Environment Institute of Australia and New Zealand Inc.

CLIMATE CHANGE POLICY AND ACTION

EIANZ Position Statement

The Environment Institute of Australia and New Zealand (EIANZ):

1. Accepts the consensus of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change Sixth Assessment Report (IPCC AR6) and developments in mainstream science since then, that:
   - global temperatures have risen more than 1°C since pre-industrial times;
   - human-induced climate change is causing increasingly frequent, intense, and destructive natural events such as droughts, floods, fires and cyclones;
   - immediate and bold action is required to reduce emissions, develop low emission energy and food production systems, and build adaptive capability so that we limit the increase in global average temperature to no more than 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels; and
   - a global temperature increment of 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels would have very high impacts for many important environmental and societal systems and must be avoided.
2. Recognises the challenges of the actions required to mitigate and adapt to climate change, particularly for fossil fuel dependent communities and developing economies, and encourages comprehensive planning and action for a just transition, noting that since the adoption of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) in 1992 global emissions have continued to increase.
3. Demands that national, state, local government, communities, industry, business and environmental practitioners lead by promoting mitigation, scaling-up the application of viable low-emissions alternatives, and building resilience.

Context

Climate change affects everyone and everything, but not equally. Its impacts are broad, complex and cumulative.

The change in global temperature is driving change in sea level and global and regional climates. Land and ocean ecosystems and the services they provide are being degraded. Human lives and social and economic systems are being impacted, species are under threat, components of our cultural heritage[1] are being degraded and destructive weather, heat and fire events are increasing in frequency and intensity. Attribution studies often show a causal link between climate change and, the likelihood or intensity of, these severe weather events.

The 2022 IPCC synthesis report warns of a need to limit warming to 1.5°C to avoid the more serious impacts on ecosystems and their services. Beyond a temperature rise of 1.5°C a number of tipping points have also been identified which must be avoided. These will likely shift the climate system from its current dynamic into a new long term dynamic with even further adverse consequences.

Global warming could now reach 1.5C before 2030 and then increase further. Limiting temperature rise this century to 1.5°C without some "temperature overshoot" now seems very difficult. It involves stabilising global emissions now and rapid, deep, and in most cases immediate, greenhouse gas emissions reductions in all sectors this decade and achieving net zero emissions before 2050.

Even if we achieve a 1.5°C trajectory, resilience-building through adaptation to and recovering from residual impacts (loss and damage) will be necessary. As part of this, governments must listen to and work with custodians and managers of cultural landscapes to protect and conserve cultural heritage, and work to restore degraded ecosystems

1 The terms 'cultural heritage' and 'cultural landscape' are defined broadly. They encompass landscapes, seascapes, artefacts and elements of intangible heritage. The UNESCO operational guidelines for the World Heritage Convention also broadly define 'cultural landscape' as "cultural properties which represent the 'combined works of nature and of man."

to build resilience, adaptation and sequestration.

Over the past 40 years, progress on addressing climate change has been slow. The issues are intergenerational and complex, there are many vested, and legitimate, interests, and it has taken time to establish the credibility of the science and the affordability of the solutions.

International efforts to understand and manage climate change have been underway through the UNFCCC since 1988. The 2015 Paris Agreement set two temperature increase goals ((i) less than 2°C and (ii) well below 2°C and as close to 1.5°C as possible), and introduced a new approach, the "bottom up" Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs).

Up until COP29 (2024), the cumulative NDC pledges were insufficient to limit temperatures to 2°C and national actions to implement these pledges have lagged, raising doubts as to whether the pledges will be delivered. Furthermore, in 2025 the US commenced the process of again withdrawing from the Paris agreement.

In 2025 the International Court of Justice in a non-binding ruling found unequivocable evidence for climate impacts in breach of international law. This opens the potential for cases against large historic and current emitting nations.

Role of decision makers

Australia and Aotearoa New Zealand are both signatories to the Paris Agreement and have been implementing climate related policies for over 30 years. Both have stated positions to achieve net zero by 2050. However, their emissions profiles, options, policies, legislated requirements and 2030 targets differ.

Governments have a key obligation to avoid dangerous climate change by providing clear leadership, policy and legal frameworks that achieve the necessary emission reductions and adaptive responses. The business community has an obligation to support and implement these and go beyond mere compliance to achieve net zero emissions as soon as possible.

