

Chapter 2

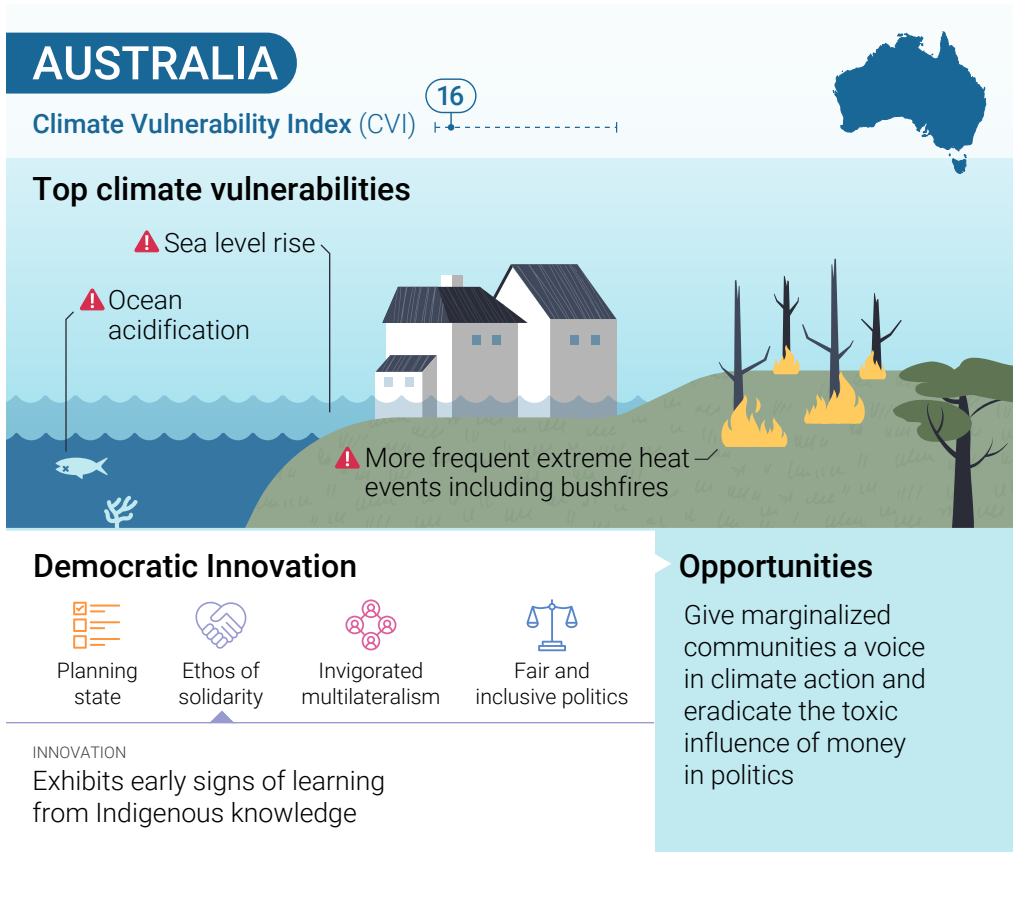
AUSTRALIA

The island-continent of Australia is a federation or Commonwealth of eight states, two territories and the federal level of government. It is a parliamentary democracy with periodic elections for elected bicameral parliaments in all jurisdictions apart from the unicameral Queensland and the territories. Governments are formed by the party or coalition with a majority in the lower house (Parliament of Australia 2019; PEO 2022). The federal, state and territory levels of government have legislative and executive power in relation to environmental matters, including climate change. There are no constitutional provisions dealing specifically with climate change (Power 2019).

Australia is a settler-colonial state and its First Nations constitute the oldest living culture in the world. The Indigenous Estate—land where First Nations people hold rights and interests—amounts to 40 per cent of the continent, often in areas of high conservation value (Gammage 2012).

