

Australia's first National Electric Vehicle Strategy

The Federal Government is establishing Australia's first National Electric Vehicle Strategy, which has been met with enthusiasm from industry.

A discussion paper on the National Electric Vehicle Strategy will shortly be released for wide consultation.

At the heart of the Strategy will be a plan to grow the Australian electric vehicle market in a bid to improve uptake of electric vehicles and improve affordability and choice.

Australia has fallen behind when it comes to electric vehicles – at last count, consumers in the United Kingdom could take their pick of 26 low-emissions vehicles under \$60,000 whereas in Australia that number is only eight.

According to Federal Climate Change and Energy Minister, Chris Bowen, national leadership is needed to ensure we don't continue to be left behind.

"Up until now, Australian households and businesses have had very little choice regarding low-emissions and fuel-efficient vehicles, and they have been paying for it," Mr Bowen said. The development of a National Electric Vehicle Strategy is an opportunity to explore options and details about how an Australian fuel efficiency standard could work and the benefits of a standard – such as getting more affordable electric vehicles to market and reducing household transport costs from inefficient vehicles.

In recognition of the importance of all jurisdictions working together to tackle this challenge and opportunity, Mr Bowen and Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Local Government Minister, Catherine King, have written to state and territory ministers inviting participation in the development of the Strategy.

The government has already acted to make electric cars cheaper through the removal of fringe benefits tax and the five per cent import tariff for eligible electric vehicles.

In a commitment to ensure Australians have access to world's best transport technology, the Federal Government will invest in the Driving the Nation plan which will:

- Establish a truly national EV charging network – with charging stations at an average interval of 150km on major roads
- Create a national Hydrogen Highways refuelling network
- Set a Low Emission Vehicle target for the Commonwealth fleet of 75 per cent of new leases and purchases by 2025

Australian Logistics Council CEO, Dr Hermione Parsons, congratulated Mr Bowen and Ms King on their efforts to progress the next steps in establishing the nation's first National Electric Vehicle Strategy.

"The freight and supply chain sector is already on a path to emissions reduction with many ALC members committed to net zero targets. It is critical that the new strategy consults widely with the freight and logistics sector and factors in the needs of our heavy vehicle fleet," Dr Parsons said.

"In the interests of our national economy, jobs and standard of living we must make the transition to alternative fuels a success, freight, transport and logistics is critical."

A consultation paper on the National Electric Vehicle Strategy is due to be released in September and will include discussion on Fuel Efficiency Standards.

Ms King encourages Australians to share their thoughts on the topic.

“We want to hear your views on how best to design fuel efficiency standards in Australia to meet industry and consumer needs now and for generations to come, so I encourage people to have their say.”

Greenpeace Australia Pacific Senior Campaigner, Lindsay Soutar, said Mr Bowen’s announcement is a welcome shift out of the slow lane for Australia.

At two per cent, Australia’s uptake of new low-emissions vehicles is also nearly five times lower than the global average.

“We need to hit the accelerator in order to catch up to the rest of the world, where the electric vehicle transition is already well underway,” Ms Soutar said.

“But vehicle standards for Australia must pass the rego check. Standards that lack ambition will still leave us trailing the pack and block Australians from accessing cheaper, cleaner cars, something Minister Bowen has recognised.”

Apart from Russia, Australia is the only OECD country to not have, or be in the process of developing, fuel efficiency standards.

A petition from Greenpeace Australia Pacific calling on Mr Bowen to introduce strong Fuel Efficiency Standards has gained over 4000 signatories in less than 24 hours.