Background

Under the *Climate Change Act 2017* the Victorian Government must determine emissions reduction targets for 2025 and 2030 by 31 March 2020 and the decision must be tabled in Parliament within 10 sitting days. The Government must also develop five yearly sector pledges which describe the actions Government will take to reduce Victorian's emissions. The first round of pledges to 2025 must be finalised by 1 August 2020.

In June 2019, the government published advice from the Independent Expert Panel on Interim Emissions Reduction Targets, chaired by the Hon Greg Combet AM. Following this, the Government invited input from Victorians to inform its decision on interim targets (2025 and 2030), and to identify priority actions to reduce emissions to inform development of pledges to 2025.

We received 3,300 written submissions with over 80 of these from organisations and the remaining 3,200 from individuals.

This document summarises the key views emerging in submissions received from around 600 separate responses from individuals and provides the text submitted by individuals through 2,700 coordinated emails. Submissions from organisations are published on Engage Victoria. All submissions will be considered in detail as the Government develops sector pledges and sets interim targets.
Key themes in submissions from 600 separate individual responses

Interim targets

Almost all the 600 individuals who made a submission supported Victorian state-based emissions reduction targets. Approximately half of these submissions (270) supported the interim targets recommended by the Independent Expert Panel – 32-39 per cent reduction over 2005 levels in 2025 and 45-60 per cent reduction by 2030. The other half (330) supported targets requiring greater emission reductions. Many submissions indicated a desire that Victoria’s targets be consistent with limiting warming to 1.5°C. A small number of submissions (10) preferred less ambitious state-based targets.

Actions to reduce emissions

The majority of submissions expressed views that the Victorian Government should prioritise emissions reduction actions in multiple sectors across the Victorian economy. Around 150 submissions indicated the Panel had identified the key emissions reduction opportunities for Victoria, while many others called for the Government to take additional or stronger actions.

Around 200 respondents identified electricity as a priority area for reducing emissions, with over 150 calling for increased renewable energy. Almost 200 submissions also identified action in the transport sector as a priority, such as increasing public transport and uptake of electric vehicles.

While submissions identified a range of policies and programs to support emissions reduction, a common theme in responses was provision of support and incentives, as well as education programs. For example, support to increase renewable energy generation and electricity storage and incentives for switching from gas to electricity, or to more energy efficient equipment or appliances. Several respondents suggested education programs publicising incentives for reducing emissions, but also for more general information about climate change and the risk of not taking action.

Many submissions expressed concern around the use of offsets, instead wanting a focus on actions that will reduce Victoria’s emissions.

Other considerations

Submissions raised a range of benefits from reducing Victoria’s emissions including having a cleaner environment, preserving biodiversity and addressing the economic risks associated with the impacts of climate change. The benefits most commonly identified in submissions were improved physical and mental health, along with avoiding the worst impacts of climate change for future generations.

A common theme of responses on the barriers to reducing Victoria’s emissions was the perceived unwillingness for change at all levels of government and in the community. Submissions also commonly mentioned a lack of awareness or understanding about the potential impacts of climate change, along with concerns about what transitioning to a zero emissions economy means in a practical sense for people.
Coordinated Email Submission from 2,150 individuals

To Whom it May Concern,

We are facing a climate emergency.

The Federal Coalition’s failure to act on climate means Australia’s emissions are increasing. Their inaction leaves Victorian communities exposed to intensifying impacts such as heatwaves, droughts, bushfires, extreme weather events, and rising sea levels.

Leadership from Victoria is needed to limit global warming to 1.5°C to avoid what the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change say will be “catastrophic” impacts.

The Andrews Labor government can show this leadership by setting Emissions Reduction Targets that get Victoria to zero emissions as soon as possible.

The Combet Report identifies a target of at least 43 percent below 2005 levels by 2025 as necessary to give us any chance of meeting the 1.5°C challenge.

A heavier lift up front of a 57 percent reduction by 2025 and 75 percent by 2030 would provide Victoria with the carbon budget needed to meet the 1.5°C challenge by 2050—the legislated deadline for zero-net emissions in the state.

Adopting science-based targets will ensure:

• the government meets its commitment to the Climate Leadership Declaration to limit warming to 1.5°C;
• send a signal to industry about the direction of our economy and help Labor deliver on its commitment to create 100,000 new climate and renewable energy jobs by 2030; and that,
• Victoria does not fall behind countries like Finland that will legislate a target of net-zero emissions by 2035.

With climate impacts occurring much faster than scientists predicted it is essential to do the hard work now. Victoria cannot afford to kick the can down the road.

The establishment of a dedicated Minister for Transition is needed to support efforts to cut emissions. This new position within government will ensure that no Victorians are left behind as our state moves from polluting and extractive industries towards a clean economy.

The government cannot afford to fly blind when it comes to the climate impact of public spending. It is essential to bring greater transparency to the budget process to ensure the government invests in initiatives that cut emissions, not increase them.

Lastly, bearing in mind that the most important responsibility we all have is to ensure a safe climate for our children and the generations that come after us, I urge the Andrews government to show leadership by delivering emissions targets that meet the 1.5°C challenge.
Coordinated email submission from 530 individuals

The climate crisis is already here

I am deeply concerned about the climate crisis. Victoria is already seeing dangerous climate impacts, like deadly heatwaves, extreme bushfires, species being pushed to the brink of extinction and the impacts of sea level rises. I want to see a government that takes the most ambitious action possible to tackle this climate crisis and protects our future.

