

25

‘Continuity and Change’: Environmental Policy and the Coming Energy Transition

Rebecca Pearse

Environmental policy debate barely featured in the election of 2016. This absence is best understood with regard to the recent political history of partisan conflict in federal parliament over climate change and energy issues. Carbon pricing has been a central object of debate since Kevin Rudd won the 2007 election. What followed was a deeply divisive contest between the Australian Labor Party’s (ALP) and the Australian Greens’ high-minded resolve to ‘price carbon’ versus the Coalition’s populist push against Rudd and Julia Gillard’s emissions trading schemes. Neither of the major parties, nor the Greens, have emerged from this conflict with clear-cut victories on climate policy.

In the wake of climate policy failure, new arenas of political conflict over mining and energy market reform have opened up. Drawn out local battles over the federal government’s role in approving major new coal and gas mines were a backdrop to the 2016 election. Threats to the Great Barrier Reef from mine-related development, agriculture and climate change were the most salient environmental issues that featured in the election. Both the Coalition and ALP promised more money for environmental management programs and research, but neither party shifted policy positions supporting major fossil fuel developments in North Queensland and elsewhere.

Much more subterranean was the persistence of carbon pricing in both Coalition and Labor policies and new differences between the parties on energy policy. The climate and energy policies taken to the 2016 election illustrate the theme ‘continuity and change’ that Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull inadvertently borrowed from the US political satire *Veep* (Hunt 2016). Carbon pricing has quietly persisted. The election went by without any scrutiny of the little-advertised transformation of the Coalition’s Direct Action Plan (DAP) into a carbon offset scheme (a form of emissions trading). The Labor leadership did not spend a lot of effort campaigning on their new climate and energy policy package, but the content of the party’s policy signalled a shift. The ALP proposed two sectoral Emissions Trading Schemes (ETS). However, in a departure from their previous focus on carbon pricing, Labor proposed a larger suite of climate and energy measures, with a greater emphasis on renewable energy, electricity grid reform and enhanced federal oversight of land use.

This chapter proceeds as follows. The major themes in recent conflicts over environmental issues in Australia are briefly described, with a focus on the directions in public opinion and in government strategies to manage climate and energy issues. I then outline key policies taken to the election by the two major parties and the Australian Greens, offering a brief evaluation of the most detailed climate and energy proposals. Reflecting upon the limitations and political tensions surrounding these policies, I speculate that in future federal elections, ‘direct’ regulation of energy transition, not carbon pricing, will be the focal point of debate.

Environmental issues in context

In the lead-up to the 2016 federal election, an unprecedented coral bleaching event devastated the Great Barrier Reef, a toxic algal bloom spread across the Murray River, land-clearing rates in Queensland (QLD) were revealed to be at record highs and the Cape Grim monitoring station recorded carbon dioxide measurements above 400 parts per million for the first time. These critical events are signs of an emerging global environmental crisis with serious implications for Australian society and economic productivity. However, as has been proven many times before, the weather does not predict political outcomes.

In the first instance, the relative silence on environmental issues in the 2016 election reflects the nation's environmental history. Since white settlement, Australia's economic development has been largely insensitive to the unique and fragile ecologies of the Australian continent. The European developmentalist vision for Australia emerged through institution-building projects during the 'long boom' of the eighteenth century. By the nineteenth century, developmentalism fortified as a shared ideology between conservatives and Australia's labour movement (Walker 1999). The centralisation of state power contributed to the transformation of the biophysical environment. This included, for instance, the provision of drought assistance, state-subsidised infrastructure and market bodies for grain and mining operations. Through the twentieth century, federal and State governments fostered further development of extractive industries through continued subsidisation and enabling laws such as those governing the allocation and distribution of mineral rights.

State governments play primary roles in the facilitation and regulation of extractive industries. However, as environmentalism emerged as a social force in Australia and following international environmental treaties, federal governments have been pushed to develop national environmental laws. For instance, after pressure to stop construction of the Franklin Dam in Tasmania, the newly elected Hawke government passed the *World Heritage Properties Conservation Act 1983*, which made provision for the protection of World Heritage sites, effectively prohibiting the Tasmanian State government's plans to dam the Franklin River.

In the late 1990s, following environmental campaigns across the country focused on forestry and mining, the Howard government instituted the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (EPBC Act), which is now the centrepiece of federal environment legislation. Contestation over the federal government's approvals for major mine developments under the EPBC Act have become common in recent times. After the 2013 election, the Abbott government unsuccessfully sought to devolve federal powers under the EPBC Act to the States, claiming the extra layer of federal environmental approval created unnecessary 'green tape'. After failing in the Senate, and a change in leadership, the Turnbull Coalition government has not pursued the legislative change further.

At the international level, the Coalition has been criticised for failing in its obligations to protect the Great Barrier Reef, which is a United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)–listed World Heritage site. The Great Barrier Reef is the world’s largest coral reef; its diverse species and complex ecosystems make it a globally unique site. The Reef has been negatively impacted on over decades by sediment, nutrient and pesticide pollution from agriculture, fishing practices, industrialisation and port expansions, and, most seriously, climate change (Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority (GBRMPA) 2014). In March 2016, the most severe coral bleaching event on record occurred, due to elevated sea temperatures, drawing the public’s attention to successive governments’ mismanagement of the issues.

