

**Submission  
No 71**

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

**Organisation:** Parents for Climate

**Date Received:** 25 October 2023

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**PARENTS FOR  
CLIMATE**

Parents for Climate Action

**Submission to the NSW Parliament:**

## NSW Climate Change (Net Zero Future) Bill 2023

25 October 2023

Parents for Climate, % ELA,  
Upper Ground Floor, 55 Brisbane St  
Surry Hills NSW 2010

Parents for Climate represents over 17,000 parents, grandparents and carers from across Australia including over 4,000 in NSW. We are Australia's leading organisation for parents advocating for a safe climate. Our supporters are from across the political spectrum, across all Australian electorates, and from varied socio-economic positions. We seek non-partisan responses to climate change and its impacts.

We advocate for 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.parentsforclimate.org](http://www.parentsforclimate.org)

This submission was prepared by volunteer David McEwen and has been approved by Nic Seton, Chief Executive Officer of Parents for Climate.

## Submission

Parents for Climate **welcomes legislation to rapidly reduce emissions and equip our society for the reality of a rapidly heating world.**

However, **we are disappointed by the limitations of the Climate Change (Net Zero Future) Bill** on the following grounds:

1. The target is inconsistent with the objectives of the Paris Agreement. As part of a wealthy nation with outsized cumulative and per-capita emissions, 50% off 2005 by 2030 and net zero by 2050 is inadequate. Indeed, it is essentially the average of what all countries need to achieve. However, given the Paris Agreement's equity provisions, NSW should be aiming to slash emissions much faster and further than developing countries.
2. We note that the targets of 75% off 2005 levels by 2030 and net zero by 2035 are more consistent with an Australian contribution that is commensurate with a 1.5 degree pathway. Anything less is not "doing our part."
3. The objective "to be more resilient to a changing climate" is vague. Indeed, the Bill at no point expresses an objective of contributing – consistent with NSW's means and with regard to its outsized cumulative and per capita emissions – to averting catastrophic levels of global heating that would materially and irreparably harm the NSW people, our environment and economy.
4. We recommend that the Bill be amended to allow the setting of interim targets, including preserving or enhancing the previous stated NSW target of 70% off by 2035. All targets should be established as floors, not ceilings.
5. We are concerned that, as presented, the Climate Bill 2023 is largely symbolic, with weak means of enforcement and no consequences for non-achievement. While it is encouraging to see that the "economic risks of delaying action to address climate change" are included, caveats that "action to address climate change should be... fiscally responsible" are far too subjective. And the caveat that action should be taken in a way that "promotes sustainable economic growth" misses the point that the Global North's obsession with growth and shareholder value maximisation is a systemic driver of the situation we are in. On a planet with finite natural resources, endless "sustainable growth" will come to be seen as a cruel oxymoron as far as our children are concerned.
6. The Bill does not include a ratchet mechanism. Given the inadequacy of the targets, and in light of the intent of the Paris Agreement to prevent catastrophic levels of climate change, the Bill should mandate an increased target at regular intervals. Given the potential impact on climate positions in election cycles and the extreme urgency we recommend a review frequency of no less than three years.

7. Targets alone are insufficient without budgets. Emissions are cumulative: apart from methane, all other greenhouse gases (carbon dioxide, nitrous oxide, fluorinated gases and the rest are very long-lived in the atmosphere: centuries to millennia). Therefore, what matters is how much each jurisdiction has cumulatively emitted over time, not just the difference in annual emissions from one year to the next. This is not articulated in the Bill apart from a brief reference in section 14 (2) (e).
8. While the Bill acknowledges the need for an “adaptation objective” it does not explicitly require a process for climate risk assessments and consequential adaptation/resilience planning. It is imperative that NSW’s adaptation be informed by a comprehensive and up to date risk assessment, which is in turn used to establish priorities and funding for the resilience and adaptation strategy.
9. While we note Clause 9 in Schedule 1, we observe that it does not explicitly preclude the appointment of Commissioners who may have direct or indirect vested interests in maintaining emissions intensive activities. We recommend that the wording be strengthened in this regard.
10. The Commission should be able to audit all NSW government agencies and departments to identify opportunities for emissions reduction and adaptation.
11. The elephant in the room is that the Climate Bill is silent on the NSW government’s approach to the expansion of coal and gas extraction. We understand that the scope 1 and 2 emissions associated with any such projects will be subject to the 43% and net zero targets under the proposed legislation, which may reduce the attractiveness of such developments for their proponents. However, ignoring scope 3 and allowing the industry to continue expanding is aptly akin to trying to put out a fire with a bucket while simultaneously pouring petrol on it. The Commission should be required to advise on all new proposed emissions intensive activities or projects presented to the NSW Department of Planning and Environment (including projects awaiting approval at the time the legislation is enacted), with such advice to be made public.

It is critical that the NSW government quickly supplements the Climate Change Bill with additional legislation, amendments and regulations that:

- Protect remaining biodiversity with “do no [further] harm” as the overriding principle.
- Eschew the use of carbon offsets in favour of prioritising genuine emissions reduction, even when that is less commercially viable.
- Ensure all government departments, agencies and proposed policies expressly rule out projects or initiatives that increase NSW’s emissions, and/or that are inconsistent with the emissions reduction path set within the Climate Change Bill (including, for example, airport expansions or new highways instead of major investment in public and active transport);

- Unwind all subsidies, grants and other publicly-funded supports or foregone royalties to the fossil fuel industry and other emissions intensive sectors such as beef, air travel, etc.; and, in the absence of the obvious - a universal carbon price - implement a windfall profits tax and/or impose a loss and damage tax on emissions intensive industries;
- Treat the fossil fuel industry in the same way we treat the tobacco industry, including bans on advertising, sponsorship (with appropriate recompense to organisations that currently receive funding, to be funded via money saved from the reduction in subsidies or introduction of a super profits tax), and political donations;
- Prepare NSW for the hot house future that is now almost inevitable, through adequate risk assessment, resilience and adaptation planning and funding.

Australia's fossil fuel industry and its boosters have demonstrated decades of contempt for the safety of the Australian people and the fragile environment on which we all depend. This must stop.

We owe it to our children to ensure we are doing all that we can to protect them from climate harm and allow them an improved quality of life and natural heritage.

We thank the committee for the opportunity to make a submission.

We would welcome the opportunity to be engaged further at any stage throughout the inquiry process. In particular, we would like to invite members of the committee to meet with us and our members, and to brief them on the views of our members in more detail.

Sincerely

Nic Seton - Chief Executive Officer