

The **Australia
Institute**

Research that matters.

> Climate & Energy.

Climate of the Nation 2019

Tracking Australia's attitudes
towards climate change and energy

Research report

Richie Merzian
Audrey Quicke
Ebony Bennett
Rod Campbell
Tom Swann



About The Australia Institute

The Australia Institute is an independent public policy think tank based in Canberra. We conduct original research that contributes to a more just, sustainable and peaceful society. We barrack for ideas, not political parties or candidates. Since its launch in 1994, the Institute has carried out highly influential research on a broad range of economic, social and environmental issues.

Our Philosophy

As we begin the 21st century, new dilemmas confront our society and our planet. Unprecedented levels of consumption co-exist with extreme poverty. Through new technology we are more connected than we have ever been, yet civic engagement is declining. Environmental neglect continues despite heightened ecological awareness. A better balance is urgently needed.

The Australia Institute's directors, staff and supporters represent a broad range of views and priorities. What unites us is a belief that through a combination of research and creativity we can promote new solutions and ways of thinking.

Our Purpose

The Institute publishes research that contributes to a more just, sustainable and peaceful society. Our goal is to gather, interpret and communicate evidence in order to both diagnose the problems we face and propose new solutions to tackle them.

The Institute is wholly independent and not affiliated with any other organisation. Donations to its Research Fund are tax deductible for the donor. Anyone wishing to donate can do so via the website at tai.org.au or by calling The Australia Institute on 02 6130 0530. Our secure and user-friendly website allows donors to make either one-off or regular monthly donations and we encourage everyone who can to donate in this way as it assists our research in the most significant manner.

Level 1, Endeavour House
1 Franklin Street
Canberra, ACT 2601
Tel: 02 6130 0530
Email: mail@tai.org.au
Website: www.tai.org.au
ISSN: 1836-9014

Key Findings

81%

of Australians are concerned that climate change will result in more droughts and flooding, up from 78% in 2018

78%

of Australians are concerned climate change will lead to water shortages in our cities, up 11 percentage points in the last two years (67% in 2017; 72% in 2018)

64%

of Australians think Australia should have a national target for net-zero emissions by 2050 (only 15% think Australia should not)

83%

of 18-34 year olds are concerned about climate change (compared to 67% of those aged 55+ years)

57%

of Australians blame increasing electricity prices on the excessive profit margins of electricity companies

76%

of Australians rank solar power in their top three preferred energy sources, making it by far the most popular energy source

58%

of Australians rank wind power in their top three preferred energy sources, up 19 percentage points from 2018

73%

of Queenslanders want Australia's coal-fired power stations phased out either as soon as possible or gradually

69%

support State Governments putting in place incentives for renewable energy

68%

of Australians agree that the Government should plan for an orderly phase-out of coal so that workers and communities can be prepared

64%

of Australians think the Government should contribute the same or more funding than previous funding to the Green Climate Fund

72%

of Australians would consider using less electricity during times of high demand if paid to do so (only 12% would not)

62%

of Australians support a levy on fossil fuel exports to help fund local adaptation to climate change

54%

of Australians reject the idea that Australia should not act on climate change until other major emitters like US and China do so

45%

of Australians think fossil fuel producers should primarily pay costs of preparing for, adapting to, and responding to global warming impacts (16% think taxpayers should primarily pay)

Climate of the Nation 2019

Tracking Australia's attitudes towards climate change and energy

Contents

1	Key Findings
3	Foreword
4	Aim + Approach
5	Executive Summary
7	Attitudes Towards Climate Change
11	Energy Transition
16	Leading Climate Action
18	Coal Mining + Fossil Fuel Subsidies
22	Adaptation
25	International Action
29	Demographics
31	Conclusion

Acknowledgements

Climate of the Nation is the longest continuous survey of community attitudes to climate change in the country. The Australia Institute acknowledges the dedicated work of The Climate Institute, which produced the report from 2007 to 2017.

The Australia Institute is delighted to carry forward this benchmark report and wishes to thank the following people and foundations for their support:

- Mark Wootton
- Eve Kantor
- ACME Foundation
- PMF Foundation
- McKinnon Family Foundation
- The Pace Foundation
- Australia Institute monthly donors

Thank you to all who have made this research possible.

¹ Cormier (2019) *Why the Arctic is Smouldering*. <http://www.bbc.com/future/story/20190822-why-is-the-arctic-on-fire>

² Hughes (2016) *The Silent Killer: Climate Change and the Health Impacts of Extreme Heat*. <https://www.climatecouncil.org.au/resources/silentkillerreport/>

³ Queensland Government (2019) *Queensland Budget 2019-20: Disaster and Recovery*. <https://budget.qld.gov.au/files/Budget%20Statements%20-%20Disaster%20Recover.pdf>

⁴ Swann (2019) *High Carbon from a Land Down Under*. <https://www.tai.org.au/content/new-analysis-australia-ranks-third-fossil-fuel-export>

⁵ Clarke (2019) *Pacific leaders, Australia agree to disagree about action on climate change* <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2019-08-15/no-endorsements-come-out-of-tuvalu-declaration/11419342>

⁶ Packham (2019) *Canberra applies pressure for region to stay quiet on coal*. <https://www.theaustralian.com.au/nation/politics/canberra-applies-pressure-for-region-to-stay-quiet-on-coal/news-story/fc-729d7890ac1665f9e77110b9c0e96a>

⁷ Saddler (2019) *National Energy Emissions Audit Report June 2019*. <https://www.tai.org.au/content/gas-coal-extraction-dominates-australia-s-rising-emissions>

⁸ UN News (2019) 'Save Tuvalu; save the world'. <https://news.un.org/en/story/2019/05/1039431>

Foreword

Climate of the Nation has tracked Australian attitudes to climate change since 2007. The Australia Institute is pleased to provide its second instalment of Australia's longest running attitudinal research on climate change and to continue the legacy of the Climate Institute.

The Arctic region is warming twice as fast as the rest of the world due to climate change. Not only is it losing ice, it is ablaze with unprecedented fires.¹ Climate change increases the frequency, duration and intensity of extreme heat and the most recent Australian summer was the hottest on record. Extreme heat has been the largest source of mortality amongst natural disasters, killing more people than all other disasters combined.² Along with the heat, four in five Australians maintain they are already experiencing the impacts of climate change.

The Premier of Queensland declares the state's most recent 'summer of disasters' is evidence of climate change. Queensland has suffered 84 disaster events in the past decade and the mounting costs are being absorbed by taxpayers.³ Governments cannot afford to keep up this ad hoc approach and Climate of the Nation reveals Australians want action and are increasingly pointing the finger at fossil fuel companies to help pay for climate impacts.

Australia Institute research shows Australia is the third largest exporter of fossil fuels in the world—behind only Russia and Saudi Arabia.⁴ This expansive role in fossil fuels quashes Australia's ability to meet its Paris Agreement targets and causes consternation with Pacific neighbours.

"You are concerned about saving your economy in Australia ... I am concerned about saving my people in Tuvalu."⁵

— Prime Minister Enele Sopoaga of Tuvalu

Appeals from Pacific Island leaders to Prime Minister Morrison to stop new coal mines and increase climate action at the regional forum fell on deaf ears. The recent federal election has further entrenched the Morrison Government's 'red lines' to protect fossil fuel interests, even ahead of diplomatic priorities.⁶ The election also encouraged Australians to pay more attention to public policy and politics, which may explain lower levels of uncertainty (measured by 'don't know' or 'not sure' response) and more polarised responses in Climate of the Nation 2019.

What is clear from Climate of the Nation is that across the political and geographic spectrum, the majority of Australians agree that ignoring climate change is simply not an answer. Australians overwhelmingly support renewable energy. Furthermore, almost three quarters of Australians are willing to support new schemes like demand response, which empowers energy users to reduce electricity usage when prompted, to help curb peak demand and lower electricity sector emissions. But ultimately, the majority of Australians want the Federal Government to lead on climate action.

The Prime Minister claims Australia is on track to meet its Paris Agreement reduction target, but it remains to be seen how, given emissions are increasing and have been for the last five years.⁷

"Stop building new coal plants by 2020.

We need a green economy, not a grey one."⁸

— UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres

The Prime Minister struggled to defend Australia's questionable climate policies at the Pacific Island Forum in August and will now face an even greater challenge on the world stage. The United Nations (UN) Secretary-General is hosting a special Climate Action Summit for leaders on 23 September 2019 and is asking all nations to come prepared to increase their efforts. More than half of Australians want the country to step up at the UN Summit and undertake further climate action to reach the Paris Agreement goal of limiting global warming to 1.5 degrees. Almost two thirds of Australians (64%) want the government to stop new coal mines.

Climate change is now driving economic policy, diplomacy and politics in Australia. That is why this benchmark report is more important than ever in 2019.

Ben Oquist
Executive Director, The Australia Institute

Aim + Approach

Who

The Australia Institute Climate & Energy Program engaged leading firm YouGov Galaxy to conduct the quantitative survey for Climate of the Nation.

How

The quantitative research for Climate of the Nation was conducted on the YouGov Galaxy Online Omnibus between Friday 25 July and Thursday 1 August 2019.

The sample comprises 1,960 Australians aged 18 years and older distributed throughout Australia, as follows:

NSW	400
Victoria	400
Queensland	401
South Australia	406
Western Australia	301
NT/ACT/Tasmania	52

Age, gender and region quotas were applied to the sample. Following the completion of interviewing, the data was weighted by age, gender and region to reflect the latest ABS population estimates.

Throughout this report 'major capital cities' refers to the capital city areas of Sydney, Melbourne, Brisbane, Adelaide and Perth. 'Regional and rural' refers to all other areas, including Canberra, Darwin and Hobart.

The margin of sampling error is 2.2%.



Executive Summary

The Australia Institute's annual Climate of the Nation Report provides a comprehensive account of changing Australian beliefs and attitudes towards climate change, its causes, impacts and solutions.

The 2019 Report shows concern about climate change impacts has returned to record highs, large numbers of Australians are experiencing the impacts of climate change right now and there is broad support for solutions.

Climate concern increasing and impacts being felt now

Over three quarters of Australians (77%) agree that climate change is occurring, the equal highest ever recorded (tied with 2016).

Concern about climate impacts has increased across the board, with the most concerning impacts being droughts and flooding affecting crops and food supply (81%), animal and plant extinction (78%), and water shortages in our cities (78%).

Four in five Australians (80%) think that Australians are already experiencing the impacts of climate change (79% in 2018). After last summer's record-breaking heat, almost half of Australians (48%) say climate change is already causing more extreme heat, up from 39% in 2018. For the first time, the majority of Australians believe that climate change is already melting the ice caps (51%).

61% of Australians believe climate change is caused by humans. However, Australians widely underestimate how many other Australians share this view.

Broad support for coal-fired power phase out

Solar is the most popular energy source for the fourth year in a row, with popularity strongest in regional and rural Australia, 18 percentage points ahead of any other energy source. The next most popular forms of energy (in terms of top three preferences) are wind, hydro and storage.

Most Australians blame increasing electricity prices on either the excessive profit margins of electricity companies (57%, up from 55%) or the privatisation of electricity infrastructure (55%, up from 52%).

While the Federal Government proposes to extend the life of old coal power stations, 70% of Australians support a government plan to ensure their orderly closure and replacement with clean energy. In Queensland, almost three quarters (73%) of respondents think that coal fired power stations should be phased out either as soon as possible (24%) or gradually (49%).

An emerging solution to managing the energy grid is known as 'demand response', where electricity companies pay users to use less electricity during times of peak demand and very high prices. The results suggest huge potential for demand response, with almost three quarters (72%) of Australians saying they would consider participating.



Leadership on climate change should come from governments

The majority of Australians (62%) believe the Federal Government should take a leading role in climate action. However, that does not absolve other levels of government, especially when national emissions continue to rise. The vast majority of Australians agree that State and Territory Governments should be either taking a leading role in or contributing to action on climate change (84%).

A majority (61%) agree that states should develop plans to phase out coal fired power stations, and over a third of Australians (36%) believe State Governments should act ahead of the Federal Government on renewable energy (32% think they should not).

The economic role of coal is overestimated

Coal is a major source of Australia's domestic emissions and contributes to Australia's podium place as third largest exporter of fossil fuel pollution. Coal's role in the economy, however, is far more modest and is significantly overestimated by the public.

On average, Australians believe coal mining contributes 12.5% to Australia's GDP (up from 10.9% in 2018) and employs 9.3% of the workforce (up from 8.8% in 2018). In reality, coal mining employs only 0.4% of workers in Australia and is 2.2% of Australia's GDP.

Despite these misperceptions, 64% of Australians want the Federal Government to stop new coal mines, including 31% who wish to shut down existing mines as quickly as possible and 33% who want to stop new mines but let existing ones operate. There is almost no support (just 4%) for subsidising new coal mines.

Fossil fuel companies should help pay for climate impacts

With increasing climate impacts come increasing costs, but who is going to pay? Currently the costs of preparing for and adapting to climate change impacts falls to taxpayers, individuals and businesses who are impacted. Yet Australians increasingly think the costs of climate change impacts should be paid primarily by fossil fuel companies (45%, a significant increase from 38% in 2018).

