

INQUIRY INTO 2024 ANNUAL REPORT OF THE NET ZERO COMMISSION

Organisation: Sydney Knitting Nannas

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This submission is written on behalf of the Sydney Knitting Nannas and Friends. We are committed to the Australian achievement of real zero emissions from all areas in the Net Zero Commission's very thorough 2024 Annual Report. We believe this is the only way to ensure a safe future environment for our children and grandchildren. Our group of 70 senior women and friends living across Greater Sydney are in regular contact with and travel to many regional areas. There are 20 Knitting Nannas groups across NSW and 20 more in other states.

The 2024 Report clearly states that in all areas covered there is critical work to be done, and we commend the authors and the research of the Report urging stronger action by the ministers who oversee these areas: Electricity and Energy, Transport, Agriculture, Land, Industry and Waste, Resources, Built Environment, and Adaptation. Under each heading is clearly stated- What needs to be done. A transition to net zero is achievable but NSW is not on track to reach its stated goals! With the clear directions stated by the Commission each sector knows what needs to be done and a pathway is laid before the ministers responsible.

This report is a wake-up call to all areas of government!

We the Sydney Knitting Nannas support the recommendations in every area, but like the Commission itself we call for greater scrutiny and action in the area of resources. We quote below the Report.

'Resources

What we found:

Emissions in this sector could increase if currently proposed extensions and expansions of coal projects go ahead. This poses a challenge for the state's emissions targets. Addressing the broader social and economic implications for NSW communities in transitioning to a net zero economy is particularly relevant in this sector.

What needs to be done:

Given the importance of this sector to the NSW emissions reduction targets, the commission will prioritise a deep consideration of issues in this sector on its 2024-25 annual report.'

On page 43 the report states:

'Any emissions increases associated with extended or expanded coal projects would require other sectors to make greater emissions reductions if the state is to meet its emissions reduction targets. The potential emissions increases from projects seeking planning determination pose a major challenge for the state's regulatory arrangements.'

Clearly, if further expansions of coal and gas projects are on the government's table awaiting approval, there needs to be a moratorium on them, given the findings of NSW's failure to meet its targets. The massive increase in emissions entailed in these proposals represent a further increase in the failure to meet targets. There is no room to push the carbon burden onto other sectors. The report sets out clearly that every sector needs far increased action to reach their own goals and cannot afford to take on the carbon emission responsibility of the resources/fossil fuels sector.

The NZC has stated it "intends to closely examine developments in the resources sector because of the impact the sector has on the NSW's primary emissions reduction targets". We agree that this must be done.

Net Zero accounting of corporations must have integrity. Under-reporting of methane emissions, for example, can no longer be tolerated. The hard work of the commission to analyse data for

accurate reporting must not be undermined by invalid data. The technology now exists for accurate assessment of fugitive methane emissions, so inaccurate assessments must not form any part of assessment and reporting.

The Net Zero 2024 report is well researched, and we recommend that the government commission a separate report on the risks that coal and gas expansions pose to NSW climate targets, to be completed by June 2025. This area was specifically singled out by the commission, and we share the deep concern of the commission. Without this recommended action we are concerned that coal and gas approvals will derail the work of all sectors to reach NSW's Net Zero goals.

The Built Environment

In the area of the built environment, there is great scope to reduce fossil fuel production. The NZC says that the "largest source of direct emissions is the onsite use of fossil fuels" including "using gas for hot water, heating and cooking in homes, commercial and public buildings." This is a sector where "significant abatement is possible and the technologies to decarbonise the sector are already commercially available." Decisive action by legislators is called for. The largest source of emissions in the built environment can be addressed immediately by switching from gas to electricity.

Difficulty in carbon abatement assessment in the land sector is visited on p. 37 of the Report. We call for more accurate assessment and accounting of carbon abatement schemes.

Logging and Forestry

The failure to specifically mention the logging of native forests is an omission from the NZC Report which cannot be justified. The Report states, on p. 37.

"Land management strategies that maintain forest and soil carbon stocks will help retain today's levels of land-based carbon storage and position the land sector to maximise its contribution to the achievement of the state's emission reduction targets".

According to scientists such as the ones cited below, the land management strategy that best maintains forest and soil carbon stocks is the cessation of native forest logging. The ANU announced in October 2022:

'Leading researchers are calling for a cease to native forest logging if Australia wants to meet its net zero targets in coming decades.'

The researchers, from The Australian National University (ANU) and Griffith University, say only native forests can remove carbon from the atmosphere at the rapid rate required.

The Federal Government has legislated a 43 per cent reduction in greenhouse gas emissions from 2005 levels by the year 2030.

Professor Brendan Mackey from Griffith University said carbon emissions need to be reduced by around 15.3 megatons each year for the next nine years if the government's target is to be met.

"This is about the same as the annual net carbon emissions generated by logging our native forests," Professor Mackey said.'

NSW has a large native forestry sector. Forestry Corporation of NSW reports logging about 30,000 hectares of native forests each year. Native forest logging emits approximately 3.6 ml tons of carbon every year, the equivalent annual emissions of 840000 cars.

One problem which must be addressed is that Forestry Corporation of NSW is a highly problematical institution. It has been convicted and fined hundreds of thousands of dollars for environmental breaches. As well, it was recently caught out exaggerating the volume of timber it

extracted from state forests by nearly 30 per cent in at least three years' worth of legally required reports, while also claiming the logs were bigger than the reality. These biomaterial reports are the only legally required publicly available reports on timber volumes.

As noted above, the integrity of corporations' accounting is paramount, and must be carefully monitored for accuracy.

In conclusion would like to emphasise the following points.

- We welcome the clear assessment and guidelines of the 2024 report and note that it is calling for legislators and regulators to take dedicated steps to achieve our commitment to the Paris agreement across all sectors.
- We agree with the Commission that resources need special scrutiny, and we call for a halt to any new coal or gas explorations or applications put before NSW Planning. The International Energy Agency found in a 2021 report that no new fossil fuel extraction projects are needed in the transition to net zero emissions by 2050.
- Legislators must hold corporations accountable for emissions contravening Net Zero goals.
- Regulators must be empowered to enforce emissions obligations and must scrutinise data reporting for accuracy, using state of the art technology.
- Native forest logging needs its own section heading under the 'Land' category and needs deep scrutiny in the next 2025 Commission report.

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On behalf of the Sydney Knitting Nannas