



Sutherland Shire Environment Centre

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This submission to the House Standing Committee on the Environment and Energy is made on behalf of the Sutherland Shire Environment Centre in respect of our support for the 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.

The Sutherland Shire Environment Centre (SSEC)¹ is well established and respected in the Sutherland Shire. Its members have been actively working on environmental conservation for 30 years. SSEC is politically non-aligned; our members live in the Hughes and Cook electorates and have actively sought representation and action on climate change from our respective Members of Parliament. We publicly petitioned and congratulated Sutherland Shire Council on their decision to join with many Councils across Australia to commit to carbon neutrality by 2030.

The Sutherland Shire adjoins Heathcote and Royal National Parks and around 16,000 homes interface with the bush and are therefore exposed to high risk from bushfires. Our coastal strip and waterways are a major drawcard for tourists and new residents but are subject to coastal inundation and flooding from an increase in extreme weather events. Last year was Australia's warmest year on record. Australia's area-average mean temperature for 2019 was 1.52 C° above the 1961-1990 average, well above the old record of +1.33 C° from 2013².

The time to act on climate change is now.

Community consultation shows that Shire residents place a high value their natural environment³. As exemplified by last season's horrific bushfires and an increase in temperature over the past decades⁴, there has never been a more overwhelming threat to the destruction of all we hold dear, than the acceleration of climate. This Climate Bill is urgent and necessary and we ask for it to be enshrined in law.

This Climate Bill provides the important and much needed framework to address climate change and commit to a net zero emissions target. This will provide investment security for the renewable energy industry and business community and offer aspirational goals to those of us who volunteer and work towards a cleaner and greener planet.

The Climate Change Bill provides for the planning and implementation of necessary mechanisms to ensure Australia's emissions are consistently and immediately reduced. Now that a renewable energy bill has been passed by NSW Parliament, all State Governments have committed to net zero emissions by 2050. It is high time for our Federal Government to do the same.

The Climate Change Bill allows a just transition to a low-carbon economy that is not just economically responsible, but also advantageous. The renewable energy industry will stimulate employment. According to an Environment report from Oxford University's Smith School of Enterprise, stimulus spending on green energy projects create twice as many jobs per dollar as fossil fuel projects⁵. In Australia, a transition to renewable energy can generate 1 million jobs and make us a renewable energy superpower⁶.

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) has advised that global emissions will need to reach net zero by 2050 if warming is to be limited to 1.5 degrees Celsius and that emissions should be halved by 2030⁷.

SSEC members know that all activities which result in the emission of greenhouse gas emission will exacerbate climate change. Over the past decade in particular, we have witnessed the general community take up the banner and demand greater action on climate change from all levels government.

Government actions that promote the use of fossil fuels for our electricity, transport, industry, manufacturing, buildings and infrastructure and agriculture, when feasible alternatives with lower or no emissions are rejected, reflects biased decision making. The community, as well as the Business Council of Australia⁸ know that the technologies that reduce greenhouse gas emissions can be implemented if the structures the Climate Change Bill proposes were in place. We urgently want to see the fair playing field the Climate Change Bill affords.

Australia's use of coal for electricity means that we have lagged behind many other developed countries in bringing down our emissions⁹. Fossil fuel use is in terminal decline and investments are at risk of becoming stranded assets. A recent report by Carbon-tracker¹⁰ forecasts a decrease in value of oil, coal and gas reserves from \$39 trillion to \$14 trillion by 2050. It is therefore imperative for both environment and economy that Australia implement a plan for reaching net zero emissions.

The Bill fairly removes the temptation for any government to make partisan, ideological, short-term decisions by installing an Independent Advisory Commission where every proposed project will be assessed under accepted, clear and transparent protocols. Australians deserve no less.

SSEC members accept the fact that climate presents an existential threat to our way of life. It is on this basis we recommend all MPs are afforded to vote with their conscience when this Bill comes before Parliament. We urge you to support the Climate Change Bill.

Thank you,



Tassia Kolesnikow, Chair

Sutherland Shire Environment Centre

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1. <https://www.ssec.org.au/>
2. <http://www.bom.gov.au/climate/current/annual/aus/#:~:text=Australia's%20warmest%20year%20on%20record%3B%20marked%20by%20severe%2C%20protracted%20drought,1.33%20%C2%B0C%20in%202013>
3. <https://www.sutherlandshire.nsw.gov.au/Council/Strategies-Plans-and-Reports/Community-Strategic-Plan>
4. <http://www.bom.gov.au/climate/change/#tabs=Tracker&tracker=timeseries>
5. <https://www.smithschool.ox.ac.uk/publications/wpapers/workingpaper20-02.pdf>
6. <https://millionjobs.org.au/>
7. https://www.ipcc.ch/site/assets/uploads/sites/2/2019/05/SR15_SPM_version_report_HR.pdf
8. <https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2020/feb/11/qa-recap-business-council-calls-for-legislated-target-of-net-zero-emissions-by-2050>
9. <https://www.ucsusa.org/resources/each-countrys-share-co2-emissions>
10. <https://carbontracker.org/reports/decline-and-fall/>