



Submission to the House Standing Committee on the Environment and Energy in respect of the Climate

Climate Change (National Framework for Adaptation and Mitigation) Bill 2020 and Climate Change (National Framework for Adaptation and Mitigation) (Consequential and Transitional Provisions) Bill 2020

Overview

We are members of a local residents' association task group, the Climate Emergency Group, that is a sub-group of the Western Adelaide Coastal Residents' Association (WACRA), South Australia. WACRA is dedicated to addressing local issues and serving our community. Given that our focus is the coast and its residents, when we restructured at the end of 2019 we identified climate change as a key issue (another was coastal management, which is related) and formed a task group to focus on the Climate Emergency we find ourselves in.

It is absolutely essential that Australia adopts national climate change policies that meet environmental clean energy needs for the long-term future of the planet. This Bill would give greater national recognition to the Climate Emergency we are in and emphasise the significance of immediately acting on it.

Therefore, we support the Climate Change Bill and ask that the Government pass it into law for the following reasons:

- WACRA's [mission statement](#) *Building healthy communities* directly relates to the issue of climate change in our communities
- WACRA Climate Emergency Group's [mission statement](#) *Increase awareness of and take action with the community towards mitigating the effects of climate change* directly relates to the issue of climate change in our communities
- We are a coastal community so will be strongly affected by climate change, and want to see not just adaptation (as per the initiative [AdaptWest Climate Change Adaptation Plan](#)) but mitigation
- We as individuals take action that is global not just local, in recognition that climate change is an issue that affects all living beings, and that action at this time, right now, is critical if we are to inhabit a liveable planet
- Australia needs an **overarching climate change action plan** (for which this Bill is the framework) committed to at both state and federal government levels, not ad hoc actions influenced by ideology or vested interests
- We need an independent body such as the proposed Committee to oversee national actions and ensure enough is being done equitably and efficiently to achieve timely objectives

- The significance of acting on climate change needs to be better reflected in our education system at all levels of the curriculum (school and university), and funded accordingly (see the article in [The Conversation](#))

Personal statement

For some years, we have been concerned and frustrated at the Federal Government's lack of action and time wasted in:

- arguing about whether climate change has any validity (ie 'belief' vs science) and how significantly the climate crisis is caused by human activities
- supporting industries that are damaging our economy, health and future prospects, as well as our global credibility (see articles in the [Australian Financial Review](#) and [Australian Online News](#) for just how far lobby groups and ministers will go to hinder efforts at emission reductions, and the Deloitte [Access Economics Report](#) for the economic good sense of addressing climate change)

Figueres and Rivett-Carnac (2020) clearly emphasise the urgency that validates this Bill:

'To have at least a 50 percent chance of success (which in itself is an unacceptably high level of risk), we must cut global emissions to half their current levels by 2030, half again by 2040, and finally to net zero by 2050 at the very latest.'

Comments on the Bill

[Climate Change \(National Framework for Adaptation and Mitigation\) Bill 2020](#)

Overall comments

Cross referencing within the document would be helpful. For example, in Section 24, '(ii) best available academic peer reviewed research or public reports' could refer to pages 9-10 where credible peer reviewed research sources are listed.

Cross referencing other relevant acts, for example the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation (EPBC) Act (currently under review), would be helpful.

Guiding principles

10 Principle of effective, efficient and equitable action (page 9)

'A decision, policy, program or process relating to performing functions or duties, or exercising powers [must have] efficiency in doing so consistently with Australia's financial, economic, health, environmental, industry, community, human rights and foreign policy objectives'

Comment: This Bill does not incorporate new economic models/theories that address climate change, such as sustainable development and 'green new deal' models (Deloitte, Jason Hickel, Stephanie Kelton, Kate Raworth, and most recently, [Mathias Cormann is talking up a 'collective green recovery'](#) to the OECD). See [References](#).

11 Principle of informed decision making (pages 9-10)

(a) 'the best available academic peer reviewed research and public reports on the contributing causes and potential impacts of climate change'

Comment: The [Climate Council](#) should also be included in the list on page 10. They recently published the 'Clean Jobs Plan' (21 July) and 'Primed for action: A resilient recovery for Australia' (21 May).

