

Greens NSW

Energy Policy



Revised August 2014

Principles

The NSW Greens believe:

1. It is the responsibility of government to ensure people and businesses have access to energy services as a fundamental aspect of participating in society. Energy from fossil fuels will become increasingly expensive and is driving environmental destruction. Sustainable and affordable energy from renewable sources is now technically possible and economically essential. Achieving this transition, however, will require a commitment from all levels of government and society to a shift from fossil fuels to renewables and energy efficiency and, at least in the transition phase, reducing the energy intensity of the economy;
2. Greenhouse gas emissions emitted as a result of burning fossil fuels for energy are NSW's single biggest contributor to global climate change;
3. A substantial change is required in energy policy and investments, shifting from a centralised, inefficient, coal-dominated network to a much more decentralised system based on renewable energy sources and maximising efficiency;
4. A 'just transition' is required for communities and workers who have traditionally derived income from coal mining operations;
5. If the transition to renewable energy sources is made in a deliberate and planned fashion and supported by appropriate industry development policies, new energy industries can provide high quality, local, state-wide and national wealth creation, export opportunities, and other social and economic benefits;

6. Governments must have a forward looking, internationally acceptable strategy that includes time frames and targets for this transition to renewable energy;
7. The principle of 'polluter pays' applies to polluting energy generation and inefficient energy processes and products;
8. Governments must actively support the research, development and growth of renewable energy industries such as wind, solar, small-scale hydro, sustainable biofuels, wave and geothermal energy;
9. Nuclear energy presents too high a risk, is too slow to be deployed for effective climate action, and is too expensive to be pursued as an energy option. Uranium exploration and mining should not be allowed in NSW;
10. The emphasis and government resourcing of measures to reduce the emissions from existing or new fossil fuel power stations, including geosequestration of carbon dioxide and other 'clean coal' methodologies, should be diverted to the development and growth of renewable energy industries.

Aims

General

The Greens NSW will work towards

11. Ensuring that no new emissions-intensive investment in generation or large-scale industrial processes occurs in NSW;
12. Transitioning NSW within 15 years to an electricity system based on 100 percent renewables, high levels of energy efficiency and demand management.

The Greens NSW will:

13. Reject carbon capture and storage as a solution to ongoing use of fossil fuels given the failure of trial projects and projected high cost. Limited economic resources can be used far more effectively in reducing emissions and providing cost-effective energy supply if diverted to renewable energy development and energy efficiency;

14. Oppose the expansion of coal mining in NSW and the expansion of coal export infrastructure, including Hunter rail networks and the Newcastle Port. (see Fossil Fuels below for further details);
15. Reject nuclear power given the limited supplies of high-grade fuel available, the environmental risk and legacy of nuclear waste, and the security risk presented by the misuse of nuclear materials and technologies. Nuclear power can never play a significant role in reducing global emissions because the lifecycle emissions of existing technologies will soon become too great;
16. Re-introduce the moratorium on exploration for uranium and continue the moratorium on uranium mining;
17. Recognise that the simplistic National Electricity Market (NEM) reforms of the past decade have increased Australia's greenhouse intensity and have worked against renewable sources and energy efficiency. The profound transitions necessary to achieve sustainability require mechanisms other than markets, such as mandatory energy-efficiency standards, least-cost planning requirements, binding greenhouse benchmarks and renewable energy targets, and forced shut downs of pollution-intensive plants;
18. Reform the NEM to remove competitive advantages given to pollution-intensive sources such as Victorian brown-coal generators and
 - a. Internalise all environmental externalities
 - b. Remove barriers to new low-emissions entrants
 - c. Create and enforce mandatory energy efficiency standards
 - d. Require least-cost planning
 - e. Set binding greenhouse benchmarks renewable energy targets.

Fossil fuels

The Greens NSW will:

19. Work to phase out existing coal-fired and gas-fired power stations, starting with the most carbon-pollution-intensive, while guaranteeing continuity of employment, conditions, and access to retraining for all power station workers

as well as financial assistance and targeted industry development for affected communities;

20. Oppose any further privatisation of the state's electricity infrastructure, including the networks, because of the unacceptable impacts on emissions' reduction, employment, the state's finances, and household energy bills;
21. Move to create a state-based carbon-pricing regime and renewable energy targets where the federal schemes are not sufficient to reduce the state's emissions;
22. Foster the development of renewable-energy and energy-efficiency industries that will create employment growth in research, development, manufacturing, marketing, installation, maintenance and education that will far outweigh jobs losses in the fossil-fuel industry. Industry development and workplace transition policies must be aligned to ensure geographic regions and economic areas experiencing the impacts of transition share in the growth of the sustainable energy sector. This must include explicit industry development and industrial relations initiatives.