In the lead-up to the federal election, the UN World Heritage Committee met in Germany to consider a draft decision to add the Reef to an ‘in danger’ list. In late July, the Committee announced it would not—on the basis of the Coalition’s Reef 2050 protection plan. In addition to this attention, the salience of the Reef during the 2016 election resulted from ongoing environmental campaigns against the federal government–approved Carmichael coal mine (including two court cases waged by environmental groups) and the Abbot Point coal terminal expansion, which will exacerbate risks to the Reef from pollution and climate change.

Apart from attention to the Reef, there was very little discussion about climate change and other environmental issues during the 2016 election. This is best understood in light of the recent history of difficult political contestation over climate and energy policy. After a bitter campaign against Labor’s ETS, the Coalition went to the 2013 election declaring its determination to abolish the ALP government’s carbon tax. The Coalition, led by Tony Abbott, released its 2013 election policy platform ‘Our Plan: Real Solutions for all Australians’ (Liberal Party of Australia (LPA) 2013). A Coalition government would immediately abolish ‘the world’s biggest carbon tax’, remove the tax on mining company profits, suspend the operation of the Clean Energy Finance Corporation (CEFC) and cut ‘green-tape’. After its election, the Abbott government also successfully moved to decrease the ambition of the Renewable Energy Target (RET). The ETS was repealed in 2015. However, the Coalition’s preference for dismantling the CEFC and devolving federal environmental powers was opposed by the crossbench.

Importantly, the repeal of the ETS was not a clear-cut victory for the Abbott government, which quickly began sliding in the polls. More fundamentally, popular and long-term climate change legislation has been very difficult for parties of all stripes to agree upon and secure. Party leaders have lost their positions in the midst of climate policy debate. Since the peak of public support for government action on climate change in 2006, public concern has declined steeply, and only in recent years has public concern climbed again (Oliver 2016). In the heat of the debate about carbon pricing, support for the carbon price was very low at between 28 and 34 per cent (see Figure 25.1), as was support for the Direct Action Plan at 22 per cent (The Climate Institute (TCI) 2014: 15), and public opinion on climate change and other environmental issues polarised (Tranter 2011, 2013).

The causes of difficulties in climate policy reform are many and varied. Common reasons put forward include the breaking of the millennium drought in 2009, which blunted the sense of urgency on climate change; the financial crisis, which took the wind out of concern for climate action; organised opposition from fossil fuel companies; strategic errors made by the Rudd government; communication errors made by Gillard who (rightly) called the ETS an effective tax; and the successful counter movement launched by Abbott in 2009, persisting all the way through Gillard's prime ministership (e.g. Bailey et al. 2012; Chubb 2014; Crowley 2013). Further, there are ongoing challenges in building a progressive political movement for climate change action (Rosewarne, Goodman and Pearse 2014). Environment-movement activists and policy advocates have struggled to build popular legitimacy for carbon pricing—a technocratic market instrument that has proven difficult to communicate (Lohmann 2008; Pearse 2016).

The difficulties for the ALP, the Greens and their supporters in civil society seeking to legitimate the carbon price run deeper than whether or not Gillard 'lied' about the ALP's intentions to institute a carbon tax and deeper than the 'framing' of the carbon price as an emissions trading scheme or a carbon tax. The most recent episode in a long-running climate policy debate in Australia shows that contrary to the advice frequently offered by economists and other climate policy advocates, a political resolution about how the state should act on climate change has not been realised via carbon trading—the most favoured style of emissions regulation. And importantly, the Liberal–National Coalition's Direct Action Plan was in disrepute from very early on and continues to be contested.

