

Australia must commit to net-zero emissions says climate scientist

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Murdoch University climate scientist Dr. Jatin Kala says coal needs to stay in the ground and fossil fuel emissions phased to net-zero starting now in order to limit global warming and its disastrous impacts.

Speaking at a seminar on the regulation of greenhouse gases for the National Environmental Law Association, Dr. Kala warned that under current projections, the globe is likely to be warmer by 1.5 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels between 2030 and 2050.

The approval of recent projects such as the Adani coal mine in Queensland go against the required global effort in keeping coal in the ground, he said.

"All of our efforts should instead be on [renewable energy sources](#). The long-term consequences of [global warming](#) far outweigh any short-term economic benefits of coal mining for [energy production](#)," Dr. Kala said.

"Clear Federal policies, legislation and guidelines are required to help achieve this goal, which would bring Australia in line with other countries that have committed to reaching net zero carbon emissions by the second half of the century.

"Storing and capturing carbon will not be enough to offset all our current emissions. The scale in the reductions required means we have no choice but to bring the burning of fossil fuels to an end as soon as we can."

According to 2015 figures, 86 percent of Australia's electricity is generated from fossil fuel energy sources like [coal](#) and gas. Renewable energy sources like hydropower, wind and roof top solar panels make up the remainder.

Under the Paris Agreement, Australia has committed to reducing greenhouse gas emissions by 26-28 percent below 2005 levels by 2030.

CO₂ and other emissions have already resulted in average global [warming](#) of 1°C above pre industrial levels, with higher figures recorded in regional areas like South-West Western Australia.

Dr. Kala was one of the lead authors on the latest report from the IPCC (Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change) that warned even limiting global warming to 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels could still have dire consequences for Western Australia and other parts of Australia.

"The warming globally will not be linear. Some regions will experience average temperature rises that are higher than this," Dr. Kala said.

"The hotter and drier conditions are already having disastrous impacts on those regions.

"[Research](#) has shown the heatwave of 2010-11 in South-West WA had repercussions across the land and sea, wiping out native plants and animals, and causing damaging insect outbreaks."

Dr. Kala also told the seminar that climate extremes would increase the intensity and frequency of impacts like power blackouts, water restrictions, flooding and coral bleaching.

"Projections are showing that impacts at 2°C of warming as opposed to 1.5°C are significantly worse," he said.

Provided by Murdoch University

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