



2021 UNFCCC Policy Fellowship

Policy Proposal Instructions

Overview

The purpose of the proposal is to determine the focus and content of your policy paper, which you will complete as part of the Policy Fellowship component of the Global Voices Scholarship Program. Your proposal cannot **exceed 500 words**.

Your policy paper must include specific recommendations for domestic policy implementation that are realistic and achievable. While we are looking for innovative policy solutions based on ideas that demonstrate imagination and cutting-edge research, you should consider what can be achieved within the research timelines and within your available resources.

Your final paper will be approximately 2,500 words. If your final version is of high enough standard, it will be published on our online journal. You will also be supported to submit altered versions of your research to media organisations and think tanks for further publication, most often in the form of editorial or feature articles.

United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC)

The ultimate objective of the [United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change \(UNFCCC\)](#) is to “stabilize greenhouse gas concentrations at a level that would prevent dangerous anthropogenic (human induced) interference with the climate system.” The Conference of the Parties (COP) was established under the UNFCCC as the supreme body of the Convention with the mandate to adopt the decisions necessary to promote its implementation. COP meetings are normally held once annually and attended by country negotiators, international agencies and bodies, and observers. The UNFCCC has two Subsidiary Bodies- the Subsidiary Body for Implementation (SBI) and the Subsidiary Body for Scientific and Technological Advice (SBSTA) that meet usually at least once a year outside of COP, for an ‘intersessional’ meeting in Bonn, Germany. These intersessional meetings are also attended by country negotiators and a variety of non-government stakeholders.

COP26 was initially scheduled to be held in Glasgow, United Kingdom, in November 2020. However, due to the international COVID-19 pandemic, it was postponed to 1 November to 12 November 2021 (Global Voices will be attending online).

2015 marked a significant year for the UNFCCC and the world, as the beginning of the Paris Agreement - a global response to climate change containing specific goals for responding to climate change, mechanisms

to pursue these goals, and binding obligations for all Parties. While the rules and processes of the Paris Agreement have largely been determined in recent years, issues such as Article 6 (carbon markets), reporting requirements for transparency, climate finance and ‘common time frames’ remain unresolved. COP26 will be an important opportunity to gain consensus on these issues, as well as to check on global progress in emissions reductions, increase global ambition, and ensure that the world is on track to achieve the Paris target of limiting warming to well below 2 degrees above pre-Industrial levels.

Policy Prompts

Here we provide prompts and questions related to some of the UNFCCC priority areas. You do not need to address the prompts directly, and you may have another area of interest that links to these. However, your proposal must address **ONLY** one policy area.

Mitigation: The Reduction of Greenhouse Gas Emissions and the Enhancement of Sinks

- I. “2021 is a make or break year to confront the global climate emergency. The science is clear, to limit global temperature rise to 1.5C, we must cut global emissions by 45% by 2030 from 2010 levels. Today’s interim report from the UNFCCC is a red alert for our planet. It shows governments are nowhere close to the level of ambition needed to limit climate change to 1.5 degrees and meet the goals of the Paris Agreement. The major emitters must step up with much more ambitious emissions reductions targets for 2030 in their Nationally Determined Contributions well before the November UN Climate Conference in Glasgow” ([UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres](#)). What can Australia do to address the missing piece of the emissions reduction puzzle? Use successful case studies from other nations to assist in developing your recommendations.
- II. In May 2020, a [diverse group of Australian organisations](#) including business and industry councils, unions, and non-government organisations, called for a ‘green’ recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic. They stated that “beyond the pandemic, Australian prosperity also depends on dealing with other long-term challenges, including the transition to net zero emissions”. How can Australia use the economic recovery initiatives that will be required to move through the pandemic to further emissions reductions and the movement away from fossil fuel dependency?
- III. “The [coastal ecosystems](#) of mangroves, seagrass meadows and tidal marshes mitigate climate change by sequestering carbon dioxide (CO₂) from the atmosphere and oceans at significantly higher rates, per unit area, than terrestrial forests. The carbon deposits accumulated within these systems are stored aboveground in the biomass of plants (tree trunks, stems and leaves), below ground in the plant biomass (root systems and rhizomes), and in the carbon-rich organic soils typical to these ecosystems”. Australia has set ourselves up as a leader in the Blue Carbon space, however [strong barriers](#) to effective implementation of carbon sequestration in ocean environments exist. Provide recommendations on how Australia can address key barriers, including: the difficulty in measuring effects; the reversing effects of climate change impacts on the process; and the challenges associated with blue carbon conservation/regeneration being used as an ‘offset’ for other emitting activities.
- IV. UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres said at the [Opening Ceremony of COP25](#) in 2019 that “to put a price on carbon is vital if we are to have any chance of limiting global temperature rise and avoiding runaway climate change”. Australia has struggled with issues of Market-based Mechanisms such as Carbon Taxes or Emissions Trading Schemes in the past, and yet many other countries or regions have implemented Market Mechanisms to address climate change. How could Australia progress in this space on a Local, State or Federal Government level?

