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Submission to Environment and Communications Legislation Committee (Senate)

Climate Change Amendment (Duty of Care and Intergenerational Climate Equity) Bill 2023

Main points

I commend the Federal Government for taking legislative action on climate change. This is a much-needed measure to address years of inaction. Climate change is having severe impacts and urgent structural and systemic action is needed to avoid catastrophic collapse of social and environmental systems.

The increase in heatwaves, droughts, floods and extreme weather events are clear evidence of a warming earth and while these changes affect all members of society, they disproportionately impact individuals, groups and communities that are marginalized and disenfranchised. Climate action is a social justice issue and therefore needs a holistic approach, recognizing the interrelated nature of climate action, poverty and inequality, something this Bill fails to do.

Climate Change Amendment (Duty of Care and Intergenerational Climate Equity) Bill 2023 is an important first step but does not address the fundamental issues that have led to the crisis we face.

Recommendations

- **Increase to a 75% Target:** While 43% is an important first step, the United States has committed to reductions of between 50% and 52% below 2005 levels by 2030 and Britain has pledged to cut emissions by 68% below 1990 levels. 43% is a conservative (and potentially manipulated) target and needs to be 75% in line with what the sector is calling for and what the evidence highlights is needed to avert environmental disaster. ¹
- **Legislate the SDGs:** The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) provide an important mechanism through which the Australian government can address some of the biggest social, economic and environmental challenges currently facing Australia, and the world, with a particular focus on human rights and social and environmental justice. Despite Australia adopting the SDGs, continued reports from the United Nations and numerous other organisations emphasise how Australia is failing and will not meet the 2030 targets.

¹ <https://www.climatecouncil.org.au/actions/petition-cut-emissions-75/>

Australia continues to tumble down the global rankings with not a single target on track to being fully met by 2030.

I draw attention the great inaction in relation to climate action and reducing inequality, that even with this legislation is unlikely to have a significant impact. The SDGs recognize that climate action is intrinsically linked to inequality and the social determinants of health. The SDGs provide comprehensive Goals and Targets that without legislative action continue to be tokenistic. If Australia is committed to sustainable action, then the policies and targets already exist but lack oversight and accountability.

The focus of this legislation should be greater and set out a clear commitment to meet the SDGs by 2030 and clearer responsibility and reporting framework, through which climate action would be a key factor.

- **No new Gas and Coal:** This government's commitment to continued Gas and Coal projects undermine the aim and purpose of this Bill. The evidence is clear and the continued commitment to polluting industries will exacerbate the climate crisis and fail to act on the core issue we face.
- **Implementing the recommendations of the [Climate and Health Alliance's Healthy, Regenerative and Just Framework](#):** The Healthy, Regenerative and Just framework for a national strategy on climate, health and well-being for Australia outlines a set of policy recommendations for all levels of government, the health sector, business and community that will protect the health and well-being of all people in Australia from the impacts of climate change. This work is guided by the desire to create a national policy framework that recognises, manages, and addresses the health risks of climate change and promotes health through climate change action.

Thank you for the chance to make this submission and I welcome the opportunity to discuss any of the points raised here further.