

Climate body says Australia emissions target 'not credible'

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This photo taken on October 12, 2006 shows exhaust stacks in Ayr, Australia, pumping plumes of smoke and steam into the air

The Australian government's climate change agency warned Thursday that Canberra's five percent emissions reduction target was "not credible" compared with other countries and called for it to be tripled.

The Climate Change Authority (CCA) said Australia risked losing its competitive edge if it did not accelerate emissions reduction strategies.

Instead of the current commitment to lower [greenhouse gas emissions](#) by five percent of 2000 levels by 2020, it said Australia ought to target a minimum reduction of 15 percent.

Doing so would only slow annual growth in average per person income by 0.02 percent, the authority said in a new report.

"The five percent minimum (at) present isn't credible in terms of the task that has to be done and the timeframe," said CCA chairman Bernie Fraser, a former Reserve Bank of Australia governor.

CCA is an independent body set up by the previous Labor government and which the new conservative administration is trying to abolish.

The report said Australia's five percent target—due to be reviewed by the government by April 30—was weaker than that of "many other comparable countries".

In the United States the target was a 17 percent reduction on 2005 levels by 2020, Britain was aiming for a 34 percent off 1990 levels and Norway was targeting a 30-40 percent decrease from the same period.

The world's heaviest emitters, China and the US, were both "stepping up their efforts on climate change", the report added, with initiatives including investment in renewable energy, tightening of vehicle emissions standards and local emissions trading pilot schemes.

"A target of 15 percent for Australia would be more in line with the targets being pursued by such countries," the report said.

Prime Minister Tony Abbott once described the science behind man-made climate change as "absolute crap" and dismisses any link between global warming and increasing frequency of events such as drought and

wildfires.

He abolished the previous government's independent [climate change](#) watchdog, the Climate Commission, soon after assuming power last September and has introduced legislation to axe the Climate Change Authority as well.

His is the first Australian post-war administration not to have a science minister.

One of Abbott's key election promises was to repeal a corporate pollution tax aimed at the nation's worst emitters, to be replaced with a controversial "direct action" plan of planting trees, sequestering carbon in soil and paying businesses incentives not to pollute.

Australia is among the world's worst per capita polluters due to its reliance on coal-fired power and mining exports.

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