

Online questionnaire report: Inquiry into Climate Change (Net Zero Future) Bill 2023

Portfolio Committee 7 – Planning and Environment for the inquiry into Climate Change (Net Zero Future) Bill 2023 launched an online questionnaire to enable public participation in an efficient and accessible way.

The questionnaire was not intended as a statistically valid, random survey. Like the submission process, respondents self-selected in choosing to participate. This means that respondents were not a representative sample of the New South Wales population, but rather interested members of the public who volunteered their time to have a say.

The questionnaire was complementary to and did not replace the usual submission process. The submission portal was also available to individuals and organisations who wished to provide a more detailed response to the inquiry's terms of reference. In this regard, some respondents may have completed the questionnaire and also made a submission.

Questions

The questionnaire comprised 10 questions. This included background information about the respondents including their contact details and their location details in the form of submitting their postcode.

A mix of multiple choice and open-ended questions sought the views of respondents on:

- Their position on the Climate Change (Net Zero Future) Bill 2023 and if they support, partially support, support with amendments or oppose the bill and why.
- Any other comments they have regarding the Climate Change (Net Zero Future) Bill 2023.

The full list of questions is at Appendix 1.

Responses to questions

The questionnaire was open from 13 - 25 October 2023 and received a total of 205 responses. Out of the 205 responses two of the responses were submitted as 'test' responses and were removed from the report. A further seven responses to question 8 were proforma responses, with some variations, submitted by different anonymous individuals. These have not been excluded from the total. This left 203 valid responses.

A sample of answers and summaries of responses are provided for each question below. The samples have been selected to represent the various viewpoints expressed in the responses.

Background

Eighty-four participants, approximately 41 per cent of respondents, indicated their partial support for the Climate Change (Net Zero Future) Bill 2023. A further 58 participants responded that they 'support' the bill (around 29 per cent) and another 56 support the bill with amendments (about 28 per cent). Only four participants, approximately 2 per cent of respondents, opposed the bill.

Q5 Based on your own understanding and the description above,
what is your position on the Climate Change (Net Zero Future) Bill
2023?

● Support	58
● Partially support	84
● Support with amendments	56
● Oppose	4



Please explain why you support the bill.

A number of respondents supported the bill as they viewed climate change, and the urgent need for action to combat this activity, as the most significant threat to the environment.

- "The Bill provides a basic monitoring and reporting framework to help determine progress towards Net Zero Future targets."
- "Because it's a matter of urgency that emissions are controlled and present targets are strengthened, controlled and policed properly. Otherwise we will achieve nothing except continued rising of heat and disastrous weather such as floods fires and cyclones."
- "Legislating for net zero emissions and reducing climate change is crucial for several reasons. First, because people alone are not responsible for climate change. Industrial activities, deforestation, and the burning of fossil fuels by corporations have significantly contributed to greenhouse gas emissions. Legislation is necessary to hold these entities accountable. Second, voluntary efforts are not enough to combat climate change effectively. Without stringent regulations, there's little incentive for corporations to reduce emissions and transition to cleaner technologies. Legislation sets clear targets and penalties for non-compliance, which can drive action. Third, climate change is a global crisis that requires collective action. Individual efforts, while important, are insufficient to address the scale of the problem. Legislation creates a framework for countries to work together, setting international standards and commitments. Fourth, it provides consistency and long-term planning. Climate policies that rely solely on individual choices can be inconsistent and easily reversed. Legislation provides stability, ensuring that emission reduction measures endure beyond political cycles. In summary, legislating for net zero emissions is essential because it holds both individuals and corporations accountable, drives collective action, and provides a stable framework for addressing the urgent climate crisis. Without such legislation, we risk insufficient progress and severe consequences for our planet."
- "I support the objects of this bill, especially setting of targets for the reduction greenhouse gas emissions by 2030. Considering the state of the climate and the frequency and severity of catastrophic weather events I urge parliament to set strict targets to reduce emissions."
- "It sets out a framework towards net zero in NSW."
- "I support this Bill 100%. NSW needs a coordinated approach with a long view to managing climate change and our approach as a state to it. We need to have targets, have a road map to get there and have a monitoring of that process. We need a commitment to make a difference and we need a coordinate ayes approach to our response to climate change and mitigation of its terrible effects."
- "With background as a scientist and journalist, I first reported on climate change - or the 'greenhouse effect' as it was then - more than 30 years ago. Governments in Australia have known for longer than that about this threat to the planet and their response has been too little and too late. This year, more than ever we are seeing a catastrophic impact of climate change, and yet governments, business and many people in the community fail to act to