Media coverage of climate change by the Murdoch Press has prompted [Kevin Rudd, supported by Malcolm Turnbull, to call for a royal commission](#). More generally, the internet provides 'information' and viewpoints that divide us, and stall action on things that critically matter. Does there need to be a qualifier re the media in the Bill to ensure fair coverage about climate change and associated actions?

(c) 'the most recent low emissions technology statement'

Comment: The [Federal Government is noted for being remiss re providing environment-related FOIs/reports in a timely fashion](#) and is [slow to release climate change data](#) (see **References**). Reports and public releases should be frequent to represent the issue's importance, well referenced and timely (as appropriate).

12 Principle of risk-based, integrated decision making (page 10)

'A decision, policy, program or process relating to performing functions or duties, or exercising powers, to which this Division applies must have regard to the principle of seeking to maintain economic prosperity and public finances over the long term'

Relating to our comment on Guiding principle 10 (above), new economic models/theories that emphasise equity, jobs for all (including providing a job guarantee to workers in fossil fuel industries whilst building the renewable energy infrastructure) should be referenced in the Bill.

17 Commission must complete assessment (page 13)

'At the same time as making a national climate change risk assessment publicly available under subsection (3), the Commission must make any evidence commissioned to support its preparation publicly available.' As per our comment on Guiding principle 11(c) (above), this would also have to be frequent and timely (as appropriate).

24 Recommendations to amend the Target (page 18)

Comment: This section needs to make it clear that amendments cannot in effect lessen the Target (eg of net zero) and this should be factored into the Bill as a proviso.

28 Matters relevant to emissions budgets (pages 22-23)

2(b)(xi) 'economic circumstances and the likely impact on taxation, public spending, and public borrowing'

Comment: Taxation is mentioned here only. The media is currently reporting on the proposed tax on electric vehicles in South Australia and Victoria. Dennis addresses this topic and the wider question of the distribution of power (see **References**). Taxation could be used to get revenue from big polluters (rather than the general public) to help reduce carbon emissions and invest in carbon storage (as per **16 Principle of national and international cooperation**). Taxation could be used to reduce resource and energy demand generally, a principle of 'degrowth' ([Hickel 2020](#)) that recognises the danger exponential growth poses to our environment and equity. Therefore, should the Bill have a clause that enables taxation regulation in this way? Should monetary incentives be offered to 'climate champions'?

30 Requirement for emissions reduction plan (page 24)

3(c) 'a strategy to mitigate the impacts that reducing emissions and increasing removals of greenhouse gases will have on employees and employers, rural and regional Australia, Indigenous Australians and wider communities, including the funding for any mitigation action'

Comment: Picking up on 'funding for any mitigation action', can the Bill ensure transparent funding processes to avoid funding mismanagement (eg [funding to a small foundation for the Great Barrier Reef without tender](#))? As well, there is the issue of [taking funds from established clean energy bodies such as the Clean Energy Finance Corporation to fund gas projects](#). It will also be important to increase funding to credible bodies such as the CSIRO.

37 Appointment of members of the Commission (page 28)

Comment: Should 'conflict of interest' be mentioned here (ie making it explicit that members of the Commission should not have a history or connections that may impede the implementation of the Bill's goals)? This has been a problem with Federal Government appointments (eg fossil fuel industry affiliations) and grants etc. [Graeme Samuel, in his review of the EPBC Act](#), makes the point that a truly independent regulator should be responsible for enforcement of environmental standards (see **References**).

References

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- The University of Adelaide 2020, [Sustainable Prosperity Conference: Modern money and a green new deal](#), 10-12 January, Adelaide, South Australia
- [Western Adelaide Coastal Residents' Association \(WACRA\)](#)
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Contact

Climate Emergency Group (WACRA): [Andrea Rankin](#) or [Julie Whitehead](#)
[Hindmarsh Federal electorate](#)