

Morrison takes credits to meet 2030 Paris emissions target



Scott Morrison says the latest projections had confirmed Australia was 'on track to meet and beat our 2030 target'. Picture: Kym Smith

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Scott Morrison has shored up his claim that Australia will meet its Paris Agreement commitment "in a canter", after revealing carried-over emissions credits from past climate pacts will be used to help the nation meet its 2030 target.

The Prime Minister said yesterday that Australia would use 367 megatonnes worth of CO₂ credits from overshooting commitments under the first and second Kyoto agreements to more than halve our emissions abatement task under the Paris deal.

The carbon-accounting decision, branded a "trick" by the Greens, means that rather than having to find 695Mt of carbon emissions cuts over the decade to 2030, Australia will now only have to lower emissions by 328Mt.

The move came as updated carbon emissions forecasts put Australia's carbon emissions in 2030 at 563Mt, equivalent to a 7 per cent fall on 2005 levels by 2030.

On raw numbers, Australia's promised 26 per cent Paris cut on 2005 emissions would require emissions to be lowered to about 448Mt or less. However, by using carried-over credits, Australia effectively now has to lower its annual emissions to about 480Mt by 2030 through future policy decisions and technological improvements.

"The emissions gap has fallen from 3.3 billion tonnes (in 2008) to just 328 million tonnes, including 'carryover' from the extra emissions Australia has cut during the first and second Kyoto Protocol commitments," he said. "That significant progress highlights Australia is going to meet our 2030 target in a canter with the suite of policies our government has put in place that support the environment, while also delivering on our plan for a stronger economy."

The use of carry-over credits, which the government has done since 2008, was not ruled out at the recent climate talks in Katowice, Poland. However, Britain, Germany and New Zealand voluntarily cancelled their carry-over Kyoto Protocol credits.

The updated emissions projections show energy section emissions are on track to fall by 17 per cent on 2005 levels by 2030, while transport and agriculture emissions are forecast to continue rising until at least 2030.

Labor, which has pledged what the Coalition says is an "economy-wrecking" 50 per cent emissions cut, said the updated forecasts showed the government had no effective climate change policy. "It is clear the Liberals are burying their heads in the sand and ignoring the vast majority of Australians who are crying out for desperate action on climate change," said the opposition's energy and climate change spokesman, Mark Butler.

Greens climate change spokesman Adam Bandt said the government had resorted to "cooking the books to halve its measly targets" and he called on Labor to rule out using similar "accounting tricks" to meet its own emissions reduction commitments. "Instead of shaping up to profit from climate denialism, Labor needs to show some spine and do the same," he said.

The Minerals Council of Australia welcomed the new projections and confirmation that carry-over credits would be used as "a measured response to reducing Australia's emissions". "Addressing climate change is not easy, particularly for a major energy and resource-intensive country like Australia

which needs a diverse future energy mix which balances affordability, reliability and emissions reduction,” said MCA chief executive Tania Constable.

But the Australian Conservation Foundation said the nation needed elected representatives who acknowledged climate change as a “national crisis”.

Mr Morrison first pledged that Australia would meet its Paris commitments easily after scrapping the national energy guarantee and splitting the climate change and energy portfolios.