

Briefing note - Emission reductions and coal phase out

April 2018

Key Results

The Australia Institute surveyed 1,557 Australians about a proposed emissions reduction target for 2030 of 45% on 2005 levels. This target is at the bottom of the range recommended by the Climate Change Authority as consistent with the global ‘two degree’ climate goal,¹ and has been proposed by Labor.

Survey respondents were first provided with an explanation of the government’s emission reduction promises under the Paris Agreement: to cut greenhouse gas emissions by 26–28% by 2030 on 2005 levels, and to consider increasing those targets in the future. Respondents were then asked about an increased 2030 emissions reduction target of 45%, as proposed by Labor.

- In total, 56% thought the 45% emission reduction proposal was “about right” or “too low”.
 - 17% of respondents said 45% was “too low”, and 39% thought this was “about right”.
 - 22% of respondents said the 45% proposal was “too high”.
 - 22% said they did not know.
- More voters for every party thought it was either “about right” or “too low” than thought it was “too high”.
 - Green voters were most likely to say it was too low (36% too low, 46% about right).
 - LNP voters were most likely to say it was too high (38% too high, 33% about right, 12% too low).

¹ “[T]he Authority confirms its preliminary recommendations that Australia commit to ... a range of approximately 45 to 65 per cent below 2005 levels”: CCA (2015) *Final Report on Australia’s Future Emissions Reduction Targets*, p 6, <http://climatechangeauthority.gov.au/sites/prod.climatechangeauthority.gov.au/files/Final-report-Australias-future-emissions-reduction-targets.pdf>

In previous polling research conducted by The Australia Institute:

- 44% said Australia is not on track to meet its current 2030 emissions target, while only 25% said it is on track.
- 58% said Australia should increase its ambition on cutting emissions.
- 60% support Australia joining the global alliance promising to phase out coal power by 2030.²

What is required under Paris

The government's current emissions pledge is not consistent with the Paris Agreement's 'well-below two degree' goal, which Australia has signed up to. The Climate Change Authority recommended Australia commit to "... a range of approximately 45 to 65 per cent below 2005 levels".³

The Australia Institute's report *Meeting our Paris Commitments* shows that

- the government's emissions targets in electricity alone (26–28%) are too low for our current Paris emissions pledge (26–28% across the economy), because emissions reductions in electricity are more efficient than other in sectors;
- the government's current emissions pledge is not consistent with Australia's commitment to the Paris Agreement's 'two degree' goal;
- to take action consistent with the Paris Agreement 'two degree' goal, Australia should phase coal power by around 2030.⁴

The report outlines modelling by Jacobs for the Climate Change Authority that considered three different policy mechanisms under a 'two degree' scenario. As shown in figures below, under each scenario, coal is phased out around 2030. (In one scenario, with much higher renewables and lower gas, the coal phase out ends around 2035.)

² The Australia Institute (2018) *Poll shows Australians want stronger emissions reduction targets and 60% want phase out of coal*, <http://www.tai.org.au/content/poll-shows-australians-want-stronger-emissions-reduction-targets-and-60-want-phase-out-coal>

³ CCA (2015) Final Report on Australia's Future Emissions Reduction Targets, p 6, <http://climatechangeauthority.gov.au/sites/prod.climatechangeauthority.gov.au/files/Final-report-Australias-future-emissions-reduction-targets.pdf>

⁴ Campbell (2017) *Meeting Our Paris Commitment*, <http://www.tai.org.au/sites/default/files/P439%20Meeting%20our%20Paris%20Commitment%20-%20TAI%20Climate%20and%20Energy%20Program%20-%20September%202017.pdf>