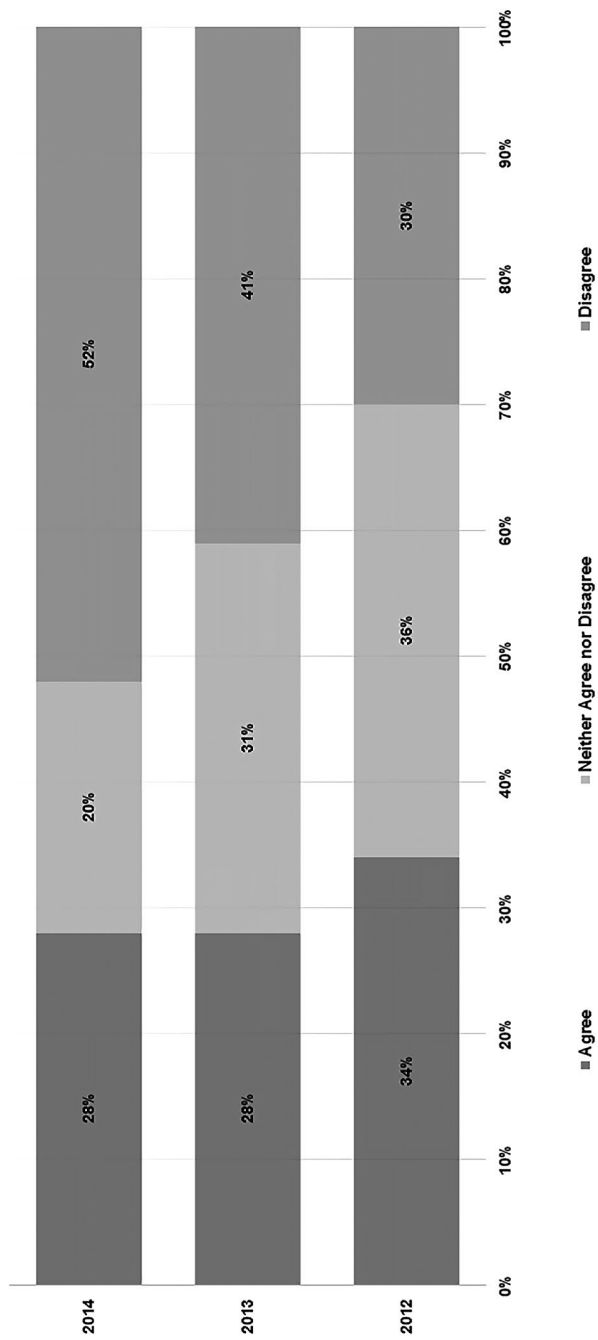


Figure 25.1. Support for the carbon price, 2012–14

Source. Constructed by author from data in The Climate Institute report (TCI 2014: 15).

Meanwhile, energy transition in the emissions-intensive political economy will require a much more fundamental set of reforms than either the ETS or DAP. At the heart of the climate crisis is a question about whether and how states might limit the availability of fossil fuels and land ecosystems for emissions-intensive production and consumption without sparking major conflict with business and affected communities, and/or risking recession. The opinion poll data suggests the public understands the serious consequences of climate change for society, and has little faith in any climate policy platform offered so far.

General public pessimism about the major party climate policies persists. The 2016 Climate Institute pre-election polling found that only 17 per cent and 20 per cent of voters believe the Coalition and Labor have effective plans for dealing with climate change respectively (TCI 2016a). The poll illustrates that even among Coalition and ALP voters, views about their preferred party's climate policies reflect low confidence (31 per cent and 40 per cent, respectively). Very few uncommitted voters believe the major parties' climate policies will be effective (see Figure 25.2). In light of data establishing broad public concern about climate change, it seems major political parties continue to struggle to convince the electorate of their credentials in responding to the challenge of climate change.

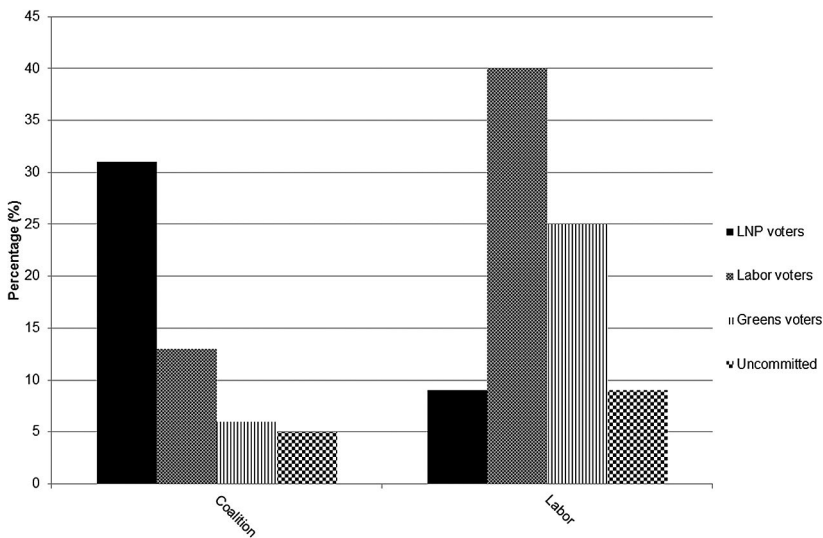


Figure 25.2. Views on Coalition and Labor climate change plans by voter groups

Source. Constructed by author based on data taken from the Lowy Institute report (Oliver 2016) and The Climate Institute report (TCI 2016a: 2).

Meanwhile, there are transformations in energy markets underway that have reconfigured the climate and energy policy debate. The breakthrough of rooftop solar, advances in battery storage technologies and the boom and bust of coal and gas mine developments have shifted the politics of climate change. Ongoing turbulence in global and national energy markets poses significant challenges to the federal government, not least because environmentalists have developed long-term campaigns seeking to halt major coal and gas mine expansions, and to boost energy market reform in favour of renewable energy expansion.