Australian politics is dominated by two main political groupings—the Liberal Party and the National Party as the right-of-centre Coalition, and the left of centre Australian Labor Party (ALP). The ALP currently holds power at the federal level, while the states and territories are governed by a mix of Coalition- and ALP-led governments. There are also several minor parties as well as elected independents. There is a mix of electoral systems across the legislatures of three predominant types—first-past-the-post, preferential voting and single transferable vote proportional representation (Bennett and Lundie 2007). Voting is compulsory in federal, state and territory elections (Australian Electoral Commission 2011).

Figure 2.1. Australia



2.1. CLIMATE VULNERABILITY

The key climate risks already experienced by Australia are:

- An increase in average temperature of 1.44°C since national records began in 1910, resulting in more frequent extreme heat events including extreme fires.
- A decline in rainfall and run-off in south-west Australia, together with increases in parts of Northern Australia.

- Ocean acidification and warming, contributing to more frequent and longer marine heatwaves.
- Rising sea levels, including at more frequent extremes of height.

Australia is projected to experience continuing increases in all of these risk areas in the coming decades (IPCC 2014, 2018; CSIRO 2020; Hoegh-Guldberg and Hughes 2021). The *Australia State of the Environment Report (2021)* found that the state of and trends for the environment in Australia are poor and deteriorating, and that climate change was ‘continuing and ... increasing the impacts of other pressures on our environment’ (Australia State of the Environment 2021).

Australia’s rich biodiversity is one of the areas most vulnerable to climate change (Australian Government 2009). Rising sea levels will affect the 85 per cent of Australia’s population that lives in coastal areas and the major cities (excluding Canberra) (Cechet et al. 2011). It is estimated that coastal infrastructure to a value of more than AUD 226 billion will be affected by a rise of 1.1 metres (Australian Government 2011). Rainfall decline in the Murray-Darling Basin has reduced agricultural production, compromised water security for cities and towns dependent on its water flows and contributed to mass fish deaths (Pittock 2019). Marine heatwaves have resulted in the coral bleaching of one of Australia’s most popular tourism destinations—the World Heritage-listed Great Barrier Reef. Climate change will also increase heavy rainfall events and flooding (CSIRO 2022). Catastrophic bushfires have increased in frequency. The horrific costs of the 2019–2020 bushfires have been recounted by a Royal Commission (Royal Commission into National Natural Disaster Arrangements 2020).

Indigenous communities have been particularly badly affected. The Lowitja Institute’s report on *Climate Change and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health* states that: ‘Climate change is compounding historical injustices and disrupts cultural and spiritual connections to Country that are central to health and wellbeing’ (Lowitja Institute 2021: 1).

Australia’s rich biodiversity is one of the areas most vulnerable to climate change.

Australia is ranked 13th of 182 countries on the University of Notre Dame's Global Adaptation Initiative (ND-GAIN) Index for 2020, where it features as the 167th most vulnerable country and the 11th most ready country (University of Notre Dame 2022a, 2022b). Areas of particular vulnerability for Australia include projected changes in cereal yields and annual runoff, and an increase in urban populations (University of Notre Dame 2022b).

Australia is among the highest per-capita emitters of greenhouse gases internationally.

2.2. CLIMATE ACTION

Australia is among the highest per-capita emitters of greenhouse gases internationally (Climate Analytics 2019). The ALP Government elected in May 2022 has increased Australia's climate ambition by altering Australia's Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) under the Paris Agreement by committing Australia to reduce its greenhouse gas emissions to 43 per cent below 2005 levels by 2030. This is in contrast to the previous government's commitment to a 26–28 per cent reduction. The new government has also reaffirmed Australia's commitment to achieve net zero emissions by 2050 (Australian Government 2022). These targets have been enacted into law in the Climate Change Act 2022 (Cth), together with a ratchet mechanism based on recommendations from the Climate Change Authority. All states and territories have a net zero target of 2050 or earlier, as well as 2030 targets that translate to an estimated 37–42 per cent reduction on 2005 levels Australia-wide (ClimateWorks Australia 2021).

