

Submission
No 43

INQUIRY INTO CLIMATE CHANGE (NET ZERO FUTURE) BILL 2023

Organisation: Farmers for Climate Action

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Farmers for Climate Action

Submission to the NSW Climate Change (Net Zero Future) Bill

Farmers for Climate Action thanks the Parliamentary Committee - Planning and Environment, for the opportunity to comment on the *Climate Change (Net Zero Future) Bill 2023 (the Bill)*.

About Farmers for Climate Action

[Farmers for Climate Action](#) is a movement of farmers, agricultural leaders and rural Australians working together to ensure Australia adopts strong emissions reduction policies by growing the number of farmers, farming communities and elected representatives championing ambitious action.

We represent more than 8,000 farmers across Australia, and our supporter base includes more than 45,000 Australians committed to deep emissions reductions across the economy this decade.

Support for deep emissions reduction

In NSW, there are more than 3100 farmers in the Farmers for Climate Action network and almost 18,000 supporters.

Farmers for Climate Action has long been calling for real bipartisan ambition on climate to ensure deep emissions reduction across the economy this decade. When governments legislate strong emissions reduction targets and a solid plan to get there, we know we are making progress towards stronger climate policies.

Many NSW farmers were devastated by three years of high rainfall and floods ([farmers in northern NSW shared their experiences](#)), only to now find they are in drought, with the potential for more hot, dry summer weather ahead.

Farmers for Climate Action supports the legislation of emissions reduction targets in NSW through the *Climate Change (Net Zero Future) Bill*, however we believe the bill can be strengthened in a number of ways:

1. The targets proposed in the Bill to reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions in NSW by at least 50% (from 2005 levels) by 2030 and zero by 2050 are not based on science. The science clearly states we need to achieve net zero emissions by 2035 if we are to limit warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius (as per the Paris Agreement). Other jurisdictions, like Victoria, have stronger targets.

The NSW Labor Government has cross-party support in the NSW Parliament for a stronger emissions reduction target. As noted above, the NSW Coalition Government had a stronger target of 70% by 2035, while the NSW Greens back a target of net zero by 2035.

NSW's targets in the Climate Change (Net Zero Future) Bill should be strengthened, ideally to achieve net zero emission by 2035.

2. A mechanism needs to be added to the Bill to **review and ratchet up the emissions targets**. There should be a schedule to ensure these reviews are done regularly. For example, 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.
3. In addition to the above, the Net Zero **Commission should be required to recommend interim targets**. In the current Bill they 'may' do this. The Bill should be strengthened to ensure they 'shall' do this.
4. **NSW carbon budgets must be based on science** and produce a fair contribution to the Paris Agreement goal of limiting warming to 1.5 degrees - not just the commonwealth carbon budget.
5. The Bill and Net Zero Commission need to be embedded into other laws to ensure real impact. The Bill should **embed action to address climate change as a core feature of all government decision making** and include requirements that climate impacts are considered in all government policy and decisions. One potential model is Part 3 of the Victorian Climate Change Act.
6. If Australia is to meet its Global Methane Pledge to reduce global methane emissions by at least 30% below 2020 levels by 2030, legislation like the Climate Change (Net Zero Future) Bill should **include a methane target** with the aim of eliminating energy-sector methane emissions (in particular coal-mine methane) by 2030.

7. **Reduce the time period for the Minister to respond to a report or recommendation of the Net Zero Commission to a maximum of three months** in all circumstances.
8. The Net Zero Commission and **Bill should have a bearing on emissions-intensive developments**, such as fossil-fuel projects. The Commission should provide advice to the Independent Planning Commission and the Planning Department on state-significant developments that cause substantial GHG emissions, and this Bill should also amend the Planning Act to refer to the climate targets in this Bill.
9. **Fiscal responsibility is already a principle of Government decision-making and does not need to be embedded in climate-specific legislation.** This point sets a principle that 'Action to address climate change should be taken in a way that is fiscally responsible'. This is likely to be misused as a reason to not take action to address climate change. The economic costs of climate change are likely to far exceed the cost of any NSW Government action to address climate change.
10. The NSW Government must commit to real emissions reduction efforts as part of this Bill - because **the path to net zero cannot be built on carbon offsets.**

We congratulate the NSW Government on the following strengths of the Bill:

- Farmers for Climate Action commend the explicit reference in the Bill that action to address climate change should be consistent with the right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment.
- We strongly welcome the establishment of a Net Zero Commission and the strength of the resources being provided to the Commission, to ensure openness, transparency and genuine community consultation. We support that the Commission is required to make reports publicly available and tabled in Parliament and that the Minister is required to provide a response.
- While we strongly supported the previous NSW Government's stronger target of 70% emissions reduction on 2005 levels by 2035 we acknowledge the target was not legislated. The legislation of targets proposed within the Climate Change (Net Zero Future) Bill will provide vital certainty for businesses and industry as many NSW farmers battle the extremes brought by accelerating climate change.



Key issues relating to the guiding principles of the NSW Government's *Climate Change (Net Zero Future) Bill*:

- The NSW Legislative Assembly is currently conducting an enquiry into **Bill to ban offshore oil and gas exploration** and related onshore infrastructure. Government support for a ban on offshore oil and gas exploration in NSW would send a clear signal that the Government is genuinely committed to action on climate change.
- Farmers for Climate Action urges the NSW Government to listen to the science and commit to **close Eraring's coal-fired power station on time**. Extending the lifespan of Eraring station will make it impossible to meet any emissions reduction targets set by the government.

Thank you for taking the time to consider our submission. We would welcome the opportunity to discuss with the Committee in more detail if required.

Sincerely,

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