

**Submission
No 32**

**INQUIRY INTO CLIMATE CHANGE (NET ZERO
FUTURE) BILL 2023**

Name: Ms Emily Edwards

Date Received: 21 October 2023

Re: Climate Change (Net Zero Future) Bill 2023

I am grateful for the opportunity to provide the committee with a submission, and thank you for your consideration.

I am the child of a six-generation farming family from Merriwa in the upper Hunter Valley. I have witnessed the catastrophic impacts of climate change on our farm, community, lives, livelihoods and our capacity to feed the nation throughout my lifetime. As such, I welcome the proposed Bill but hold serious reservations about its efficacy. Targets without the means and the will to effect the changes they require are as good as meaningless. As such, the Bill needs to be strengthened in the following key areas.

The functions of the Net Zero Commission should be amended so the Commission is required to provide advice on all new emissions-intensive developments, such as fossil fuel projects. This means it would have a role in decisions on proposed coal mine expansions, including considering lifecycle emissions. A moratorium on proposed fossil fuel expansions should be in place until the commission is established.

The targets in the bill should be strengthened. Unfortunately, the targets proposed in the bill are not science-based targets. Other jurisdictions like Victoria have stronger targets. At a minimum, the current NSW target of 70% emissions reduction by 2035 should be in the Bill, and a mechanism provided to set additional interim targets. The Victorian Climate Change Act requires the Government to set targets for each five-year period, and a similar approach could be taken in NSW (see Victorian Climate Act 2017)

The bill should embed action to address climate change as a core feature of all government decision-making. The actual impacts of the bill are questionable because the bill and commission aren't embedded into other laws. The bill should include requirements that climate impacts are considered in all government policy, and decisions. One potential model is the Victorian Climate Change Act (Part 3) which embeds climate considerations into seven other acts.

The Bill should enable the NSW Government to set sectoral methane targets, and for the Commission to provide advice on those targets. Notably, rapid methane reductions from the energy sector are crucial to avoid climate tipping points. A new report from the IEA says that "[t]argeted actions to tackle methane emissions from fossil fuel production and use are essential to limit the risk of crossing irreversible climate tipping points." The IEA recommends a target to cut energy sector methane emissions (particularly coal-mine methane emissions) by 75% by 2030.

The Bill needs to be complemented by immediate action to stop dangerous new coal expansions and put NSW on a pathway to switch away from gas. Policies that promote endless expansion of coal mining, like the 'Strategic Statement on Coal' introduced by former Deputy Premier John Barilaro, should be scrapped, and the NSW Government needs to start the process of developing its promised roadmap to gas decarbonisation.

The Bill needs to be complemented by accelerated action to diversify regional economies, create new jobs and deliver extensive skills and training opportunities. In the lead-up to the NSW election, NSW Labor committed to the creation of statutory authorities to facilitate

economic diversification and structural adjustment planning, and it is crucial that these authorities are implemented rapidly and provided with sufficient resources to catalyse real change. To be successful, these authorities need to be based in regional communities and have genuine community ownership and participation.

Our family has just submitted an application for a \$150,000 primary producers' grant from the NSW government provided in response to the catastrophic floods last year. The support we hope to receive will go some small way to helping replace the fences, livestock, farming equipment and labour that was lost in the floods (preceded by the Black Summer Fires of 2019-20). Climate change is a huge burden on the NSW taxpayer as well as the farmers we all rely on. This anecdote is replicated across the state. It's too costly to pay lip service to carbon emission targets without taking the vital material actions to ensure they are met.

The fossil fuel lobby and the mining unions have held our governments captive for too long. It is time to get lobbyists out of legislation. The short-term profits of the big extractors and the pitifully few jobs that are preserved by continuing and expanding fossil fuel extraction are laughable compared to the costs this industry wreaks on all Australians.

A glance at Google Earth will show the devastating loss of prime food-producing agricultural land in the Hunter Valley over the past four decades. Climate Change is making essential food production harder, more expensive, and more uncertain. We can't eat royalties.

Sincerely,

Emily Edwards