoria overcome potential challenges to reducing emissions in 2031 - 2035?

- Invest in energy infrastructure. Victoria has an excellent recent track record in infrastructure investment, and this could simply be a continuation of that.

² Dr David Lindenmayer (ANU) has extensively researched the mountain ash and mixed species forests of Victoria (<https://theconversation.com/ashes-to-ashes-logging-and-fires-have-left-victorias-magnificent-forests-in-tatters-50897> , <https://www.anu.edu.au/news/all-news/study-shows-wildfires-increasing-in-size-and-frequency> , <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4sdTuA-F9Sg>)

- Further improvements to assessment processes to support more streamlined approval of renewable energy and storage projects.
- Utilise our education and research sectors to determine the order in which sources of emissions are addressed, depending on the availability and future prospects of emissions reduction solutions.
- Engage farmers to develop the vision. There are many well-educated farmers in Victoria now and they can speak the same language as academics and climate scientists. There is a major generational shift occurring in agriculture right now, with climate denialists being replaced by a new generation of farmers who understand the situation and the challenge.

7. What can be done to make sure the benefits and costs of climate action are fairly shared? (Sometimes described as a 'just transition')

- Separate disadvantage into *ongoing* versus *transitional*. Adjust the existing welfare system to address the ongoing disadvantage and devise specific programs to address the transitional issues. In both cases the affected people need to be at the centre and the programs not done to them.
- Avoid baking in subsidies, one-off payments and other supports that are difficult to remove or have perverse outcomes.
- Promote and support carbon pricing transparency so that those who consume goods and services that generate high volumes of carbon contribute commensurately to mitigation and abatement funding.

8. Is there anything else you would like to share with us?

The target needs to be credible for Victoria so that the whole community can understand and support it.

9. About the Environment Institute of Australia and New Zealand (EIANZ)

EIANZ is a not-for-profit, professional association for environmental practitioners from across Australia and Aotearoa New Zealand. The Institute has a certification scheme that recognises ethical and professional practice which assures government, industry, and the community of practitioners' professional standing.

Our members and certified practitioners have specialist knowledge and skills in environmental systems, processes, and solutions. They bring passion, ingenuity, and creativity to their work.

Across our membership we have broad and deep knowledge of environmental issues, including climate change and biodiversity, and strong relationships with all sectors of the community, notably emissions-intensive industries.

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