Victoria must be bold and ambitious

I want to see targets of at least 50% pollution reduction by 2025 and 80% by 2030. These targets are consistent with limiting temperature increases to 1.5 degrees Celsius. We need ambition and action now. We cannot continue to push climate action down the road. The costs of acting now are less than the cost of inaction and having to act later. In the absence of leadership from a Federal Coalition Government, it's more important than ever for Victoria to show Canberra what climate leadership looks like.

Build new renewable energy

I am pleased to see strong government support for new renewable energy and storage projects, and for household solar. I want to see this momentum continued, but with an increased public investment and more support for community-owned projects. I'd also like the Government to support the Star of the South wind project so Victoria can be home to Australia's first offshore wind project.

Treat energy as an essential service

Energy is an essential service and it should be in public hands. Privatisation of energy hurt Victorians, especially in the Latrobe Valley, and has led to skyrocketing bills. I want to see Victoria's transformation to renewable energy as one that supports communities, not just large private energy companies. I would like to see the Government buy back our energy network, and set up a public energy retailer, so we can ensure that all Victorian's have access to reliable, affordable and clean power.

We must be honest about coal

Coal is the single biggest cause of climate change. I want to see the Government urgently plan for the replacement of all Victoria's coal power stations by 2030, in line with recommendations from the United Nations International Panel on Climate Change. The government must also stop subsiding the coal industry, like the $50 million for coal to hydrogen. The Government should instead invest in a transition plan for workers and industries.

Replace Yallourn, Australia's dirtiest power station

Australia's dirtiest, most polluting, coal power station is Yallourn, right here in Victoria. Yallourn is destroying the climate and harming the local community with toxic chemical pollution. Yallourn must be replaced by 2022, with a strong and fair transition plan for workers.

Transition to a gas-free Victoria

Gas, like coal, is a fossil fuel that destroys our climate. I want to see the Government develop a plan to urgently phase out gas in Victoria. This will reduce household and industry energy bills and ensure we protect our climate. I want to see the Government stop the proposed gas-import terminal at Westernport Bay, stop plans for new offshore gas drilling, make the onshore gas moratorium permanent and stop the roll out of new gas infrastructure to new homes.
Transforming transport

Transport is the second biggest source of emissions for Victoria and our fastest growing. We urgently need to stop building new mega-roads, like the West Gate toll road and the North-East Link, and instead build new public transport and make our cities more active-transport friendly.

Protect our forests for their carbon

Victoria’s forests are spectacular and I am devastated to see them destroyed so a multi-national corporate can make mega profits turning them into cheap paper. The Government needs to be protecting our precious native forests for their carbon, habitat and as the source of our clean drinking water.

Better buildings

I want to see the Government set, and properly police, strong new standards so our buildings are energy efficient. I also want to see the Government better support the retrofitting of existing buildings by expanding the Victorian Energy Efficiency Program to include insulation and better accounting for more efficient appliances. Living and working in good buildings is the most efficient and cheapest way to reduce climate pollution. Done well, it will also create many new jobs and give people comfortable homes and workplaces.

Regenerative farming

I want to see the Government reduce emissions from agriculture by protecting existing native vegetation on farms, supporting re-generation on farms, better soil management and reduced fertilizer application. I would also like to see the Government put in place policies to reduce meat and dairy production and instead invest in research for animal-free meat and dairy.
Coordinated email submission from 44 individuals

To Whom it May Concern,

Climate change from human activity threatens life on Earth.

In order to stop the worst impacts of climate change we must collectively act to reduce emissions.

Australia has so far not pulled its weight in combating emissions and Victoria is one of the highest carbon-intensive places on the planet.

The Andrews Government has shown steps in the right direction through legislating the Victorian Renewable Energy Target and the Climate Act and the next step is legislating ambitious science based emissions targets.

It’s now time to step it up and show others what real action looks like while leveraging the benefits of transition.

The final report (Combet Report) from the expert panel ‘Interim Emissions Reduction Targets for Victoria (2021-2030)’ models both 2°C and 1.5°C target but recommends adoption of a 2°C target. Victoria should adopt targets based on 1.5°C emissions budget which the Combet Report shows is achievable.

The report notes that an interim target of 43% below 2005 levels by 2025 and 67% for 2030 would be inline for 1.5°C carbon budget which is based on a 50% chance of limiting warming to 1.5°C. A 50% chance is too much of a gamble. A more ambitious target is required to meet the challenge of a fair emissions budget that will leave a safe climate.

Norway and Uruguay will be zero emissions by 2030 and Finland will be at zero emissions by 2035. This is the type of ambition that we need to stay within a 1.5°C carbon budget for Victoria.

The upcoming UN 2019 Climate Summit’s theme is ‘A Race We Can Win. A Race We Must Win’ we have little time to act and now is the time to be bold.

Making these targets would also be in line with the commitments that Victorian Government has taken with the Paris Pledge for Action and the Climate Leadership Declaration for limiting warming to 1.5°C.

Thank you for the opportunity to participate in the creation of emission targets and for the past leadership.