Renewable energy

The Greens NSW will:

23. Implement a planned, strategic phase-in of renewable energy technologies, including legislated, binding targets that increase over time to 100% of all electricity generated in NSW by 2030;
24. Implement government purchasing initiatives including requiring all NSW government agencies to purchase a minimum of 10% Greenpower, rising to rising to 50% within four years, or directly install renewable energy capacity on their buildings. The cost of this could be offset by energy efficiency measures;
25. Legislate to prevent non-Greenpower accredited electricity products from being sold or advertised as green or environmentally friendly;

26. Support transitioning all operational domestic water heaters to solar or other high-energy-efficiency technology;
27. Support a state-wide co-generation target for all industrial power use of 10% within eight years;
28. Fund sustainable energy programs and offset any inequitable social consequences resulting from the shift to sustainable energy;
29. Support policies that create incentives for renewable energy, including renewable energy targets;
30. Support a fair purchase price for energy generated by roof-top solar that is equivalent to the price retailers charge customers for the energy they consume;
31. Support the development of community and local-government owned and operated wind farms and other renewable energy projects as a means to equitably share profits and alleviate community concern in areas potentially facing opposition to wind farm development;
32. encourage reform to the planning and regulation of wind farm that includes:
 - a. improved community involvement in siting decisions,
 - b. respecting the legitimate rights of neighbours and communities with respect to noise and visual amenity,
 - c. encouraging profit sharing with adjoining neighbours, communities and local government, and
 - d. a clearer process for handling noise complaints;
33. Support the creation of planning guidelines based on:
 - a. site specific noise and amenity impact assessment and controls,
 - b. genuine consultation and negotiation with neighbours who would be directly affected, and
 - c. buffer distances between existing residences and wind farms of ten times the blade diameter, with the ability for the buffer to be waived as a result of

the negotiation with neighbours (for example, for an 80 metre blade machine the buffer would be 800 metres);

34. Support the development of large renewable energy projects, under public ownership and control, including the use of capital funding mechanisms such as Green Bonds, especially where private capital is not prepared to invest and take risk.
35. Work for the development of large solar thermal power stations with storage;
36. Ban the burning of native forestry so-called waste materials to generate electricity as it is unsustainable and non-renewable. Ensure that native forestry biomass power sources are not allowed to be labelled as renewable energy or Greenpower.

Energy efficiency and conservation

The Greens NSW:

37. Recognise that Australian society wastes a huge amount of energy – in daily lives, in industry and commerce, and in transmission from centralised generation. NSW is particularly wasteful, with one of the highest per capita rates of energy consumption in the world;
38. Recognise that reducing waste through energy efficiency offers major economic, social and environmental benefits, by cutting energy costs and removing the need for new generating capacity. Investing in energy saving technology creates more jobs and economic activity per unit of energy consumed than investing in generating more energy. Since many efficiency gains are available instantly, efficiency is also the fastest way of reducing greenhouse emissions.
39. The Greens NSW will work towards:
 - a. Greater energy efficiency gain targets in the NSW Energy Savings Scheme;

- b. Requiring all new commercial buildings to meet a minimum 6 star energy rating under the National Australian Built Environment Rating System (NABERS);
- c. Implementing a greenhouse trigger that requires all developments with energy related emissions above 10,000 tonnes pa to implement all available energy efficiency measures with a payback time of four years or less;
- d. Requiring all NSW government agencies to take the lead on energy efficiency, imposing penalties for failure to reach targeted energy use reductions, and to be housed in 6 star NABERS buildings within eight years;
- e. Restoring and improving the Building and Sustainability Index (BASIX) scheme, requiring high-rise and multi-unit developments to meet the same 40% energy reduction target as free-standing homes, thereby ending the unsustainable and unfair gift to major political party donors;
- f. All renovations to existing housing stock reaching the same 40% BASIX target, with upgrades required for existing sections of buildings being renovated, and the BASIX scheme extended to existing housing stock;
- g. Providing government-accredited technical assistance to identify and implement energy-efficiency projects for any company, organisation or individual. This assistance will be free of charge if all projects with a payback of four years or less are adopted;
- h. Support the widespread roll-out of 'smart' metering, which measures electricity use and price by demand and time of day, along with new tariff arrangements to encourage energy conservation and strategic demand reductions with mechanisms to protect low-income households from avoidable increases in energy bills;
- i. Reaching agreement at COAG meetings to expand and increase national Minimum Efficiency Performance Standards (MEPS) for all energy-using products, banning the most inefficient products from sale in Australia and moving towards world's best practice in standards;

- j. Removing all subsidies to energy-intensive industries, such as aluminium smelting;
- k. Developing industry transition plans for all energy-intensive industries that cannot substantially reduce their reliance on fossil fuels, including financial support for the development of new sustainable industries in affected areas, employment guarantees, and training and transition assistance for the workforce;
- l. supporting research into and development of low-carbon-fuel alternatives for emission-intensive and fossil-fuel-dependent industries;
- m. Developing alternative regulatory, educational and market mechanisms to minimise the installation and use of air conditioning.

