

**Submission
No 91**

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

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The Climate Change (Net Zero Future) Bill 2023 submission

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the Climate Change (Net Zero Future) Bill 2023 recently introduced into the NSW Parliament. I live on the Northern Tablelands, a region which is aware of the impact of climate change experienced as extreme weather events including, in the past 5 years, drought, flooding and fires. My local Council Armidale Regional Council declared a [Climate Emergency on 23 October 2019](#) with the stated goals to

1. Reduce greenhouse emissions aiming, by 2030, for no additional contribution from our region to the global temperature rise;
2. Adapt to current and anticipated climate change impacts;
3. Reduce atmospheric concentrations of greenhouse gases

The Government is to be commended for introducing legislation to enshrine climate targets in law and to create a Net Zero Commission to monitor and report on progress towards these targets. However, it is evident that, if there is serious intent to address the Climate Emergency and to ensure intergenerational equity, the Government must directly address on-going effects of fossil fuel production and expansion, the consequences of failure to protect and enhance biodiversity across the State and the inadequate planning associated with renewable energy zones. The targets of 30 June 2030 of 50% from the net greenhouse emissions in 2005 and 30 June 2050 are too little too late.

Immediate reductions in greenhouse gas emissions and sequestration of carbon are critical:

a. Coal

As a community representative on Consultative Community Committees for three mines adjacent to the Northern Tablelands I am aware of the harsh reality of the Government's failure to reign in coal extraction. We are facing the Vickery 'Extension', the Maules Creek 'Continuation' and the Boggabri 'Modification 8 (Amended)'. In reality, these 'expansions' are effectively new mines and just three of 13 proposed coal mine expansions. Then there is the Hunter Valley Operations coal expansion to the south at Singleton (the biggest single expansion in NSW since the 2016 Paris Agreement).

The lifecycle emissions from these 13 expansions will be 14 times the total annual emissions released in NSW ([Lock the Gate](#)) see also The Guardian, 28 February 2023, [Eight coal projects to be considered by NSW forecast to add \\$1.5bn tonnes to global emissions](#)

The importance of scope 3 emissions cannot be overestimated. The Australia Institute, in a report published in 2020 [Enough Scope](#) observed that *Coal mined in NSW causes more emissions than the UK or France and nearly four times more than directly emitted from NSW itself. NSW climate policy*

aims for net zero emissions by 2050. Yet in the midst of a bushfire crisis, under coal lobby pressure, the NSW Government seeks to abolish the legal requirement to consider emissions from coal exports. It is vital that situations such as this are precluded by NSW legislation.

b. Coal Seam Gas

Santos' Coal Seam Gas project (incorporating the Queensland Hunter Valley Gas Pipeline and the Narrabri Gas Project) with its threats to the Great Artesian Basin, to the State's foodbowl and to the Pilliga Forest, appears to continue to receive 'special treatment' from the Government. One example of this is the impunity with which Santos CEO Kevin Gallagher can claim the company has the easements for the pipeline and is awaiting a licence. On 18 May 2023 Mr Gallagher was reported as having claimed: "*We've got the easement, all we need is a licence for that pipeline,*" (Northern Daily Leader, [Santos in talks...Narrabri on track](#)). When this claim was challenged, the Office of Energy and Climate Change concluded in an email dated 26 September 2023

OECC relayed the principle that any public statements made in relation to a pipeline licence should be accurate and factual (to Santos)

In this instance OECC is not taking any further action.

The NSW Government must commit to refuse to allow Santos to impose any Authority to Survey orders on landholders resisting this ill-advised project; and must protect Crown land.

c. Sequestration of carbon in Public Native Forests

The function of the Net Zero Commission could usefully be extended to include the protection and development of activities which foster carbon sequestration – a simple and direct way to achieve this would be to stop the logging of public native forests. The Blueprint Institute in its 2023 report

[Branching Out](#) has:

Using cost-benefit analysis modelling we find that ending native forest logging in 2023–24 instead of 2039–40 (the date that the North East Regional Forestry Agreement is currently scheduled to expire), and instead utilising the land for carbon sequestration and tourism will deliver a net benefit valued at \$45 million in present-day dollars. This includes the estimated cost of providing transitional packages to the industry as it shuts down, as well as the cost of breaking wood supply agreements that extend to 2028.

The native forests on the North Coast have significant capacity to immediately generate major alternate revenue streams that can replace revenue generated from logging. In particular, we find that managing the North Coast region in a manner consistent with conservation would abate an

average of 0.45 million tonnes of carbon annually. This equates to a net present value of \$174 million. Our analysis also indicates that increased tourism to the region could, over 17 years, provide a net present value of \$120 million. In totality, from present to FY2040, using the forests of the North Coast for purposes other than logging will generate at least \$294 million in revenue.

The next government-led five yearly review of the logging industry will commence in 2024, making now an ideal time for impactful analysis. We encourage the New South Wales Government and Opposition to enact the following recommendations:

- 1. Immediately cease all government subsidies to FCNSW.**
- 2. Create a 'natural capital' weighting that increases the Benefit Cost Ratio of native forests when Expenditure Review Committee decisions affecting them are made.**
3. *Legislate the end of native forest logging in New South Wales.*
4. **Expand land valuation methodologies to include carbon storage, tourism and water.**
5. *Expand hardwood timber plantations to meet hardwood demand.*
6. *Incentivise private investment in timber plantations.*
- 7. Expand formal policy mechanisms aimed at conserving native forests.**

Recommendations:

that the NSW Government

1. acknowledge that planned mine 'extensions', new mines and coal seam gas projects are completely incompatible with climate targets
2. divert resources to renewable projects
3. replace every coal-fired power station by 2030
4. immediately halt the logging of public native forests and assist the transition to sustainable renewable regional economies in effected areas
5. establish a Net Zero Commission with the ability to shape strong and effective climate policies
6. commit to achieving 100% clean renewable electrical energy in NSW by 2030

Conclusion:

The NSW Government can shape a fairer, safer and sustainable future through judicious, forceful and immediate action.