the level that is needed. Australia is one of the world's largest exporters of coal and gas. The emissions from these exports dwarf our domestic climate pollution. The rate of forest logging, clearing of land, and support of petrol guzzling vehicles is also contributing and cannot go on for longer. Setting guiding principles, targets for reduction of net greenhouse gas emissions and objectives to adapt for climate change is vital to drive change, and prevent NSW continuing to make such large contributions to climate change that threatens us the whole World. Act now before it's too late."

Please explain why you partially support the bill.

A number of participants only partially supported the bill. A commonly cited concern was that the 2030 timeframe was not ambitious enough and additional, more immediate targets should be set. Other respondents commented on emissions from coal expansions and the negative effect these will have on the environment.

- "Much too long before implementation."
- "The 2030 target is not ambitious enough. Carbon offsets are ineffective and are a form of green washing. No amount of new tree planting can replace the removal of mature trees. New housing developments must not require the knocking down of native forests. If the government wants to increase the population of NSW, which is already unsustainable, then it must consider high rise near public transport and not continue the urban sprawl. Make zombie D.A.s illegal as these developers are destroying the coastal landscape of NSW. Stop logging in native forests and stop any removal of native forests for development."
- "There are little over eleven years until 2035 (reduction target of 70% of emissions). The proposed Commission should be put in place ASAP, to enable monitoring of methane emissions. There should also be more serious and committed re-training of workers, so they can transition to other jobs, e.g. regenerative farming, building trades. New South Wales could look to restore some manufacturing capacity. Victoria has already established a more ambitious target and program. Regeneration is, hopefully, a means to stop the rise in global emissions, for people, fauna and flora to survive for generations to come."
- "This Bill will do almost nothing about coal mine expansions in NSW. And the lifecycle emissions from 13 proposed coal expansions in NSW will dwarf NSW domestic emissions - in fact, if approved, lifecycle emissions from those expansions will be 14 times the total annual emissions released in NSW."
- "It is very pleasing to see this bill introduced to Parliament, however, it needs to take into account the life cycle climate impacts of any proposed coal and gas mining expansions. The emissions from these proposed expansions would far outweigh any positive effects of this bill."

What amendments would you like incorporated?

Most respondents who answered this question believed that amendments to the bill should include changing the target dates to sooner than 2030 and 2050, increasing the target reduction percentages and having the bill consider coal mine expansions.

- "I would like to see a NetZero target reached far sooner than 2050 - 2050 is too far away to deal with the impacts of Climate Change - whilst an adaptive objective to make NSW more resilient to the impacts of Climate Change is necessary overall we need to ensure our climate doesn't reach the heating point where we'd need to take those drastic actions - Net Zero by 2030 at the latest."
- "2050 is much too late. 2030 must be the target or at the latest 2035. We are in a climate crisis."
- "Aim higher: 70% reduction by 2030. No new coal mines or gas mining should be approved. No further expansion of existing coal mines or gas mining should be allowed."
- "There are at least 13 coal mines applying for expansions in NSW- including one 20 km from our farm. If these are all approved, they would emit more than 2 billion tons of lifecycle greenhouse gas emissions. That's equivalent to 14 years of annual NSW emissions. We need to stop all new fossil fuel projects and reject applications for expansion if we are serious about limiting emissions. We also need to invest in new employment opportunities for those who will be affected by this. This transition is inevitable so lets be proactive."
- "The bill conveniently ignores the fact that 13 proposed coal expansion will dwarf NSW domestic emissions - if approved, lifetime emissions from expansions will be many more times the total annual emissions of NSW."
- "Targets should be open to change if climate disasters become more severe. It is a floor, not a ceiling. Guiding principles should have human health and well being as the center. Recognising that we have a health and mental health crisis at this now arising from extreme weather and rising temperatures."