Three in five (62%) Australians support the proposal of funding the costs of climate adaptation and disaster response through a levy on fossil fuel exports.

Support for net-zero emissions by 2050

Every State Government has a target of net-zero emissions by 2050 and 64% of Australians support a similar target at the national level.

For the first time, well over half of Australians are now aware of the Paris Agreement, the key UN accord to curb emissions (59%, up from 49% in 2018 and 46% in 2017). In light of the UN Climate Action Summit on 23 September 2019, more than half of Australians (56%) want the country to step up and undertake further climate action to reach the Paris Agreement goal of limiting global warming to 1.5 degrees.

Most Australians reject the idea that Australia should wait for other countries, like China, before it strengthens its emissions reduction targets (54% disagree Australia should wait).

For the first time, the majority of Australians (51%) agree Australia needs to help vulnerable peoples and developing countries adapt to the negative impacts of climate change (up from 49% last year.)

Almost two thirds of Australians (63%) support maintaining or increasing current levels of climate foreign aid, equal to \$1 billion over five years and want Australia to at least maintain its climate foreign aid contribution to the UN Green Climate Fund (64%).

Attitudes Towards Climate Change

Concern about the impacts of climate change is on the rise and has been increasing steadily over the past three years. More people believe that we are already experiencing the impacts of climate change right now.

Climate change is occurring

Australians overwhelmingly believe that climate change is occurring now and that humans are the main cause.

Over three quarters of Australians (77%) agree that climate change is occurring. This result is the equal highest ever recorded in the survey, in 2016, just slightly above last year (76%).

Women are more likely to believe climate change is occurring (80%) than men (74%) and there is a clear gap between generations. 18-34 year olds are most likely to think climate change is occurring (83%); older Australians aged 55+ are least likely, but still a large majority think climate change is occurring (71%).

FIGURE 6.1:
ACCEPTANCE OF CLIMATE CHANGE, 2012-19

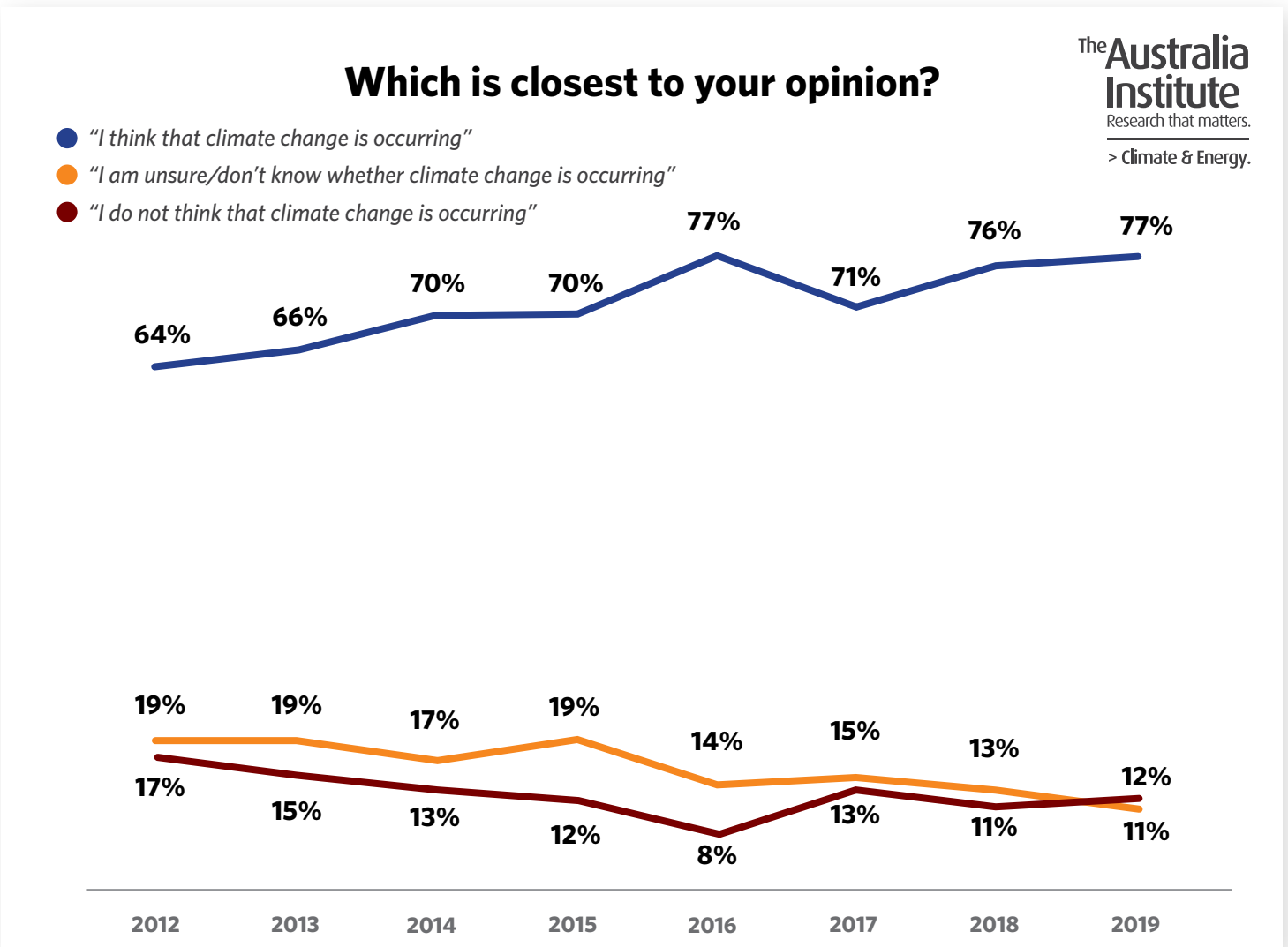
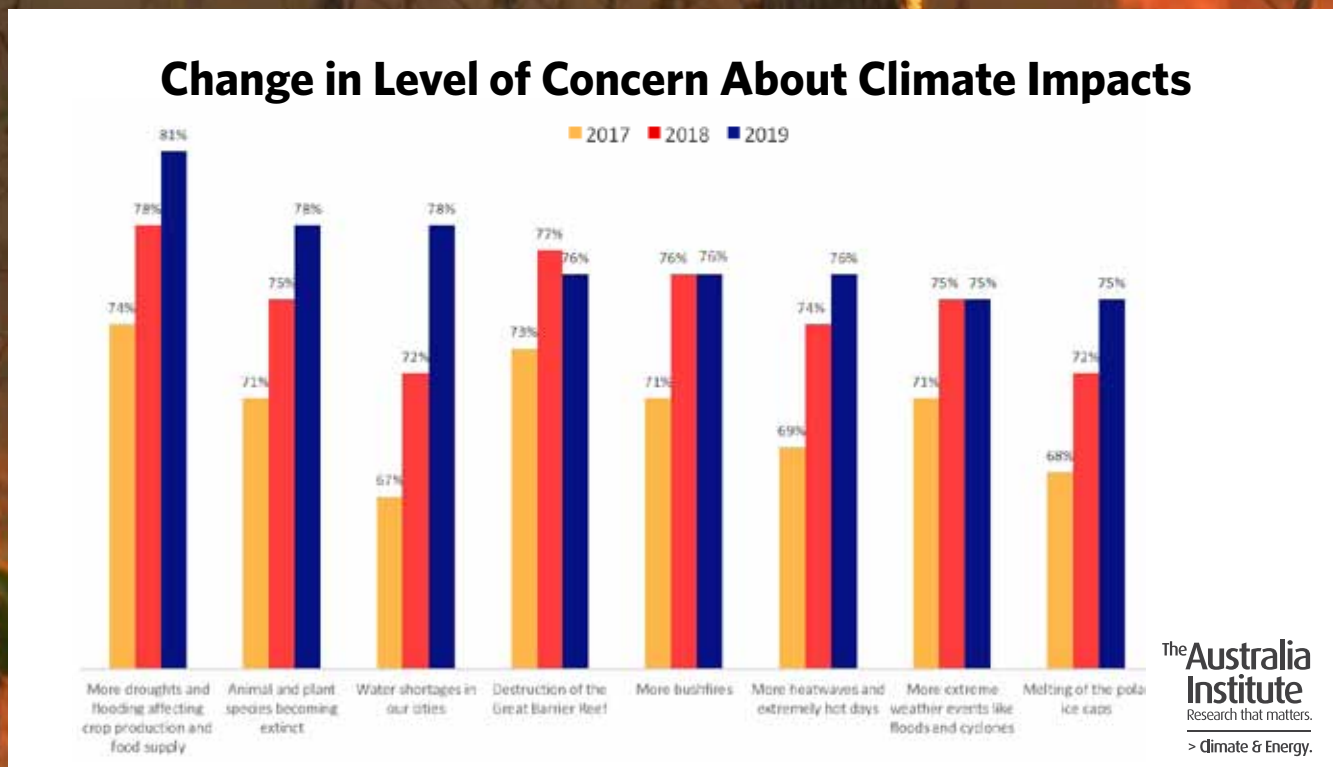


FIGURE 6.2:
CHANGE IN LEVEL OF CONCERN ABOUT
CLIMATE IMPACTS 2017-2019



Level of Concern

Many of the climate impacts of increasing concern relate to the effects of heat. According to the Bureau of Meteorology's annual Climate Statement, 2018 was the third hottest year on record and the 2018-19 summer was the hottest summer on record.

Concern about the impacts of climate change has been steadily increasing across the board over the past three years.

The top three impacts that concerned people were:

- 81% More droughts and flooding affecting crop production and food supply;
- 78% Animal and plant species becoming extinct;
- 78% Water shortages in our cities.

Concern about climate-induced droughts and flooding affecting crop production and food supply has steadily increased by seven percentage points over the past three years from 74% in 2017 to 81% in 2019.

The whole of New South Wales (NSW) was declared in drought during the latter half of 2018, and NSW had the highest levels of concern for climate-induced droughts. Almost half (48%) of people in NSW were very concerned climate change will result in droughts and floods affecting crop production and food supply. There was a large nine percentage point increase among those 'very concerned' about climate-induced droughts and floods in both NSW and South Australia (NSW 48%, up from 39% in 2018; SA 47%, up from 36% in 2018). More Queenslanders are very concerned about climate-induced droughts and floods (42%, up from 37%) but were below the national average.

The ongoing drought is also reflected in concern over water shortages in our cities due to climate change (78%), which has jumped dramatically by eleven percentage points in the past three years (67% in 2017; 72% in 2018).

The number of Australians concerned about climate-induced extinctions has also risen in the past three years to 78% (71% in 2017; 75% in 2018) News of mass extinctions, from the UN scientific panel on biodiversity⁹ to the local Australian Koala Foundation,¹⁰ have permeated the public debate and now extinctions are tied with water shortages in cities among climate impacts that most concern Australians.

Concern regarding heatwaves increased to 76% up from 69% in 2017. This trend will likely continue, given heavily populated centres like Western Sydney could see a tripling of days over 35 degrees by 2090, under the current global emissions trends.¹¹

Three quarters of Australians (75%) are concerned about climate change melting the polar ice caps (up from 72% in 2018 and 68% in 2017) with news of unprecedented melting.¹²

⁹ Metherell (2019) *One million species at risk of extinction, UN report warns, and we are mostly to blame.* <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2019-05-06/biggest-global-assessment-of-biodiversity-sounds-dire-warnings/11082940>

¹⁰ Woodward (2019) *Only 80,000 koalas remain in the world, rendering them 'functionally extinct' — another victim of the 6th mass extinction.* <https://www.businessinsider.com.au/koalas-functionally-extinct-in-australia-2019-5>

¹¹ Ogge, Browne and Hughes (2018) *HeatWatch: Extreme heat in Western Sydney.* <https://www.tai.org.au/content/heatwatch-extreme-heat-western-sydney-0>

¹² Carrington (2019) *'Extraordinary thinning' of ice sheets revealed deep inside Antarctica.* <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2019/may/16/thinning-of-antarctic-ice-sheets-spreading-inland-rapidly-study>

Already happening

The steadily rising concern about climate impacts correlates with the large majority of Australians who think climate impacts are happening right now. In 2018, Climate of the Nation began asking respondents whether climate change is already causing these same climate impacts (or will in future, or not at all), in order to track people's perceptions of the pace at which climate impacts are occurring over time.

