



COP31 needs the power of Strategic Philanthropy

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Framed as the "Implementation COP", [COP31](#) is an unprecedented opportunity to transition from target setting and policy to execution and implementation. In this effort, philanthropy is uniquely positioned to accelerate both, **high-level agreement and on-the-ground action**. In Australia and Türkiye, COP31's co-hosts, philanthropic actors are doing exactly that.

Ahead of COP31, this joint article brings together perspectives from our network on both host nations to demonstrate how philanthropy can make a tangible impact. Türkiye, for instance, provides a blueprint for how **philanthropy can build climate ambition and strengthen civil society's cohesion**, creating the conditions for holding leaders accountable for climate policy in a complex, fossil-fuel-reliant economy. Australia, meanwhile, provides **examples of foundations deploying innovative finance and powerful campaigning**.

Türkiye: Connecting ambition with civil society delivery

Written by Dijan Balkaroğlu

COP31 comes at an important moment for Türkiye, as some of the hardest questions about its own climate transition are becoming increasingly difficult to avoid. The energy picture is changing, although not in one direction. Wind and solar power generated 22% of Türkiye's electricity in 2025^[i], almost twice their share five years ago^[ii]. Nonetheless, fossil fuels remain a major part of the system.

Türkiye has made **'35% by 2035' one of the flagship ideas of its COP31 agenda**, calling for electricity to reach 35% of global final energy demand by 2035^[iii]. Türkiye itself shows how ambitious this shift is: domestic electrification has remained around 21%, while the country's official projections show it will only reach about 25% by 2035^[iv]. Reaching 35% will require faster renewable deployment, but also a much clearer direction on fossil fuels.

Recent emissions data make this even more pressing. Türkiye's greenhouse gas emissions increased by 4.2% in 2025, the highest annual increase among the world's 16 largest emitters, while the global increase was 0.7%^[v]. Türkiye's 2035 Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC) aims to limit GHG emissions to 643 MtCO₂e^[vi], though this is a reduction from projected growth rather than an absolute reduction



from current emissions. Türkiye has put implementation at the center of COP31, which is much needed after years of climate commitments. **But implementation and ambition need to move together.**

Philanthropic actors in Türkiye are actively demonstrating how higher ambition can be paired with concrete operational delivery. A key example is the [Sabancı Foundation](#) (Sabancı Vakfı), which built upon its milestone as the first Turkish non-profit to sign the international [Philanthropy Commitment on Climate Change](#) (hosted globally by Philea and WINGS) by partnering with [TÜSEV](#) to drive systemic change. In June 2026, they officially launched the [Türkiye National Philanthropy Climate Pledge](#), uniting 30 non-governmental organizations and grant-making institutions under a shared seven-pillar framework. By committing signatories to actionable guidelines across grant-making and institutional operations, the initiative mobilizes civil society to fund grassroots adaptation and elevate climate ambition ahead of COP31.



Photography by TÜSEV

The Transition Away from Fossil Fuels (TAFF) agenda could also make this focus on implementation more concrete. Earlier this year, Türkiye joined 56 other countries in Santa Marta^[vii], ^[viii] to discuss the practical challenges of moving away from fossil fuels, including national and regional roadmaps. However, Türkiye is not among the more than 80 countries that have backed Brazil's proposal for a TAFF Roadmap^[ix]. This is particularly relevant given that Türkiye still has no fossil fuel phase-out plan^[x], while coal remains a major part of electricity generation. **Carrying the Santa Marta conversation into COP31** would connect electrification, renewables and green industry with a just transition away from fossil fuels, including what happens to workers, communities and local economies along the way.



This again makes civil participation essential. Civil society, researchers and local actors need meaningful space in the process, as well as strong alliances that ensure policy commitments turn into action. Philanthropy can help support that space without replacing governments or public climate finance. It can support independent research, strengthen civil society's capacity, and sustain local engagement beyond a single COP.

Türkiye's choices reach beyond its borders through its energy, industrial and trade links with Europe, the Mediterranean and its wider neighborhood. COP31 will last two weeks, but its value for Türkiye will also depend on what it sets in motion at home and what continues after Antalya.

Australia: Enabling through innovative finance and scaling execution

Written by Dr. Catherine Brown OAM

Turning to the Asia-Pacific, Australia offers a **complementary perspective on how philanthropic leadership can trigger evolution** from policy mobilization to practical market execution. These reflections are made from the perspective of Australian climate philanthropy.

Australia's climate has warmed by an average of 1.51 ± 0.23 °C since national records began in 1910^[xi], making the net-zero transition urgent. In response, the Australian Government set a target to reduce emissions to 62-70% below 2005 levels by 2035 and released its **Net Zero Plan, which sets out five transition priorities**^[xii]. These are summarized in the acronym CLEAN: Clean electricity across the economy, Lowering emissions through electrification and efficiency, Expanding clean fuel use, Accelerating new technologies and Net carbon removals scaled up.

Australia is making good progress in some areas of the net-zero transition and **philanthropy has played a part in this**. In other areas however, Australia can do more, and again foundations are involved in **building momentum for action**, both as grantmakers and providers of catalytic capital through impact investment.