Energy markets and pricing

- 40. While recognising that pricing is only one mechanism for reducing emissions, the Greens NSW will work to remove all market barriers to the rapid transition to 100% renewable energy, including:
 - a. Integrating full environmental, economic and social costs in energy pricing;
 - b. Removing hidden subsidies for fossil fuels and pricing signals that encourage inefficiency;
 - c. Implementing more advanced models of integrated least-cost planning that seek to develop demand-side responses before any supply-side investment is made;
 - d. Removing off-peak-electricity pricing for hot water as prices do not include the environmental costs of generation and unfairly disadvantage solar hot water;
 - e. Including the full cost of transmission and losses in prices as current pricing mechanisms unfairly disadvantage local embedded generation such as solar PV, and distributed co-generation;

- f. Introducing tax deductions and allowing accelerated depreciation for investment in renewable-energy and energy-efficiency technologies;
 - g. Providing financial assistance, investment subsidies and support and expertise to low-income households to avoid energy poverty and to enable them to become more energy efficient;
41. Ensure that levels of electricity-supply reliability used in planning are set at levels that are realistic and do not result in over-investment in transmission and distribution and unnecessary increases in power bills;
42. The Greens NSW recognise that the adoption of a national carbon-pricing mechanism is a step towards incorporating the environmental costs of energy generation into the price signals, and will work to ensure that any carbon-pricing mechanism is accompanied by measures to ensure that:
- a. Low- and middle-income households receive adequate protection from increased prices in the form of assistance in reducing demand and monetary compensation;
 - b. Industries such as aluminium smelting that are dependent on the consumption of large amounts of energy or fossil fuels are not protected from, or compensated for, the costs of carbon pricing or emissions trading;
 - c. Targets are set in accordance with the latest understanding of climate science to minimise the chances of dangerous increases in global average temperature;
44. The Greens NSW will work to reduce household energy bills by ensuring that new investment in wires and poles infrastructure is delayed until all cost-effective demand-side responses, including local solar generation, energy efficiency, and demand management, have been deployed;
45. Recognising the predicted rise in domestic gas prices caused by the development of gas export facilities on the east coast of Australia, the Greens NSW support the provision of assistance to household, business and industrial gas users to reduce gas use, transition away from gas use, and improve energy efficiency, and will work to ensure that the assistance is not

delivered as subsidies on gas prices but in a manner that protects low-income households from energy poverty;

46. The Greens NSW oppose gas export facilities in NSW and will work to resist their provision.

Peak Oil

47. The Greens NSW recognise the evidence that the global supply of oil is reaching or has reached its maximum and that growing demand and declining supply will lead to escalating prices and increasing scarcity with severe adverse consequences for all sectors of the economy, including urban and regional transport, food supply and the delivery of goods and services.
48. The Greens NSW recognise the contemporary profligate use of energy by minority world countries is unsustainable in the future regardless of alternative energy sources that may be found. A fundamental component in addressing Peak Oil is the need to reduce dramatically energy consumption for both static and transport use.
49. The Greens NSW recognise that avoiding the risk of a disintegrating society and a dysfunctional economy requires:
 - a. Urgent planning for petroleum scarcity, including restructuring the economy to be less dependent on the availability of oil;
 - b. Reserving oil supplies for the delivery of essential and emergency services and the production and distribution of food;
 - c. Preferential access to liquid fuels for those for whom public transport options are not feasible;
 - d. Recognition that the current rate of increase in air travel is placing unsustainable burdens on the climate and the supply of liquid fuels;
 - e. Substantial and urgent investment in public transport, cycling and pedestrian facilities, fixed rail and maritime transport of goods and the development of alternatives to travel and transport.

Biofuels

The Greens NSW are working towards:

51. Restricting the sources of biofuels to genuine waste;
52. Banning the importation or domestic production of biofuel sources such as palm oil that compromise recovery of endangered species, biodiversity and sustainable land use management;
53. Ensuring that crops grown for biofuel production are based on ecologically sustainable practices such as zero land and soil degradation, optimal conservation of water and protection of the river systems;
54. Ensuring that the production and processing of biofuels are based on ecologically sustainable practices such as minimal air, land and water pollution;
55. Establishment of second and third generation biofuel production facilities that demonstrate positive environmental and social outcomes through stringent greenhouse gas (GHG) life cycle analysis, environmental impact assessment and Energy Return on Investment analysis prior to production;
56. A moratorium on the cultivation of genetically engineered organism for any part of the biofuel production process.
57. Quantification and monitoring of greenhouse gas emissions from biofuel production by requiring the implementation of an accredited life-cycle analysis and publication of GHG mitigation assessments;
58. The concept of 'land-to-tank' analysis of the whole chain of biofuel production and use, including (Particulate Matter) PM2.5 and PM10 air emission levels;
59. Prioritisation of research and development into second and third generation biofuels including algae to biodiesel and cellulosic fuels over the extension of the ethanol excise rebate;
60. Repealing the volumetric biofuel mandates until there is independent evidence that they are a cost-effective measure for reducing greenhouse gas emissions or improving air quality;
61. Dismantling subsidies and tax exemptions for biofuels;

62. Amending environment and planning laws to provide targeted environmental assessment of biofuel production including soil impacts, invasive species impact and water use impacts;
63. Cancellation of the ethanol excise rebate and a diversion of this government expenditure into development of non-fossil fuel based transport and second generation biofuels production.