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SA Youth Forum

Submission to the Australian Government Productivity Commission: Investing in cheaper, cleaner energy and the net zero transformation Interim Report

Prepared

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SOUTH AUSTRALIAN YOUTH FORUM INTRODUCTION:

Amber Brock-Fabel founded the South Australian Youth Forum (SAYF) in 2021 at the age of 17. Since its inception, the Forum has grown into a dynamic platform run by young people, for young people, entering its fourth year in 2025.

SAYF brings together youth aged 14 to 24, offering them a space to engage in meaningful discussions and debates on issues that directly impact their lives. Meeting at least once a month throughout the year, Forum members have the opportunity to express their opinions, contribute to surveys, and develop models of engagement on topics of interest.

The Forum is a genuine youth-led initiative, with every aspect shaped by the young people themselves. Through their involvement, young people not only have a voice but are empowered to influence their communities and the broader state. SAYF continues to be a vital force in elevating youth perspectives and fostering leadership among South Australia's young people.



SUBMISSION INTRODUCTION:

Climate change and global warming is one of the most significant issues affecting young people, both today and in the future. Already, the earth's temperature has risen over 1.35°C since pre-industrial levels, bringing with it increased levels of extreme weather events, disruptions to food and water security, severe ecosystem change, and increased levels of health problems (Lindsey and Dahlman, 2025). The climate crisis is a significant worry for young people, with the 2023 and 2024 SA Youth Forum Consultation Surveys finding that nearly 60% of all young people are concerned about this, and believe that not enough action is being taken to prevent the devastating effects of global warming (South Australian Youth Forum 2024). Young people want to see real, physical action which is efficient, and put into place without continuous delays. Young people also want to be consulted on this action, due to their reality as the future generations affected by this crisis.

This submission is independently authored by young people, aged 18-24, who are part of the South Australian Youth Forum Inc. It has been informed by personal experiences, shared advocacy, and peer consultation. It will explore how young people perceive the current standards and responses to climate change, any changes in the interim report that we want to see changed and the potential impact of these practices being implemented. **Through this submission, we hope to highlight the urgent need for continued climate action, elevate those with lived experience, and call for effective policies which will help Australia reach net zero emissions.**

Overall, the SA Youth Forum does agree with the majority of the actions and suggestions proposed within this report. However, there are some clauses which could be improved upon through additional actions and clarifications. **These include clauses 1.3, 1.4, 2.3, 2.4, and every clause in Section 3.** Our suggestions to these clauses should be specifically reviewed by the commission for full consideration of our submission.

Section 1: Reducing the cost of meeting emissions targets

1.1: Reducing emissions in the electricity sector after 2030

The SA Youth Forum wholeheartedly agrees with the requirement of the Australian government to introduce enduring policies which will shape the electricity sector beyond 2030.

Whilst, ideally, Australia should have reached net zero by 2030, this is a near impossible task. Therefore, it is essential to continue our efforts following this year, when many of our current incentives and tax breaks stop. Many young people, as many as 35.3% of young people, are extremely worried about the climate crisis, believing that time is “running out to address it” and that “governments are not prioritising climate action”, leading to feelings of powerlessness and hopelessness (South Australian Youth Forum, 2024). It is due to these feelings and requirement for action that policies and incentives should be introduced for beyond 2030.

1.2: The Safeguard Mechanism should cover more industrial facilities and carbon leakage provisions should be improved

The SA Youth Forum also agrees with this section, believing that without lowering the threshold of the Safeguard Mechanism, large polluters are able to continuously increase their emissions without disincentives. Many young people believe that too much emphasis is placed on individuals to act against climate change, without proper regulations for the large corporate polluters, a belief that this recommendation seeks to fix (South Australian Youth Forum, 2024).

1.3: Introduce an emissions-reduction incentive for heavy vehicles and phase-out policy overlaps for light vehicles

Whilst the SA Youth Forum agrees with this recommendation, we would recommend the **inclusion of a time-period for the phasing out of electric vehicles** from the Fringe Benefits Tax. This should be long enough for many people to still be incentivised to purchase electric vehicles in order to meet the 2030 emissions target, and for electric vehicles to become the new normal, so that customers do not revert to purchasing petrol vehicles.

1.4: Apply frameworks to achieve emissions targets at least cost and improve transparency

The SA Youth Forum strongly agrees with this recommendation, and urges for **this information to be made publicly and routinely available**. The public should be able to easily access and understand these frameworks and national carbon values, so that they can hold the government and large polluters accountable to adhering to these. Through being routinely accessible, such as on an existing website that people already visit often, this information will reach a much greater audience, therefore further improving the transparency of climate action.

Section 2: Speeding up approvals for new energy infrastructure

2.1: Reform national environment laws

The SA Youth Forum wholeheartedly agrees with the recommendations in this section. We would like to specifically highlight the importance of **engagement with local communities and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples**. Ensuring continuous consultation with these groups is essential to ensuring that any climate action and energy projects passed is beneficial and does not significantly disrupt lives in negative ways (Sustainability Directory, 2025). Without consultation and engagement with these communities, projects can often ignore the needs of locals, making them feel disconnected and unsupportive of action, causing it to become unsustainable and inefficient. Young people want to see more consultation with local groups in climate action, to truly ensure it meets the needs of the community and has long-term success (South Australian Youth Forum, 2024).