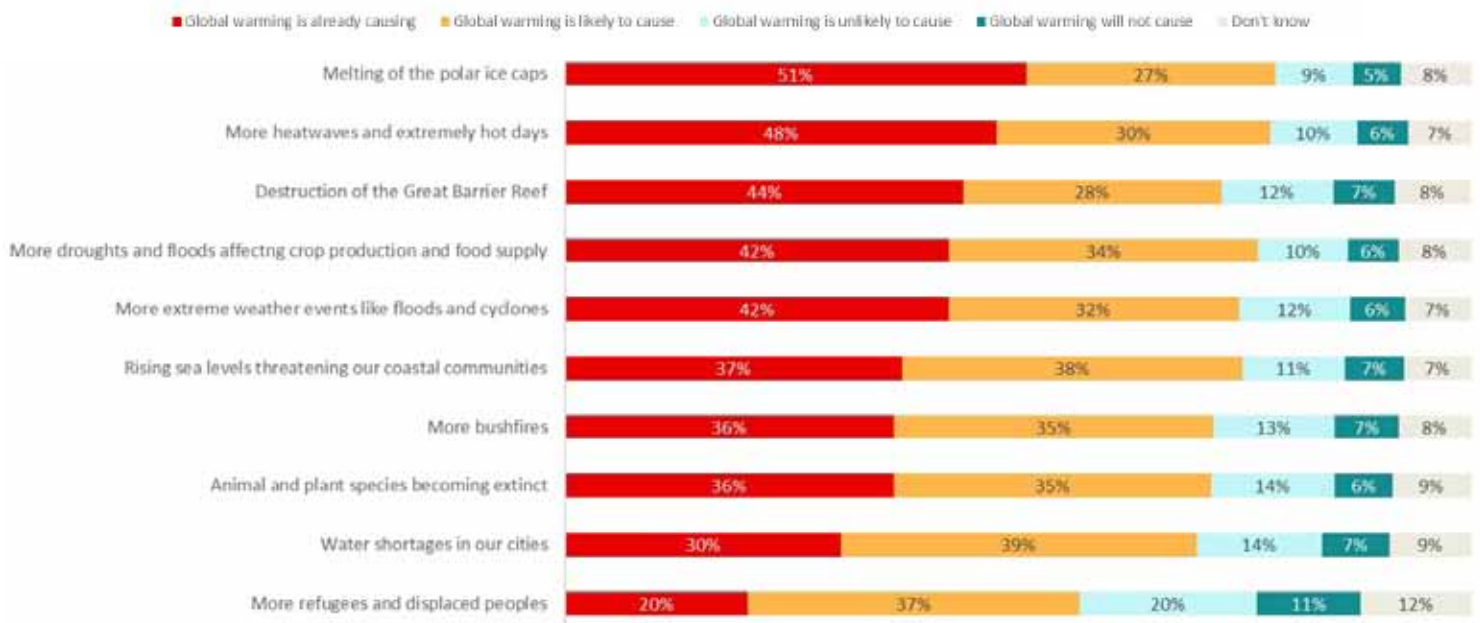
A consistent four in five (80%) Australians think that we are already experiencing the impacts of climate change (79% in 2018).

In particular, the number of respondents who believe climate change is already causing impacts rose dramatically. Almost half of Australians (48%) say climate change is already causing more heatwaves and extremely hot days, up nine percentage points from 39% in 2018. The number of respondents who think climate change is already causing more droughts and flooding rose ten percentage points from 32% in 2018 to 42% this year, and water shortages in our cities rose to 30% (up from 20% in 2018).

For the first time the majority of Australians believe that climate change is already causing melting of the ice caps (51%, up from 43% in 2018).

FIGURE 6.3:
PACE OF CLIMATE IMPACTS

Pace of Climate Impacts



Most Australians underestimate how many Australians believe in human induced climate change

Climate of the Nation asked respondents both what they believe to be the causes of climate change and what they perceive other Australians believe are the causes of climate change.

An increasing majority of Australians believe the science telling us humans are the main cause of climate change. At the same time, most Australians underestimate how many other Australians share that view.

While 61% of respondents believe climate change is caused by humans, Australians on average think that view is shared by less than half (49%) of their fellow Australians.

A quarter of Australians (26%) believe natural causes are the main cause of climate change, 10% don't know while just 4% don't believe that climate change is happening at all. Interestingly, Australians on average significantly overestimate the number of Australians who don't believe climate change is happening (13% compared to 4%).

Australians are more likely to be closer to the correct number if they themselves believe humans are the main cause of climate change. Those who are 'very concerned' about climate change are most accurate, on average only 1% point off the correct answer. Younger generations are most likely to judge accurately.



¹³ Department of Environment and Energy (2019) *National Greenhouse Gas Inventory – Quarterly Update December 2018*.

¹⁴ The Australia Institute (2019) *Gas and Coal Watch*. <https://www.tai.org.au/gas-coal-watch>

¹⁵ Saddler (2019) *National Energy Emissions Audit: July 2019*. <https://www.tai.org.au/content/national-energy-emissions-audit-july-2019>

¹⁶ Ludlow (2019) *Summer of reckoning for Australia's power grid*. <https://www.afr.com/policy/energy-and-climate/summer-of-reckoning-for-australia-s-power-grid-20190822-p52jn4>

Energy Transition

The electricity sector remains the largest source of greenhouse gas emissions in Australia (33.2% of national emissions).¹³ Australia's electricity generation is dominated by coal power plants, most of which are old and often fail in hot weather when they are needed most.¹⁴ Wind and solar are the cheapest forms of new generation, while renewables with storage are now competitive with other forms of generation. The energy transition is already underway.

Over the last decade, electricity emissions in Australia declined by more than 15% as 12 coal-fired power stations closed down and gas power generation also declined. Renewables now account for more than 20% of generation in the National Energy Market (NEM). The increase in renewables generation over the last decade is equivalent to all Australian energy generation in 1950s.¹⁵

However, without clear policy to manage this transition, uncertainty has delayed investment — increasing unreliability, emissions and costs for all users.¹⁶

Solar remains the preferred energy source

Asked to rank a list of energy sources from most to least preferred, Australians continue to strongly support renewable energy sources over fossil fuels.

Solar power topped the list for the fourth year running, with over three quarters of Australians (76%) ranking solar among their top three most preferred energy sources. In fact, solar power was the most favoured energy source across all gender, age, state and voting groups; and even among those who don't believe in or hold any concern about climate change.

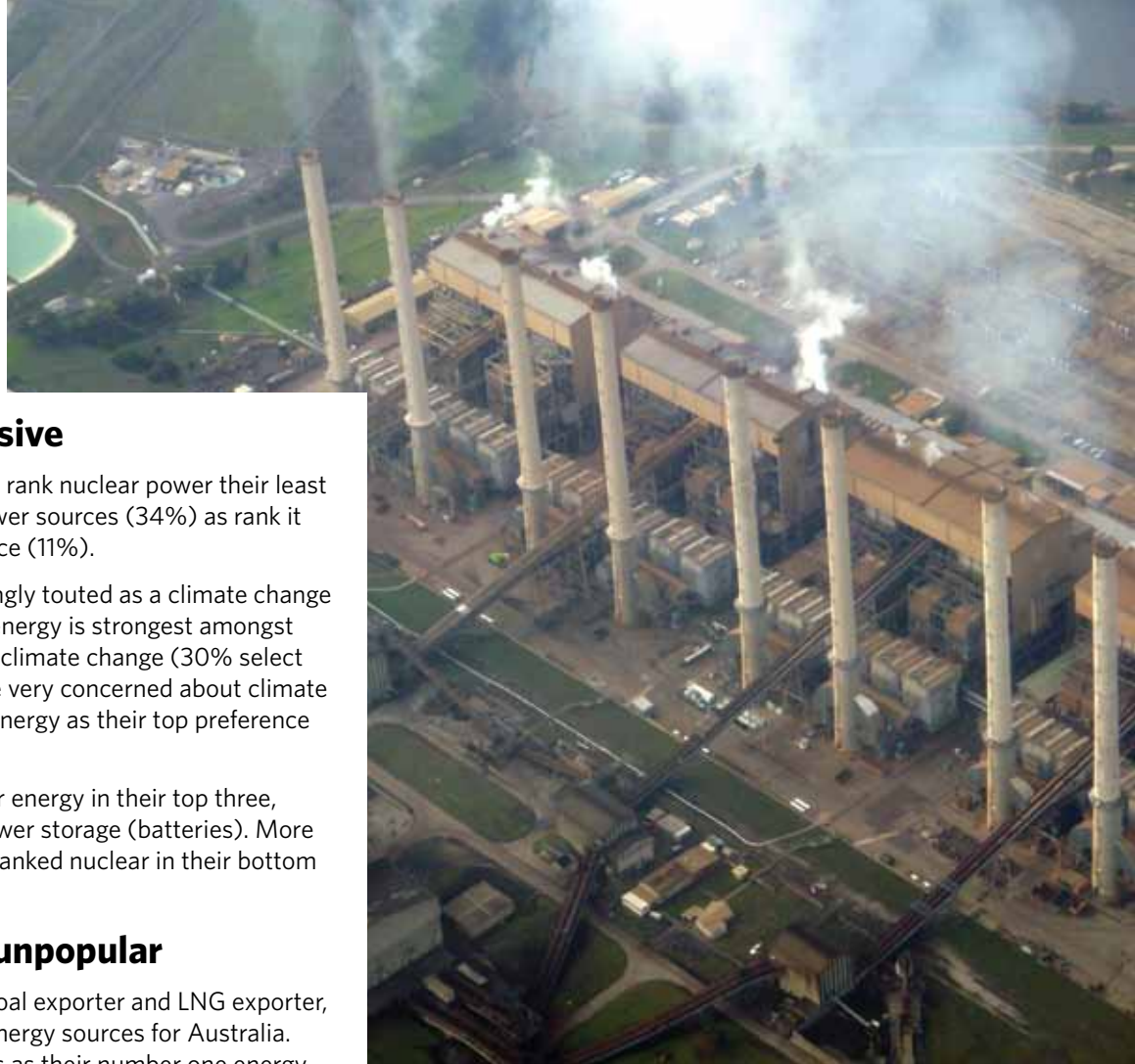
A majority of Australians (58%) ranked wind power among their top 3 most preferred power sources. Hydro energy is among the top 3 preferences of 39% of Australians, demonstrating Australians' solid preference for renewable energy over fossil fuels.

TABLE 7.1: PREFERRED ENERGY SOURCES WHICH RANKED IN RESPONDENTS' TOP 3 PREFERENCES*

	2019
Solar	76%
Wind	58%
Hydro	39%
Power Storage	29%
Nuclear	22%
Tidal/Wave	21%
Gas	20%
Coal	18%
Geothermal	17%

* excludes 8% who did not answer





Nuclear power is divisive

Three times as many Australians rank nuclear power their least preferred power source of all power sources (34%) as rank it their most preferred energy source (11%).

While nuclear energy is increasingly touted as a climate change solution, preference for nuclear energy is strongest amongst those not at all concerned about climate change (30% select as top preference). Among those very concerned about climate change, only 5% select nuclear energy as their top preference (fig 7.1).

One in five (22%) ranked nuclear energy in their top three, behind solar, wind, hydro and power storage (batteries). More than twice as many Australians ranked nuclear in their bottom three (59%) as their top three.

Gas and coal remain unpopular

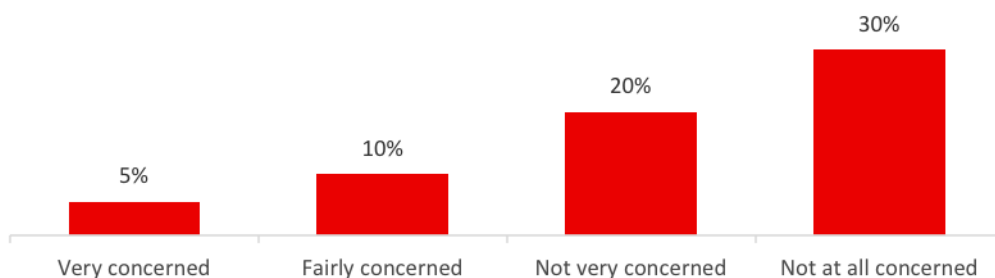
Australia is the world's biggest coal exporter and LNG exporter, yet coal and gas are unpopular energy sources for Australia. Only 5% of respondents rank gas as their number one energy source, and only 7% rank coal as their number one. Two thirds (64%) of Australians rank coal in their bottom three energy sources (18% top three).

In Western Australia, the biggest producer of gas in Australia, preference for gas as an energy source is particularly low. Only 3% of West Australian respondents select gas as their most preferred energy source.

In Queensland, solar beats coal almost four-to-one as the preferred energy source. Almost half (45%) of Queenslanders choose solar as their most preferred energy source, while just over one in ten (12%) of respondents choose coal.

FIGURE 7.1:
PREFERENCE FOR NUCLEAR POWER, COMPARED TO LEVEL OF CONCERN ABOUT CLIMATE CHANGE

Preference for Nuclear Power Compared to Level of Concern About Climate Change





Who is to blame for electricity price increases?

Controversy about high electricity prices, as well as who or what is to blame, has become a fixture of Australian politics. Most Australians blame increasing electricity prices on either the excessive profit margins of electricity companies (57%, up from 55%) or the privatisation of electricity infrastructure (55%, up from 52%).

43% of Australians also blame Federal Government policy uncertainty or poor policy making. The absence of a federal climate and energy strategy, despite a federal minister responsible for both energy and emissions reduction portfolios, is a growing source of consternation — especially in South Australia (where 52% blame Federal Government policy uncertainty or poor policy making).

