

# #CLIMATEACTNOW

February 22<sup>nd</sup> 2021

## UPDATE ON THE STATUS OF THE INQUIRY INTO THE CLIMATE CHANGE BILL

It's three weeks since the public hearings into the Climate Change Bill. So, what's the current status of the Bill?

### Written Submissions

Prior to the public hearings, the general public and other interested parties were invited to make written submissions commenting on the Climate Change Bill. In total more than 6,500 individual submissions were received by the Secretariat, which is a phenomenal number! Thank you to everyone who contributed. Currently 1,207 submissions have been uploaded to the [parliamentary website](#) for public review.

The vast majority of submissions are in support of the Bill and come from a wide range of influential organisations including: The Business Council of Australia, the Investor Group on Climate Change, the Australian Medical Association, the Property Council of Australia, the Climate Council, the WWF and Oxfam.

### Public hearings



The Committee subsequently hosted two days of public hearings on Friday January 29<sup>th</sup> / Monday February 1<sup>st</sup> 2021.

A list of parties who spoke at the hearings, along with their submissions and a transcript of their spoken evidence can be viewed [here](#).

If you prefer, you can watch a recording of the hearings on demand on the parliamentary website by clicking on these links:

[Friday 29<sup>th</sup> January 2021 – Part 1](#)  
[Monday 1<sup>st</sup> February 2021 – Part 1](#)

[Friday 29<sup>th</sup> January 2021 – Part 2](#)  
[Monday 1<sup>st</sup> February 2021 – Part 2](#)

A broad range of perspectives were heard over the two days with government departments, business organisations, investor groups, environmental groups, and leading scientists taking part. The overwhelming feedback was in support of the Climate Change Bill with key benefits identified as:

- a commitment to reach net zero emissions no later than 2050
- the establishment of an independent commission to audit, report and advise on decision-making, and
- the need for adaptation and mitigation planning.

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The feedback also stressed the need and economic benefit for the government to take **urgent** action to limit global warming to 1.5-2c.

See what [The Guardian](#) had to say in their analysis of the hearings, or browse through a list of quotes from the witnesses at the bottom of this mail.



## What happens next?

The Committee is now reviewing all the evidence, both written and verbal, and Committee Chairman, Ted O'Brien MP, will prepare a report for the House of Representatives. If any members of the Committee disagree with the conclusions of the chairman's report, they may lodge a dissenting report to the House.

We anticipate that the Chairman will try and present his report back to the House of Representatives in March.

## What you can do now

To legislate, it is important that the government continues to hear a strong voice from the people asking for the Bill.

- Write to your local, federal MP; the Energy & Emissions Reduction Minister ([Angus Taylor MP](#)); the Environment Minister ([Sussan Ley MP](#)); or the [Prime Minister](#) expressing your desire for the adoption of stronger climate legislation, for the Bill to be debated and for MPs to be given a free 'conscience' vote.
- Encourage as many people as possible to sign up their support for climate legislation on the [Climate Act Now website](#). We currently stand at 95,329 signatories and it would send a strong message if we were to reach 100,000 before the report is presented
- Follow Climate Act Now on [Facebook](#) and [Instagram](#) to stay up to date with all the latest news

Every day that passes without the introduction of meaningful legislation to address climate change is an economic opportunity missed and environmental damage increased. Keep up the pressure on this government to adopt the #ClimateActNow.

The Climate Act Now team

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## What do the experts have to say about the Climate Change Bill?

### On the need for a net zero emissions target...

**Professor Hugh BRADLOW**

**President, Australian Academy of Technology and Engineering**

“In that regard, we overwhelmingly support the need for net zero emissions by 2050....national legislation to enshrine the target will create investment certainty and will also give us the opportunity to return to the international stage for advocacy for global emissions reduction.”

“The net zero targets and five-year updates are extremely important in creating investment certainty. People don't just invest in technology because they like it; they invest in it for a purpose, and that purpose, ultimately, has to have economic viability and, without those targets, it won't have economic viability.”

**Dr John VAN DER KALLEN**

**National Chair, Doctors for the Environment Australia**

“Mitigating and adapting to climate change is not a political issue. The science is clear, and we can no longer afford to kick the can down the road. We are suffering the health consequences of climate change now. We must have laws which outline our path to zero emissions and a commission independent of politics which includes a health voice to guide us out of our current predicament.”

**Dr Angela FRIMBERGER**

**Board Member, Veterinarians for Climate Action**

“To date our federal government has lacked a cohesive plan for limiting the severity of climate change, and the climate change bill 2020 will substantially address this. By setting a net zero target and encouraging practical measures to achieve that target, the climate change bill will ensure that Australia contributes a fair share to preventing further warming and these catastrophic impacts on the health of people and animals won't be further worsened.”

**Dr Will STEFFEN**

“Another reason why this bill is so important is that we, first of all, have to have a target. I happen to think that net zero by 2050 is a little bit too late, really, to get this under control, but we have to start somewhere.

