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New Documents Reveal Automakers' Coordinated Campaign to Undermine Key Australian Climate Regulations

The auto industry lobbied lawmakers to push for some of the weakest fuel economy standards in the world

Drawing on over 500 pages of previously unseen documents obtained via Freedom of Information (FOI) request, *new research* by climate think tank InfluenceMap sheds light on the auto industry's efforts to weaken climate policy in Australia. This research comes as the Australian government finalizes its consultation on the design of upcoming fuel efficiency (CO2) standards.

The research exposes how automakers' main industry association - the **Federal Chamber of Automotive Industries (FCAI)** - orchestrated a strategic campaign to push policymakers to adopt rules in line with its own weak, voluntary CO2 standards. These standards, originally developed with the oil industry in 2018, would be significantly less ambitious than comparable international policies.

As the only developed country without vehicle fuel efficiency standards except Russia, negative industry advocacy risks pushing Australia down the priority list of global battery electric vehicle supply and undermining its national climate targets.

The documents reveal the FCAI's playbook to weaken climate policy including:

- A July 2022 meeting with policymakers the FCAI made clear that they aimed to convince Australia's Minister for Climate Change that legislating the FCAI's voluntary CO2 standard "would effectively reduce emissions" according to a government email.
- This is despite government modeling indicating that the FCAI's voluntary CO2 standard would be weaker than even Trump-era US regulations, as well as the EU.
- FCAI sought to downplay the potential of battery electric vehicles in Australia in an April 2022 meeting with policymakers, while also pushing for the government to adopt weak fuel efficiency standards.



THE FCAI PLAYBOOK TO WEAKEN AUSTRALIAN CLIMATE POLICY

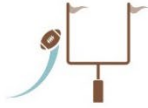


STEP 1 SET THE TERMS

Create an industry-led voluntary CO2 standard with no penalties for failure

Set a weak 2030 emissions reduction target

Introduce loopholes (e.g. super credits) to promote internal-combustion engine (ICE) powered vehicles



STEP 2 MOVE THE GOAL POSTS

Use support for a weak CO2 standard to oppose Paris-aligned climate policies

Overlook government modelling showing that the standard is weaker than international policies

Celebrate failure to meet voluntary CO2 targets for larger vehicles as a win



STEP 3 PREDICT FAILURE

Downplay the potential of battery electric vehicles (BEVs) in Australia

Spread anti-BEV narratives to the government



STEP 4 PROMOTE ALTERNATIVE SOLUTIONS

Advocate for alternative technologies

Promote ICE-powered vehicles over BEVs



STEP 5 LOCK IN WEAK POLICY

Lobby policymakers to adopt weak fuel efficiency standards

Run a strategic PR campaign to push back on ambitious fuel efficiency standards

InfluenceMap Program Manager Ben Youriev says: *This behind-the-scenes effort shows the automotive industry adopting a similar playbook to the oil industry to weaken climate rules aimed at promoting battery electric vehicles.*

These documents show the FCAI and some of its key members are advocating to lock-in a longer-term role for combustion-powered vehicles by introducing significantly weaker fuel efficiency rules than in other regions like the US, EU, and New Zealand.

Such advocacy efforts risk making Australia a 'dumping ground' for polluting cars and are a major obstacle for Australia to meet its national climate targets.

The research also analyzes the climate policy engagement of Australia's 15 largest automakers on upcoming fuel efficiency standards. It finds:

- Negative engagement on fuel efficiency standards from Australia's two top-selling automakers, Toyota and Hyundai, both of which occupy leadership positions in the FCAI.
- FCAI's negative advocacy appears misaligned with key members Tesla, Volvo Cars (through Polestar) and Volkswagen, which appear to support higher ambition fuel efficiency standards.
- Most automakers have limited direct engagement on upcoming fuel efficiency standards, suggesting that the FCAI is likely advocating on their behalf.

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About InfluenceMap

InfluenceMap is a London-based think tank with offices in Tokyo, Seoul, and New York. It provides data driven analysis on issues related to energy and climate change. Our metrics for measuring corporate influence over climate policy are used by investors, including the global Climate Action 100+ investor engagement process.