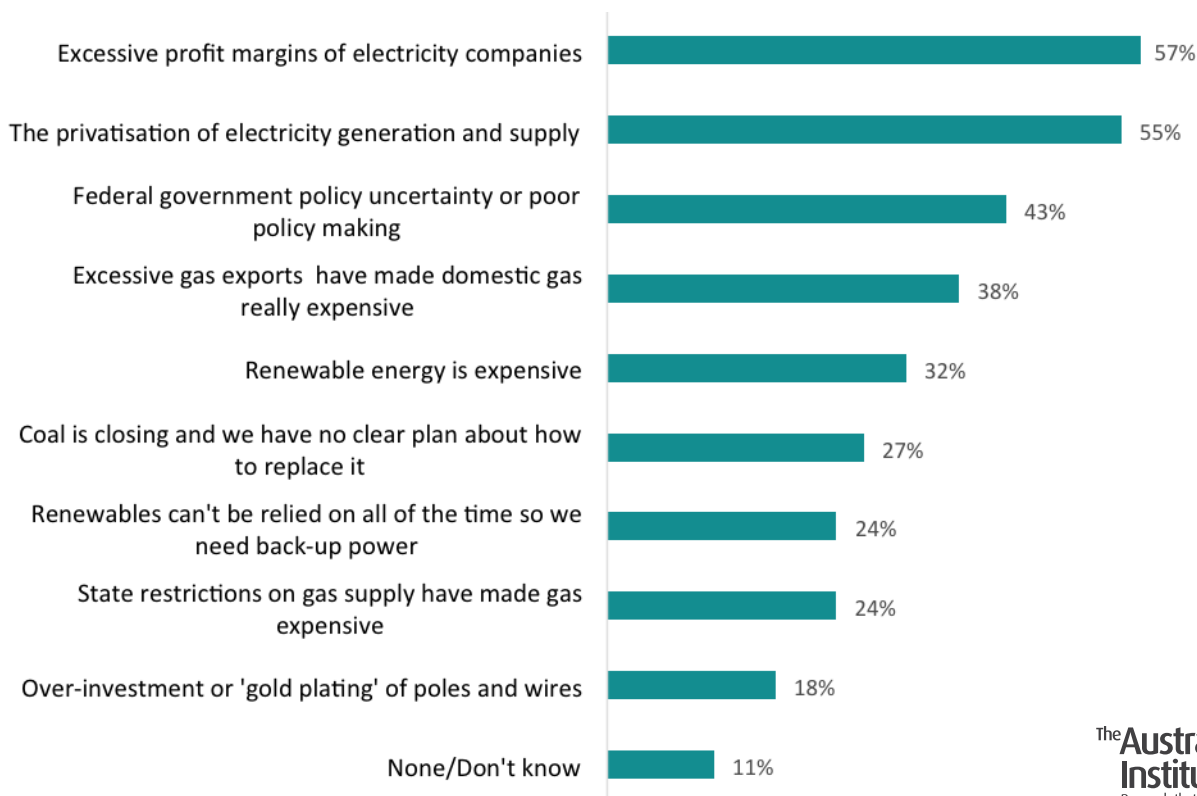


In addition, increasing numbers of Australians blame excessive gas exports for really expensive domestic gas, up from 34% in 2018 to 38% in 2019. Liberal Party and One Nation voters were most likely to blame excessive gas exports (43% and 42% respectively). Australia's massive increase in LNG exports has linked Australia to international markets, meaning increased gas production has been putting upwards pressure on domestic gas prices.

The least blamed factor was over-investment in poles and wires (18%). This is significant as numerous government authorities have confirmed that costs from poles and wire upgrades are the single biggest reason for cost increases over the decade, indicating a large gap between evidence and public perceptions.

FIGURE 7.2:
BLAME FOR RISING ELECTRICITY PRICES

Who/What is to Blame for Rising Electricity Prices?



Demand response as an energy solution

The Australia Institute has been advocating for a rule change to allow electricity companies to pay users to use less electricity during times of high demand, known as demand response. For the first time, Climate of the Nation asked whether respondents would consider participating in a 'demand response' scheme and almost three quarters (72%) said yes.

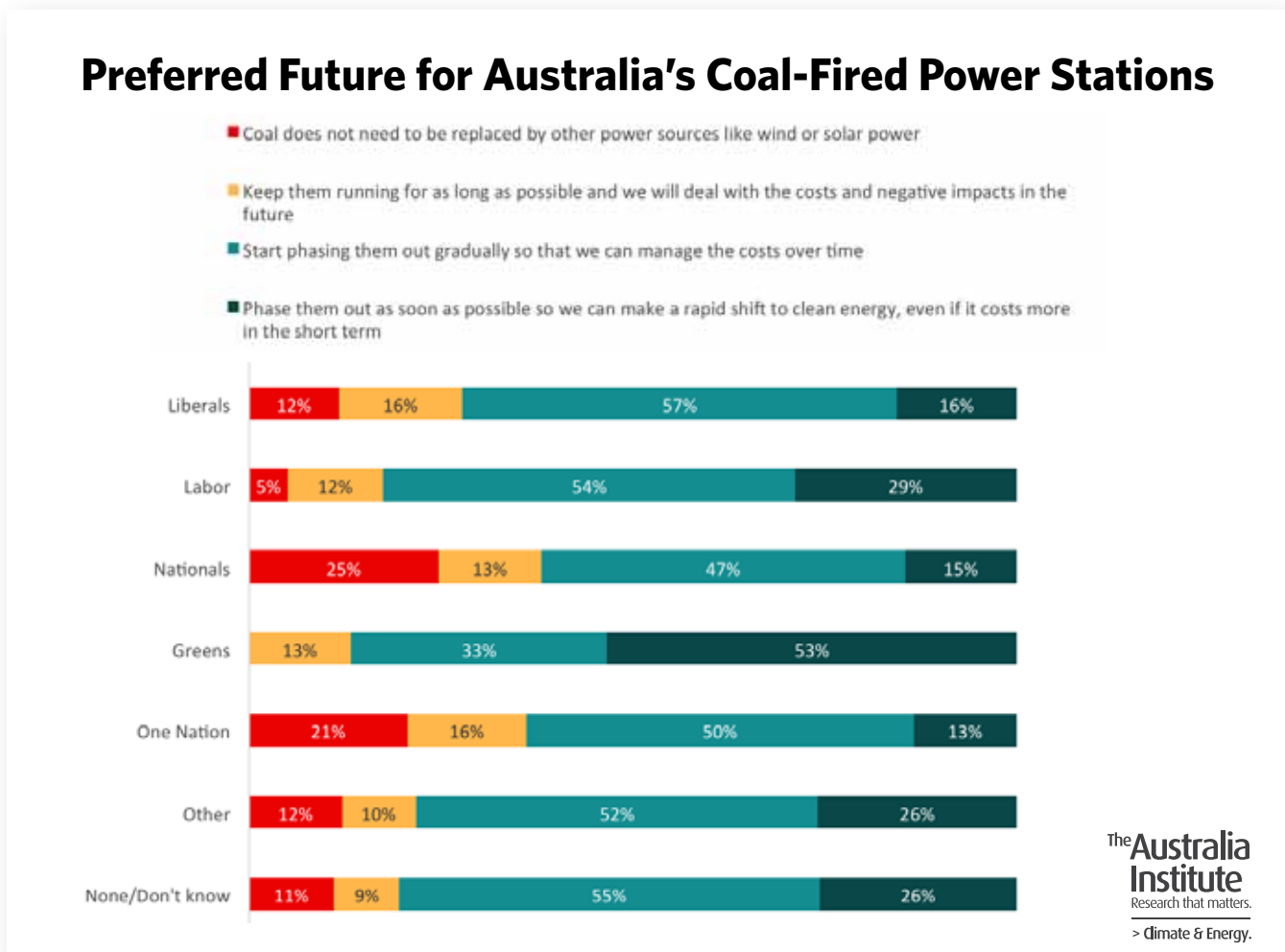
There is across the board support for demand response, with a majority of Australians, from all political party preferences, states, age groups and incomes, backing a demand response scheme which would help the electricity market cope with the increasing number of extreme heat and peak demand days.

The transition should be planned

Australia currently has no national plan to manage the changing nature of the electricity system, particularly as our ageing coal-fired power stations reach — or in some cases continue beyond — their designed lives. The Australian Government is currently considering underwriting new coal investments and extending the life of existing generators.

70% of Australians support a government plan to ensure the orderly closure of old coal plants and replacement with clean energy. 68% support a government plan for an orderly phase out of coal so that workers and communities can prepare.

FIGURE 7.3:
PREFERRED FUTURE FOR AUSTRALIA'S COAL FIRED POWER STATIONS



Compared with last year there is less faith in letting the market and energy companies decide when old coal plants are closed. 40% disagree with letting the market decide, up from 36% in 2018.

In total, four in five (78%) want a plan to phase out coal power. Of those, 52% want a “gradual” plan to manage costs over time while 26% want a “rapid” shift even if the costs are bigger. Only 9% of Australians said we do not need to phase out coal and 13% want to keep old generators running and deal with costs later.

In Queensland, almost three quarters (73%) of respondents think that coal fired power stations should be phased out either as soon as possible (24%) or gradually (49%). 13% think that coal does not need to be replaced by other power sources.

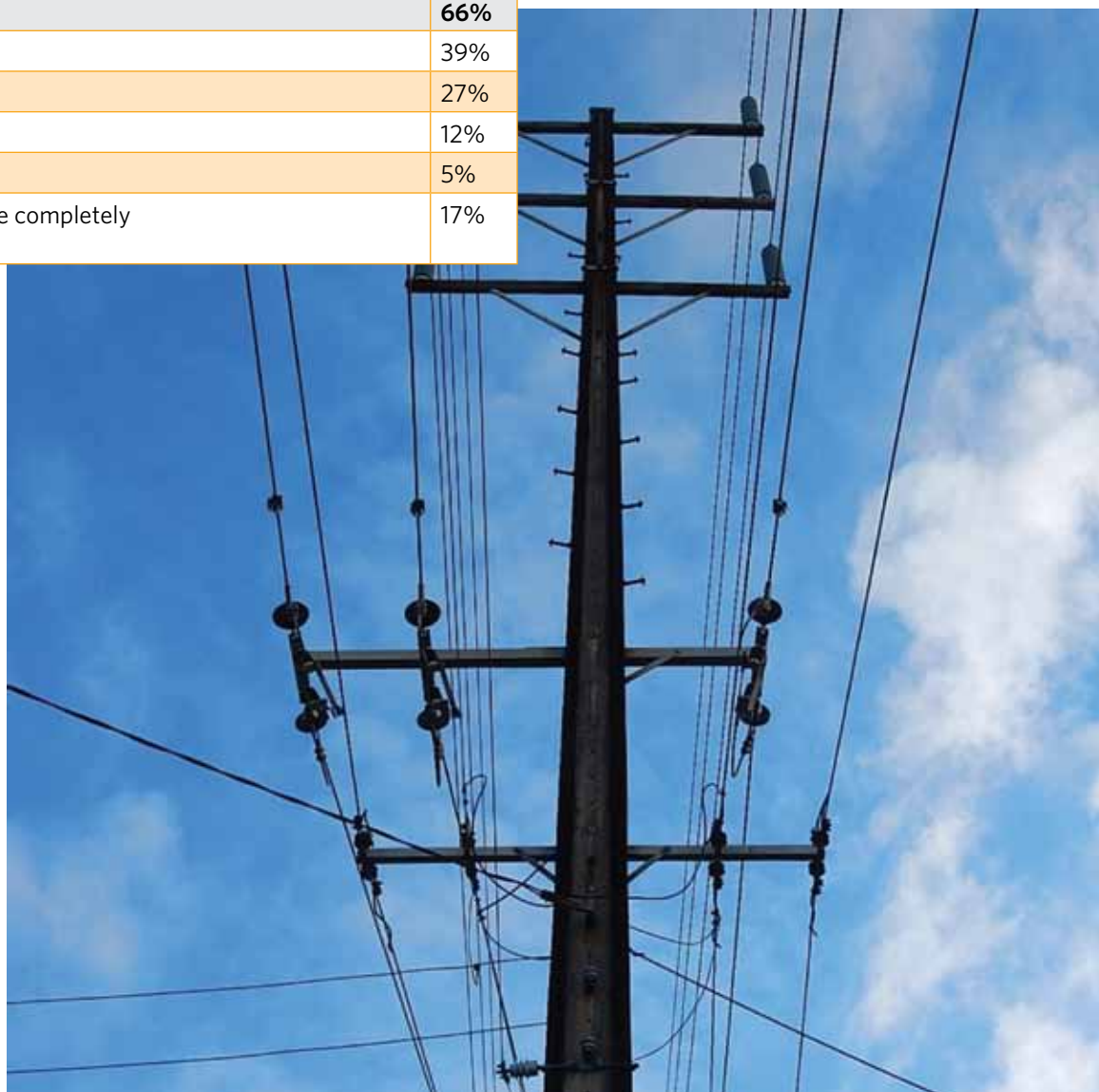
Greens voters were most likely to select a rapid transition (53%) while Liberal voters were most likely to say it should be managed gradually (57%). However, a clear majority of voters for all parties supported a phase out (78%) (fig 7.3).

How quickly do Australians think the phase out should happen?

Two in three (66%) respondents think coal fired power should be phased out in the next twenty years, including two in five (39%) who think it should happen within the next 10 years. 17% think coal should never be completely phased out (table 7.2).

