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1. Reduce the cost of meeting carbon targets

1. What could be done to improve the cost-effectiveness and alignment of policies to reduce emissions across the industrial, electricity and transport sectors?

1. Near-Term Priorities

a) Introduce a National SME Sustainability Credential

Most carbon policies disproportionately target large industry and electricity generation, overlooking the combined emissions potential and transition role of small business. An accredited, low-barrier SME sustainability credential—like the one EVERDANT provides—would:

Improve policy visibility across the long tail of micro/nano businesses.

Offer a voluntary on-ramp to emissions tracking, offsetting and climate resilience.

Cost far less than current top-down regulatory enforcement for equivalent abatement.

EVERDANT's pilot experience across media, fitness, and consultancy industries reveals that even small shifts (e.g., cloud storage efficiencies, digital-first client engagement, waste stream audits) deliver measurable emissions impact when scaled.

b) Fund and Federate Digital Tools That Simplify Climate Action

EVERDANT's digital agent, Julia, provides proactive coaching for emissions reduction aligned with each business's capacity. With co-investment, this tool could be embedded into regional business chambers, local government procurement platforms, or grant portals—creating low-cost consistency across jurisdictions.

c) Align Voluntary Credentials with Policy Incentives

Businesses already undertaking voluntary emissions-reduction (e.g., switching to renewables, transitioning vehicle fleets, reducing waste) often see no policy recognition or incentive. Embedding recognition into government programs such as:

Local procurement scoring

State development grants

Tourism or agri-sector initiatives

will lower friction, boost uptake, and signal a coordinated national effort.

2. Examples of Alignment and Misalignment

Positive Alignment Example:

A Queensland-based SME participating in the EVERDANT pilot integrated three small changes:

Switched to a low-carbon hosting provider (SDG 9)

Reduced single-use promotional materials (SDG 12)

Recycled 100% of outdated tech via certified e-waste partners (SDG 13)

While each individual action appeared minor, the cumulative impact across their sector—if replicated—would represent significant Scope 3 emissions reductions. However, these actions currently sit outside emissions-reduction policy visibility, creating a blind spot in national estimates.

Misalignment Example:

A micro-agriculture supplier attempted to install solar irrigation to reduce diesel dependence. Despite state incentives for solar energy, regulatory delays and multiple conflicting grant criteria meant they abandoned the project. The interaction between federal, state, and local schemes often discourages SMEs from engaging, especially when upfront capital costs or time burdens outweigh the perceived benefits.

Conclusion

The most cost-effective path to emissions reduction lies not only in broad market mechanisms, but in empowering the under-recognised contributors—the millions of Australian small businesses—through consistent, low-friction, data-backed support.

EVERDANT stands ready to partner on this transformation, offering a living model for streamlined credentialling, policy integration, and AI-enabled guidance. By embedding voluntary signals into the emissions policy landscape, Australia can reduce costs, boost participation, and accelerate toward net zero with inclusive momentum.

2. Are there gaps in the emissions-reduction policies in the industrial, electricity and transport sectors which should be addressed?

1. Views on Near-Term Priorities

There is a substantial policy gap when it comes to micro, small, and regional enterprises (MSMEs), which are effectively excluded from most emissions-reduction signals in the industrial, electricity and transport sectors.

These businesses:

Operate below regulatory thresholds,

Are not included in baseline or safeguard schemes,

Have no consistent pathway to engage with electrification, fleet transition, or emissions tracking,

Are largely absent from the datasets that inform national policy and investment decisions.

Yet collectively, they represent over 97% of all Australian businesses, and their cumulative emissions and purchasing behaviours exert substantial influence on national

outcomes.

EVERDANT's experience working with early pilot businesses on the Sunshine Coast shows that meaningful emissions action is achievable when clear trellises, localised coaching, and easy-to-follow frameworks are provided.

Near-term reform priorities should include:

Creating a national emissions-reduction signal for MSMEs, either voluntary or embedded within digital compliance processes (e.g. BAS, ASIC).

Aligning incentives like grants, procurement access, or rebates with verified action through tools like EVERDANT.

Bridging the data gap by supporting platforms that capture and report small business carbon actions, to better inform policy planning.

2. Examples of Adverse Outcomes Due to Gaps

Example 1: Electrification Gap in the Transport Sector

One regional service-based microbusiness (1.5 FTE) explored switching to an EV van. Despite sustainability intent and regional grant announcements, the following issues emerged:

EV infrastructure (e.g. charging) was missing from local planning zones.

No targeted financing or tax structure was available for microbusiness fleets.

Grant applications were too complex for non-specialist operators, with no clear coaching or support.

Result: The business delayed the purchase, choosing to maintain an ageing diesel vehicle. A clear emissions-reduction signal—with accessible tools, local support, and a shared platform—could have accelerated the decision.

Example 2: Industrial SME Left Behind by Energy Policy

A local manufacturing SME with 12 staff received mixed messages from energy retailers and government schemes. After investing in process improvements to reduce electricity usage, they sought validation and support for low-carbon production.

No national platform recognised or validated their effort.

Carbon neutral certification was prohibitively expensive.

The business abandoned efforts to market itself as a low-emissions supplier—missing a market advantage.

This gap in low-cost recognition mechanisms penalised early movers and distorted their investment decisions.

