Dear Chair,

The Hospo Voice union welcomes the opportunity to make a submission in response to the Interim Emissions Reductions Targets for Victoria Issues Paper.

Hospo Voice is Australia’s first digital union for hospitality workers, launched in May 2018. It was created to mobilise the hospitality workforce to combat the epidemic of wage theft and multiple other forms of exploitation that the industry’s workers are ubiquitously subjected to.

The hospitality workforce is a predominantly young demographic of people more vulnerable to exploitation, as they have generally not been educated about their work rights and are working in increasingly insecure, casualised workplaces. As young people, the majority of us are also in the first generations to have grown up hearing about climate change all our lives and distressingly, see nowhere near the scale of action that is needed taken to avert climate crisis. The insecurity in our industry is reflective of the insecurity that will engulf every part of our lives in the coming decades if we do not limit global warming to 1.5°C.

Hospitality workers recognise the serious threat to our industry posed by the climate crisis. The food and drink that we make and serve is under threat from the catastrophic effects of climate change on agriculture around the world, but particularly Australia, with its already water-scarce environment. The Garnaut Review, which looked into the impacts of climate change on Australian agriculture, found that the path we are currently on to climate catastrophe will result in a 92-97% decline in irrigated agriculture capacity in the Murray-Darling Basin. This alone is an urgent incentive for action, as the Murray-Darling system provides 40% of Australia’s food.

The hospitality industry will not survive if unmitigated climate change is allowed to continue and wreak havoc with agriculture, in Australia and globally. We want strong action taken for the sustainability of our own industry, but also stand in solidarity with Australian farmers by calling for meaningful climate action to alleviate these consequences.
Examining the industry from a different angle, the thousands of hospitality workplaces across the state are also threatened by intensifying climate impacts. Heatwaves, bushfires and floods are all already increasing due to climate change. Any of these events can seriously damage or shut down local hospitality businesses across the state, putting entire workplaces out of employment.

The Federal Coalition’s failure to act on climate means Australia’s emissions are increasing. 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.

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.

Hospo Voice also supports the establishment of a dedicated Minister for Transition, which 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. As young unionists, we have grown up seeing the exploitation rife in many industries after years of union membership decline. We want to see a low carbon economy that unites the values of ecological sustainability and workers’ rights.

The hospitality industry is what Melbourne has become famous for worldwide. More broadly, Victoria’s rural and regional areas bring in millions of tourists annually to enjoy the local, high quality produce served in hospitality businesses across the state. As hospitality workers, we are proud to be part of this industry which helps our city and rural economies thrive. But this entire industry is threatened with collapse if we do not take the urgent action needed now to alleviate climate crisis. We therefore urge the Andrews government to show leadership by delivering emissions targets that meet the 1.5°C challenge.
If you have any further questions, please do not hesitate to get in contact.

Yours sincerely,

Jess Browning, James Madsen-Smith and Anna Langford of the Hospo Voice union.