

**Submission
No 77**

INQUIRY INTO CLIMATE CHANGE (NET ZERO FUTURE) BILL 2023

Organisation: Sweltering Cities

Date Received: 25 October 2023



Submission regarding: Climate Change (Net Zero Future) Bill 2023

Sweltering Cities is a Non-Government Organisation that advocates and campaigns for improved and equitable living conditions in communities across Australia. We operate at the grassroots level, striving for sustainable cities, and improving health in the face of climate change inequity. Having started in Western Sydney, we understand the disproportionate impacts of climate change and notably, heat and heat-related illness, on the people of that community. We are a health-promotion charity registered with the ACNC.

Heatwaves are the deadliest environmental disaster in Australia. Western Sydney has experienced extreme temperatures of almost 50°, with devastating consequences for the health and wellbeing of our community. It is clear that we need urgent action to mitigate rising temperatures, address the impacts of extreme heat and to create more resilient communities that can withstand the challenges of a changing climate.

Our comments on the Climate Change (Net zero future) Bill 2023

We congratulate the Government on affirming and legislating their commitment to reaching net zero carbon emissions in NSW by 2050. We note that the legislation says 'at least' and hope that the Net Zero Commission can advise on ambitious interim targets. 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.

There is a scientific consensus that continuing to mine and burn coal and gas will exacerbate climate change and undermine the goal of keeping temperature rise below 1.5°. We look forward to more clarity on when NSW will end coal and gas extraction. As a health promotion charity who are working to reduce the prevalence of heat-related disease, we know that every degree of warming will have a negative impact on the Australian community through a higher number of extreme heat days, and longer and hotter heatwaves. Therefore, ambitious action to reduce carbon emissions is essential to reducing the health, social and economic impacts of rising temperatures.



We welcome the statements by the Minister in the second reading speech on the commitment to not relying on offsets to achieve net zero emissions. We know that offsets systems can undermine carbon emission reductions because of issues including badly planned or ineffective programs.

Regarding the ‘adaptation objective’:

We’re pleased that the NSW Government is committed to increasing resilience to climate disasters and has included adaptation along with mitigation in this legislation, as we believe the two are inextricably linked. It would be beneficial to add further detail into the legislation in order to guide the work of the Net Zero Commission and ensure that NSW takes ambitious steps forward for adaptation. Specifically, we suggest:

In Part Two, Section 10, to the text *For this Act, the adaptation objective is that New South Wales is more resilient to a changing climate* add *For this Act, the adaptation objective is that New South Wales **community, environment and economy** is more resilient to a changing climate*. The purpose of this addition is to add detail which strengthens the legislation and guides the regulations to be more comprehensive.

Regarding the Net Zero Commission:

In Part Two, Section 14 Functions of Commission, (2) (g) we suggest that in addition to *[the Commission may provide advice and make recommendations to the Minister about the following] ... greenhouse gas emissions and action to address climate change relating to specific business or industry sectors* the legislation is amended to read *greenhouse gas emissions and action to address climate change **and greenhouse gas emission targets** relating to specific business or industry sectors*. The purpose of this is to empower the Commission to give advice to the government regarding target emission reductions for specific industries, as it does for government agencies in (2)(f). We believe that this strengthens the legislation and the outcome will be clearer guidelines for industry and business.

We believe that it would be beneficial to reduce the timeframes for Ministerial responses to Commission reports from 6 and 4 months to **a maximum of 3 months for both annual reports and other reports**. We recommend this change in order to ensure that information and recommendations are dealt with in a timely manner. Climate change and climate disasters are urgent concerns, as stated in the guiding principles of the legislation.