There is some evidence to suggest that along with a broad concern about climate change, there is support for government action to guide an orderly energy transition. Renewable energy technologies, and supporting policies, are consistently popular (TCI 2014, 2016b). The 2016 Climate Institute Poll found that 72 per cent of respondents agree that 'it is inevitable that Australia's current coal fired generation will need to be replaced' (TCI 2016b: 4). And there is some recognition that energy transition warrants a decline in Australia's export coal production. The 2016 Lowy Institute Poll (Oliver 2016) queried respondents' views on fossil fuels. A majority of people (88 per cent) agree that 'the use of fossil fuels is in decline and Australia should invest more in alternative energy sources'; many agree (79 per cent) that 'we should reduce our reliance on fossil fuels to help combat climate change'. At the same time, a majority support continuing exporting coal from Australia 'to developing countries, to help them grow and reduce poverty' (66 per cent) and 'to keep our economy strong' (53 per cent) (*ibid.*: 17).

On topics related to coal and gas mining, public opinion runs in different directions. When posed a question about (export) coal vis-à-vis Great Barrier Reef protection, views support a limit on coal. The Fairfax Media Your Vote survey of 63,000 people found that 79 per cent of respondents 'strongly agree' or 'agree' that the health of the Great Barrier Reef should be prioritised over coal mining (Hasham 2016). Concerns about coal seam gas (CSG) development are significant. The ABC Vote Compass survey of 250,000 people found that 67 per cent of respondents disagreed with the statement 'There should be fewer restrictions on coal seam gas exploration', with the largest opposition to relaxing CSG regulation in regional NSW (75 per cent), regional Victoria (VIC) (70 per cent) and the Hunter/Illawarra region (69 per cent) (Smail and Blumer 2016).

The strongest opposition to relaxed CSG regulation came from Greens voters unsurprisingly; though among Nationals, voter opposition has increased 7 per cent since 2013 (*ibid.*). Electorally, community concern about CSG has made more difference to State elections compared to federal elections. For instance, the 2015 New South Wales (NSW) election saw Ballina, a historically Nationals seat, go to the Greens. The O'Farrell and Baird governments have gone to elections with policies to limit CSG exploration and exploration licence cancellations in 2015.

In the 2016 election, the most nationally prominent debate about coal mining in local electorates was in the seat of New England, where Nationals leader and Deputy Prime Minister Barnaby Joyce ran against Independent Tony Windsor (see also Cockfield and Curtin, Chapter 14, this volume; Curtin, Chapter 16, this volume). A key theme in the contest was Windsor's opposition to two major open-cut coal mines proposed for the Liverpool Plains. Joyce was also on the record opposing these mines, but had disappointed some in the electorate for not doing enough to make the case against the mine within the federal government, which had just approved the Shenhua Watermark mine subject to a federal review of the water management plan. Joyce comfortably won the seat, with a margin of 19.5 per cent but with a swing against him of 4.7 per cent. The case of New England demonstrates that local conflicts over mining have not been decisive in most regional electorates, where a strong base of Nationals voters continues.

Overall, it is clear that there is considerable public concern about environmental issues, particularly climate change, mining and energy transition. However, this trend of awareness is not presently shifting votes or the priorities of the major parties at present. There are, however, signs of change alongside continuities in the election platforms of the major parties.

Policies taken to the 2016 election

A closer look at the environmental policies taken to the 2016 election reveals signs of what is to come if public concern and pressure for the federal government to address climate and energy issues grows in the future. Interestingly, the details of the major parties' 2016 environmental

policy platforms illustrate two emerging trends: a convergence on carbon offset policy; and a divergence on energy policy and environmental protection laws. Taken together, these trends stand in contradiction to one another. Carbon offsetting displaces environmental action away from carbon-intensive industries (e.g. electricity, mining), whereas ALP/Greens proposals to reform the National Electricity Market and the EPBC Act are a more direct, and potentially more effective, means to limit fossil fuel dependence and facilitate energy transition.

The policy platforms of the Coalition and ALP with regard to both environmental protection policy and climate/energy policy were as different as they ever have been, albeit with significant and often unrecognised commonalities. The policy platforms of the Coalition and ALP illustrate the continuation of major party support for 'market-based' emissions policies; for example, emission trading and carbon offset programs. Below, I illustrate that the apparent distinction between the Coalition's preference for 'direct action' versus a market mechanism is a rhetorical difference only; the substantive policy similarities in the climate and energy arena are at odds with the points of difference major parties emphasise.

The same can be said of the ALP's and Coalition's proposals for managing impacts on the Great Barrier Reef from land use, coal developments and climate change. In the arena of federal environmental protection law, there are more considerable departures. The Coalition unsuccessfully campaigned to remove 'green tape', whereas the ALP and Greens have gone to the election with proposals to strengthen provisions under national environmental legislation.