Adaptation: The Adjustment of Natural and Human Systems in Response to Climate Change

- I. “Australia will provide additional support to key climate initiatives to help Pacific countries mitigate and adapt to climate change and meet their climate goals” ([Minister Bishop](#)). Climate change threatens to undermine defence, political, economic, and social progress in the Asia-Pacific region. How can Australia

best collaborate with our Pacific neighbours to ensure we can contribute to greater climate justice?

- II. "Climate change is one of the most pressing public health threats of our time." ([Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, Director-General of WHO](#)). The World Health Organisation released a [Special Report](#) on Health and Climate Change at COP24. How can Australia's health policies be adapted to successfully address the key health risks caused by climate change?
- III. The importance of transparency in national planning and decision-making processes has been a central agenda item at the Australian co-chaired Umbrella Group ([UNFCCC](#)). Outline how Australia can improve its own transparency practices.

Loss and Damage

- I. [Article 8](#) of the Paris Agreement states that Parties recognise the importance of averting, minimising, and addressing loss and damage associated with the adverse effects of climate change. Least Developed Countries (LDC) and Small Island Developing States (SIDS) have limited means to avert or minimise loss and damage in the adverse effects of climate change. What could Australia do to strengthen their ability?
- II. What is Australia doing to address loss and damage due to climate induced disasters within its own national level and what do you think can be improved?

Increasing Ambition

- I. "The leadership from governments and non-state actors starts our pathway to net zero. But it is not enough (...) We are currently a long way off what science tells us is needed over the course of this decade. Together we need to go further and faster to ensure that we build a healthier and more sustainable future, one which respects the natural systems that underpin our existence and delivers dignity for all of humanity" ([COP 25 and COP26 Presidents](#)). What can Australia do to increase its ambition within its climate pledges and how can we help other countries also increase their ambition to achieve the international goal of net-zero?
- II. The Talanoa Dialogue was an initiative by the Fijian Presidency to bring non-state actors to the formal intergovernmental process, to share success and challenges, and to increase ambition. The Dialogue process was completed at [COP24 in 2018](#). Should the sharing of successes and discussions between State and Non-State actors continue? How can Australia best engage in this?
- III. There are many businesses, cities, and local and State and Territory Governments that are acting on climate change in innovative and successful ways. Discuss ways that Australia can capitalise on these learnings to ensure best-practice approaches are delivered around the country.

Youth, Gender and Indigenous Perspectives

- I. The [Indigenous and Local Communities Platform](#) is "designed to enable indigenous peoples and local communities at the front lines of climate change to share their unique perspectives on reducing emissions and adapting and building resilience to climate change, thereby giving them an active role in shaping climate action as part of the UNFCCC process". How can Australia better engage Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the climate change dialogue?
- II. The objective of the [Gender Action Plan](#) is to advance women's leadership and decision-making as a crucial step towards successful responses to the challenges of climate change. What gender-sensitive policies and/or innovative practices could the Australian Government implement to advance gender-responsive climate mitigation and adaptation?
- III. "Right now, we are the ones who are making a difference. If no one else acts, then we will" ([Greta Thunberg](#)). In the 2019 Global Climate Protest, young people across the world rallied for significant action on climate change. Yet, since that time, "Nothing has been done" to tackle the climate crisis according to Greta. How can young people better engage with Local, State and Federal Government to achieve meaningful action and develop innovative solutions?

- I. “Business can move the markets to promote the green economy we need” ([Secretary-General of the UN](#)). Examine the ‘green economy’ and how it can be used to implement the Paris Agreement. How can the Australian private sector be mobilised to support more ambitious and innovative adaptation responses?
- II. “Our challenge is to create the conditions for investment to flow, and to get all forms of finance working together for maximum impact” ([World Bank Group President Jim Yong Kim](#)). How can the Australian Government support greater private-public-partnership investment in renewable energies and climate resistant technologies?
- III. A goal of the UNFCCC was to collectively mobilise at least \$US100 billion per year in climate finance for developing countries by 2020, and annually through to 2025. What policies does Australia have in place to achieve this goal and what do you think can be improved?

Proposal Structure

Your proposal must include the following sections:

- Context and background, including a top-line review of the existing research/commentary.
- Your research aims.
- Your proposed recommendations.
- A short bibliography of 2-4 of the most important sources you have used to start informing your research.

Proposed Recommendations

- Provide specific, realistic, and achievable policy recommendations. You should aim to write these using [SMART criteria](#).
- These must relate specifically to Australia but should also consider the global implications of their implementation.
- Recommendations should outline the mechanism responsible for implementing, funding, and evaluating the success of the policy recommendation. It is not always the same organisation who does all three of these. For example, many Federal Departments provide funding to the ABS to conduct research into a specific area, which is then used and evaluated by another organisation.
- You should consider what success would look like if your recommendation was to be implemented. How would this be measured? And by whom? How would this fit within existing outcome measures?