Powering Australia (Australian Labor Party 2021) sets out the federal government's plan to 'create jobs, cut power bills and reduce emissions by boosting renewable energy'. Among other things, it proposes investment in the electricity sector by upgrading the electricity grid, introducing solar banks and community batteries, and other emission-reduction measures, such as manufacturing renewables, low-emission technologies and emission-reducing live-stock feed, as well as capping the emissions of the largest emitters and measures to encourage the uptake of electric vehicles.

The Australian courts, which are generally regarded as independent (Australia has a 0.98 GSoD score on judicial independence), have

been involved in climate action through climate litigation. The ‘first generation’ cases have generally been administrative law challenges to government decisions. ‘Second’ or ‘next generation’ cases, on the other hand, have focused on holding governments and corporations to account for the climate change impacts of their actions (Peel, Osofsky and Foerster 2017).

The impact of second generation litigation remains to be seen. In *Sharma v Minister for Environment (Sharma v Minister 2021)*, a Federal Court found a novel duty of care owed to children by the Australian Government to prevent climate harms when exercising power under the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 (Cth) (Peel and Markey-Towler 2021). This decision, however, was overturned on appeal to the Full Federal Court. The Court rejected the duty of care, among other things, because it was unsuitable for judicial determination as it concerned ‘core government policy’ or ‘public policy of the highest importance’ (*Minister v Sharma 2022*).

In an unprecedented international legal action, a group of eight Torres Strait Islanders known as the Torres Strait 8 successfully complained to the UN Human Rights Committee that the Australian Government had violated the plaintiffs’ rights under the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, specifically, article 6 (right to life), article 17 (right to be free from arbitrary interference with privacy, family and home) and article 27 (right to culture). While the Committee did not find a violation of article 6, it concluded that articles 17 and 27 were breached by the failure of the Australian Government to take adequate climate action (UN Human Rights Committee 2022).

Climate action is also championed by civil society organizations through advocacy, research, and organizing and mobilizing, including during elections, with a range of organizations active in this space (0.66 GSoD score on civil society participation). These range from youth climate groups to organizations dedicated to climate change, such as the Climate Council and Climate Works; trade unions, including the Australian Council of Trade Unions; and employers and employer groups, such as the Business Council of Australia. The Australian Reserve Bank (DeBelle 2021) and the finance industry regulator (APRA Practice Guide 2021; see also TCFD 2017) have also

been vocal in warning of the financial risks of climate change (see also Kearns 2022).

The Climate Change Performance Index places Australia sixth-last in its assessment of the climate actions of 61 countries (Burck et al. 2022). Australia's climate action falls short in two major respects. First, there is inadequate climate ambition. While the federal government's climate ambition compares favourably with that of its predecessor, its climate ambition is consistent with warming of 2°C, the upper end of the Paris Agreement's temperature targets (Climate Analytics 2022) and has only improved Australia's overall Climate Action Tracker rating from 'Highly insufficient' (Climate Action Tracker 2022a) to 'Insufficient' (Climate Action Tracker 2022b). It is argued that to be consistent with the lower end of the Paris Agreement's temperature targets (1.5°C), Australia's emissions must be reduced by 75 per cent by 2030, and net zero emissions reached by 2035 (Climate Council 2022).

Australia remains among the most fossil-fuel-dependent countries.

Second, there is continued dependence on fossil fuels for domestic consumption and export income. Australia remains among the most fossil-fuel-dependent countries (Swann 2019; Clean Energy Council 2022). Powering Australia and the recently enacted Climate Change Act are silent on phasing out such fuels and ALP Prime Minister Anthony Albanese has recently argued that a ban on coal production would not reduce emissions as other countries will continue to engage in such production (Brown 2022).

