

Australia PM defends coal after UN warning on climate

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Coal is stockpiled at the coal port of Newcastle in Australia's New South Wales state on April 25, 2012

Australian Prime Minister Tony Abbott on Tuesday defended using coal to generate energy as "the foundation of our prosperity", after the United Nations warned that carbon emissions were leading to disaster.

UN climate experts said on Sunday that emissions of three key [greenhouse gases](#) were at their highest levels in more than 800,000 years

and Earth was on track for temperatures to rise by at least four degrees Celsius (7.2 degrees Fahrenheit) by 2100 over pre-industrial times.

Asked about the issue, Abbott said that [coal](#), a key export commodity for Australia and source of [energy](#), was still critical to the nation's economy.

"For the foreseeable future coal is the foundation of our prosperity," he told reporters in Sydney.

"Coal is the foundation of the way we live because you can't have a modern lifestyle without energy. You can't have a modern economy without energy and for now and for the foreseeable future, the foundation of Australia's energy needs will be coal."

Abbott said the fossil fuel was also crucial for the world's energy needs and would help raise living standards in less developed countries.

"If we are serious about maintaining and improving living standards in countries like Australia we have to be serious about making the best use of coal," he added.

Coal, gas and oil are the main source of global [carbon emissions](#) but also the backbone of the world's energy supply.



A truckload of coking coal arrives at the BlueScope Steel refinery in Port Kembla near Sydney on November 22, 2011

In its landmark review the UN's Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) warned that unless carbon emissions were arrested, warming would bring worsening drought, flood, rising seas and species extinctions.

Abbott, who once said climate change science was "absolute crap", has previously made comments supportive of the mining industry, which produces the country's top two exports—iron ore and coal.

In opening a Queensland mine last month, he declared "coal is good for humanity", adding that it was "very important that we sustain our faith in coal".

And since coming to power in 2013, he has abolished a carbon tax on

[greenhouse gas emissions](#) as well as a mining tax on coal and iron ore profits.

Following the release of the IPCC report, the Australian Greens called on for the nation's [coal industry](#), worth some Aus\$39.8 billion (US\$34.6 billion) a year, to be scrapped.

"Four degrees is an unliveable planet, it is death to humanity," Greens leader Christine Milne said on Monday.

"Coal is bad for humanity and Tony Abbott is bad for Australia—he is actually driving global warming with his economic policy and putting our future at risk not only environmentally and socially, but economically as well."

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