Where philanthropy is driving progress

In Australia, key parts of the energy transition is community-led. Over 4 million households use rooftop solar, making it the highest per-capita take-up globally (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2025)^[xiii]. In the second half of 2025, rooftop solar contributed 14.2% of electricity generated in Australia, nearly doubling its achievement since 2020, when it contributed 7.2%^[xiv].



The use of batteries alongside solar arrays is also growing. The [Rooftop solar and storage report](#) shows that a record 183,245 batteries were sold in Australia in the second half of 2025 alone. This figure is more than the previous four years combined^[xv]. Overall, Australia has increased its renewable energy share of electricity to over 40% across its two major grids^[xvi].

These developments reflect not only growing investment in renewable technologies, but also the role of communities in building pressure for a faster energy transition.



Photography by Canva Pro. For illustrative purposes.

Philanthropy has played a role in this broader ecosystem of action. As explained in the report [The Economics of Giving: The Case for Climate Philanthropy](#), published by the Australian Environmental Grantmakers Network (AEGN) in May 2025, philanthropy contributed funding to help accelerate the decarbonization of AGL Energy: Australia's largest electricity generator and retailer, historically responsible for more than 8% of the nation's total carbon emissions. By funding independent technical research, community mobilization, legal strategies, and shareholder advocacy, philanthropic capital helped reshape the corporate strategy of Australia's biggest emitter, leading AGL to bring forward its coal-plant closure dates and commit up to A\$20 billion by 2036 to build 12 gigawatts of new renewable generation and firming capacity.

Climateworks Centre has been funded by the Myer Foundation and other philanthropies since its inception and has been a leader in driving forward the



elements of industrial decarbonisation through high-quality research and advocacy. One area of current focus is Net Zero Industrial Precincts, including current work in Gladstone, Australia. ^[xxv]

Improved availability and access to finance to support the transition to a net zero global economy is a critical tool and catalyst to accelerate climate action^[xvii]. **Australian philanthropy has supported various initiatives to address barriers in the current climate finance ecosystem.** Growing connections between catalytic finance (philanthropy, government, impact investment) are unlocking private and institutional finance.

An example of this is the [Kardutjaanup rejuvenation project](#), where impact investors and **philanthropic capital enabled the Esperance Tjaltjraak Native Title Aboriginal Corporation** to acquire a 4,000-hectare former cropping property, which they are now in the process of revegetating with millions of native trees, delivering biodiversity restoration, carbon sequestration and on-country employment for the Wudjari people^[xviii].



Photography by The Rejuvenation Trust.

An alternative and powerful avenue for unlocking finance is through strategic government partnerships. For instance, the [Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade](#) (DFAT) through its Blended Finance Unit has engaged philanthropy through development of the International Development Investor Groups, which has built relationships and trust between catalytic finance from government and foundation and family office impact investors. The Asian Climate-smart Landscape Fund Australian Feeder Fund has recently been launched with [Minderoo Foundation](#) alongside the [Paul Ramsay Foundation](#), as the lead impact investors, together with a private foundation. Beyond direct funding, foundations often also take a stand on



topics that are important to the impact they are trying to achieve. The leading work of [Machdoch Foundation](#), which has invested nearly \$45 million over the last four years in climate resilience, sustainable agriculture and wellbeing^[xx], is an important example of this impactful role of philanthropy. [Machdoch Foundation](#) understands that adapting our food system to a changing climate is now a critical issue. As a leading voice in the public debate about Australia's National Food Council^[xxi], it has been championing the importance of strong food systems governance and the inclusion of farmers, citizens, and public health, climate, and environmental civil society representatives^[xxii].

Pacific island nations face an existential threat from the climate crisis, as highlighted by President Surangel Whipps Jr. of Palau: "Rising sea levels and extreme weather events threaten our hospitals, schools, infrastructure and food security, putting our children's future at risk"^[xxiii]. Given Australia's close regional ties, **Australian philanthropic organizations, such as the Minderoo Foundation, are actively channeling resources into the Pacific to build regional climate resilience.** Through ongoing pre-COP31 consultations and collaborative initiatives, philanthropy and regional partners are establishing practical pathways toward achieving a 100% renewable energy transition for the Pacific, directly paired with targeted adaptation and infrastructure resilience programs^[xxiv]. This work continues.

Philanthropy can move ambition and action forward

COP31 in Antalya arrives at a critical juncture for global climate diplomacy. Today, international climate action unfolds against a backdrop of geopolitical fragmentation, constrained public budgets, and mounting economic pressures, even as extreme weather events accelerate worldwide.

What makes COP31 uniquely suited to this moment is its historic dual structure: combining Türkiye's role as the physical host representing an emerging economy at a transition crossroads, with Australia's leadership over negotiations alongside Pacific Island partners.

The complementary experiences of Türkiye and Australia offer practical blueprints for cross-sector collaboration between philanthropic, corporate, and public actors. In a world where public funding is under pressure, these two perspectives demonstrate that foundations play an indispensable role: serving as agile, catalytic capital to bridge policy and execution, drive progress toward the commitments established at COP31, and sustain momentum for climate action through the UK's upcoming G20 Presidency.



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Foundations 20

Foundations 20 (F20) is an international platform of foundations and philanthropic organisations that serves as an enabler and bridge-builder between philanthropy, civil society, business, finance, think tanks and politics, with a focus on advancing the Paris Agreement and the Sustainable Development Goals within and beyond the G20.

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