2.3. DEMOCRATIC DEBILITATION HINDERING EFFECTIVE CLIMATE ACTION

The four circumstances of democratic debilitation discussed in Chapter 1 are already evident in Australia. There is the underlying orientation of short-termism. Australia's former Treasurer has referred to the climate crisis as requiring 'significant structural change' (Frydenberg 2021). The Grattan Institute has said that '[g]etting to net zero will be arguably the biggest economic transformation Australia has seen outside of wartime' (Wood, Reeve and Ha 2021: 17). However, there are no meaningful plans for jobs and industries in a climate-safe economy. The Climate Change Act

has been criticized for failing to provide a long-term roadmap for decarbonizing the economy (Jotzo 2022).

Specifically, there is no plan for phasing out fossil fuel industries and many fossil-fuel-based projects are still under development (Ogge, Quicke and Campbell 2021), even though the changing economics of energy production will lead to further closures of coal-fired plants. The Australian Energy Market Operator projects that most of Australia's 20-odd coal plants will close over the next two decades (AEMO 2020). Without credible plans to address such closures, these stranded assets are likely to lead to stranded communities.

The short-term orientation stems in part from discourses on security that focus on the immediate future rather than the longer term (McDonald 2015). Part of the difficulty is also what Wilkinson has dubbed the 'no regrets' policy that has prevailed in both major political parties (the Coalition and the ALP) since the Howard Coalition Government's tenure (1996–2007), or the principle that climate action should not result in costs to Australia's economy in the short term, especially to its fossil fuel industries (Wilkinson 2020). The prioritization attached to avoiding negative impacts on fossil fuel industries is no coincidence and raises another circumstance of democratic debilitation—capture by vested interests.

There are indications of a fossil fuel hegemony in Australia (Wright, Nyberg and Bowden 2021); one that was perhaps most vividly illustrated by former Prime Minister Scott Morrison brandishing a lump of coal provided by the Minerals Council of Australia in the Commonwealth Parliament (Murphy 2017). In the context of a GSoD score of 0.74 on media integrity, some have highlighted the nexus between the fossil fuel industry and the media (Holmes and Star 2018), while others have highlighted the historical and contemporary connections between the coal industry and the Australian state (Baer 2016). Professor Ross Garnaut, who has written two comprehensive reports on climate change, has observed in relation to Australia how '[e]missions-intensive industries have invested heavily to influence climate change policy since the early days of discussion of these issues' (Garnaut 2009: 15).

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This investment in influence by these industries is notable in several ways:

- The resources industry is by far the largest sector making political contributions (Crowe 2021).
- The success of the AUD 22 million advertising campaign by mining companies against the Rudd Government’s resource super-profits tax is part of political folklore—to the extent that ‘[i]t’s now become routine for industry groups to threaten a “mining tax style campaign” every time they don’t get their way with government’ (Knott 2011; Davis 2011).
- Employees of and lobbyists for industry have included former ALP ministers, former National Party leaders and former Liberal Party ministers (see e.g. Davies 2015; Henderson and Bradfield 2016).

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Power of this nature has a profound impact and enlivens the notion of ‘policy capture’ (OECD 2017). Wilkinson’s book, *The Carbon Club*, provides a meticulous account of how a network of climate science sceptics, politicians and business leaders brought about decades of climate inaction in Australia (Wilkinson 2020). Under the Howard Government, climate change policy was effectively determined by fossil fuel lobbyists, many of whom were former senior public servants, who likened themselves to organized crime through the self-styled label ‘the greenhouse mafia’ (Hamilton 2007: Chapter 1). Perhaps the most singular fact is that fossil fuel companies have played an instrumental role in the ousting of two of the five prime ministers in office since 2007—Kevin Rudd (Davis 2011) and Malcolm Turnbull (Alberici 2018).