Table 25.1. Parties' environmental policy positions

Policy area	Coalition	ALP	Greens
Climate change	<p>Emissions targets: 5% reduction on 2000 levels by 2020 26–28% reduction on 2005 levels by 2030 No new mitigation policies announced. Continuation of Emissions Reduction Fund</p>	<p>Emissions targets: 5–25% reduction on 2000 levels by 2020 45% reduction on 2005 levels by 2030 'Net zero pollution' by 2050 Ensure 50% of the nation's electricity comes from renewable energy by 2030, with Commonwealth becoming direct purchaser of renewable energy (\$152 million) Establish a Just Transition Unit inside Department of Environment (DOE) to coordinate actions to meet obligations under UN Paris Agreement Create 10 Community Power Hubs across Australia (\$99 million), and Community Power Network (partnership with States and Territories) Electricity Modernisation Review of National Electricity Market by end of 2016 Introduce a federal 'climate trigger' to regulate land clearing 'Cap and offset' scheme (phase 1, 2018–20), full ETS from 2020 (phase 2), with 100% access to international carbon credits Mandatory light vehicle standards phase in 2020–25 (105g CO₂/km) Retain Climate Change Authority (\$17.4 million)</p>	<p>Emissions targets: 60–80% reduction on 2000 levels by 2030 100% reduction on 2000 levels by 2040 No new coal or gas \$1 billion Clean Energy Transition Fund Reinstitute a carbon price Remove subsidies on diesel fuel Thermal coal export levy (\$3/t) At least 90% of the nation's electricity from renewable energy by 2030 Establish the RenewAustralia Authority to oversee phase out of coal-fired power. Reform National Electricity Network, including establish force write down on network assets, set a clear fee structure, a time frame for commercial and domestic connections Community Energy Powerhouses Start-Up Fund, two years operational funding for 50 projects (\$150 million) Tax exemptions on profits made by community renewable project investors (\$4.3 million) Solar Communities fund (\$103 million) for local communities and institutions to invest in storage Sustainable Schools Program (\$192 million) Solar Ombudsman within Clean Energy Regulator to facility 'right to solar' for renters.</p>

Policy area	Coalition	ALP	Greens
Great Barrier Reef	Establish the \$1 billion Reef Fund, providing finance for energy and water-quality projects, to be administered through the Clean Energy Finance Corporate (CEFC) No commitment to legislate a cap on water pollution	\$500 million Reef Plan, administering recommendations of the Great Barrier Reef Water Science Taskforce report No direct commitment to legislate a cap on water pollution	Strengthen the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority (\$91 million) Stricter standards on shipping to protect marine life, and double Australian Marine Safety Authority emergency response preparedness fund (to \$30 million) Overturn the federal approval for the Abbot Point coal port expansion ¹
Federal Environmental Laws	Longstanding policy to devolve federal power under EPBC Act to the States	Introduce 'Climate Trigger' to EPBC Act Introduce National Parks Trigger to EPBC Act, so that any developments in national parks threatening biodiversity will need federal approval (\$15 million)	Install new generation of federal environmental laws and establish independent authority, the National Environment Protection Authority
World Heritage areas	2015 proposal to remove tracts of the Tarkine rainforest from Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area listing	Investigate and nominate three areas for World Heritage Listing: Cape York Peninsula; the West Kimberley region; and the Daintree Rainforest (expand to recognise Indigenous values)	Extend boundaries of Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area to include the Tarkine \$63 million for World Heritage Areas and Ramsar wetlands Re-establish \$2 billion Biodiversity Fund

¹ The Greens list some of their key climate and energy policies as part of their 'Living Reef, Dying Coal' package e.g. no new coal or gas, reinstitute carbon price (Australian Greens 2016).

Source: Constructed by author from (ALP 2016a, 2016b; LPA 2016; Australian Greens 2016).

Climate and energy

A main point of difference between the two major parties on climate policy was their respective long-term emissions reduction targets. The short-term targets of both major parties are the same: the Coalition and ALP both have unconditional targets of a 5 per cent reduction on 2000 levels by 2020. The Coalition announced no long-term emissions target in the election, whereas the ALP confirmed a policy of 45 per cent reduction on 2005 levels by 2030 and 'net zero pollution' by 2050. Both parties went to the election with a form of 'baseline-and-credit' emissions trading in their policy platform, with additional financial commitments for Great Barrier Reef protection. Where the ALP stood out was on energy policy. In this policy arena, Labor has moved much closer to the Greens (see Table 25.1).

The Coalition went to the election intending to continue with the DAP—the federal government's flagship climate policy. The DAP is a voluntary competitive grants scheme through which participants submit proposals to the government for projects that reduce greenhouse gas emissions, and propose a cost for the abatement undertaken. The scheme uses a reverse auction to allocate payments from an Emissions Reduction Fund (ERF). Entities submit sealed bids for funding to implement registered emissions reduction projects. The government then chooses projects on the basis of their being 'least cost' means for emissions abatement (measured in relation to the lowest bids per unit of notional abatement).

Successful applicants enter into a contract with the federal government to undertake project/s and produce Australian Carbon Credit Units (ACCUs), defined as representing a volume of greenhouse gases (measured as tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent (tCO₂-e)) below a baseline. The first two auctions were held in 2015, and a third in 2016, with \$1.7 billion spent so far on 143 million tCO₂-e. The largest project contracted under the DAP in April 2016 is the Catchment Conservation Alliance–Great Barrier Reef Initiative, a public–private partnership between commercial resource management firm Terra Carbon and the QLD government. The contract commits to purchasing 15 million tCO₂-e. Terra Carbon has won more than a third of all ERF contracts for 52 million tCO₂-e.