EIANZ proposes and advocates for the following broad responses from Australia and Aotearoa New Zealand:

1. Internationally – Engage with urgency to achieve effective, fair, and sustained global action – globally NDCs require more ambition and focused implementation. Even if there is overshoot of 1.5°C, there must be a mantra that "every tonne matters" and recovery back below 1.5°C must be as soon as possible.
2. Regional cooperation – Support and collaborate with countries regionally in adapting to the impacts of climate change and transitioning to net zero. Cooperate with regional neighbours and Indigenous Peoples to build capacity to adapt to and manage impacts, including the potential for relocation of affected Pasifika communities.
3. Mitigation strategy – Strengthen and implement national NDCs consistent with limiting warming to 1.5°C and net zero before 2050. Include meaningful short- and medium-term targets (eg as a minimum, 71% by 2035 for Australia).

   Provide clear, simple, and credible legal and commercial frameworks for the efficient and economic removal of high emitting technologies and phaseout of fossil fuels from the economy. Reserve [high integrity] offsetting for truly hard to abate activities.

   Encourage circular economy thinking that allows both decarbonization and lower intensity consumption. Promote behaviour change in communities, as community members are decision makers.
4. Whole of society – Consider climate change impacts and opportunities for emissions reduction across all decision making. Support a just transition for greater equity nationally and internationally. Collaborate with and engage Aotearoa New Zealand and Australia communities in the transition to a net zero economy and in

building resilience. Provide clear information for informed decisions, eg, on investments and insurance. Reset the relationship with disenfranchised regional and rural communities being asked to host solar, wind and transmission projects.

5. Technology and capacity building – Further research mitigation and adaptation; pilot low emissions technologies; and plan for the transition of fossil fuel related jobs to roles within a net zero economy. Strengthen the link between climate policy and energy policy and ensure that new energy technology build rapidly replaces high emitting sources, just not meeting underlying growing energy demand.
6. Adaptation and impact response – Build resilience by preparing for the impacts of climate change, reducing vulnerability and increasing the ability of communities and ecosystems to withstand and recover from extreme weather events.. Also build a stronger emergency response capability. Engage and support custodians and managers of at-threat cultural landscapes to protect them from further climate related degradation or destruction.

Policy into practice

EIANZ has a clear commitment to environmental protection, sustainable development and maintaining objective professional standards as we address the risks and opportunities from climate change. It will continue to:

1. Educate – Train environmental and sustainability professionals to drive emissions reduction and adaptation. Provide opportunities to custodians and managers of cultural landscapes for climate change specific training that includes Indigenous perspectives.
2. Engage – Work with peer professional associations, government, custodians of cultural landscapes and communities to accelerate climate action.
3. Influence – Actively advocate for change and engage with governments and other decision makers to urgently and rapidly reduce emissions and build resilience and adaptive capacity.
4. Certify – Maintain and promote the climate speciality of the CEnvP Scheme and encourage all environmental professionals actively working on climate change to become certified.

EIANZ encourages environmental policy makers and practitioners to undertake:

1. Climate risk assessment – Embed climate risk assessments and adaptation planning into strategic and long-term decision making
2. Informed decision-making – Ensure relevant data are available to assist decision-making. Remain informed of climate science, policy, mitigation and adaptation practice.
3. Resilience building – Design management plans that consider the impacts of a changing climate on the needs of human communities, cultural landscapes, other species and ecosystems, and accordingly.
4. Verification – Evaluate work program for emissions mitigation and adaptation efficiency and effectiveness. Develop strategies and actions that account for both direct (e.g. increase in temperature, reduced rainfall) and indirect (e.g. altered fire regimes, shifting seasons) impacts of climate change.
5. Advocacy and collaboration – Be champions for climate action and advocate for necessary change. Co-design and implement strategies with sectors and communities to encourage buy-in and action.
6. Landscape restoration and connectivity – consistent with our understanding of the interconnection of cultural, spiritual, historical and scientific values, protect and reconnect natural landscapes to allow wildlife and plants to migrate and adapt in response to climate change. Restore degraded ecosystems to build resilience, adaptation and sequestration.

The Environment Institute of Australia and New Zealand (EIANZ) is Australasia's peak body for environmental professionals. As part of a global network of more than 100,000 environmental practitioners, we advocate for sound environmental policy and promote ethical and competent practice.

EIANZ represents members and certified practitioners from a diverse range of technical disciplines including environmental scientists, policy makers, engineers, lawyers, and economists. Our members are at the forefront of challenging and complex issues such as climate change, sustainability and preserving biodiversity.

EIANZ has Position Statements on a range of key environmental issues. These are periodically reviewed by our Policy and Standards Committee and re-endorsed by the EIANZ Board. All current Position Statements can be accessed here.