The capture by the fossil-fuel industry is undemocratic not only for who it unduly empowers, but also for who it disempowers. Among those disenfranchised are Indigenous communities. In an understated way, the 2022 IPCC report coverage of Australasia refers to ‘[r]ecognition of the role of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples in identifying solutions to the impacts of climate change [as] slowly emerging ... having been largely excluded from meaningful representation from the conception of climate change dialogue through to debate and decision-making’ (IPCC 2022: Chapter 11).

Others have argued that Indigenous communities are ‘the first to be impacted and the last to be heard’ (Moggridge et al. 2022).

The third circumstance of democratic debilitation, self-referring decision making, is said to arise from democratic mechanisms (particularly elections) underpinned by accountability to constituents of a nation state and to current voters—a section of the current generation. To this can also be added the politics of self-interest, both sectional and individual. Signs of such debilitation are already apparent. The ‘climate wars’ have contributed to the ousting of three prime ministers since 2007 (Crowley 2021), while also distorting different interests to the point where they have become irreconcilable, thereby providing a platform for political polarization and the exploitation of division for electoral gain (Eckersley 2015). Such polarization is reflected in the importance ascribed to emissions reductions by voters, which sharply divides along lines of political party preference (Colvin and Jotzo 2021). It has also resulted in divisiveness and conflict—much of which is unnecessary—and false trade-offs between protecting jobs as opposed to the environment, between regions and cities, and between blue-collar and white-collar workers (Fitzgibbon 2021).

These self-referring dynamics are connected to the fourth circumstance of democratic debilitation, weak multilateralism. Rather than emerging as a global climate leader, Australia has been criticized by former UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon for not pulling its weight on climate action (Thorpe 2021), and by current UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres as a ‘holdout’ on meaningful 2030 targets (O’Malley 2022). At the 2021 Glasgow Conference of the Parties (COP) to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), Australia refused to join calls by more than 40 countries—including several fossil-fuel-dependent nations such as South Korea and Indonesia—to end the use of coal power (Morton 2021).

In a welcome sign, Powering Australia commits the federal ALP government to ‘[r]estoring Australia’s reputation with trading partners and allies by meeting international commitments made by Australia, and advancing climate diplomacy’, and includes a bid to co-host a future UNFCCC COP in Australia with Pacific nations. However,

whether these efforts will be fully successful is somewhat moot, given the government's inadequate climate ambition (Harris 2022).

2.4. THREATS TO DEMOCRACY FROM THE CLIMATE CRISIS

The 3Is identified in Chapter 1 (insecurity, instability and inequality) are already evident in Australia. In relation to food insecurity, climate change will heighten the risks of food shortages and price increases (Quiggin 2007; Bartos 2022).

A Senate Committee report on the implications of climate change for Australia's national security identifies four categories of climate risk to Australia's national security (Government of Australia 2018)—extreme weather events and physical effects, health and well-being, the economy and threats to Australia's region. On the last category, the Climate Council has warned of the risks to Australia from conflicts over water, as well as increased displacement and forced migration from countries in the region facing significant sea level rises, notably the Pacific Island nations, Bangladesh, China, India, Indonesia and Vietnam (Spratt and Dunlop 2019; Durrant, Bradshaw and Pearce 2021). Powering Australia recognizes these risks by '[t]reating climate change as a security threat' and committing to 'an urgent climate risk assessment' by the Director-General of National Intelligence and the Secretary of Defence (Australian Labor Party 2021: 50).

Insecurity and instability intertwine with inequality because climate risks fall unevenly.

Insecurity and instability intertwine with inequality because climate risks fall unevenly. It has been said that '[c]limate change has the potential to significantly accelerate inequality' in Australia (University of Sydney 2018) and concern has been voiced for low-income workers and families (Brotherhood of St Laurence n.d.). Australia's GSoD score on social rights and equality is 0.84. Fossil-fuel-dependent communities in regional Australia will clearly be disproportionately affected by the shift away from fossil fuels. The climate crisis also threatens to deepen health inequities by creating a 'multiplier effect', notably through extreme weather events (Friel 2014).