Through a staggered process of design since 2013, the DAP has taken shape as a type of emissions trading. The DAP now involves rules for a baseline-and-credit carbon offset scheme, wherein liable entities who

emit above a set baseline are required to purchase credits (ACCUs) in order to meet their obligations under the DAP Safeguard Mechanism. The DAP creates carbon credits for purchase, albeit without tradability or linkage to international carbon markets. The *Australian* journalist Alan Kohler picked up on this, observing:

The interesting question is why no one is talking about any of this. Obviously the 150 companies involved know about it, and it's all described in full on the department website, but the fact that Australia has effectively legislated an emissions trading scheme is virtually a secret (Kohler 2016).

The DAP was redesigned in this way because of criticisms of the scheme's lack of environmental integrity. Since being announced, the DAP has been under question, in particular with regard to its cost and whether or not it can reduce emissions. The Coalition committed a capped figure of \$2.55 billion to the ERF. Experts, non-government organisations (NGOs) and political commentators have criticised the DAP (e.g. Burke 2016; Kohler 2016; Reputex 2013; TCI 2013), with key arguments being the DAP wastes public funds on ineffective carbon abatement projects; the additionality of ERF-funded projects cannot be guaranteed; the DAP effectively operates as an ETS; and the Safeguard Mechanism does not guarantee limits on fossil fuel production.

In a very low-key manner, the ALP announced two ETS as part of its larger climate and energy policy package. Labor's Climate Change Action Plan is the broadest set of climate and energy policy reforms a major political party in Australia has ever proposed. The ALP election platform included a renewable energy target of 50 per cent by 2030; community power network for small-scale renewables; creation of a Just Transition Unit within the Department of Environment focused on the electricity sector; a review of the National Electricity Market; two ETS (one in the electricity sector and the other in heavy industries) with full access to domestic and international carbon offsets for emissions intensive firms; and a 'Climate Trigger' to regulate large-scale land clearing under EPBC Act (ALP 2016a; 2016b).

This suite of climate and energy policies demonstrates the influence of environmentalists and communities affected by coal and gas. The ALP Climate Action Plan reflects an agenda advocated within the party by the Labor Environment Action Network, which has campaigned since 2013 for a stronger policy platform (Lloyd 2016). The Climate Trigger is modelled on the Water Trigger developed by Windsor when he was

in federal parliament, acting in the interests of landholders in the New England electorate affected by coal and gas mine proposals. The Water Trigger (legislated in 2012) introduces more scientific oversight on federal approvals for coal and gas mines where water resources are at risk.

In a similar vein, the Climate Trigger will instigate independent scientific review of broad-scale land clearing (which is historically managed by the States) that has an 'impact on Australia's ability to meet its agreed climate change commitment to keeping global warming well below two degrees Celsius' (ALP 2016a). Since changes to State land-clearing laws in QLD, a resurgence in the clearing of native vegetation has been recorded, which is likely to further reduce water quality in the Great Barrier Reef and undermine the national climate targets if clearing continues to increase (Maron et al. 2016).

Further, the ALP's climate and energy policy program mirrors the Greens' platform strongly. Both parties, for instance, propose reform to the National Electricity Market and programs to ensure a 'just transition'; a goal recognised in the United Nations climate negotiation text in Paris 2015. The main point of difference between the ALP and Greens in the energy policy arena relates to proposed limits on coal and gas extraction and production. The Greens' longstanding policy is that no new coal and gas mines should be opened (including expansions on existing mines), with an immediate ban on unconventional gas mining. Further, the Greens' greenhouse gas goals and renewable energy production targets are more ambitious (Table 25.1).

Importantly, the limitations of the DAP are mirrored in the Labor's ETS, which is heavily weighted toward the unlimited use of domestic and international carbon offsets. Labor has made a point of allowing unlimited availability of international offsets in a bid to ensure 'flexibility' for emissions-intensive firms. In reality, offsets undermine the environmental integrity of any ETS (Lohmann 2009; Pearse and Böhm 2015). Carbon offsets share the same problems as the project and reverse auction-funding arrangements under the DAP. The problems of non-additional 'anyway' projects are the same in carbon offset schemes. For instance, offset projects funded under the Clean Development Mechanism have been shown to be non-additional (Victor 2009) and displace the costs of responding to climate crisis from the North to South (Bryant, Dabhi and Böhm 2015).

Great Barrier Reef

Both major parties included promises to manage ongoing threats to the Great Barrier Reef, but neither made commitments to stop coal mining and port developments damaging the area. Since the 2013 election, there have been ongoing conflicts over the federal government's approval of the Abbot Point coal terminal expansion and the Adani Carmichael mine in the Galilee Basin. Environmental groups have opposed the mine and related port and railway developments. These sustained campaigns combined with controversy over the World Heritage Committee review have successfully connected the Great Barrier Reef, coal mining and climate change in the public's minds (Hasham 2016). In response, both the Coalition and ALP developed policies for reef management going into the election.