TABLE 7.2: TIMELINE FOR PHASE-OUT OF COAL-FIRED POWER

When should Australia completely end coal-fired power generation?	
Subtotal (within next 20 years)	66%
Within the next ten years	39%
In the next 10-20 years	27%
In the next 20-30 years	12%
In the next 30-50 years	5%
Coal fired power should never be completely phased out	17%

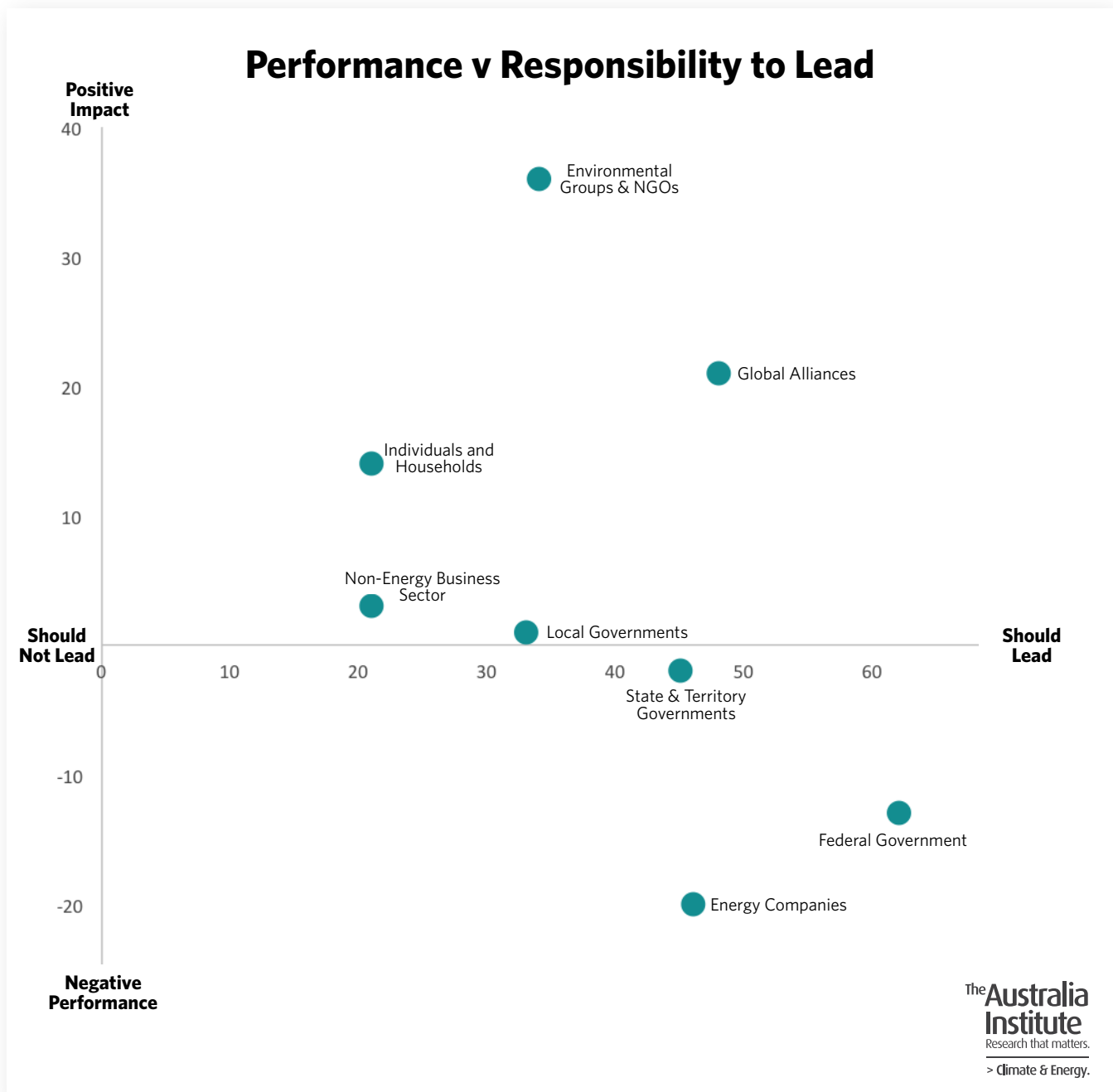


Leading Climate Action

In the absence of a national climate and energy policy to reduce Australia's greenhouse gas emissions and implement targets aligned with the Paris Agreement goal of limiting global temperature rise to well below 2 degrees above pre-industrial levels, Australian states and local councils are playing an increasing role in climate change action.

Australians continue to believe that the Federal Government, State and Territory Governments, global alliances and energy companies have a responsibility to lead on climate action.

FIGURE 8.1:
PERFORMANCE V RESPONSIBILITY TO LEAD



¹⁷ Climate Emergency Declaration (2019) *Climate emergency declarations in 967 jurisdictions and local governments cover 212 million citizens.* <https://climateemergencydeclaration.org/climate-emergency-declarations-cover-15-million-citizens/>

Federal Government

The Federal Government is ranked as the second worst performer in acting on climate change (following energy companies) and 37% of Australians say the Federal Government's performance has been 'terrible' or 'poor'.

Despite this poor performance, the majority of Australians (62%) believe the Federal Government should take a leading role in climate action.

State and Local Council Action

Many States and Territories have set renewable energy and net-zero emissions targets. The Australian Capital Territory (ACT) leads the pack and is on track to be running on 100% renewable energy by 2020. The ACT and 42 local councils and cities, including the Sydney City Council, Hobart City Council, Darwin City Council and Melbourne City Council, have officially declared a climate emergency.¹⁷

The vast majority of Australians agree that State and Territory Governments should be either taking a leading role in or contributing to action on climate change (84%). Only 7% of Australians believe that State Governments should not be taking action on climate change.

When it comes to renewable energy, the majority of Australians (69%) agree that State Governments should be putting in place incentives for more renewable energy, such as wind farms, but they are divided over whether State Governments should act ahead of Federal Governments on renewable energy (should act 36%, should not 32%).

A majority (61%) agree that states should develop plans to phase out coal fired power stations.

One third (33%) of Australians believe State and Territory Governments' performance in taking action on climate change is 'average', three in 10 (28%) think their performance is 'fairly poor' or 'terrible', and one in four (26%) think their performance is 'excellent', 'very good' or 'fairly good'.

Other actors

Environmental groups and Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) are consistently ranked as the best performing entity in acting on climate change. The majority (50%) of Australians rank the climate change performance of environmental groups and NGOs as excellent or good.

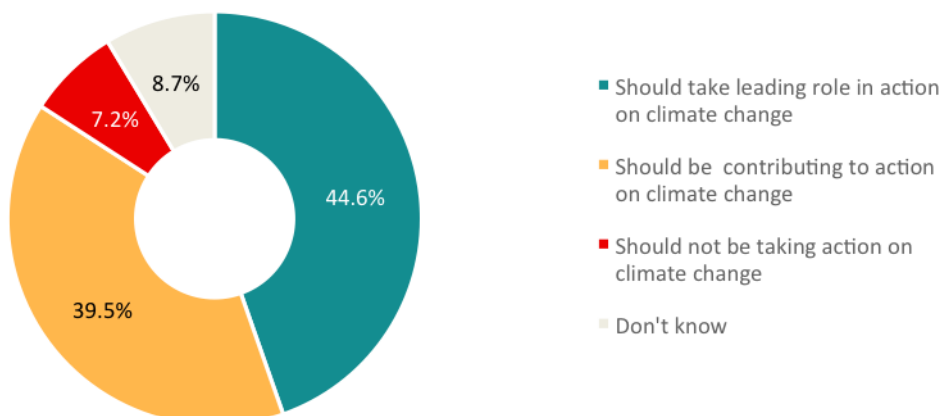
Global alliances such as the United Nations also receive a consistently positive ranking in terms of acting on climate change. 41% of Australians rate their performance as excellent or good.

Nearly half of Australians (48%) believe global alliances should play a leading role in acting on climate change. The upcoming United Nations Climate Action Summit in New York on 23 September 2019 is an example of how global alliances are seeking to meet these expectations and mobilise ambitious action on climate change.

Energy companies continue to have the worst performance in acting on climate change. 41% (the same as in 2018) of Australians say the performance of energy companies has been 'terrible'/'poor'. Only 3% say energy companies do an 'excellent' job on taking action on climate change.

FIGURE 8.2:
STATE AND TERRITORY GOVERNMENT RESPONSIBILITY FOR DRIVING ACTION ON CLIMATE CHANGE

State and Territory Government Responsibility for Driving Action on Climate Change



Coal Mining + Fossil Fuel Subsidies

Australia is the third largest exporter of fossil fuels in the world and the number one exporter of coal.¹⁸ Australia's already high contribution to global greenhouse gas emissions could potentially worsen, with Australian governments actively promoting the expansion of Australia's coal exports and 53 new coal mines currently proposed across Australia.¹⁹ Despite this, Australia's economy is less reliant on fossil fuels than many other exporters.

Australians continue to overestimate the size and economic value of the coal industry

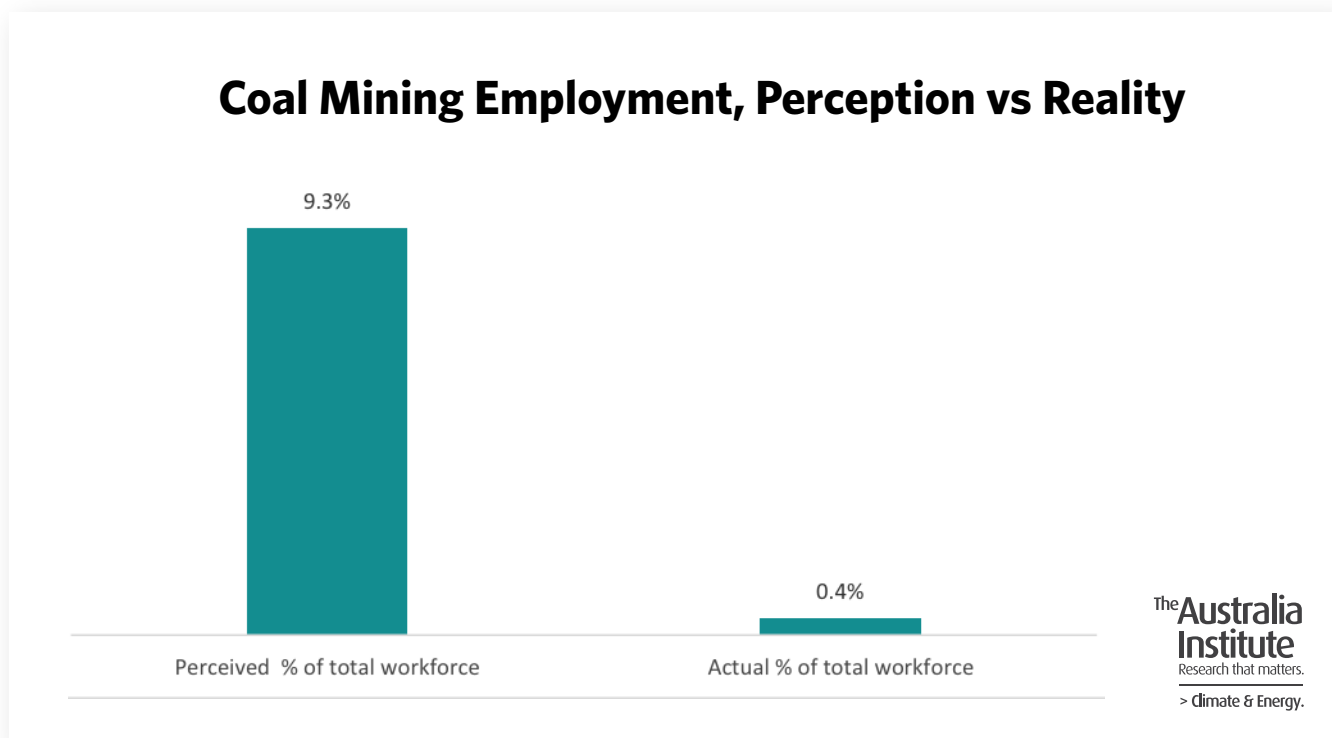
Australians significantly overestimate the size of the coal mining industry, both in terms of employment and contribution to GDP, even more so than last year.

Excluding the 39% who said they don't know, Australians on average believe that coal mining makes up 9.3% (up from 8.8% in 2018) of the workforce in Australia. In reality, coal mining employs around 57,900 workers, making up only 0.4% of the almost 13 million-strong Australian workforce.²⁰ In other words, respondents perceive coal employment as being 23 times larger than it actually is.

Greens and Labor party voters are more likely to correctly estimate that coal mining makes up less than 1% of the Australian workforce.

The perceived contribution of coal mining to GDP in Australia is also substantially over-estimated. On average, Australians believe that coal mining contributes 12.5% (up from 10.9% in 2018) to Australia's GDP (excluding the 43% who don't know). In reality, coal mining contributes 2.2% to the GDP of Australia, \$39.8 billion of almost \$1.85 trillion.²¹ Put differently, respondents perceive coal mining as contributing six times more to GDP than it does.

