

Australia PM Abbott defends emissions target

15 August 2015



Industrial chimneys belch emissions across Botany Bay in Sydney

Prime Minister Tony Abbott on Saturday defended Australia's carbon pollution reduction target as in line with those of other countries after the nation's climate change authority criticised the goal as "disappointing".

The government on Tuesday announced plans to reduce [greenhouse gas emissions](#) by 26 to 28 percent of 2005 levels by 2030, well below the level recommended by the independent Climate Change Authority which advises the government on the issue.

In Adelaide on Saturday, Abbott defended the target, saying it was on a par with that of the United States and far better than those of South Korea and China, the world's biggest carbon polluter.

"When it comes to emissions per capita, our target, a target that we are absolutely confident that we can and will meet, is the best in the world," he said, Australian Associated Press reported.

"So let's not have anyone say that this is a

government which is indifferent to environmental outcomes."

The Climate Change Authority has suggested a target of cuts of more than 40 percent.

"The government's target of a 26-28 percent reduction in total emissions (which is what counts most when it comes to containing [global warming](#)) would put Australia at or near the bottom of the group of countries we generally compare ourselves with," the authority said in a statement late Friday.

Bernie Fraser, who heads the authority, said Australia's targets were "well below what we recommended and that's disappointing".

"And in per capita terms, our emissions will remain about the highest of the wealthy, developed countries," he told the Australian Broadcasting Corporation on Saturday.



Australian Prime Minister Tony Abbott speaks during a visit to New Zealand, in Wellington, in April 2015

With its heavy use of coal-fired power and relatively small population of 23 million, Australia is

considered one of the world's worst per capita greenhouse gas polluters.

Asked about Abbott's claims that the proposed per capita reductions were better than any other comparable country, Fraser said: "There are different ways of presenting these kinds of figures and I think the fact is that, in per capita [emissions](#) terms, Australia's still going to be pretty much out in the vanguard, whatever the reduction is."

"You know, when you're coming from a pretty high base... you've got a lot of catching up to do," he said.

Fraser said Australia's targets were "pretty clearly at the bottom" and did not match the requirement needed.

"All countries are not doing enough at the present time and Australia is not reducing a fair share, even of what is being done at the moment," he said.

Australia is expected to take its targets to a UN climate conference in Paris at the end of the year at which organisers hope to conclude a pact limiting global warming to two degrees Celsius (3.6 degrees Fahrenheit) over pre-industrial levels.

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