Figure 13. Generation mix under CET, 2°C scenario

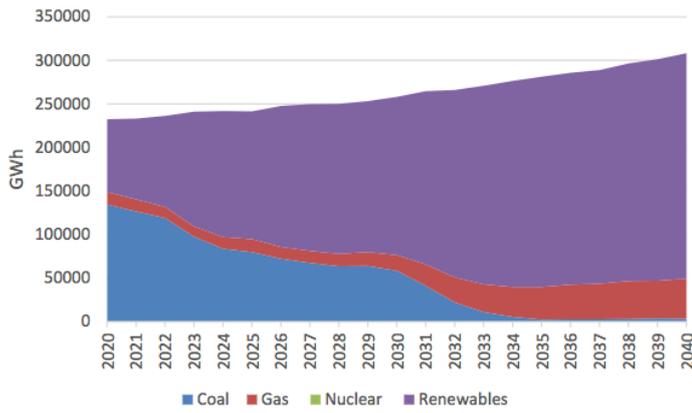
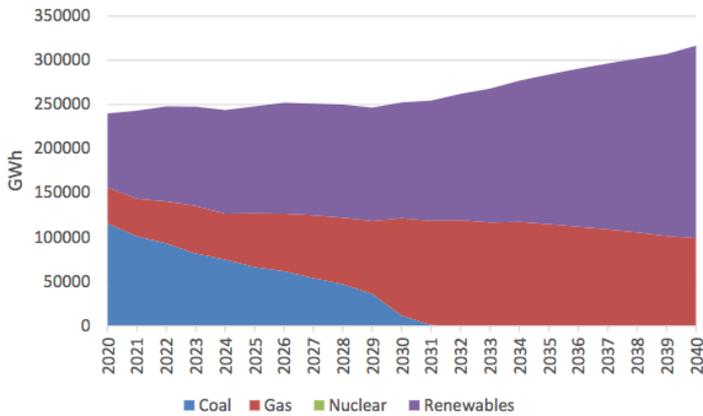
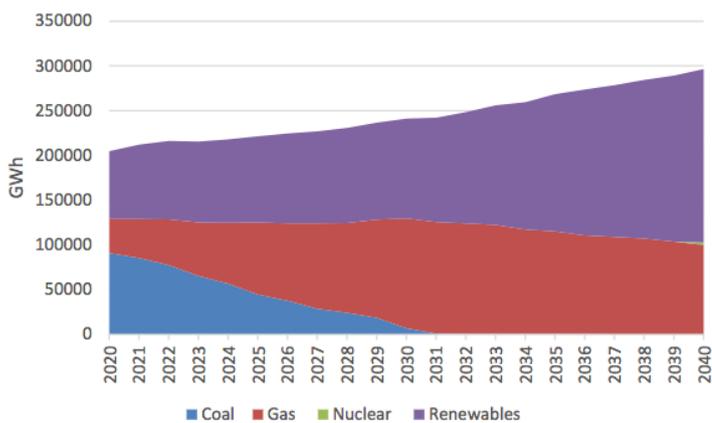


Figure 14. Generation mix under EIS, 2°C scenario



Source: Jacobs (2017) *Modelling illustrative electricity sector emissions reductions policies: Final report*

Figure 15. Generation mix under a carbon price, 2°C scenario



Source: Jacobs (2017) *Modelling illustrative electricity sector emissions reductions policies: Final report*

Method

The Australia Institute conducted a national survey of 1,557 people between 27 March and 7 April 2018 online through Research Now with nationally representative samples by gender, age and state and territory.

Results are shown only for larger states.

Voting crosstabs show voting intentions for the lower house. Those who were undecided were asked which way they were leaning; these leanings are included in voting intention crosstabs, but results are also shown separately for undecideds. “LNP” includes separate responses for Liberal and National. “Other” includes Nick Xenophon Team and Independent/Other.

Detailed results

In the Paris climate agreement, the Australian government promised to cut greenhouse gas emissions by 26–28% by 2030 on 2005 levels. The government also promised to consider increasing targets in the future. Labor has proposed an increased 2030 emissions reduction target of 45%.

In your view is the 45% proposed target

	Total	Male	Female	NSW	Qld	VIC	WA
too low - Australia should reduce emissions by more than 45%	17%	16%	18%	17%	17%	17%	16%
about right - Australia should reduce emissions by 45%	39%	37%	40%	40%	40%	36%	41%
too high - Australia should reduce emissions by less than 45%	22%	27%	16%	18%	22%	25%	21%
Don't know / not sure	22%	20%	25%	25%	20%	22%	22%

	Total	LNP	ALP	GRN	PHON	Other	Undec
too low - Australia should reduce emissions by more than 45%	17%	12%	18%	36%	19%	16%	16%
about right - Australia should reduce emissions by 45%	39%	33%	50%	46%	27%	24%	29%
too high - Australia should reduce emissions by less than 45%	22%	38%	10%	6%	33%	18%	18%
Don't know / not sure	22%	17%	23%	13%	22%	41%	37%