Furthermore, **all information about the environment and past assessment decisions should be made publicly and routinely accessible**, to truly allow public understanding of climate action and therefore for further consultation and engagement

2.2: Set up a specialist 'strike team' for priority projects

The SA Youth Forum supports the use of a strike team to act to expedite priority renewable energy projects. We hope this will ensure that all priority projects are executed quickly and effectively for swift climate action

2.3: Establish a Coordinator-General for priority projects

The SA Youth Forum supports the independent perspective that the Coordinator-General will provide on priority projects to ensure their application and success. We would recommend, if it is in the scope of the report, **for a relevant example of such a role to be provided** to further guide the government's application of this recommendation.

2.4: Consider the energy transition in approval decisions

The SA Youth Forum wholeheartedly supports this recommendation. This is something that should have been changed years ago, with many young people being disturbed by the continued approval of coal mines and other environment-harming projects (South Australian

Youth Forum, 2024). This is so significantly important that we would even recommend moving it to 2.2 or 2.1 to emphasise its importance.

Section 3: Addressing barriers to private investment in adaptation

3.1: Set up a climate risk information database covering all climate hazards

The SA Youth Forum agrees with the idea of this database, with many of the young people we have consulted expressing the idea of the difficulty of finding information regarding the climate and risk being exceedingly difficult and therefore causing problems in literacy and understanding (South Australian Youth Forum, 2024). Due to this, we would recommend for this **database to be free, easy to use, and routinely accessible, possibly embedded into existing high traffic sites**. This accessible database will ensure that an increased number of people across Australia can understand the risks of climate change and methods of increasing safety.

3.2: Develop a nationally consistent climate resilience rating system for housing

The SA Youth Forum agrees with this recommendation, suggesting that this climate resilience rating system should be **associated with real estate listings**, possibly being further linked to financial valuation of properties. This will ensure that people are able to understand the safety of the property they are purchasing, and are more likely to invest in more climate resilient houses, therefore increasing the climate resilience of Australia as a whole.

3.3: Governments should agree on a series of actions to improve housing resilience over time

Whilst the SA Youth Forum agrees with this recommendation, we would like to really emphasise the need for the Australian Government to work from the bottom-up, helping improve the housing climate resilience of those in lower socioeconomic areas first in order to solidify the base of our society. Too often policies are first implemented in the high socioeconomic brackets and take decades to filter down to help those with less means to help themselves. Lower socioeconomic communities will be the most significantly hit by the climate crisis, and therefore should be prioritised in improving the resilience of housing stock. This is why we would recommend that a **subclause outlining the importance of prioritising low socioeconomic housing should be included**. The financial supports discussed in the report would be incredibly beneficial for low-income households, however houses in these

areas should also be improved first, before other high-income areas due to the severe effects climate change will have on this group.

3.4: Give the Climate Change Authority responsibility for monitoring, evaluation and learning regarding adaptation policy

Whilst the SA Youth Forum agrees with this recommendation, we would like to also highlight the **importance for the Climate Change Authority to have young people engaged in the decision making and evaluation process**. There should be a body of young people able to provide ideas and a young, future perspective on actions and policy, possibly one of the already established youth groups such as the Youth Advisory Council on International Climate Change. This generation is the future, and so must be consulted. Many young people noticed the lack of shared responsibility across generations, with significant amounts of climate activism falling on the younger generation. Yet we are continuously absent from policy making decisions. It is due to our nature as the future and our unique perspective that we should be involved in any evaluation and decision-making regarding policy. The SA Youth Forum itself is involved in many discussions about decision making, acting as a youth-led voice for young people in these discussions. This includes partnering with government agencies on several reports and policy suggestions, as well as in roundtables and the advertisement of varying initiatives. We would be honoured to be involved in the further evaluation and design of this report as well as future policy reports.

Miscellaneous Feedback

One essential aspect of climate activism and action is **duty of care**. The Australian Government has a duty of care over younger generations, to care for them and to ensure that the world is in the best form possible when it is inherited. Currently the Australian Government does not have a duty of care towards future generations to consider the impact of decisions that could harm the climate, and to therefore not make any decision that could harm the climate. This report must recommend that the Australian Government consider legislating this duty of care in some manner. It is an essential part of continued climate action, to ensure the government is always working to prevent climate change.

Additionally, **transparency** is incredibly important. The Australian Government should continually seek to inform the public of progress for climate change and the actions they are taking to reduce this. This could be through a variety of forms such as social media, websites, or even climate updates with the weather on the TV. Transparency is key to ensuring that the public understands what is being done and can keep not only corporations, and communities accountable, but also the government itself. Due to this we would recommend including a section regarding transparency for climate action.

Conclusion

Overall this is an incredibly promising report filled with many actions and recommendations which will make Australia and the world into a better place for young people. Climate action is essential, and it is good that this is being done sooner rather than later. However, continued action requires transparency, easily accessible information, a strong timeline, and consultation with local communities and other vulnerable groups. We hope we have provided a perspective of this report from the perspective of young people.

References

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