The Coalition promised additional funding for Great Barrier Reef protection through a \$1 billion Reef Fund, providing finance for energy and water-quality projects, to be administered through the CEFC. This announcement came off the back of the Coalition's unsuccessful attempts to abolish the fund when it repealed the ETS, a failed directive for the CEFC to cease its operations in 2013 (Taylor 2013) and an attempt to prohibit CEFC investment in wind power and rooftop solar (Henderson and Tlozek 2015). Whether the CEFC can be used to fund the proposed Great Barrier Reef projects is an open question, with most experts suggesting it will not be possible given that the legislated purpose of the CEFC is to facilitate investment in clean energy technologies (Slezack 2016). Beyond (questionable) funding for these projects, the Coalition has announced a program to tackle illegal fishing (a threat to dugongs and turtles in the Marine Park), but has no commitment to legislate a limit on water pollution from agriculture flowing into the Reef area.

The ALP went to the election proposing a \$500 million fund to resource CSIRO research (\$100 million), environmental management programs (\$300 million) and reef management (\$100 million). Of this commitment, \$377 million was new investment plus a reprioritisation of \$123 million by the government in the 2016–17 Budget. Labor has pledged to work with the QLD government to implement the Great Barrier Reef Water Science Taskforce report. However, the party has not made a direct commitment to legislate a cap on agriculture-related water pollution, nor has the ALP developed a plan to deal with illegal fishing.

Conclusions

The recent history of Australia's climate and energy policy debate is a story of deep divisions in federal politics, and there is evidence that the electorate has little faith that the major parties have an effective plan to deal with the problem. It is no wonder then that in the 2016 election both major parties largely neglected climate and energy issues when communicating their campaign pitches.

There is, however, continuing public concern about climate change, and various polls have found public support for renewable energy policies and regulatory limits to coal and gas industries. While trends in public opinion about energy transition and mining did not translate to electorally significant public pressure in the election, we have cause to think it may in the future. Difficulties associated with changing energy markets will continue, as will the impacts of coal and gas mining, and of climate change on World Heritage sites like the Great Barrier Reef, society and the economy. In light of these changes, and the new directions of ALP and Greens policy, we can anticipate the next federal election will see more concerted debate about energy transition.

As this shift happens, we should hope that the continuity of flawed emissions trading and carbon offset schemes like the Coalition's DAP and Labor's ETS will be replaced with further change. The broadening of Labor's Climate Change Action Plan to focus on a suite of measures aimed at energy market reform and transition is a welcome step towards a more productive national climate debate in future.

References

- Australian Greens. 2016. 'What the Greens with do for Australia: Standing up for what matters'. Available at: greens.org.au/platform
- Australian Labor Party (ALP). 2016a. 'Labor's climate action plan: Capture carbon on the land'. Available at: www.laborsclimatechangeactionplan.org.au/capture_carbon_on_the_land
- . 2016b. 'Climate change action plan: Policy paper'. Australian Labor Party. Available at: www.laborsclimatechangeactionplan.org.au

- Bailey, Ian, Iain MacGill, Rob Passey and Hugh Compston. 2012. 'The fall (and rise) of carbon pricing in Australia: A political strategy analysis of the carbon pollution reduction scheme'. *Environmental Politics* 21(5): 691–711. doi.org/10.1080/09644016.2012.705066
- Bryant, Gareth, Siddhartha Dabhi and Steffen Böhm. 2015. "Fixing" the climate crisis: Capital, states, and carbon offsetting in India'. *Environment and Planning A*: a130213p. doi.org/10.1068/a130213p
- Burke, Paul J. 2016. 'Undermined by adverse selection: Australia's direct action abatement subsidies'. *Economic Papers: A Journal of Applied Economics and Policy* 35(3): 216–29. doi.org/10.1111/1759-3441.12138
- Chubb, Phillip. 2014. *Power Failure: The Inside Story of Climate Politics Under Rudd and Gillard*. Melbourne: Black Inc.
- Crowley, Kate. 2013. 'Irresistible force? Achieving carbon pricing in Australia'. *Australian Journal of Politics & History* 59(3): 368–81. doi.org/10.1111/ajph.12021
- Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority (GBRMPA). 2014. *Great Barrier Reef Outlook Report 2014*. Canberra: Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority.
- Hasham, Nicole. 2016. 'YourVote: Prioritise Great Barrier Reef over coal mining, survey shows'. *Sydney Morning Herald*, 14 June. Available at: www.smh.com.au/federal-politics/federal-election-2016/most-australians-want-great-barrier-reef-saved-at-expense-of-coal-mining-survey-20160614-gpim6w.html
- Henderson, Anna and Eric Tlozek. 2015. 'Clean Energy Finance Corporation could have legal grounds to fight wind and solar ban, lawyer says'. *ABC News*, 14 July. Available at: www.abc.net.au/news/2015-07-14/cefc-may-have-legal-grounds-to-fight-wind-solar-ban-lawyer-says/6618246
- Hunt, Elle. 2016. 'Malcolm Turnbull's "continuity and change" slogan straight out of Veep'. *The Guardian*, 23 March. Available at: www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2016/mar/23/malcolm-turnbulls-continuity-and-change-slogan-straight-out-of-veep

