

Scott Morrison flags more funds for renewables and low emission energy sources

Morrison unveils climate policy in Melbourne, February 25, 2019.

Prime Minister Scott Morrison delivers a speech in Melbourne on the Coalition's environment policy. Morrison announces \$3.5 billion in spending over the next ten years, including a \$50 million commitment to begin work on a second undersea cable connecting the Victorian and Tasmanian electricity grid. (AAP VIDEO/Alex Murray)

Greg Brown, Journalist, 3:16PM February 25, 2019
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Scott Morrison has flagged more government funds for renewables and low emission energy sources — including investments in Snowy 2.0, electric cars and Tasmanian hydro — as he declares climate change action does not have come at the expense of economic growth.

The Prime Minister today revealed plans for a \$56 million interconnector from Tasmania to the mainland, which would accelerate the delivery of the Marinus Link that could keep the lights on for households in Victoria and reduce emissions by 25 million tonnes by 2030.

Mr Morrison also said there would be further announcements on the Snowy 2.0 project and on a “national electric vehicle strategy”. “To ensure the transition to new vehicle technology and infrastructure is carefully planned and managed,” Mr Morrison said today, after confirming a \$2 billion investment in Tony Abbott-style direct action measures. “And through that strategy the government will investigate mandating electric vehicle plug type to improve the constancy and interoperability of public charging. It has got to be practical, it has got to be accessible.”

The Coalition's \$2 billion Climate Solutions Fund will ‘do nothing to bring down pollution’ while Australia continues burning and exporting coal, the Leader of the Green has told Sky News. Richard Di Natale argues the policy is driven by corporate interest, with Australia's big coal, oil and gas lobby being left alone. He says Prime Minister Scott Morrison is backing in former prime minister Tony Abbott's ‘climate denial policy’ because he doesn't believe in taking action on climate change. The policy will allocate taxpayer funds to help farmers and local governments devise methods to reduce emissions.

He said creation of the direct action-style Climate Solutions Package and investment in clean energy would help Australia meet its 2030 Paris targets “in a canter”.

With a group of Liberal MPs pushing for more investment in renewables, Mr Morrison hailed the effectiveness of two agencies Mr Abbott tried to abolish: the Clean Energy Finance Corporation (CEFC) and the Australian Renewable Energy Agency (ARENA).

ARENA, which helps fund renewable projects, will run out of money in 2022 unless there is an injection of capital. “The CEFC continues to invest in renewables, energy efficiency and low emissions technologies, including energy storage and electric vehicles,” Mr Morrison said. “It is the largest organisation of its kind in the world today investing in clean energy, with countries lining up ..looking to learn from its success.”

Mr Morrison said the government would differ from Bill Shorten by not choosing the environment over the economy. “Such an approach, I consider, is not measured, not balanced, not practical and it’s not helpful,” Mr Morrison said. “If that’s what you think this debate is about, you know where the debate goes? It goes to the extremes, leads to people making reckless decisions, not balanced ones. That can have very dire consequences for our country and future generations.”

He said Labor’s 50 per cent renewable energy target and 45 per cent emissions reduction target makes the Gillard government’s carbon tax “look like a mosquito bite”. “This thing is a chunk out of people’s living wage,” he said. “Sure you can have higher targets but they come at a tremendous cost. “Their targets depend, in fact they rely, on shutting industry and businesses down; you can’t achieve that any other way. So they’re either lying about the targets they are setting, or they are lying about the impact, on jobs, especially in heavy industries and the agricultural sector.”

Coalition’s climate policy is just ‘a rebadge’^{3:37}

Sky News host Laura Jayes says the government’s Climate Solutions Fund is an admission that the Coalition ‘doesn’t have a climate policy’. The government will unveil the new \$2 billion package on Monday, which will allocate taxpayer funds to help farmers and local governments devise methods to reduce

emissions. The ten-year program is an extension of former Prime Minister Tony Abbott's Emissions Reduction Fund. Ms Jayes says the policy is 'just a rebadge from a Prime Minister with a background in marketing'.