FIGURE 9.1:
COAL MINING EMPLOYMENT AS A PERCENTAGE OF THE TOTAL AUSTRALIAN WORKFORCE, PERCEPTION vs REALITY



¹⁸ Swann (2019) *High Carbon from a Land Down Under*. <https://www.tai.org.au/content/new-analysis-australia-ranks-third-fossil-fuel-export>

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ ABS (May 2019) *Labour Force, Australia, Detailed, Quarterly*.

²¹ ABS (Mar 2019) *Australian National Accounts: National Income, Expenditure and Product*.

Cross-party support for a moratorium on new coal mines

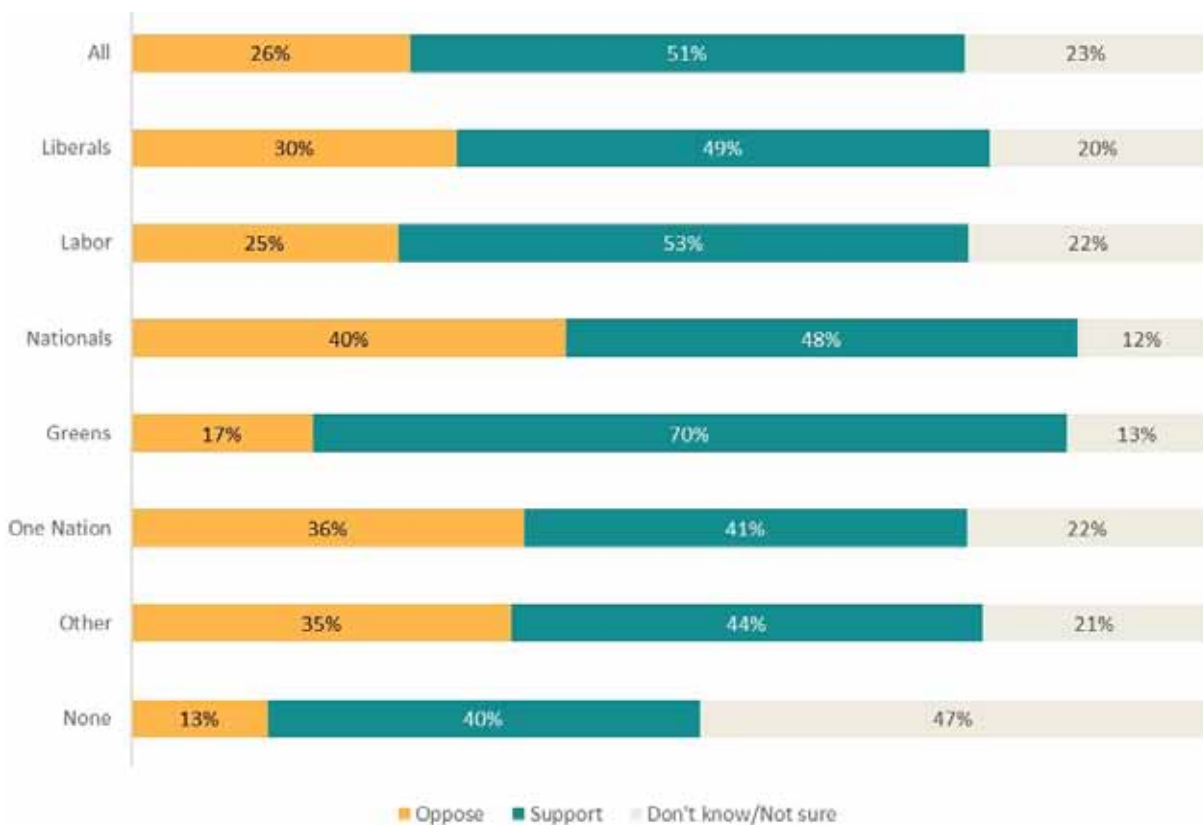
Half (51%) of Australians support a moratorium that would stop Australia building new coal mines and expanding existing ones. Almost twice the number of people support a moratorium as oppose it (26%).

Both support and opposition have increased from 2018 as the number of respondents selecting 'don't know' declined eight percentage points to 23% in 2019.

More respondents support than oppose a moratorium across all political parties.

FIGURE 9.2:
MORATORIUM ON NEW COAL MINES

Moratorium on New Coal Mines



Support for phasing out coal mines

Almost two thirds (64%) of Australians want the Australian Government to stop building new coal mines, consistent with the results from 2018.

In 2018, one quarter (25%) of Australians wanted new coal mines stopped and existing mines phased out as soon as possible; in 2019 that figure has risen six percentage points to almost one in three Australians (31%) in 2019. One third (33%) of Australians want new coal mines stopped, but existing mines to be allowed to operate until the end of their approvals (down from 40% in 2018). It appears some who supported a gradual phase out of existing coal mines in 2018 have shifted to supporting a more rapid phase out in 2019.

Twenty percent of respondents support building new coal mines but want any taxpayer subsidies stopped and just 4% want tax payer funds to subsidise new coal mines (similar to the 3% in 2018).

TABLE 9.1: ATTITUDES TO COAL MINING PHASE OUT

Which of the following is closest to your opinion?	
Stop new coal mines, but allow existing coal mines to operate until the end of their approvals	33%
Stop new coal mines and phase out existing coal mines as soon as possible	31%
Allow new coal mines to be built, but stop any taxpayer subsidies	20%
Use taxpayer funds to subsidise new coal mines	4%
Don't know / not sure	12%



Opposition to fossil fuel industry subsidies

More Australians oppose than support the government putting public funds into infrastructure to subsidise the expansion of the coal, oil and gas industries (45% oppose, 36% support, 19% don't know).

Although the overall percentage that support subsidising the expansion of the coal, oil and gas industries (45%) is similar to the overall support in 2018 (44%), attitudes to fossil fuel industry subsidies have become increasingly polarised. Compared to 2018, more respondents strongly support (12%) and strongly oppose (23%) the government subsidising the expansion of the coal, oil and gas industries.

The future of coal mining

The majority (69%) of Australians agree that the Australian Government should plan to phase out coal mining and transition into other industries (67% in 2018). Three in five (62%) agree that Australia's transition from the mining boom requires stopping the approval of new coal mines, up six percentage points from 2018.

Although respondents increasingly recognise the need to transition from coal mining, the number of respondents who agree that coal mining has a strong economic future has increased. Two in five (38%, up from 32% in 2018) of respondents think coal has a strong economic future, compared to 44% who disagree.

While 43% disagree that the economic impacts of coal mining outweigh its negative impacts on health, the environment and other industries, 39% agreed with this statement (up from 32% in 2018).



Adaptation

Many people and communities are already dealing with the impacts of climate change, experiencing longer bushfire seasons, intense storms, heatwaves, and more extremely hot days that are only expected to increase in frequency and intensity without a rapid reduction in emissions. The costs and impacts of adapting to climate change deserve more attention.

The cost of coping with climate impacts

Australian greenhouse gas emissions have increased over the last five years, reaching the highest on record in 2019.²² During the federal election in May 2019, the national debate about climate change focused on the cost of reducing emissions. The much greater cost of current and future climate change impacts attracted far less attention.

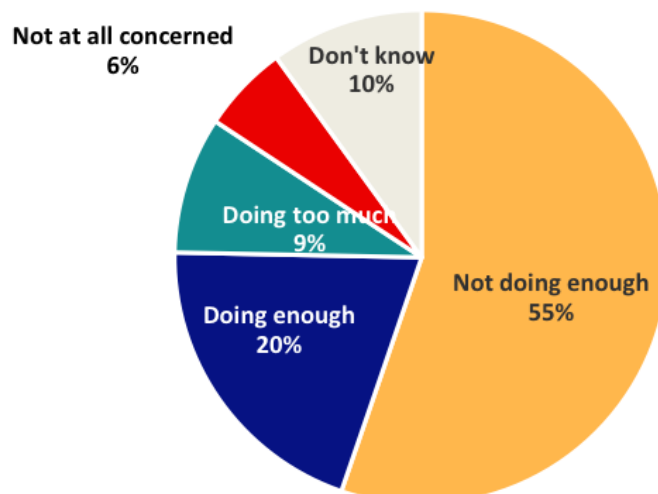
Climate change will increase the frequency and severity of many types of extreme weather events.²³ As noted previously, Australians are feeling more impacts of climate change than ever before. According to one study, Australia is already experiencing a total economic cost of \$18.2 billion per annum from natural disasters.²⁴ In Queensland, last summer was dubbed the 'summer of disasters' by the Premier, who said it was evidence of climate change.

Some impacts are now locked in, but impacts are likely to increase further unless emissions are reduced rapidly. The question of who picks up the bill for climate impacts will become more pressing as the costs mount. Currently it falls to individuals and businesses, and their insurers, and governments. There has been no cost imposed on the fossil fuel industry for its emissions since the Abbott Government abolished the carbon price in 2014. After the Queensland 'summer of disasters', the state budget faced \$1.3 billion in costs, while the Insurance Council of Australia reported insurance costs of more than \$1.2 billion.²⁵

Governments have an essential role in coordinating and funding resilience to and relief from climate impacts, but currently the Federal Government has no comprehensive climate adaptation plan and no mechanism for funding adaptation, other than ad-hoc payments for disaster relief.

FIGURE 10.1:
GOVERNMENT ACTION ON CLIMATE

Thinking Now About How Australian Governments Are Preparing For And Adapting To The Impacts Of Global Warming, Do You Think Governments Are...?



The Australia
Institute
Research that matters.
> Climate & Energy.

²² Cox (2019) *Australia's emissions reach the highest on record, driven by electricity sector*. <https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2019/jul/09/australias-emissions-reach-the-highest-on-record-driven-by-electricity-sector>

²³ Steffen, Dean and Rice (2019) *Weather Gone Wild: Climate Change Fueled Extreme Weather in 2018*. <https://www.climatecouncil.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/Climate-council-extreme-weather-report.pdf>

²⁴ Deloitte Access Economics (2017) *Building resilience to natural disasters in our states and territories*. http://australianbusinessroundtable.com.au/assets/documents/ABR_building-resilience-in-our-states-and-territories.pdf

²⁵ Queensland Government (2019) *Queensland Budget 2019-20: Disaster and Recovery*. <https://budget.qld.gov.au/files/Budget%20Statements%20-%20Disaster%20Recover.pdf>



Are Australian governments doing enough on climate change?

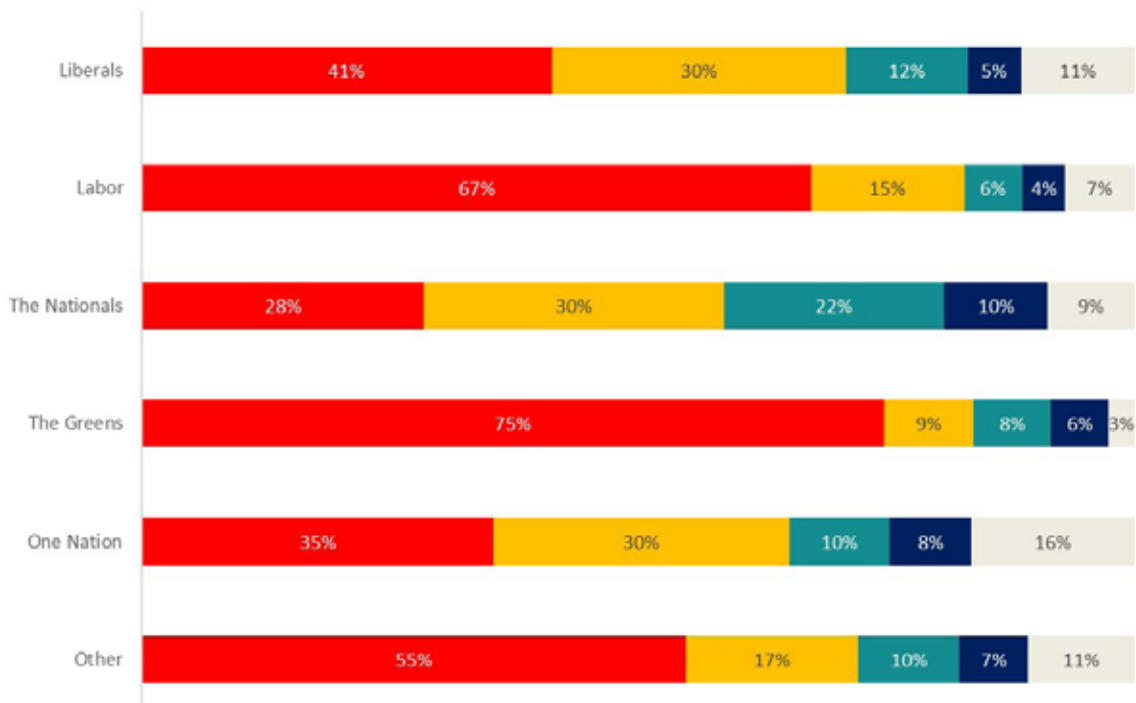
Most Australians (55%) think their governments (at all levels) are not doing enough on climate change. One in five (20%) think governments are doing enough, and 9% think they are doing too much. Regional and rural Australians are at least as likely as people in major capital cities to think the government is not doing enough (57% rural and regional; 55% major capital cities).