Indigenous communities are at particular risk. The 2014 IPCC report explains that Indigenous peoples in Australia 'have higher than average exposure to climate change because of a heavy reliance on climate-sensitive primary industries and strong social connections to the natural environment, and face particular constraints to adaptation' (IPCC 2014: 1375). These interact with what the 2022 IPCC report characterizes as the 'ongoing impacts of colonisation', such as lower levels of income, and poorer school outcomes and employment opportunities, set against higher levels of poverty and ill-health compared to non-Indigenous Australians (IPCC 2022: Chapter 11).

The Lowitja Institute report highlights how rising sea levels are submerging the Torres Strait Islands (Lowitja Institute 2021). This is the context in which the Torres Strait 8 have made their claim to be 'refugees in their own country' (UN News 2022). The report also warns of the broader threat of forced climate migration, with Indigenous people moving from climate-affected Traditional Country to urban areas, becoming displaced from land, culture and spiritual connections.

The 3Is will invariably affect Australia's democracy. Political participation and equality will be affected, particularly in communities impacted by climate change and action. States of emergency risk significant shifts of power from the legislature to the executive branch of government, and the militarization of responses to extreme weather events such as bush fires (McDonald 2021). Calls to be 'put on a war footing' and fight the climate crisis like World War III serve only to exacerbate these risks (McInerney and Garrett 2020; Blair, Treagust and McCulloch 2020).

There is also the impact on free and fair elections, noting Australia's GSoD score of 0.81 on Electoral Participation. In a report on the future conduct of elections in times of emergency, the Commonwealth Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters (Parliament of Australia 2021) acknowledges the impact of these situations on the conduct of elections—specifically, voter participation by vulnerable communities, election campaigning and, more generally, trust in the electoral process.

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Australian democracy needs to be renewed in response to the climate crisis.

2.5. RENEWING AUSTRALIAN DEMOCRACY TO ADDRESS THE CLIMATE CRISIS

Australian democracy needs to be renewed in response to the climate crisis (Huntley 2019; Garnaut 2021; Megalogenis 2021). The debilitation it suffers and the threats it faces from the climate crisis can be addressed in three ways: (a) a planning state; (b) a solidaristic ethos; and (c) a fair and inclusive politics.

2.5.1. A planning state

In its 2021 report, 'Achieving a Net Zero Economy', the Business Council of Australia states that:

To achieve a net zero economy by 2050, the nation needs an unprecedented level of coordination, with bipartisan support, to align and accelerate investment signals, enhance regulation and provide much needed policy certainty for business and communities.

(BCA 2021: 5)

There are elements here of what Giddens (2011) has called a Planning State in order to counter short-termism. More specifically, this is where nation states take responsibility for taking the lead on:

- **Planning.** In terms of both mitigation and adaptation.
- **Regulation of the economy.** Including instituting the polluter pays principle and establishing the economic framework for a low-carbon economy.
- **Coordination and integration.** Between government, the private sector and citizens, as well as between different levels of government.
- **Holistic risk mitigation.** To address the risks of the climate crisis, together with other risks experienced by contemporary societies, among other things through social protection.

The last point is critical and relatively neglected (IPCC 2014: 1376).

The centrality of the state in addressing the climate crisis is not difficult to understand. Both the Stern Review on the economics of climate change (Stern 2006) and, in Australia, the 2008 *Garnaut Climate Change Review* (Garnaut 2008) recognize that climate change is ‘the greatest and widest-ranging market failure ever seen’ (Stern 2006: i).

