

## Victoria's energy transition and the decarbonisation of Victoria by 2050

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The challenges of decarbonising Victoria's \$400 billion economy and transitioning to net zero emissions by 2050 as the population continues to grow towards 10 million, is one of the State's biggest environmental challenges. The Victorian [State of the Environment \(SoE\) 2018](#) report analyses 9 energy and 14 climate change indicators and delivers recommendations for Victoria's energy systems in the light of the 2015 Paris Agreement and the State's *Climate Change Act 2017*. "The report tells a story of good progress in some areas and slow progress in others," says Victorian Commissioner for Environmental Sustainability, Dr Gillian Sparkes. "We must remain focused and committed to the job of decarbonising Victoria."

Victoria's *Climate Change Act 2017* is an example of legislation that will help Victoria to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. The Act sits alongside other key Victorian Government energy and climate change initiatives including [Victoria's Climate Change Adaptation Plan 2017-2020](#), the [Energy Efficiency and Productivity Strategy](#) and [Renewable Energy Action Plan](#).

The Act specifically requires the Premier and relevant Minister to establish five-yearly interim targets to keep Victoria on track for meeting the 2050 targets. The Act requires government consultation with environmental experts to advise on options for the interim targets; indicative trajectories for Victoria to 2050 based on interim target options; and efficient and cost-effective opportunities for achieving the interim targets. "According to the Act, the interim emissions targets for the 2021-25 and 2026-30 periods must be set on or before 31 March 2020," says Dr Sparkes, who provides a detailed recommendation in the SoE for the Victorian Government to provide clarity on developing appropriate measures and indicators for tracking the impact of energy emissions reduction to meet interim targets.

The Independent Expert Panel constituted under the *Climate Change Act 2017* prescribes a path to decarbonisation through an energy transition in electricity generation, transport, industry and the built environment. Major opportunities include:

- Shifting to zero- and low-carbon electricity generation
- Electrification of energy services (combined with low-carbon electricity)
- Increasing end-use efficiencies
- Integration of high concentrations of distributed energy resources (including rooftop solar and small-scale battery storage)
- Victoria's transport infrastructure reducing its reliance on fossil fuel combustion for energy with increased charging infrastructure for electric vehicles
- Wider adoption of Green Building Council's Green Star Communities.

The Victorian State of the Environment 2018 Report measures Victoria's progress against the UN Sustainable Development Goal 7 'Affordable and Clean Energy'.

| SDG Target   | Status | Trend     | Data Quality |
|--|--------|-----------|--------------|
| 7.1 By 2030, ensure universal access to affordable, reliable and modern energy services    | Fair   | Improving | Good         |
| 7.2 By 2030, increase substantially the share of renewable energy in the global energy mix | Poor   | Improving | Fair         |
| 7.3 By 2030, double the global rate of improvement in energy efficiency                    | Poor   | Stable    | Good         |

SOURCE: VICTORIAN [STATE OF THE ENVIRONMENT 2018 REPORT](#)

"A critical part of my job is to shine a light on areas of the state's environment that are working well, and those we need to improve," says Dr Sparkes. The energy indicators in the SoE 2018 report include energy use per capita, per capita transport energy use and total net energy consumption by industry sector. The data is collected from a range of sources including the Victorian Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (DELWP), the Commonwealth Department of Environment and Energy, Australian Energy Statistics, National Greenhouse Gas Inventory and the NEM Review. It is sobering that the only energy indicator in the SoE 2018 report that is fair, rather than poor, is total electricity consumption," says Dr Sparkes. "We have a Climate Change Act, we have targets, but there is clearly still much work to transition to net zero emissions in Victoria by 2050."

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The Commissioner's role is to provide independent and objective scientific reporting to inform policy-makers, scientists and the wider Victorian community on the state's natural environment.