

Submission
No 35

INQUIRY INTO CLIMATE CHANGE (NET ZERO FUTURE) BILL 2023

Organisation: Bushfire Survivors for Climate Action

Date Received: 24 October 2023



Submission on the Climate Change (Net Zero Future) Bill 2023

24 October 2023

About Bushfire Survivors for Climate Action

Bushfire Survivors for Climate Action (BSCA) is a growing group of people who have been directly impacted by bushfires in Australia. We are a non-partisan, community organisation made up of bushfire survivors, firefighters and their families, working together to call on our leaders to take action to reduce emissions.

BSCA formed shortly after the Tathra and District fire in March 2018, and its founding members were all impacted by bushfires, including the Black Summer bushfires in 2019-20, Blue Mountains in 2013, Black Saturday in 2009 and Canberra in 2003.

As authors of this submission on behalf of Bushfire Survivors for Climate Action, we have lived experience of the impacts of climate change—through the loss of our homes and loved ones, the fracturing of our communities, and the destruction of our natural environment. We firmly believe that urgent and ambitious climate action by all levels of government is essential to protect the safety and future of all Australian communities and to reduce the impacts of climate change that we have already experienced first-hand.

www.bushfiresurvivors.org

Submitted to:

<https://www.parliament.nsw.gov.au/committees/inquiries/Pages/lodge-a-submission.aspx?pk=3016>

For further information on this submission, please contact:

Fiona Lee
Government Relations Advisor

With notice, a member of Bushfire Survivors for Climate Action could potentially make themselves available for the public hearings.

SUBMISSION

We congratulate the NSW Government and the Environment Minister on developing the Climate Change (Net Zero Future) Bill 2023 and welcome the opportunity to share our views on it.

"It is encouraging to see a strong draft bill that acknowledges the danger we are in, and that the NSW Government has a responsibility to address climate change in a way that is consistent with the right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment." Serena Joyner, CEO, Bushfire Survivors for Climate Action, Sydney.

The explicit acknowledgement within the guiding principles, targets and objectives that action to address climate change should be consistent with the right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment (as per The UN General Assembly 2022 resolution) is very encouraging to those of us whose lives have already been heavily impacted by climate change.

We support the requirement for the Minister to present the Commission's reports in both Houses of Parliament within 28 days after receiving a report from the Commission, and publish a response. Additionally, we propose that these responses be made public within 3 months (instead of 6), and the recommendations be actively implemented. This outcome would indicate a significant achievement in promoting transparency and effective climate action.

Our organisation strongly supports legislated emissions reduction targets and the intent of the draft bill however we know first-hand that climate change is harming our communities now. The window to adapt to climate change is rapidly closing and the next few years are **absolutely critical** to mitigating the worst impacts of the climate crisis.

Therefore our view is that while it is a good starting point, the bill needs to be strengthened and made more ambitious.

"Every ounce of greenhouse gas emitted will be measured in the number of lives and homes lost to extreme weather events. We want to limit future impacts to our families and communities across the country so we're asking that the Coalition's target be left in place and reviewed by the commission, as that target guarantees earlier emissions reductions towards net zero than having no 2035 target." Jo Dodds, President, Bushfire Survivors for Climate Action, Bega

We offer the following amendments on the draft bill to safeguard our communities:

EMISSIONS REDUCTIONS TARGETS

- We need the NSW Government to help reduce the risk and intensity of climate disasters by legislating science based targets, ideally to achieve net zero emissions by 2035. We are already three years into the critical decade for climate action and the bill needs to reflect the urgency and the scale of the climate challenges we are already experiencing. We're rebuilding and doing everything we can to protect our

homes, families and communities from future bushfires and floods. But we can't do it alone.

- The 2030 and 2050 targets should be reviewed by the Commission as soon as it is established and a schedule for interim targets should also be set. 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)
- Section 14 (1)a should be amended to require the Commission to regularly review the 2030 and 2050 targets, as well as any interim targets, and adjust or ratchet up these targets to match the latest climate science. A schedule also needs to be set for these reviews to occur.
- The existing, more ambitious Coalition target of a 70% emissions reduction on 2005 levels by 2035 should be included in the bill. There is already cross-party support in the NSW parliament for a 2035 emissions reduction target *at least* this strong, and abolishing it is highly undesirable.

WHOLE OF GOVERNMENT APPROACH

- The bill and Commission should embed action to address climate change as a core feature of all government decision making. Action to address climate change should be embedded into other legislation, for example the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979. One potential model is the Victorian Climate Change Act (Part 3) as it puts a range of responsibilities on to various decision makers to consider climate impacts.

NET ZERO COMMISSION

- 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. The Bill as currently drafted has little to no impact on 13 proposed coal mine expansions in NSW which, if approved, would emit more than 2 billion tonnes of lifecycle greenhouse gas emissions. One of those projects is the biggest proposed in NSW since the Paris Agreement - the Hunter Valley Operations Coal expansion.
- A moratorium on proposed fossil fuel expansions should be put in place until the Commission is established.

ADDITIONAL POINTS

- NSW Government policies that contain assumed support for coal extraction, including the Strategic Statement on Coal and the NSW Net Zero Plan, should be scrapped or heavily amended to include climate considerations.

In conclusion, we commend the NSW Government for developing the draft bill and acknowledge its positive aspects, however more ambitious measures, including legislated

science-based emissions reduction targets, are critical for the protection of lives and property in frontline communities.

With bipartisan support for strong emissions reduction in NSW, this Bill provides an historic opportunity for NSW to lead the way on climate action, encouraging greater ambition from both Labor and coalition governments at the state and federal levels. The Bill is an opportunity for governments to show the same courage and leadership as those of us already on the frontlines of climate damage, where we work to support each other, regardless of political stripes, do whatever is necessary to protect us all. But courage alone will not be enough to protect our children and the places we live and love. Our efforts cannot hold back the rising tides of climate disasters. Only by working with strong and courageous leaders within government, as well as within communities, can we build a cleaner, safer environment.

The Climate Change (Net Zero Future) Bill 2023 is the most pressing and immediate opportunity to affect the policy and political leadership we seek. The adoption of the amendments we recommend would bring a very much needed ray of hope to communities who are now facing yet another summer of catastrophic risks and trauma.

Yours sincerely,

Serena Joyner, CEO Bushfire Survivors for
Climate Action | Darug and Gundungurra
Country

Jo Dodds, President Bushfire Survivors for
Climate Action | Yuin Country

Fiona Lee | NSW Government Relations Advisor
Bushfire Survivors for Climate Action | Awabakal
and Worimi Country