

Submission
No 83

INQUIRY INTO CLIMATE CHANGE (NET ZERO FUTURE) BILL 2023

Organisation: BirdLife Southern NSW

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Legislative Council Portfolio Committee No. 7
Inquiry into the Climate Change (Net Zero Future) Bill 2023

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BirdLife Australia is Australia's largest bird research, bird watching and conservation organisation. For more than 100 years BirdLife has been a leading advocate for native birds and for those who value them. We are independent and not-for-profit, with over 300,000 supporters nationally.

Need for action on climate change

BirdLife has a long-standing concern for the future of Australia's unique avifauna considering widespread habitat loss and degradation and the failure of successive governments to address this. Climate change ramps up the difficulties faced by all wildlife – with increased frequency of extreme weather events, hotter temperatures for longer periods, stressed vegetation which wildlife depend on for shelter and food, scarcity of water. The impacts on threatened woodland bird species, with many already in decline, are likely to hit hardest. The swift parrot and regent honeyeater are two especially vulnerable species, with numbers of each estimated to be down to a few hundred in the wild.

We support strong action on climate change. BirdLife is concerned that the federal government's stated commitment to no new extinctions will fail without greater action at both national and state level.

This bill's two main provisions - legislating climate targets and establishing a Net Zero Commission - are good steps forward by the NSW government.

We would like to see the bill strengthened in crucial areas to make it more effective. The bill currently puts emissions reduction targets for NSW at 50% by 2030 and net zero by 2050. These targets are inadequate and not based on science. Victoria has stronger targets.

Suggestions to make the bill more effective

1. The targets need to be stronger. The Climate Council states that nationally we need 75% emissions reduction by 2030 to limit warming to 1.5°C. The 50% by 2030 in the current bill must be increased, ideally to achieve net zero emissions by 2035.

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2. There needs to be a 'ratchetting up' provision, with 2030 and 2050 targets reviewed by the Commission and a schedule to ensure these regular reviews.
3. If the Parliament won't adopt the science aligned-targets, for example 75% emissions reduction by 2030, then at least the NSW government's existing 2035 target of a 70% emissions reduction should not be abolished by the bill.
4. There needs to be a coordinated 'whole of government' approach. The bill should include requirements that climate impacts are considered in all government policy and decisions.
5. The Minister should be required to implement reports from the Net Zero Commission.
6. The Commission should be required to provide advice on all new proposed emissions intensive developments including fossil fuel projects.

This bill is an important step for the NSW government. We strongly urge that it be strengthened to enable greater cuts to cumulative emissions earlier in the period 2023-2050.

Kind regards

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