

# Australia's Scott Morrison doesn't deny pressuring UK to drop climate asks from trade deal

By [Angela Dewan](#), International Climate Editor

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Prime Minister Scott Morrison and UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson in the garden of 10 Downing Street, London, on June 15, 2021.

**London (CNN Business)** Australian Prime Minister Scott Morrison all but admitted Thursday that his country had asked UK negotiators to exclude particular climate commitments from a free trade deal agreed in principle in June.

The UK government, which is chairing November's COP26 international climate talks, as well as Australia's

have come under pressure since Sky News reported a leaked email Wednesday from a British trade "deputy director" alleging that UK business secretary Kwasi Kwarteng had agreed that the Department of International Trade could "drop both of the climate asks," including "a reference to Paris Agreement temperature goals."

CNN has not been able to verify the contents of the leaked email and UK officials have declined to confirm its authenticity, but when journalists in Canberra asked Morrison why Australia had asked for the temperature reference to be excluded, Morrison — without confirming the Sky News story — said Australia wanted to keep climate and trade issues separate.

"Well, it was about trade. It wasn't a climate agreement, it was a trade agreement. And ... in trade agreements, I deal with trade issues. In climate agreements, I deal with climate issues," he told a press conference Thursday, according to a readout posted by his office.

"We're pursuing agreements on clean energy technology with a vast number of countries, and we'll have agreements about that. But the key agreement we've made is when we signed up to Paris, and the

commitments that we made to achieve those. Those commitments are clear," he said.

The reporting from Sky News suggested that the issue hinged on whether to explicitly mention a goal to contain global warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels. The Paris Agreement obliges countries to try and contain the average global temperature rise to 2°C, with a preference for closer to 1.5°C.

The UK's Department of International Trade had pushed back on Sky's reporting Wednesday, saying that it was "completely untrue" that the deal would not "sign up to" the commitments made in the Paris Agreement.

"Our ambitious trade deal with Australia will include a substantive article on climate change which reaffirms both parties' commitments to The Paris Agreement and achieving its goals, including limiting global warming to 1.5 degrees. Any suggestion the deal won't sign up to these vital commitments is completely untrue," the statement said.

But when asked specifically by CNN whether "1.5°C" would be included in the agreement, the department said it would not disclose the details of the negotiations.

Kwarteng's office did not comment on the reports and directed CNN to the trade department's statement.

Other free trade agreements signed by the United Kingdom, such as one with the European Union, mention 1.5°C explicitly.

## **Morrison says 'Australia's doing it' on climate**

When asked about Australia's stance on lowering the warming limit to 1.5°C, Morrison only pointed to the Paris Agreement, which contains the 2°C target.

"We have signed up to our commitments under the Paris Agreement. We will meet them. We will beat them," he said.

He added that while other countries were still making commitments, "Australia's doing it. Australians are doing it. Australian businesses are doing it."

"And that's the story that we can tell to the rest of the world. Australians, we just get on with it and we are."

The comments will be a new headache for COP26 President Alok Sharma, a British MP who is traveling the world trying to firm up commitments to 1.5°C ahead November's talks in Glasgow. He just finished a trip to

China, during which he stressed the importance of signing up to the more ambitious limit.

His office would not comment on the trade deal to CNN.

A source told CNN during a recent G20 ministerial meeting that several fossil fuel producing countries were opposing the more ambitious limit to global warming.

China has openly accused the West of trying to move the goal posts on the 2-degree target.

Australia is the world's second-biggest exporter of coal and its resources minister, Keith Pitt, said last week it would continue to extract and export the fossil fuel well beyond 2030, in response to a senior UN climate official, Selwin Hart, warning that the climate crisis would "wreak havoc" on the Australian economy.

Sharma is also trying to get developed nations to end the use of unabated coal, which is coal burned without capturing the carbon emitted, by the end of the decade.

A member of the UK's main opposition Labour Party — Ed Miliband, who oversees trade in the political shadow opposition — criticized the UK government for bowing to Australia's pressure on climate.

"Australia is one of the world's biggest polluters and key to the goal of limiting global warming to 1.5 degrees. But

rather than piling pressure on them, the Government has simply rolled over," he wrote on Twitter.

Morrison made his comments after the Australian Minister for Trade, Tourism and Investment Dan Tehan said that the country had "remained consistent" in ensuring all of its trade agreements met "existing multilateral environment commitments."

The Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, which sent the statement including Tehan's comments, did not respond to CNN's question of whether "1.5°C," would be mentioned in the trade agreement.

The UK-Australia trade deal was agreed in principle in June. It was touted as a success by both sides and particularly by the UK government, which had sold the freedom to strike up bilateral trade deals as a key benefit for leaving the European Union.

Australia is coming under increasing pressure to boost its climate commitments ahead of the talks in Glasgow. The country is among dozens that missed a July 31 deadline to improve its pledge to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, as signatories to the 2015 Paris Agreement were obliged to do.

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The country has agreed to reduce emissions by between 26% and 28% by 2030, from 2005 levels, well below the renewed commitments by the United States, European Union and United Kingdom, among other developed nations. The Australian government has said it will increase its pledge before talks in Glasgow.