The Australian states provide some insights on how an effective planning state with elements identified by Giddens might implement climate policies (State of NSW and Office of Environment and Heritage 2016; Government of South Australia n.d.). These elements are also present in the climate change Bill proposed by the independent federal parliamentarian, Zali Steggall. The Bill emphasizes that planning in the climate crisis is a democratic enterprise and that one of its key principles is promoting ‘community engagement and self-determination’ (Climate Change (National Framework for Adaptation and Mitigation) Bill 2020 (Cth): cl. 15). This is consistent with the thinking of the International Energy Agency that: ‘[c]itizens must be active participants in the entire process, making them feel part of the transition and not simply subject to it’ (IEA 2021: 4).

The vital importance of democratic planning in the climate crisis should not be downplayed. The crisis is a societal and existential challenge that raises a complex range of issues—not just technical, but also social, economic, political and environmental. It is therefore imperative that we harness our collective wisdom to address the crisis.

Of central importance is ensuring that First Nations are adequately represented in decision making, as required by the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (2007). The call in the *Uluru Statement from the Heart* (2017) to address the ‘torment of our powerlessness’ through ‘a First Nations Voice enshrined in the Constitution’ and ‘a Makarrata Commission to supervise a process of agreement-making between governments and First Nations and truth-telling about our history’ is also critical.

Self-determination of First Nations is of particular significance to the Indigenous Estate not only because of its scale (around 40 per

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cent of Australia's land mass), but also because of its importance to climate mitigation, including carbon capture and renewable energy, both wind and solar (O'Neill et al. 2021). Effective Indigenous representation also enables vital learning to be transmitted from the oldest living cultures, particularly in respect of developing an understanding of societal well-being that goes beyond gross domestic product and other economic considerations. As the Lowitja Institute report highlights:

Central to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures is the holistic nature of health and wellbeing. Good health is dependent on respectful and reciprocal relationships to Country, culture, spirituality, community and family. It is a cultural responsibility to look after and respect oneself (connection to body, mind and emotions), each other (family, kinship, community) and the environment (connection to Country).

(Lowitja Institute 2021: 13)

This broader conception of societal well-being is consistent with the Albanese Government's plan—following initiatives in Canada and New Zealand—to introduce a 'well-being' budget that includes measures related to climate change (Chalmers 2022). It also profoundly connects with Indigenous sovereignty. As the *Uluru Statement from the Heart* (2017) says, '[t]his sovereignty is a spiritual notion: the ancestral tie between the land, or "mother nature", and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples'.

The politics of self-interest arising from self-referring mechanisms should be countered with a solidaristic ethos.

2.5.2. Democratic renewal through a solidaristic ethos

The politics of self-interest arising from self-referring mechanisms should be countered with a solidaristic ethos, which can also be used to address the risks from insecurity, instability and inequality. A solidaristic ethos is a democratic principle that should be broad and inclusive, encompassing intergenerational and intra-generational solidarity, as well as solidarity within and among nations, and with nature (see Section 1.1).

In Australia, voice and social protection are two important aspects of promoting democratic solidarity in the climate crisis. Communities that are particularly affected by climate change and climate action—

frontline communities—should have a meaningful voice. This includes First Nations people, communities in regional Australia suffering from drought, water scarcity and bushfires, and fossil-fuel-dependent communities. The Climate Change Act signals these communities by emphasizing particular regard for the impact on rural and regional Australia.

In the world of work, where there will be extensive industrial and employment restructuring, this means putting mechanisms for social dialogue in place that will be integral to a just transition (see Chapter 1). Indeed, the ALP's policy platform affirms the Paris Agreement's 'requirement for just transition planning involving local communities, unions, and industry' (ALP National Platform 2021: [23]), or what is referred to in Zali Steggall's Bill as a 'fair employment transition' (Climate Change (National Framework for Adaptation and Mitigation) Bill 2020: cl. 14).

