

**Submission
No 94**

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

Name: Dr Deidre Stuart

Date Received: 24 October 2023

Planning and Environment Committee,
NSW Parliament

Dear Inquiry Members,

I write to make a submission related to the proposed **Climate Change (Net Zero Future) Bill 2023** put forward by NSW Environment Minister Penny Sharpe.

I strongly support that the Bill will: (1) put greenhouse gas emissions reduction targets into law in NSW; and (2) establish a Net Zero Commission to monitor and report on progress toward these targets. However I also have some very significant concerns about the Bill as it reads now – as follows:

I wholeheartedly support Clause 3 (Purpose of Act) and in particular support the commitment to effective action on climate change (Clause 3(3)). From my perspective as an Australian citizen and NSW resident, over the past decade, I have too often observed greenwashing on the part of Federal/State governments. Although I understand that ASIC is cracking down on corporations over greenwashing, there does not seem to be any body capable of holding governments to truthful account. I do not want any Climate Change Act to be yet another greenwashing effort that lulls NSW residents into a false sense of security.

Further, I support Clause 7: This Act prevails to the extent of an inconsistency with another Act or Law – which recognises the over-riding omnipresent seriousness of the climate heating challenge we face. I also strongly support the Guiding principles in Clause 8 and that the best available science (Clause 8.8(b)) should be taken into account when determining action to address climate change. However, as a non-lawyer, I do not know whether the Clause 7 statement above is strong enough. It reads as if for the proposed Climate Change Act to prevail, some active inconsistency would need to be demonstrated which sounds onerous and time-wasting. **Instead I ask that climate change considerations (with the purpose of the proposed Bill Clause 1.1 (a-c)) are embedded in all other Acts in NSW. Addressing our climate emergency is an all-of-government and all-of-society problem. Action to address climate issues needs to be incorporated into all government decision-making hereon.**

I am concerned that Clause 9's Targets for reducing net greenhouse gas emissions are not enough, given where the science about where the world is right now. I note that the Clause 9.1(a) target – *by 30 June 2030—to reduce net greenhouse gas emissions in New South Wales by at least 50% from the net greenhouse gas emissions in 2005* – is stronger than Australia's updated Paris-Agreement 2022 NDC of 43% below 2005 levels by 2030, so that is good, but it is below what is needed and reasonable international expectations of us as a wealthy country. The Clause 9.1(b) target – *by 30 June 2050—to reduce net greenhouse gas emissions in New South Wales to zero* – is similarly not ambitious enough. **Given that 2030 is not that far away, please also include a 70% greenhouse gas emissions reduction target (compared to 2005 levels) by 2035 in the Bill. Furthermore, NSW should follow the practice of the Paris Agreement and review commitments every five years and ratchet up emissions reductions with each sequential commitment – and this practice should be made a requirement within the Act.**

I have read the Bill completely, and it is not clear to me how it will address problems I have been actively grappling with, very frustratingly, for the last decade – namely problems of: (1) ongoing/new fossil-fuel extraction projects in NSW; (2) absurdly that new NSW regions are still being opened up for fossil-fuel exploration; (3) ongoing under-estimated methane leaking problems from existing fossil-fuel operations in NSW; and (4) new housing developments (and likely other infrastructure) in NSW being approved with very climate-and-wallet-unfriendly characteristics such as connections to gas infrastructure (and gas cooktops,

gas water heating) as well as black roofs. The proposed Net Zero Commission's functions (Clause 14) do not seem to address any of these topics. So how will this Bill effect real change? **I ask that the Net Zero Commission's functions should include having to provide advice on large-scale development projects, and on any others that have significant climate implications (or climate adaptation implications).** The Net Zero Commission also needs some way to address the under-reported, under-estimated 'fugitive' methane emissions from coal operations and have actions they can take that will prevent/curtail further such emissions. Further, at the least, until the Net Zero Commission is up and running, I ask for a moratorium on all fossil fuel exploration licences, and a moratorium on processing of all fossil fuel applications (new, extensions, expansions).

I am very concerned that this Bill will just end up as further greenwash for NSW. It is not good enough to supposedly reduce greenhouse gas emissions in NSW, while continuing to allow and facilitate massive fossil fuel exports – with all their under-monitored under-reported domestic (NSW) methane emissions. I am aware that yet another citizens blockade of the Port of Newcastle is planned. This is especially relevant here, because Port of Newcastle is the biggest coal port in the world and Australia's single largest contributor to the climate crisis, contributing a whole 1 % of the world's greenhouse gas emissions. **I note that Rising Tide, the group organising the Port of Newcastle blockade, have three specific demands that I support being incorporated into any NSW Climate Change Act – that:**

(1) All new fossil fuel projects are cancelled immediately;

(2) Fossil fuel export profits are taxed at 75% to fund community and industrial transition and to help pay for climate loss and damages;

(3) End all coal exports from Newcastle by 2030.

Incorporating these three things into the NSW Climate Change Act would definitely make it more effective – and more just. Moreover, corporations and people across NSW would know very clearly where they stand and plan accordingly hereafter.

Thank you for considering my submission,

Deidre Stuart
Resident of NSW.