Australia has a population of around 25 million people, and it accounts for just over 1% of the world's carbon emissions. But per capita, Australians emit more than 15 metric tons of carbon, World Bank data shows, around the same as people in the United States, which is the world's second-biggest carbon emitter and responsible for more than 14% of emissions.

## **Australia stands by coal 'beyond 2030' after UN warns of economic havoc**

By [Helen Regan](#) and [Angela Dewan](#), CNN Business

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A bucket-wheel reclaimer by a pile of coal at the Port of Newcastle in Australia on October 12, 2020.

**London (CNN Business)** The Australian government said Monday that the country would keep producing and exporting coal "well beyond 2030," despite a stark warning from a top UN climate official that failing to scrap the fossil fuel will "wreak havoc" on the economy.

The comments, made in a rebuke by the minister for resources and water, Keith Pitt, puts Australia at odds with several other developed nations, which are working towards phasing out coal by the end of the decade.

"The future of this crucial industry will be decided by the Australian Government, not a foreign body that wants to shut it down costing thousands of jobs and billions of

export dollars for our economy," Pitt said in a statement Monday.



John Kerry is pushing China drop coal. Beijing is pushing back

In his 360-word statement, the minister listed a number of economic benefits coal has brought the Australian economy but made no mention of the climate crisis.

Pitt's statement added that figures showing coal's "impending death are greatly exaggerated and its future is assured well beyond 2030."

"Coal consumption throughout Asia is forecast by the International Energy Agency to grow over the next decade to meet the energy demands of countries like China, India and South Korea," Pitt said.

"Australia has an important role to play in meeting that demand. Coal will continue to generate billions of dollars in royalties and taxes for state and federal governments, and directly employ over 50,000 Australians."

Australia is the second-largest exporter of coal in the world and the country has a high per capita carbon footprint, largely because of its coal industry. An Australian emits an average of 17 metric tons of carbon dioxide, while the global average is less than 5 tons per person, European Commission data shows.

Of the world's 176 new coal projects, 79 of them are in Australia, according to Fitch Solutions' Global Mines Database.



Protesters against the Adani coal mine, now named Bravus, march through the streets of Brisbane on July 5, 2019.

Pitt made his comments as the UN's top climate envoy, Selwin Hart, said the global phase-out of coal was not happening fast enough "to avert a global climate catastrophe."

"We fully understand the role that coal and other fossil fuels have played in Australia's economy, even if mining accounts for a small fraction — around 2% — of overall jobs," Hart said during a video address to the Crawford Leadership Forum at the Australian National University on Monday.

"But it's essential to have a broader, more honest and rational conversation about what is in Australia's interests, because the bottom line is clear: If the world does not rapidly phase out coal, climate change will wreak havoc right across the Australian economy, from agriculture to tourism, and right across the services sector. Similarly, construction, housing and the property sector, in a country where the vast majority live on or near a coastline. It will be even more catastrophic in your neighborhood."

Hart added that business and investors were increasingly abandoning coal in favor of renewable energy that is now cheaper in most places.

By not cutting coal, Australia is setting itself up for a future of climate disasters such as droughts, heatwaves, fires and floods, which will become more frequent and severe as the planet warms.

"It is increasingly clear that decarbonization is inevitable, and it is the greatest commercial opportunity of our age," Hart said, adding that the world is "at a critical juncture in the climate crisis."

## **Australia's climate record**

Coal is the biggest single source of carbon emissions in the world, and the UN has called on OECD countries, including Australia, to phase out the fossil fuel by 2030. China is the world's biggest consumer and producer of coal, accounting for around 50% of the world's production, and pressure is growing on the country to phase out the fossil fuel quicker than planned.

Scientists say key economies must cut carbon pollution by 45% this decade if the world is to contain average global temperature rises to 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels. Going beyond that, scientists say, will mean more frequent and intense climate impacts, including droughts,

heatwaves and wildfires, as well as heavy rainfall and floods.

Australia has pledged to reduce its greenhouse gas emissions by 26-28% by 2030, from 2005 levels, a pledge that sits well below renewed commitments by the United States, European Union and United Kingdom, among other developed nations.

US President Joe Biden increased his country's pledge in April to reduce emissions by 50-52% in the same timeframe.

Australia, like dozens of other countries, missed a July 31 deadline, laid out in the 2015 Paris Agreement, to increase its pledge, though the government says it will do so ahead of the COP26 international climate talks to be held in Glasgow in November.

Australia has also not committed to net zero emissions by mid-century, a goal that the United States, European Union and United Kingdom, among other countries, have done. Net zero is where the amount of greenhouse gas emitted is no greater than the amount removed from the atmosphere.

Prime Minister Scott Morrison has said Australia is aiming to reach zero "as soon as possible," and preferably by

2050, but has stopped short of anything more concrete. Many Australian states have, however, committed to net zero independently of the central government.

- Much of the developed world is switching to renewable sources to generate electricity, while Australia's power grid remains heavily coal-reliant.

Coal is, however, still used extensively around the world for heavy industry, such as steel making, where energy from sources like wind and solar are not able to meet power requirements. Alternatives, like green hydrogen, are in development and are slowly coming into wider use.