Please explain why you oppose the bill.

Only four of the 203 responses opposed the bill. All four responses are listed below as they did not have a unified view.

- "Bill still allows Coal mining to continue and expand".
- "I don't agree with it".
- "What good is having yet another piece of useless window dressing on the ballroom of the Titanic? The Science says that the world **MUST STOP** extracting and burning fossil fuels **NOW** and **URGENTLY** get to nett **ZERO GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSIONS** by 2035 to try to avoid **CLIMATE CATASTROPHE**. All this Bill does is allows the Minns government to claim it is doing something as the bloody Titanic goes down **WITH EVERY LIVING THING ON EARTH** to potentially die. Therefore I strongly oppose such fakery by this minority Labor government and call for **REAL** laws that will end the mining and burning of fossil fuels **IMMEDIATELY** if not **SOONER!**"
- "Because nothing Australia, let alone NSW, can do to affect Climate Change."

Do you have any other comments?

Approximately 35 per cent of respondents answered this question. While respondents' views varied, most agreed that climate change was of significant importance and emphasised the seriousness of this issue.

- "According to 97% of the World's Leading Scientists we are in a Climate Change emergency, we must transition to renewable energy now to save future generations from the impacts of that."
- "I see this as an extremely high priority need - if not an emergency. I understand that there are limits to what we can repair but future generations - and now even my own (I am 65) will face too many threats if we do not achieve the higher standard of net zero emission targets."
- "We have no time to waste. Humanity and its governing bodies need to reduce fossil fuel consumption, abandon plans for new fossil fuel extraction and harvest installations, and invest predominantly in alternative energy sources. There is massive opportunity for economic gain in renewable energy. 2050 is too late. We need to take radical action now to prevent future catastrophe. It is our duty to future generations. Nuclear is not the answer. We need clean energy not power plants that will pollute the environment for millennia."
- "Politicians need to listen to the climate change scientists who have been begging for the changes needed to reduce the impact of climate change for over 4 decades. Instead the politicians have listened to big business and now we are in real trouble. I am so disappointed in the politicians of Australia in general as they are all talk and little to no tangible action had been taken. Please for the sake of our children, grandchildren and future generations act now. Stop spending money on war and potentially space exploration, tax the wealthy and ACT now. Stop the criminalisation of Climate Change protestors and release them from jail NOW."

- "This Bill represents a bare minimum in monitoring and reporting."
- "Drought, flood and fires are now a constant for NSW. Examining and changing our current trajectory of rapid environmental collapse by adopting available environmentally friendly alternatives is our only way to survive."
- "As I said, the Bill is a good first step but needs to be amended to provide a greater commitment by the Government to the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions. Expanding coal mines is a terrible idea, not just for the communities threatened by global warming but for the planet itself."
- "I think we should definitely consider our Scope 3 emissions. Our massive coal exports get burned and the increase in world emissions still dramatically affects our bushfires, our floods and droughts."
- "The cost of NOT reducing emissions is so great that we must stop them ASAP and is worth any inconvenience or increased costs. Our children's future is more important than a low power bill."

Conclusion

The online questionnaire has been a valuable tool to efficiently gather the views of interested stakeholders on the issues raised in the terms of reference. The information gathered through the questionnaire will inform committee members and will be reflected in the inquiry report. The committee may also use the responses to support its findings and conclusions.

Appendix 1: List of questions

1. Name:
2. Email address
3. Postcode
4. Please select one of these options
 - a. Yes
 - b. No
5. Based on your own understanding and the description above, what is your position on the Climate Change (Net Zero Future) Bill 2023? Select one of these options:
 - a. Support
 - b. Partially support
 - c. Support with amendments
 - d. Oppose
6. Please explain why you support the bill. (max 300 words)
7. Please explain why you partially support the bill. (max 300 words)
8. What amendments would you like incorporated?
9. Please explain why you oppose the bill. (max 300 words)
10. Do you have any other comments? (max 300 words)

