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Australian Government flies white flag of surrender as it falls short on required emissions cuts

The Australian government has just announced a 2020 target range that falls short of what is required to avert dangerous climate change, Climate Action Network Association (CANA) has said.

“The Government's 2020 target range is 5% on 2000 levels, rising to 15% only if other developed countries come on board. Even then, there is no clarity about what this would mean. This falls far short of what is required to avoid dangerous climate change” said Dr Nina Hall, National Coordinator of Climate Action Network Australia (CANA).

“This is not a White Paper on climate change, this is a White Flag. The Australian government appears to have all but given up on avoiding dangerous climate change” continued Dr Hall

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) has repeatedly warned that restricting global warming to 2°C, the commonly accepted threshold for dangerous climate change, requires that developed countries like Australia cut greenhouse gas emissions by 25 to 40% by 2020. This advice has been repeatedly acknowledged by the Australian government.

CANA is the peak non-government on climate change in Australia, with 60 member organisations representing social, environmental and legal concerns. In August this year, the majority of CANA's member organisations released a policy calling for greenhouse emissions to peak by 2010 and to be cut by at least 40 percent by 2020 (on 1990 levels).

If Australia's 2020 target range was replicated internationally, atmospheric levels of greenhouse gases would rise to around 550ppm, causing the earth would warm by over 3 degrees. Under this scenario, Australia would lose the Great Barrier Reef, the Kakadu wetlands, much of the Murray Darling Basin, and many of its famous beaches.

“Prime Minister Rudd said he was aiming for a 'balanced approach'. But there will be no balance with a target as low as this. Either we significantly reduce our emissions or we risk dangerous climate change and all that this will bring”, Dr Hall said.

Dr Hall added, “The real test for the Rudd Government's climate policy is whether it successfully avoids dangerous climate change. Today, on this score, the Australian government has failed decisively”

Further Information:

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