### On the need for an independent commission...

**Dr John VAN DER KALLEN**

**National Chair, Doctors for the Environment Australia**

“Just like Australian governments listened to the experts in dealing with COVID-19, Australian governments need to listen to experts in mitigating and adapting to climate change. The proposed Climate Change Commission would be that critical independent, scientific voice which could guide Australia out of the climate emergency. Furthermore, reporting regularly, independently and publicly without referral, it will ensure transparency and accountability for the Australian people.”

**Ms Nathalie SWAINSTON**

**Wingecarribee Net Zero Emissions Inc.**

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“I think it is evident in the policy impasse that we have had for over a decade that the experts and the evidence are not being correctly heeded. I don't work in politics, so I can't necessarily speak to where that is breaking down, but I think anyone who observes news coverage of the issue would say that it is an over-politicised issue, whereas it should just be a question of economics and science. I think one of the key parts of the bill, where it recommends an independent advisory commission, would mean that the public can have trust in the fact that the best scientists, business leaders and experts are, without the influence of special interests, advising government on what steps it should take and that they are holding government to account.”

## On the need for urgent action...

**Professor Penny SACKETT**  
**Chair, ACT Climate Change Council**

“There are different policy options. I think that that's a strength of this climate change bill—that it actually leaves those decisions to the government of the day, of course to be argued in parliament, as is always the case. But what needs to be stressed is that there is so little time remaining to reduce emissions, to protect the world, to protect the Australian environment and the health of its people, that we must rely on all levers that we have available at our disposal.”

**Dr Angela FRIMBERGER**  
**Board Member, Veterinarians for Climate Action**

“We're also scientists, accustomed to relying on published scientific findings and making evidence-based decisions. Because of this, we understand the science of climate change and we know that the data clearly shows that this problem is anthropogenic, severe and urgent. We're also used to working within a regulatory framework, and we understand the importance of good legislation in achieving good outcomes.”

**Mr Tim BUCKLEY**  
**Director, Energy Finance Studies, Australasia/South Asia, Institute for Energy Economics and Financial Analysis**

“Australia is not doing our fair share. If we want to look at other stats—EVs—we're a global laggard; vehicle emissions standards, we're a global laggard; power plant emission standards, we're a global laggard.”

**Professor Lesley HUGHES**  
**Councillor, Climate Council of Australia**

“Last year the UN's 2020 report on how well different countries around the world are meeting the Sustainable Development Goals rated Australia as the second-worst country in the world, out of 177 countries, for climate policy and climate action. So clearly the legislation that is in place at the moment is not achieving what it may have intended to achieve, so clearly we need something better and something new.”

**Dr Will STEFFEN**

“Those of us who work on the physical climate system can attest to the fact that climate change is moving faster than we thought—in other words, the system is accelerating, in many ways, which means that to keep within the Paris targets we need to have a sense of urgency, of moving fast.”

## On the value of a federal transition strategy...

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**Ms Anna FREEMAN**

**Policy Director, Energy Generation, Clean Energy Council**

“The bill outlines a principle of fair employment transition, and the most effective way to ensure a fair transition is to offer a clear timeline for change. An anticipated transition allows people and business to plan and adjust. So there is no reason for delay.... The only thing currently holding us back from doing more is a lack of ambition and transition planning.”

**On the economic impacts of reaching or not reaching net zero by 2050...**

**Ms Suzanne HARTER**

**Climate and Energy Campaigner, Australian Conservation Foundation**

“Experts have done the math, and the economy-wide cost of not achieving the Paris Agreement objectives far outweigh the cost of a smooth transition to net zero emissions. Investors in the private sector are crying out for policy certainty.”

**Dr Nicky ISON**

**Energy Transitions Manager, WWF-Australia**

“While climate change is a huge multidimensional threat, acting on climate change presents a huge economic opportunity for this country.”

**Ms Francesca MUSKOVIC**

**National Policy Manager, Sustainability and Regulatory Affairs, Property Council of Australia**

“Australia is increasingly exposed to disasters caused by natural hazards and has incurred significant economic costs from damage to infrastructure, essential services and community. Without action, to start planning for and building and retrofitting more climate-resilient infrastructure, the economic impact alone...will be costs expected to reach \$39 billion per year on average by 2050.”

**Mr Simon O'CONNOR**

**Chief Executive Officer and Executive Director, Responsible Investment Association Australasia**

“Even in the next five years alone we'll see \$43 billion less investment, with lack of clarity around policy certainty, trajectories and pathways in Australia. It's a missing opportunity for jobs and investment, including regional economic development opportunities across many sectors.”

**Professor Rosemary LYSTER**

“For a long time the message which the coalition government has given is that it's too expensive and that people are not going to be able to afford the cost of renewable energy and so on while not disclosing to Australians the taxpayer dollars that need to be spent every single time we have cyclones, bushfires, floods and so on... the government needs to tell the truth.”