- Kohler, Alan. 2016. 'Australia's secret ETS starts in five weeks'. *Australian*, 23 May. Available at: www.theaustralian.com.au/business/opinion/alan-kohler/australias-secret-ets-starts-in-five-weeks/news-story/7f1de2a63db3e8d4a12066f31edcf640
- Liberal Party of Australia (LPA). 2013. 'Our Plan: Real Solutions for all Australians'. Melbourne: Liberal Party of Australia.
- . 2016. 'The Coalition's Policy to Invest in Our Great Barrier Reef'. Melbourne: Liberal Party of Australia.
- Lloyd, Graham. 2016. 'How hardcore greens trumped unions on renewable energy target'. *Australian*, 11 October. Available at: www.theaustralian.com.au/national-affairs/climate/how-hardcore-greens-trumped-unions-on-renewable-energy-target/news-story/f24c7b968392bb0e48945cb33bc8f5c8
- Lohmann, Larry. 2008. 'Carbon trading, climate justice and the production of ignorance: Ten examples'. *Development* 51(3): 359–65. doi.org/10.1057/dev.2008.27
- . 2009. 'Regulation as corruption in the carbon offset markets'. In Steffen Böhm and Siddhartha Dabhi (eds), *Upsetting the Offset: The Political Economy of Carbon Markets*. London: Mayfly Books, pp. 175–91.
- Maron, Martine, Bill Laurance, Bob Pressey, Carla P. Catterall, Clive McAlpine, Hugh Possingham, James Watson, Jonathan Rhodes, Kerrie Wilson and Marc Hockings. 2016. 'Queensland land clearing is undermining Australia's environmental progress'. *The Conversation*, 22 February. Available at: theconversation.com/queensland-land-clearing-is-undermining-australias-environmental-progress-54882
- Oliver, Alex. 2016. 'Lowy Institute Poll 2016', Sydney: Lowy Institute. Available at: www.lowyinstitute.org/publications/lowy-institute-poll-2016
- Pearse, Rebecca. 2016. 'Moving targets: Carbon pricing, energy markets and social movements in Australia'. *Environmental Politics* 25(6): 1079–101. doi.org/10.1080/09644016.2016.1196969

- Pearse, Rebecca and Steffen Böhm. 2015. 'Ten reasons why carbon markets will not bring about radical emissions reduction'. *Carbon Management* 5(4): 325–37. doi.org/10.1080/17583004.2014.990679
- Reputex. 2013. 'Direct action vs. ETS: Achieving our emissions objectives'. Available at: www.reputex.com/publications/direct-action-vs-emissions-trading-achieving-our-emissions-objectives/
- Rosewarne, Stuart, James Goodman and Rebecca Pearse. 2014. *Climate Action Upsurge: The Ethnography of Climate Movement Politics*. London: Routledge.
- Slezack, Michael. 2016. 'How the Coalition is using clean energy financing as an election slush fund'. *Guardian*, 20 June. Available at: www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2016/jun/20/how-the-coalition-is-using-clean-energy-financing-as-an-election-slush-fund-australia
- Smail, Stephanie and Clare Blumer. 2016. 'Vote compass: Australians oppose any relaxation of CSG restrictions'. *ABC News*, 3 June. Available at: www.abc.net.au/news/2016-06-02/vote-compass-coal-seam-gas-csg/7467884
- Taylor, Lenore. 2013. 'Clean Energy Finance Corporation could sue over Coalition shutdown'. *Guardian*, 19 September. Available at: www.theguardian.com/world/2013/sep/19/clean-energy-finance-corp-could-sue
- The Climate Institute (TCI). 2013. 'Coalition climate policy and the national climate interest'. Sydney: The Climate Institute.
- . 2014. 'Climate of the nation 2014: Australian attitudes on climate change'. Sydney: The Climate Institute.
- . 2016a. 'Factsheet: Australian attitudes to climate change as captured in the lead up to the 2016 federal election'. Sydney: Galaxy Research for The Climate Institute.
- . 2016b. 'Factsheet: Australian views on preferred energy mix & the drive to phase out coal power generation'. Sydney: Galaxy Research for The Climate Institute.
- Tranter, Bruce. 2011. 'Political divisions over climate change and environmental issues in Australia'. *Environmental Politics* 20(1): 78–96. doi.org/10.1080/09644016.2011.538167

———. 2013. 'The great divide: Political candidate and voter polarisation over global warming in Australia'. *Australian Journal of Politics & History* 59(3): 397–413. doi.org/10.1111/ajph.12023

Victor, David. 2009. 'Plan B for Copenhagen'. *Nature* 461: 342–44. doi.org/10.1038/461342a

Walker, Ken J. 1999. 'Statist developmentalism in Australia'. In Ken Walker and Kate Crowley (eds), *Australian Environmental Policy 2: Studies in Decline + Devolution*. Sydney: UNSW Press, pp. 22–44.

Legislation

Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 (Cth).

World Heritage Properties Conservation Act 1983 (Cth).

This text is taken from *Double Disillusion: The 2016 Australian Federal Election*, edited by Anika Gauja, Peter Chen, Jennifer Curtin and Juliet Pietsch, published 2018 by ANU Press, The Australian National University, Canberra, Australia.

doi.org/10.22459/DD.04.2018.25