

IWDA SUBMISSION TO THE CLIMATE CHANGE AUTHORITY

August 2019

The International Women's Development Agency (IWDA) is the leading Australian international development agency entirely focussed on women's rights and gender equality in the Asia Pacific region. IWDA exists to advance the rights of women and girls, in all their diversity. This includes drawing attention to the gendered effects of climate change and the ways in which Australia's domestic policies influence climate outcomes within and outside of our borders.

ALIGNING DOMESTIC POLICY WITH FOREIGN POLICY OBJECTIVES

The Australian Government's *Pacific Step-Up* is a multi-faceted plan to more closely engage with our neighbours in the Pacific. This plan plays a key role in Australia's foreign policy objectives: supporting strong and resilient neighbouring governments, enabling all people to participate in the global economy, working for gender equality, and continuing to advance and protect Australia's interests through high-quality global and regional engagement.¹ Additionally, Australia has made strong commitments to gender equality in the international development program and throughout all areas of our foreign policy engagement which make us a well-respected partner, regionally and internationally.

However, the goodwill Australia has generated through these commitments is undermined by our current domestic policies on climate change. Despite investments in adaptation and mitigation in the Pacific through the international development program, Australia has not taken commensurate action to reduce our emissions. The Pacific Islands Forum (PIF, 14-15 August 2019) provides evidence of the ways Australia's domestic stance puts us in tension with regional interests and how this impacts our role and reputation in the region. Leaders of Pacific Island nations have noted with deep concern the incongruity between the Australian Government's policies supporting the Australian coal industry, and their own safety and sovereignty.²

While we acknowledge it falls outside the terms of this inquiry, IWDA's position is that Australia's current emissions reductions target is insufficient, and that we should commit to a carbon neutral economy by 2050.³ At a minimum, the CCA should make recommendations that will enable Australia to meet its current target without using carry over credits. This is the critical first step in rebuilding our credibility and aligning our foreign and domestic policies to ensure we maintain our relationships with the Pacific region while delivering for the Australian people. If the Australian Government continues to minimise the existential threat climate change poses to Australia and to our Pacific neighbours, we risk losing regional influence at a time when it is needed most. The recommendations included in this submission outline the ways in which the CCA can take a gender inclusive approach to align Australia's domestic and foreign policies and climate change work.

¹ DFAT 2017

² Lyons 2019

³ IWDA 2019

HEEDING THE EXPERTISE OF FRONTLINE COMMUNITIES IN THE PACIFIC

IWDA reiterates the calls made by Pacific Island leaders in the [Nadi Bay Declaration](#) from the Pacific Islands Development Forum, and by Pacific feminists at the Pacific Feminist Forum.⁴ We, like Pacific Island leaders, are concerned by the ‘lack of comprehension, ambition or commitment’ from developed nations such as Australia to take the ambitious, immediate action that is needed to slow and mitigate the current climate crisis.

We echo Pacific Island leaders in calling for “an immediate global ban on the construction of new coal-fired power plants and coalmines” and for all countries to “rapidly phase out their use of coal in the power sector.”

RECOMMENDATION 1: The Australian Government must immediately stop using carry-over credits to meet our Paris Agreement emissions reduction targets

RECOMMENDATION 2: The Australian Government must immediately stop new coal mining projects and begin phasing out existing coal mines and coal-fired power plants, prioritising the closure of the 75% of coal-fired power stations currently operating outside of their lifetime

RECOMMENDATION 3: The Australian Government must immediately take action to improve the Emissions Reduction Fund (now called the ‘Climate Solutions Fund’) by

- a) Overhauling the safeguard mechanism to prevent big polluters from increasing their baselines
- b) Overhauling the safeguard mechanism to hold big polluters accountable by instituting steep fines for those who do not meet emissions commitments
- c) Preventing funding from prolonging the life of coal-fired power plants or subsidising new coal-fired power plants

RECOMMENDATION 4: The Australian Government must reintroduce high-impact emission reduction policies such as carbon pricing to accelerate the rate at which emissions are reduced, put the burden of pollution on producers, and generate critical tax revenue to fund the essential services Australians need

GENDERED COSTS AND IMPACTS OF CLIMATE CHANGE

People experience climate change differently based on where they live, their profession, their socio-economic class and their gender.⁵ This is true in extremely climate-vulnerable countries like Tuvalu, and in countries like Australia.

