

April, 2021

Climate Engagement (Australia)



Australian Academy of
Technology & Engineering

The Australian Climate Context

- Australia has experienced volatile and extreme weather conditions (fire, floods, etc...) over recent years that are a direct consequence of climate change. Not all Australian political parties acknowledge this fact.
- Federally, Australia has struggled to deliver an ambitious and unified climate and energy policy.
- The Government's official policy is to reduce emissions by 26-28% on 2005 levels by 2030. We may or may not meet this target but if we do it will be because of uptake of renewable electricity generation.
- The eight Australian state and territory governments all have net zero emissions targets by 2050. However the federal government has not committed to net zero emissions.
- The recent change in US President has resulted in indications that the Australian Government may be moving towards a more internationally aligned climate policy.

The Australian Energy Context

- The federal Government has stated that renewables are established and no longer in need of Government support.
- Clean energy has been identified as a priority by the federal Government but they remain 'technology neutral' and insist that coal is still a potential option to power Australia. Gas is the 'preferred' fossil fuel due to perception of lower carbon emissions.
- State governments are committed to an electricity future powered by renewables and energy storage.
 - Major renewable, electrification and storage announcements have occurred in all states and territories.
- Recent announcement on support for electric vehicles and community batteries by Federal Labor Party.

Communicating to Government and Industry

- ATSE's Energy Forum has been particularly focused on energy policies that affect climate change for some time. The 'nexus' between energy, agriculture and water has also been a topic of much discussion at ATSE.
- The Energy Forum is working on an ambitious net zero target for Australia – potentially 2030 – and a roadmap of how this could be achieved through technology and policy.
- ATSE intends to have our Net Zero policy finalised and public by mid-year in order to socialise it at the CAETS meeting in September and conduct domestic advocacy around potential COP26 commitments.
- ATSE has publicly supported independent legislation to introduce a net zero by 2050 target in law, and gave evidence to that effect at a government hearing as the invited witness of the Bill's sponsor.
- ATSE has successfully focused on advice to government around a manufacturing and industry-driven economic recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic.

Impact and Influence

- Emerging industry support of net zero emissions and energy transition:
 - in spite of federal policy and activities to date.
 - as a consequence of state and territory policy and activities.
- However federal policy and activities are shifting:
 - Low Emissions Technology Investment Roadmap (June 2020)
 - Funding for the Australian Renewable Energy Agency (ARENA) (September 2020)
 - Recycling and Clean Energy Modern Manufacturing Initiative (April 2021)
- Prime Minister Scott Morrison attending President Joe Biden’s Leaders Summit on Climate – 22-23 April 2021.
- The Australian Government is developing a long-term emissions reduction strategy that it will take to the 26th United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) climate summit in Glasgow in 2021.