More Coalition voters (40%) say governments are not doing enough than say they are satisfied with current efforts (30%). Across most voting groups, Australians are most likely to say governments are not doing enough.

FIGURE 10.2:
GOVERNMENT ACTION ON CLIMATE CHANGE BY VOTING INTENTION

Thinking Now About How Australian Governments Are Preparing For And Adapting To The Impacts Of Global Warming, Do You Think Governments Are...?

■ Not doing enough ■ Doing enough ■ Doing too much ■ Not at all concerned ■ Don't know / not sure



Who should pay for the costs of dealing with climate impacts?

Fossil fuels are the largest contributor to climate change and almost half of Australians think fossil fuel companies (coal, oil and gas producers and retailers) should primarily pay for the cost of preparing for and adapting to climate change impacts (45%), a significant increase from last year (38%).

16% of Australians suggest taxpayers should bear the costs of climate impacts, a sizeable drop from last year (21%).

Among all demographics, more people select fossil fuel companies than select taxpayers to primarily pay for climate impacts. Queensland, which has the lowest preference among the states for fossil fuel companies paying for climate impacts, still has twice as many people selecting fossil fuel companies (39%) as taxpayers (20%).

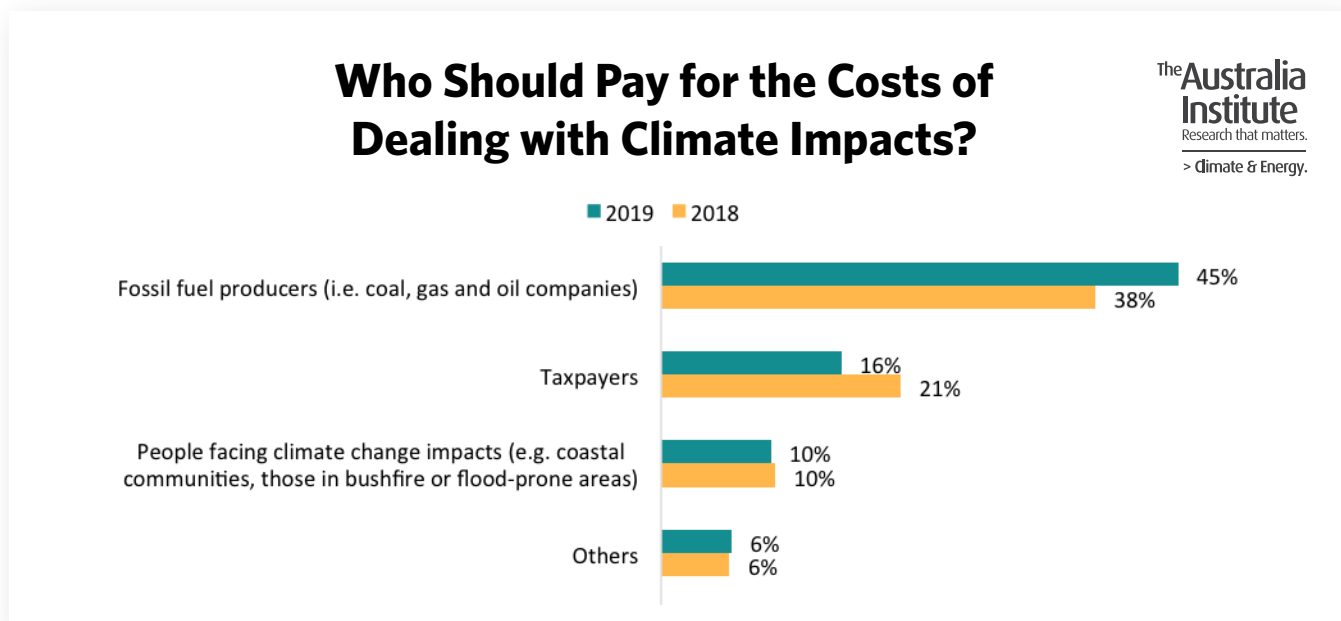
Support for a levy on fossil fuel exports

Australia's fossil fuel industry is dominated by its gas and coal exports. Mining for export has earned Australia a podium place as the third biggest exporter of fossil fuel emissions globally.²⁶ A simple and effective way to ensure fossil fuel companies contribute towards preparing for and protecting from the costs imposed by their products is to impose a levy on exports of fossil fuels.

A majority (62%) of Australians support the introduction of a fossil fuel export levy, with only 21% opposed. Support has increased since 2018, when 59% supported a levy.

There is majority support from most voting groups, including Liberal (57%) and Nationals (53%) voters. Only among One Nation voters do more oppose (45%) than support the levy (38%). People aged 18-34 years old are most in favor (70%) of a fossil fuel levy, but a majority in every age group support a levy (62%, aged 35-54 years old; 56% of those aged 55+)

FIGURE 10.3:
WHO SHOULD PAY FOR THE COSTS OF DEALING WITH CLIMATE IMPACTS?



²⁶ Swann (2019) *High Carbon from a Land Down Under*. <https://www.tai.org.au/content/new-analysis-australia-ranks-third-fossil-fuel-export>

International Action

“Ok is the first Icelandic glacier to lose its status as a glacier.

In the next 200 years all our glaciers are expected to follow the same path.

This monument is to acknowledge that we know what is happening and what needs to be done.

Only you know if we did it.”

AUGUST 2019, 415 PPM CO₂

— Commemorative plaque, former Okjökull glacier

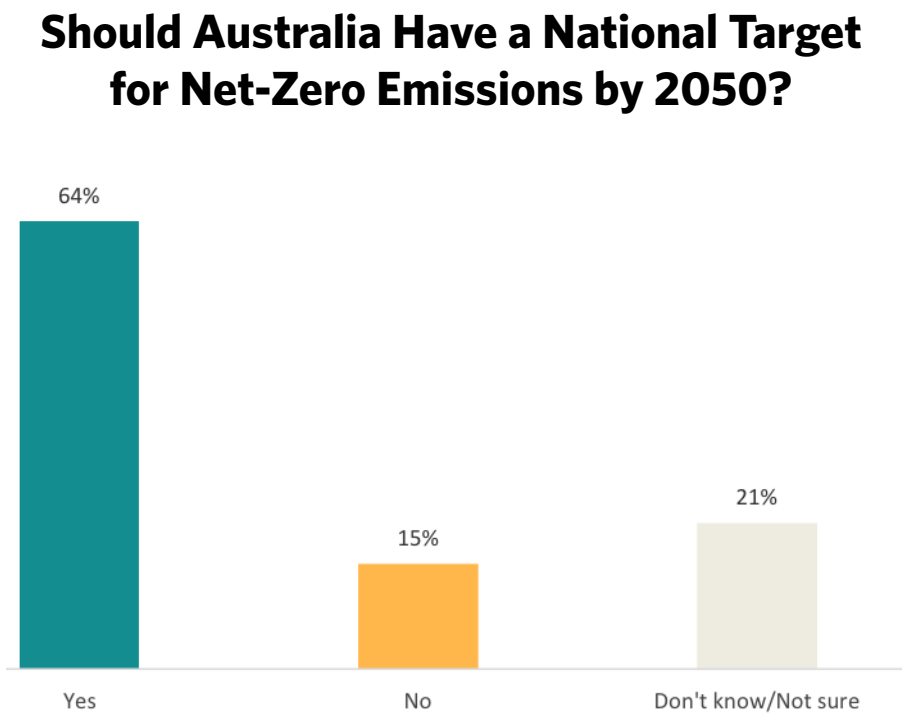
Paris Agreement Targets

Emissions must fall to meet Australia’s nationally determined contribution (NDC) under the Paris Agreement. The reality is that national emissions have been rising for half a decade. Australians are waking up to this fact, with the share of Australians who think Australia’s emissions are rising now at 39%, a five percentage point increase from 2018 (34%). Five times as many Australians think Australia’s emissions are rising as think they are falling (7%).

The goals of the Paris Agreement are to limit global warming to well below 2 degrees, aiming for 1.5 degrees, and to get to net-zero emissions. Two in three Australians (66%) agree that Australia should set targets and implement domestic action towards those goals. Only 10% disagree.

Respondents were also asked about the UK Government’s recently legislated net-zero by 2050 target, noting that most states in Australia have similar net-zero targets. Almost two thirds (64%) of Australians agree that Australia should have a national net-zero emissions target by 2050 (15% no, 21% don’t know).

FIGURE 11.1:
SUPPORT FOR NATIONAL NET-ZERO EMISSIONS TARGET



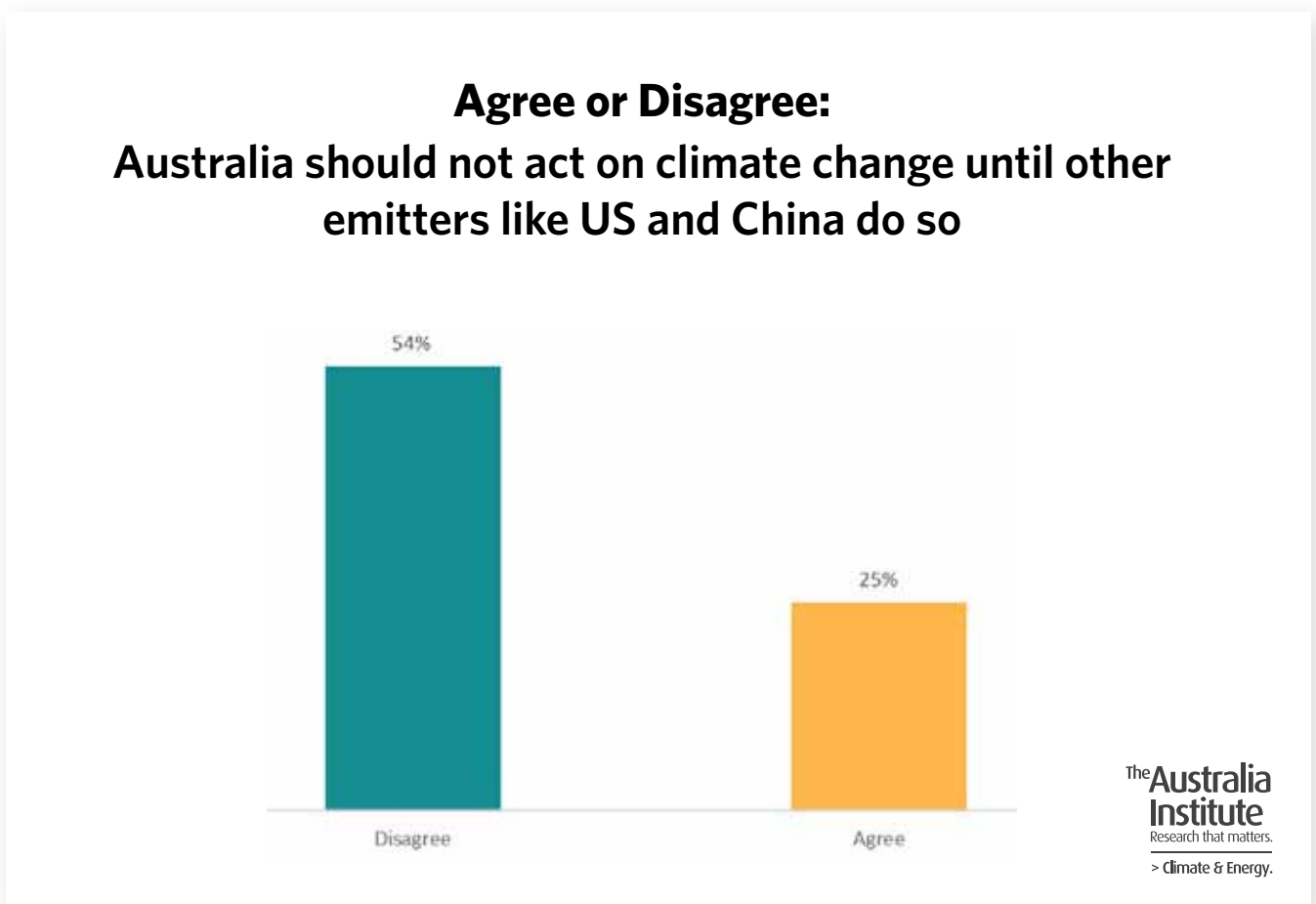
International action

Australian politicians and interest groups who argue against climate action often claim Australia's action makes no difference and that Australia should not act in advance of big emitters like China and the US. Yet on any reasonable assessment of climate action, Australia is far behind most countries and in no danger of acting 'early'.²⁷

Most Australians reject the idea that Australia should not act on climate change until other major emitters like US and China do so (54% disagree, 25% agree). Those 'very' or 'fairly' concerned about climate change are more likely to disagree (73% and 57% disagree, respectively). More Coalition voters disagree with Australia waiting for others to act than support Australia waiting for others (42% disagree vs 37% agree).

Well over half of Australians are now aware of the Paris Agreement, the key UN accord to curb emissions. Those saying they have heard of the agreement has jumped to 59%, up from 49% in 2018 and 46% in 2017. A majority of voters in all parties are aware of the Paris Agreement, strongest amongst Greens voters (76%), National voters (73%) and Liberal voters (63%). A majority of Labor voters and One Nation voters have heard of the Paris Agreement (both 55%).