Climate change is expensive, and the costs are gendered. According to a May 2019 report from the Climate Council, climate change will result in enormous consequences for Australians and the Australian economy: reduced agricultural productivity is projected to exceed \$19 billion by 2030, and more than \$4 trillion, or \$61,000 per person, by 2100; damage-related loss of property value for homes in low-lying and climate-vulnerable areas will cost Australian homeowners \$611 billion by 2050; and economy-wide losses due to heatwaves (such as the \$800 million in direct financial losses from the January 2009 heatwave) will have catastrophic consequences.⁶ As Australia’s agricultural systems continue to suffer, our exports will decrease, the cost of food will increase, and we will fail to meet the needs of Australians and our trade partners.

All of these consequences are gendered. Women have less access to resources and capital and are more likely to work in the public sector—jobs that are often cut in times of national recessions and economic downturns. This means women are less able to cope with the economic and financial shocks that will result from climate change in Australia. Further, women are fourteen times **more likely to die** during a natural disaster than men, and during food shortages and times of economic hardship, women experience higher rates of malnutrition, and violence from male partners and family members.⁷ Gendered consequences don’t just impact women, as research in the Murray-Darling Basin shows: men in areas affected by extreme water stress and shortages are facing identity crises and increasing social isolation and, as a result, have substantially higher rates of suicide than women in these same areas and their male urban counterparts.⁸

⁴ Pacific Islands Development Forum 2019; Pacific Islands Forum 2018; Pacific Feminist Forum 2019; Morton 2019

⁵ Women and Gender Constituency 2018

⁶ Climate Council of Australia 2019, 1

⁷ Mcleod et al. 2018

⁸ Alston 2011, 65–66

These communities are experiencing some of the most severe consequences of climate change, yet have little input into the policies that perpetuate it. Australians are already bearing the significant, gendered costs of climate change.

The negative and harmful impacts of climate change upon women is exacerbated by their exclusion from decision-making spaces. Women are underrepresented in formal leadership positions at all levels of government, and are similarly underrepresented in the bodies that make decisions on climate change prevention, adaptation and mitigation policies.⁹ Women in Australia have long contributed to the farm economy, but continue to go unacknowledged and underrepresented in water and land management and decision-making bodies.¹⁰ This means that the important knowledge women have about climate change is left out of policies and strategies. When women *are* involved in decision-making, **climate change policies are more ambitious** and have better outcomes.¹¹ Ambitious policies to protect our planet are in the public interest.

RECOMMENDATION 5: The Climate Change Authority should take into account gender considerations in all of its recommendations

RECOMMENDATION 6: The Climate Change Authority should consult with women and women's rights organisations, in all research, recommendations, toolkits and guidance papers

PREPARING THE AUSTRALIAN ECONOMY TO TAKE ADVANTAGE OF THE GLOBAL TRANSITION TO NET ZERO

There are significant economic and social opportunities for Australia in the transition to a net zero economy. By taking a gender transformative approach, the Australian Government can assist in the positioning of the Australian economy to best take advantage of opportunities associated with the global transition to net zero emissions, while also striving for the principle of equity as outlined in Box 2 of the consultation paper. The Australian economy will thrive when all of its people have opportunities to benefit from decent, dignified work.

Recent research shows that a 10-30% 'subsidy swap' towards renewable energy sources would not only **pay for the transition to clean energy**, but would also lead to a global GDP increase of 0.2% and a carbon emissions decline of between 2.32% and 10% by 2030 compared to baseline scenarios; produce millions of jobs worldwide; contribute to positive public health outcomes and reduction in health spending; and, moreover, slow the effects of climate change.¹²

RECOMMENDATION 7: Increase the numbers of women and girls, in all their diversity, in STEM jobs by actively promoting inclusion through education, training, advertising and cultural shifts within male-dominated environments

RECOMMENDATION 8: Fund re-training opportunities for people currently engaged in high-emission industries, such as coal, to take advantage of the highly-skilled workforce and reduce hardships from coal plant/mine closures

RECOMMENDATION 9: Ensure funding for training and education programs towards marginalised and Indigenous communities to ensure historically underserved populations are actively engaged in decent work emerging from the transition to net zero

RECOMMENDATION 10: Re-appropriate a minimum of 10-30% of Australia's fossil-fuel subsidies to fund research into and construction of renewable energy sources such as wind and solar farms

⁹ Eastin 2018; UNISDR, UNDP, and IUCN 2009

¹⁰ Alston 2011

¹¹ Mavisakalyan and Tarverdi 2019

¹² Bridle et al. 2019

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