Risks of Inaction or Poorly Designed Policy Fill-ins

Filling gaps without understanding the real-world context of small and regional businesses may create:

Excessive compliance burdens that deter engagement.

Overlapping reporting systems that replicate confusion across sectors.

Unfunded mandates or unfriendly systems that accelerate burnout among sole traders and small operators.

A better solution is to bridge these gaps with lightweight, guided, AI-supported engagement models like EVERDANT—so that participation is encouraged, not imposed.

Conclusion

The biggest emissions-reduction policy gap is not technological—it's relational and structural. Small businesses want to do the right thing, but face fragmentation, complexity, and invisibility in current policy structures.

By intentionally filling these gaps with coordinated, cost-effective, digitally enabled frameworks, Australia can improve alignment across sectors and deliver lower-cost, higher-participation pathways to net zero.

EVERDANT is ready to support this transformation—one small business at a time.

3. [Are there any duplicative emissions-reduction policies in the industrial, electricity and transport sectors which could be streamlined?](#)

1. Views on Near-Term Priorities

Australia's emissions-reduction framework has evolved rapidly and in parallel across jurisdictions, sectors, and program types. As a result, duplication has become a hidden cost, particularly for small businesses and mid-sized industrial actors attempting to align with best practice across multiple fronts.

Near-term streamlining priorities should include:

Harmonise federal, state and local emissions tracking systems — especially around grant eligibility, ESG reporting, and energy transition incentives. Small businesses often find that different applications ask for similar (but not identical) sustainability or energy-use data in slightly different formats.

Create a shared emissions data passport that businesses (especially SMEs) can update once and use across programs—avoiding the fatigue of “reporting for reporting's sake”.

Standardise sector-relevant pathways (e.g. manufacturing, freight, agriculture, creative industries) so that emissions-reduction expectations are proportionate and aligned.

EVERDANT has seen firsthand how overlapping requirements for grant access, procurement credentials, and ESG declarations deter small and micro businesses from progressing beyond intent. We believe digital credentialling with verified, time-stamped progress toward emissions goals offers a more efficient mechanism that complements—rather than duplicates—existing signals.

2. Examples of Duplication and Misalignment

Example 1: Small Operators Caught Between ESG and Grant Requirements

A regional consultancy working with EVERDANT aimed to apply for both:

A local council small business sustainability grant.

A state-level “eco-innovation” support package.

Both required:

A carbon or sustainability plan (but with different templates),

An emissions baseline (but used different tools to calculate it),

Progress metrics (but with incompatible KPIs and timelines).

This created duplication of effort and added cost, requiring external consultant support. A shared framework—built on a common data model or credentialing platform—could have cut the red tape dramatically.

Example 2: Complementary Signals Across Transport + Industry

A freight logistics business in South East Queensland began transitioning their light vehicle fleet to EVs, guided by:

State transport EV incentives, and

Industry-led Scope 3 supply chain pressure from a major grocery client.

These two signals worked together well because both were voluntary and framed as progress-based (not punitive). EVERDANT's voluntary credential helped the business track SDG alignment (SDG 13, SDG 9) and share this transparently with the client, reinforcing behavioural change.

This success supports the view that voluntary, coordinated, non-duplicative signals across jurisdictions drive better outcomes than scattered, rigid, overlapping mandates.

Conclusion

Too many emissions-reduction signals—especially when uncoordinated—create confusion, resistance, and administrative drag. For micro and SME actors in particular, this turns intent into inaction.

EVERDANT advocates for:

A national emissions credentialing backbone for small enterprises,

Federated use of aligned voluntary signals across policy, grants, and ESG,

And consistent sectoral guidance that avoids “double-counting” or “over-burdening” participants.

Smart, layered, and digitally coordinated signals will deliver lower-cost emissions reductions and higher trust across the system.

2. Speed up approvals for new energy infrastructure

1. Are planning and approvals processes for large energy infrastructure taking too long? If so, what causes the most delay?

The participant did not respond to this question.

2. How can planning and approvals processes be sped up without unduly compromising regulatory standards?

The participant did not respond to this question.

3. Should clean energy projects be treated differently to other projects for the purpose of environmental and other approvals? If so, how?

The participant did not respond to this question.

4. What can be done to build local community support for new energy infrastructure projects?

The participant did not respond to this question.

5. Please outline any evidence showing the productivity benefits of faster approvals for energy projects.

The participant did not respond to this question.

3. Encourage adaptation by addressing barriers to private investment

1. What are the barriers and enablers impacting decisions by owner-occupiers, landlords and developers about how housing is built and updated over time so that it is resilient to the effects of climate change?

The participant did not respond to this question.

2. What information do people need to make decisions about where to live, how to build and how to upgrade their homes to appropriately factor in climate change?

The participant did not respond to this question.

3. What are the most cost-effective retrofitting options for improving the resilience of Australia's existing housing stock? What are their costs and benefits?

The participant did not respond to this question.

4. What role might minimum standards play in ensuring the resilience of Australia's housing stock?

The participant did not respond to this question.

5. The impacts of climate change are being factored into the regulation of where and how houses are built in different ways around Australia. What does leading practice look like? Where is there room for improvement? Are there lessons we can learn from other countries?

The participant did not respond to this question.