FIGURE 11.2:
SHOULD AUSTRALIA ACT ON CLIMATE CHANGE?



²⁷ Germanwatch (2019) *Climate Change Performance Index 2019*, <https://www.climate-change-performance-index.org>

UN Climate Summit

The Paris Agreement requires countries to increase ambition over time. The UN has invited all countries who have signed the Paris Agreement, including Australia, to commit to take further action to reduce emissions at the special UN Climate Summit on 23 September 2019.

More than half of Australians (56%) want the country to step up and undertake further climate action to reach the Paris Agreement goal of limiting global warming to 1.5 degrees. The generational divide is huge, with 68% of people aged 18-34 years old supporting further action, compared to 47% of those aged 65+ (58% 35-49 years old, 48% 50-64 years old).

TABLE 11.1: SUPPORT FOR FURTHER CLIMATE ACTION, BY AGE

	Total	Age			
		18-34	35-49	50-64	65+
Take further climate action to reach the Paris Agreement goal (of limiting global warming to 1.5 degrees)	56%	68%	58%	48%	47%
Keep Australia's carbon emissions reduction target the same	25%	14%	24%	31%	37%
Don't know / not sure	19%	18%	18%	22%	16%

Across all political parties, more Australians support a national net-zero emissions target by 2050 than oppose (fig 11.3).

For the first time, the majority of Australians (51%) agree that Australia needs to help vulnerable peoples and developing countries adapt to the negative impacts of climate change (up from 49% last year; 18% disagree). Disagreement is concentrated among those who believe humans are not causing climate change (48% disagree).

Climate foreign aid

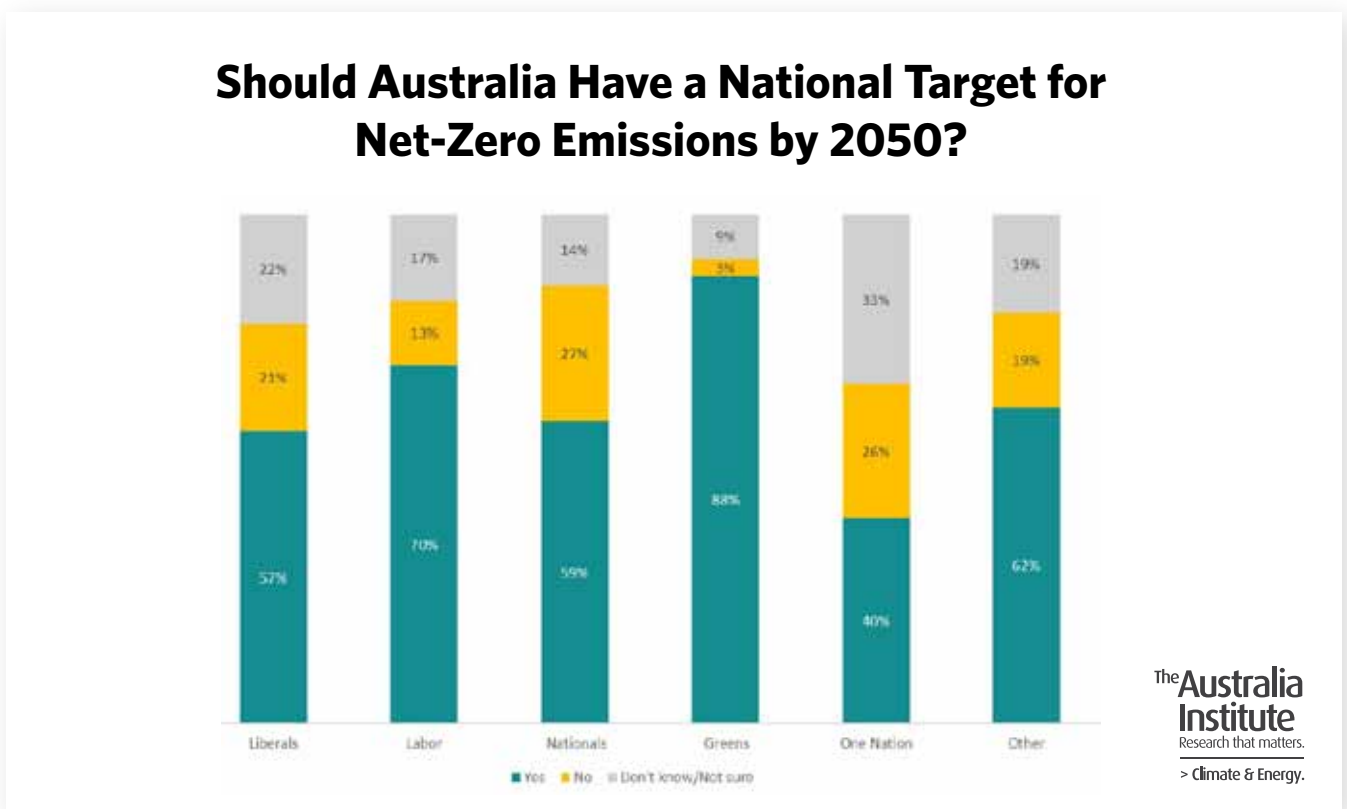
A key part of the Paris Agreement is a commitment for all industrialised countries, like Australia, to provide foreign aid to developing countries including the Pacific Islands to help with the impacts of climate change. Over the last five years, Australia has given \$1 billion in climate foreign aid.

A majority of Australians (63%) support increasing Australia's climate foreign aid commitment or keeping it at the same level. Around one in four Australians (27%) support increasing this commitment and one in three (36%) want it kept at the same level.

The primary international fund to support developing countries with climate action is the UN Green Climate Fund. Australia helped design and manage the Fund, ensuring it had a strong focus on the Pacific, and in 2014 Australia helped kick-start it with \$200 million for its first funding round. With the Fund having spent the initial round of funding on aid projects, it is now seeking contributions for its second funding round. Several industrialised countries have announced they are providing a new pledge of climate foreign aid to the Fund, but in 2018 Prime Minister Morrison stated Australia would not make any further commitments.²⁸

The Prime Minister's stance contrasts with that of two in three Australians (64%), who want Australia to at least contribute the same amount of funding as last time to the Green Climate Fund. Three in five Coalition voters (60%) want the government to maintain or increase its contribution.

FIGURE 11.3:
SUPPORT FOR A NATIONAL TARGET FOR NET-ZERO EMISSIONS BY 2050, BY PARTY



²⁸ Karp (2018) Morrison says Australia won't provide more money for global climate fund. <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2018/oct/08/scott-morrison-resists-calls-to-withdraw-from-paris-climate-agreement>

Demographics

Gender

- Women are more concerned about climate change than men, with 40% 'very concerned' and a further 39% 'fairly concerned', a total of 79%. 33% of male respondents were very concerned and 36% fairly concerned, a total of 70%.
- Similarly, women are more likely to respond that global warming is already causing impacts such as increased heatwaves (57% to 38%), destruction of the Great Barrier Reef (53% to 34%) and more bushfires (43% to 30%).
- Men are more likely than women to be aware of the Paris Agreement, 67% to 51%. However, women are more likely to support policy measures to deliver on Australia's Paris commitments, 66% supporting a serious policy plan compared to 57% of men.

Age

Younger respondents tend to be more concerned about climate change and more supportive of action to reduce emissions. There is a significant difference between the attitudes of respondents aged between 18-34, and those aged 55 and over.

18-34 year olds are:

- More concerned about climate change than over 55s (83% v 67%).
- More likely to agree that Australia's current coal-fired power generation needs to be closed and replaced with clean alternatives, than over 55s (67% v 54%).
- Less likely to be aware of the Paris Agreement than over 55s (54% v 68%), but when asked about it, more likely to agree that Australia should enact a serious policy plan to deliver on Paris commitments to get to net-zero emissions (69% v 53%).
- More likely than over 55s to agree that Australia should be a world leader in climate change action (69% v 54%).
- More likely than over 55s to agree that Australia should set targets and implement domestic action to help limit global warming to 1.5-2 degrees and achieve zero emissions (72% v 59%).
- More likely than over 55s to agree that Australia should take further action at the UN Climate Summit in September 2019 to limit global warming (68% v 47%).
- More likely than over 55s to agree that Australia should replenish the UN Green Climate Fund (77% v 54%). 41% think that Australia should contribute more funding than it contributed last time, compared to 17% of over 55s.
- More likely to agree that managing Australia's transition from the mining boom requires stopping the approval of new coal mines, than are over 55s (72% v 52%).

Urban vs Rural

Major Capital Cities

- More agree that Australia's current coal-fired generation will need to be closed and replaced with clean alternatives (64%) than people living in regional areas (55%).
- More likely to support a moratorium on new coal mines (55%) than people living in regional areas (46%).
- More likely to support government funding to subsidise the expansion of coal, oil and gas industries (39%) than regional Australians (32%).

Rural and Regional Australia

- More likely to be aware of the Paris Agreement (62%) than those who live in major capital cities (57%).
- More likely to consider using less electricity during times of high demand if paid to do so (75%) than those who live in major capital cities (70%).
- More likely to blame the excessive profit margins of electricity companies for the increase in electricity prices (64%) than those who live in major capital cities (53%).

States

New South Wales

- NSW respondents are the most likely to be 'very concerned' about climate change, 42% compared to a national average of 37%.
- NSW respondents are the most concerned about the potential for climate change to damage the Great Barrier Reef, 79% concerned or very concerned, compared to a national average of 76% and just 73% in Queensland.
- NSW respondents are most likely to respond that global warming is already causing droughts and flooding affecting crop production and food supply, 46% compared to a national average of 42%. This perhaps reflects several years of drought conditions through the NSW Murray Darling Basin.

Victoria

- Victorians are most likely to support a levy on fossil fuel exports to help fund local governments' preparations for climate change, with 65% support compared to a national average of 62%.
- Victorians are also most likely to support further climate action in line with the Paris Agreement goal of limiting warming to 1.5 degrees at this year's UN Climate Summit, with 58% support compared to a national average of 56%.
- Similarly, Victorians have the highest support for increasing Australia's contribution to the international Green Climate Fund, with 31% support compared to a national average of 27%.

Queensland

- While 73% of Queenslanders are 'very concerned' or 'fairly concerned' about the destruction of the Great Barrier Reef, this is the lowest level of concern in any state and lower than the national average of 76%.
- Queenslanders are more likely to support a moratorium on new coal mines than they are to oppose it. 49% support a moratorium, 29% oppose it, and 22% don't know or are unsure.
- Almost three quarters (73%) of Queenslanders prefer that Australia's coal-fired power stations are phased out either as soon as possible or gradually. 13% believe that coal does not need to be replaced by other power sources like wind or solar power (compared to the national average of 9%).

Western Australia

- Western Australian opposition to subsidising fossil fuel industries is far above the national average. 53% of Western Australians oppose public funding being used to subsidise coal, oil and gas industries (compared to the national average of 45%).
- 76% of Western Australians believe that the Government needs to implement a plan to ensure the orderly closure of old coal plants and their replacement with clean energy (compared to 70% of all Australians).
- Western Australians are most likely, of all states and territories, to participate in a demand response scheme. 78% of Western Australians would consider reducing electricity during times of peak demand if they were paid (compared to the Australian average of 70%)

South Australia

- South Australians are the most likely to be 'very concerned' about water shortages in cities due to climate change, 51% compared to a national average of 44%.
- South Australians are also the most likely to be 'very concerned' about extreme weather events such as floods and cyclones, 43% compared to a national average of 38%.
- South Australians are least likely to respond that Australian governments' response to climate change is adequate, with just 14% saying that governments are doing enough compared to the national average of 20%.

Tasmania, Australian Capital Territory and Northern Territory

Due to the smaller populations of Tasmania and the Territories, statistically relevant samples could not be separated out of the data for each jurisdiction. As a group these jurisdictions are often the most ambitious in terms of climate action. For example, 75% of respondents support more serious policy planning to reach zero emissions goals compared to 62% nationally. Only 16% of these respondents say Australia should not act on climate change until major emitters like the US and China do, compared to 25% nationally.

Conclusion

Australians want the Federal Government to lead on climate action. Yet after five years of rising emissions and an absence of any credible climate policy, many Australians are looking elsewhere for leadership.

Two thirds of Australians agree that State Governments should put in place incentives for more renewable energy and many states and territories have their own renewable energy targets. Every State Government now has a net-zero emissions by 2050 target, leaving the Federal Government isolated without a long-term plan.

Currently, a number of state energy ministers are pushing for the consideration of a national 2050 target through the Council of Australian Governments (COAG). A long-term plan would also be popular amongst Australians, with almost two thirds in support of a national target of net-zero by 2050.

The Federal Government could face additional pressure to produce an ambitious long-term climate plan at the international level. Under the Paris Agreement, countries are supposed to bring forward long-term plans to reach net-zero emissions. With the UN Climate Action Summit around the corner (on the 23 September 2019), the expectation from the UN Secretary-General is that leaders, including the Prime Minister, come to New York with more than just speeches.

While the Coalition government has struggled to agree on immediate climate and energy policies (such as the National Energy Guarantee), perhaps a long-term plan could be within reach.



The **Australia**
Institute
Research that matters.

> Climate & Energy.