A just transition in the climate crisis that—to quote from the UN Sustainable Development Goals—'leaves no one behind' (UN Sustainable Development Group n.d.) emphasizes the role of social protection, which is another pillar of the International Labour Organization's Decent Work Agenda (see Chapter 1). Protections of this nature in Australia will require dedicated plans for communities particularly affected by the climate crisis. The Business Council of Australia (BCA) has called for a low-carbon regional roadmap (BCA 2021). The Australian Council of Trade Unions (ACTU) advocates plans to provide for an orderly closure of coal-fired power stations (ACTU n.d.), as does the Australia Institute (Stanford 2020), including specific plans to phase out thermal coal (Quiggin 2020). An agreement between the ACTU and the BCA has called for 'an independent and properly resourced National Energy Transition Authority to manage an orderly and fair transition process for workers in emissions intensive industries and their communities, particularly in regional areas, that has governance of governments, industry, community and unions' (BCA 2022).

More general measures should also be contemplated, such as those suggested by Garnaut in his book, *Reset*, in which he argues for employment security in the form of a national commitment to full employment and income security through a universal basic income,

Putting mechanisms for social dialogue in place will be integral to a just transition.

together with proposals for a job guarantee (Garnaut 2021, 2022; Mitchell n.d.). Former ALP Deputy Opposition Leader, Jenny Macklin, has called for an emissions and employment accord that embraces a policy of full employment, nation-building plans and an increased social wage (Macklin 2019).

Together with broadening the understanding of societal well-being, there is much to be learned from Indigenous communities regarding the notion of a solidaristic ethos. In his book, *Sand Talk: How Indigenous Thinking Can Save the World*, Indigenous thinker Tyson Yunkaporta outlines how an Indigenous knowledge perspective can be helpful to curb self-interested (narcissistic) behaviour and deal with the sustainability crisis (Yunkaporta 2019).

A fair and inclusive politics means democratic planning, a voice for 'frontline communities' and social dialogue.

2.5.3. Fair and inclusive politics

A fair and inclusive politics means democratic planning, a voice for 'frontline communities' and social dialogue. Indigenous writer Tony Birch (2017) has emphasized how dialogue between Indigenous communities and non-Indigenous people must be equitable and reciprocal, and based on an unflinching recognition of colonialization and its continuing impact; others have similarly called for the '[d]ecolonising [of] solidarity' (Land 2015). Equally, these dialogues should be based on a recognition of the Indigenous sovereignty called for in the *Uluru Statement from the Heart*, that 'this ancient sovereignty can shine through as a fuller expression of Australia's nationhood'. Treaties with First Nations are critical and treaty processes are under way in Queensland, Victoria, South Australia and Northern Territory, highlighting the need for a national treaty with Australia—one of the few settler-colonial states without a national treaty (ATNS n.d).

A fair and inclusive politics extends to two other aspects. The central role of the state underlines the importance of public integrity measures. The ALP's Powering Australia involves a substantial amount of public funds and much of this money will be dispensed through the exercise of discretion, whether by ministers, government departments or public agencies. There is clearly a risk here of misuse of public funds.

Second, the toxic influence of money in Australian politics has to be eradicated. The Commonwealth is the most significant jurisdiction but has the weakest laws regulating political funding and lobbying. In the words of former Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull, we need ‘root and branch reform’ at the federal level (Grattan and Austin 2009). In relation to the funding of federal election campaigns, such reform should include effective transparency measures, caps on election spending, caps on political donations and a fair system of public funding of political parties and candidates. In relation to lobbying, the key reform measures are effective disclosure obligations, a code of conduct for lobbyists, fair consultation processes and resourcing of disadvantaged groups (Tham 2018). Promisingly, the federal ALP government is committed to introducing more effective disclosure obligations and spending caps (Karp 2022).

2.6. CONCLUSION

Australia has suffered from serious climate impacts and weak climate action. The latter is in part explained by democratic debilitation. The newly elected federal government promises hope of better. Whether its actions will be sufficient to achieve a climate-safe future, however, remains to be seen.

Australia has suffered from serious climate impacts and weak climate action.

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LEGISLATION

Climate Change Act 2022 (Cth)

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CASES

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