

Engage Victoria
Victorian Government
1 Treasury Place
East Melbourne VIC 3002

4 April 2025

To whom it may concern,

Re: Victoria's 2026-30 Climate Change Strategy

On behalf of Geelong Sustainability, we support the Victorian Government's intent to build on the progress and foundations from the first Climate Change Strategy 2021-25, particularly the focus on reducing emissions and strengthening climate resilience over the next five years - and beyond.

The next five years are very likely to provide further opportunities for climate action alongside greater climate challenges than ever before. Our submission is influenced by several major factors impacting upon our region, in particular:

- The rapid development and deployment of renewable and battery technologies and related infrastructure.
- Community support for reducing carbon emissions remaining strong but having declined in recent years.
- Increasing risks from weather and climate extremes, including 'compound events' where multiple hazards occur together or in sequence.
- Keeping average global temperature below 1.5°C, without overshoot, is almost certainly out of reach.
- Climate change disproportionately impacting the vulnerable, and exacerbating inequalities, due to a cost-of-living crisis, unaffordable housing and rising insurance premiums.
- High geopolitical uncertainty and disruption, elevating the importance of national energy security and resilient supply chains.

About Geelong Sustainability

[Geelong Sustainability](https://geelongsustainability.org.au) is a multi-award-winning not-for-profit community organisation and registered charity that supports residents of Geelong and surrounding regions to live more sustainably and address the climate emergency. Since our establishment in 2007, we have been at the forefront of environmental advocacy, community education, and sustainability initiatives, with extensive networks in community, government, and business throughout Geelong and the Barwon region.

Meeting the 2026-30 challenge

In providing this submission, we acknowledge the leadership of the Victorian government over the past five years in achieving significant carbon emissions reductions and in supporting the transition away from fossil fuels.

Multiple benefits have flowed from the 2020-25 strategy and this is why our suggestions for priorities for the next five years uses the 2020-25 five-point plan as a base.

We propose that the Victorian Government gives consideration to the following.

A clean energy economy

The clean energy transition is reducing carbon emissions, cutting energy costs for households and businesses and creating thousands of jobs for Victorians.

Extreme weather events during 2020-25 had an unprecedented impact on Victorians and climate risks will increase further over the following decades with sea-level very likely rising into the next century. To avoid the worst outcomes from climate change, greater effort is needed to reduce emissions and accelerate electrification.

The [Climate Council](#)'s analysis shows that Australia must strive for a 75% emissions cut below 2005 levels by 2030, and net zero emissions by 2035 so we can help hold global warming at the safest levels possible. This suggests that the long-term safety of Victorians warrants a strengthening of the state's existing emissions reduction targets – not to mention the need to reduce the substantial economic, social and environmental costs that are increasingly being felt from not reducing emissions fast enough.

We also urge the Government to accelerate the transition from gas to electricity and ensure a focus on the large emitters in our state reducing their emissions. As a country which exports around 80% of its gas, we need to divert some of this gas to domestic use without opening up any new gas fields. We seek a commitment to no new fossil fuel projects and a clear plan to retire existing fossil fuel projects and safe and ethical decommissioning. Geelong Sustainability supports the ambitions of [Renew Australia for All](#) “to create a fairer, cleaner, safer Australia for all of us; where everyone can share in the benefits, jobs and opportunities of our clean energy future – now and for generations to come”. This includes ambitious electrification and specific initiatives for the most vulnerable in our community to ensure that no one is left behind.

Finally, consideration should be given to regional emissions reduction plans to strengthen accountabilities and encourage innovation.

Innovation for the future

Geelong Sustainability encourages continued investments in new technologies, pilot schemes and other initiatives to reach net zero emissions as soon as possible. However, given the urgency of rapid emissions reductions, it is essential that the focus remains on deployment of existing and proven technologies.

Geelong Sustainability's [Climate Safe Rooms](#) project is an example of an innovative, low cost and high-impact community initiative to support people with complex healthcare needs that become worse during heatwaves and extreme cold. One room in their home is modified to ensure it does not become uncomfortably hot in summer or too cold in winter. The modifications may include: insulating rooms; efficient reverse cycle air-conditioners; small solar system; and window coverings or external blinds.

This project has already achieved significant improvements in health, sustainability and energy savings for vulnerable households and is ready to be scaled. An application for \$2m Climate Safe Rooms funding (for 100 homes) will be submitted to the Disaster Ready Fund, which supports disaster resilience and risk reduction.

Resilient farms and forests

Geelong Sustainability supports investing in Victoria's natural environment to improve biodiversity, protect our lands, waterways and forests and to sequester carbon dioxide. Nature based solutions are fundamental to ensuring both environmental and community resilience to a changing climate, as well as supporting emissions reductions.

As agriculture is one of the largest emissions sources in the state, agricultural practices that reduce emissions and protect and improve environmental assets are essential to meeting our climate targets - and guaranteeing ongoing food security.

Climate smart businesses and communities

Geelong Sustainability welcomes the Victorian Government's support for communities and businesses in the clean energy transition and in reducing their energy bills. We encourage further support through 2026-30 for investments in solar panels and residential batteries, energy efficiency upgrades and electrification through the Victorian Energy Upgrades program and Solar Homes programs - particularly for vulnerable communities. We also support reducing emissions from waste and investments in improving public transport.

We would like to see greater investment in local communities to create secure, well-paid jobs to support the clean energy transition alongside skills development, education and training to expand and diversify the electrification workforce.

A climate resilient Victoria

Since further changes to the climate are locked in for several decades, with unprecedented risks and challenges very likely, climate adaptation and strengthening resilience needs to be a high priority. The Victorian Government has done some very good planning in this area but, with the science indicating global temperatures potentially breaching 2.5°C, the level of investment required is likely to be much higher than what has been anticipated. Identifying, assessing and responding to climate-related risks across regions will be required and with close and sustained engagement with communities, including Traditional Owners.

While community support for action on climate change remains strong, research by [Essential Research](#) shows that 54% (down five since October 2021) said "climate change is happening and is caused by human activity", while 35% (up five) thought "we are just witnessing a normal fluctuation in the earth's climate". This is the lowest lead for human activity in Essential's graph which goes back to 2016.

Geelong Sustainability is concerned about the lack of investment, at all levels of government, in supporting communities to understand 'the why?' of climate change and the energy transition. Misinformation and disinformation in these areas has accelerated and the general public is confused about the facts and many have lost sight of the criticality around a

successful energy transition. The social licence for deployment of renewable technologies and batteries is being eroded and stronger community engagement is needed to better understand the benefits of the energy transition for a safer future, cleaner environment, jobs growth and for social justice.

Better communication on climate change needs to be accompanied with investments in skills and training, including for organisations that already have strong community connectivity and trust.

Summary

Geelong Sustainability encourages the Victorian Government to build upon its achievements over the past five years and, over 2026-30, to:

- Strengthen the state's existing emissions reduction targets, consistent with the science, and accelerate the transition from gas to electricity.
- Ensure the focus remains on deployment of existing and proven technologies while making investments in new technologies, pilot schemes and other innovations that include those with high community benefit and relatively low cost.
- Continue support for investments in solar panels and residential batteries, energy efficiency upgrades and electrification, particularly to support the health and well-being of vulnerable communities.
- Invest in climate adaptation and building resilience, including through strengthening the social license for the energy transition, while actively addressing misinformation and disinformation.

Yours sincerely,

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Chair

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