

**Submission
No 34**

**MINERALS LEGISLATION AMENDMENT (OFFSHORE DRILLING AND
ASSOCIATED INFRASTRUCTURE PROHIBITION) BILL 2023**

Organisation: Australian Parents For Climate Action

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AUSTRALIAN PARENTS FOR CLIMATE ACTION

Australian Parents for Climate Action

Submission to the Committee on Environment and Planning RE:

Minerals Legislation Amendment (Offshore Drilling and Associated Infrastructure Prohibition) Bill 2023

30 August 2023

Australian Parents for Climate Action

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Australian Parents for Climate Action represents over 17,000 parents, grandparents and carers from across Australia, with more than 4,300 current supporters in NSW, with members up and down New South Wales incredible coastline. We are Australia's leading organisation for parents advocating for a safe climate. Our supporters are from across the political spectrum, across Australian electorates, and from different socio-economic positions. We seek non-partisan responses to climate change and its impacts.

We are focused on pushing Australian governments and businesses to take urgent action to cut Australia's carbon emissions to net zero as quickly as possible. We encourage Australia to take a leadership role on the world stage, leading by example and calling for other nations to take the necessary action to protect our children's futures.

For more information, visit www.ap4ca.org

This submission was prepared by Sam Oomens. It was approved by David McEwen and Nic Seton, CEO, Australian Parents for Climate Action.

Summary

- We welcome the Government's willingness to establish an inquiry into the potential amendment prohibiting mining and development of offshore oil, gas, and mineral resources in NSW
- The United Nations and the International Energy Agency have explicitly said that if we are to limit global heating to 1.5C, there can be no new oil and gas development, both onshore and offshore¹
- The NSW Labor Government has committed on paper to leading the charge on taking action on climate change² with an objective of delivering a 50% cut in emissions by 2030, this is another opportunity to demonstrate that leadership in action and ban offshore drilling
- An urgent shift towards large scale renewable energy and away from fossil fuels is required to limit the impacts of climate change on Australia.
- The development of wind farms within a designated offshore wind area is both more environmentally sustainable and economically beneficial than coal or gas development as wind power is one of the cheapest forms of new energy generation³ and does not emit greenhouse gases in order to generate electricity
- Offshore oil exploitation would require seismic surveying, which AP4CA feels presents an unacceptable risk to local marine ecosystems that would be impacted at all levels, from deafening and confusing migratory whales to killing zooplankton essential to maintain healthy trophic cascades within entire ecosystems⁴
- Committing to the prohibition of mining and development of offshore oil, gas, and mineral resources off the coast of NSW is not only an appropriate response to the increasing impacts of climate change, but is also representative a number of communities, groups, organisations, businesses and people throughout NSW who see the potential for the exploration of oil and gas as a rebuff of all the promise of taking meaningful action to fight climate change, including the parents, grandparents and carers who make up the dedicated volunteers of AP4CA

¹ EIA, 2021. Net Zero by 2050

² NSW Climate and Energy Action, 2023. Taking Action on Climate Change

³ CSIRO, GenCost Report 2021-2022 'Calculated Levelised Cost of Energy by technology and category for 2021

⁴ AMCS, 2023. Seismic Blasting between Otway Coast & NW Tasmania

Submission

Australian Parents for Climate Action (AP4CA) strongly supports consultation for the proposed legislation to prohibit mining and development of offshore oil, gas and mineral resources in NSW, noting the importance of this inquiry on the health and wellbeing of our children and ability for the Australian energy sector to transition away from fossil fuels. As an organisation of parents, grandparents and carers advocating for a safe climate, we are often opposed to policy and proposals that would create material harm to our environment. Therefore, we welcome this proposal to amend legislation in order to prohibit the extraction of oil and gas from NSW waters or develop infrastructure to transport materials that are exacerbating the climate crisis.

In line with the best available science, as well as the view of numerous scientists, experts, Indigenous communities and activists around the world, the use of coal, oil and gas must rapidly be phased out and replaced with renewable energy. There is no longer any time to wait or to hope for gradual transitions. The inquiry seeks to examine and report on the Minerals Legislation Amendment Bill 2023, including the potential environmental impacts of offshore drilling. AP4CA encourages the Committee to put the future prosperity of our children and the state above the potential profits of those who would explore and exploit our world class coastline for resources which we will no longer have any need for, by or before 2050¹.

There are a number of reasons why the prohibition of oil and gas extraction is the right thing to do and chief among them is the part that legislation will play in safeguarding a future for our children from the increasing threat of climate change. It is well understood that the extraction and consumption of oil and gas is exacerbating the climate crisis as the release of CO₂ into the atmosphere increases global temperatures, with increasingly damaging effects⁵. We cannot continue to extract fossil fuels and meaningfully address climate change at the same time. For the sake of limiting the worst impacts of climate change and protecting the environment for future generations, AP4CA supports the legislation to ban offshore drilling.

Legislating an end to offshore oil and gas exploration and production is an important mechanism for transitioning away from fossil fuels and protecting marine ecosystems and everyone who relies on it. The legislation would also align with the NSW Labor Government's stated objective of delivering deep cuts in emissions, aiming for 50% reduction by 2030 and net zero by 2050. Offshore drilling can no longer be allowed to occur. It flies in the face of climate science as well as the numerous coastal communities who are already suffering with the myriad impacts of a warming climate including frequent flooding and inundation as seen throughout 2022 and 2023.

AP4CA advocates for a safe climate, not only for our children but for the numerous ecosystems that we interact with and are a part of. This means championing a future that seeks to reduce harm to the environment, to ecosystems and to wild life. Current offshore drilling requires seismic surveying during the exploration phase and has a number of harmful impacts on marine environments as well as the multiple industries that rely on healthy aquatic ecosystems, such as tourism and commercial fishing. Seismic testing employs the

⁵ U.S. EPA, 2023. The Basics of Climate Change

use of seismic airguns, which can reach more than 250 decibels and can impact marine animals miles away, disturb essential behaviours like breeding and feeding and significantly impact the ability for individual whales and dolphins to communicate effectively^{6,7}. The legislation would prohibit mining and development of offshore oil, gas and mineral resources in NSW, and by extension prohibit the ability for similar projects occurring in federal waters from reaching the shores of NSW. This would have a net benefit on marine ecosystems and the communities that rely on their continued good health.

Australian Parents for Climate Action strives to safeguard our children's future, by pushing for changes big and small. When considering the amendment to prohibit offshore drilling, AP4CA implores the Committee to do so with the understanding that while our children may not yet have a say in the legislation that shapes their future, they will be left with the consequences. It is the logical thing, the sustainable thing and the right thing to do to prohibit the exploitation of our coastline.

⁶ Iorio, L., and Clark, C., 2010. Exposure to seismic survey alters blue whale acoustic communication

⁷ Dunlop, R., McCauley, R., and Noad, M., 2020. Ships and air guns reduce social interactions in humpback whales at greater ranges than other behavioral impacts