

Clean Economy Jobs Bill 2024

Submission No: 5
Submitted by: United Nations Association of Queensland
Publication: Making the submission and your name public
Attachments: See attachment
Submitter Comments:



**United Nations
Association
of Australia**
QLD Division

7 March 2024

UNAAQ Submission to Clean Economy Jobs Bill 2024

Dear Committee Secretary, Clean Economy Jobs, Resources and Transport
Committee

Please find attached the submission of the UNAAQ to the inquiry into the Clean
Economy Jobs Bill 2024, prepared by Fien Van den Steen and Susan Harris Rimmer.

We are prepared to give evidence if required by the committee.

Kind regards



Professor Susan Harris Rimmer

President, United Nations Association Queensland

c/o N61 Griffith University Nathan Campus
Brisbane, QLD 4111

(07) 3735 4182
qld@unaa.org.au



Our recommendations

1. The UNAAQ is in favour of the Bill as it aligns with the UN position on urgent emissions reductions. We recommend that the Committee commend the Bill to be passed.
2. The UNAAQ is in favour of the Bill as it aligns with the Sustainable Development Goals.
3. The UNAAQ agrees with the Statement of Compatibility that the Bill will guarantee human rights in Queensland if enacted, which will implement Australia's treaty obligations under the UN human rights treaties.
4. The UNAAQ urges the Committee to consider the Bill in the context of the upcoming Brisbane Olympic and Paralympic Games and the possible hosting of the COP31 in Brisbane in 2026, in conjunction with Pacific Island nations, where Queensland could be able to work closely with the United Nations be seen as a climate leader and not a laggard.

About UNAAQ

With over 100 members, the Queensland Division of the United Nations Association of Australia works to inform, inspire and engage Australians on the work, goals, and values of the United Nations to create a safer, fairer, more sustainable world.

Our Queensland programs and events help educate Australian citizens and leaders about the UN's vital work and encourage them to become involved in promoting the UN. We work to support UN Youth to promote greater understanding of the UN within Australian schools, particularly through the conduct of Model UN Conferences.

We promote the UN's critical role in striving to maintain international peace and security, human rights and sustainable development. We focus on promoting the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the issues affecting Queenslanders and Queensland, such as climate change, the rights of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples, gender equality and refugees.



About the Bill

We understand the main purpose of the Clean Economy Jobs Bill is to reduce greenhouse gas emissions in Queensland by stating emissions reduction targets.

These targets are:

- *30 per cent reduction below 2005 levels by 2030*
- *75 per cent reduction below 2005 levels by 2035*
- *net zero by 2050.*

By legislating the targets, the Bill aims to:

- *create policy certainty to attract investment in new industries and in decarbonising the State's existing industries*
- *support the creation of more job opportunities in Queensland's emerging clean economy industries and in existing industries.*

To achieve its objectives, the Bill proposes to establish a new Act that:

- *sets out Queensland's emissions targets as identified above*
- *establishes a requirement to set emissions reduction targets for 2040 and 2045 at least 10 years in advance*
- *requires annual reporting to the Queensland Parliament on the progress towards achieving Queensland's emissions reduction targets*
- *provides for the development of emissions reduction plans for sectors; and*
- *establishes an expert panel to provide advice on emissions reduction progress, and efficient and cost-effective ways to reduce emissions.*



Recommendation 1: Bill is in alignment with UN position on emissions reduction

The UNAAQ is in favour of the Bill as it aligns with the UN position on urgent emissions reductions. We recommend that the Committee commend the Bill to be passed and consider following recommendations for improvements.

- The proposed reduction targets and timeline **align only minimally with the global Paris Agreement** to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), endorsed by Australia. This Agreement has set the global goal to limiting climate change to 1.5°C and to well below 2°C (UN n.d.a).
- On the last Conference of the Parties (COP28) to the UNFCCC in UAE, it was reiterated to **set the target at 1.5°C rather than 2°C** in line with the global scientific consensus. Half a degree of increased global warming will make a world of difference (Figure 1), as already felt in Queensland (Figure 2) (UNFCCC 2023, 13 December).
- As a result, all Parties, including Australia have agreed to submit **renewed Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs)** in which they increase their ambitions to realign with the 1.5°C target. These increased ambitions should be reflected in the Bill, by bringing the net zero target closer to 2040 (rather than 2050) and intermediately a minimum reduction of 43% by 2030 compared to 2019 levels, and 60% by 2035 (Figure 3) (Commonwealth 2023; UNFCCC 2023).
- Due to the **global short falling promises and delayed actions**, global warming reached 1.5°C by the end of 2023, and steers the world to a future of 2.8°C. This is condemned by the UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres: “humanity has opened the gates of hell” [...] “we must turn up the tempo, turn plans into action and turn the tide” (Millman 2023). This should be reflected in the urgency and scope of the Bill and sectoral plans.
- To ensure the **translation of the Bill into action**, UNAAQ commends the proposed reporting framework to ensure transparency and accountability, and proposes to include additional safeguards, such as more detailed sectoral and state emission reduction pathways.
- Lastly, the **accountability should extend to all emissions produced by Queensland**, resulting from domestic emissions and the emissions produced by exported coal. Opening new coal mines in Queensland contradicts the Bill's purpose to create political certainty around the state's decarbonisation and the global agreement to transition away from fossil fuels as decided at COP28 (UNFCCC 2023).

Hence, if the main purpose of the Bill is to reduce emissions by setting emission targets, we recommend considering the Bill as the floor to establish more ambitious climate action, aligned with the urgency of the climate crisis and the targets of the Paris Agreement.



Recommendation 2: Bill is in alignment with UN Sustainable Development Goals

The UNAAQ is in favour of the Bill as it aligns with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and encourages to take a more holistic approach considering the wide range of effects of climate change and opportunities of emission reductions for Queensland.

- The UNAAQ commends the alignment of the Bill **with SDG 7 'Affordable and clean energy'** insofar the Bill strengthens the Queensland clean energy strategy, as expressed in the Queensland Energy and Jobs Plan, and the inclusion of the energy sector in the projected sectoral decarbonisation plans. However, the UNAAQ questions the further investment in coal mining and the emphasis on securing jobs in this part of the energy industry, in contrast with the proclaimed political certainty of the state's decarbonisation.
- The UNAAQ supports the alignment with **SDG8 'Decent work and economic growth'** and the emphasis on economic diversification and technological innovation to provide those jobs. However, the UNAAQ recommends expanding the job focus from the extractive and energy industries to include other sectors that are at least equally important in providing job opportunities in Queensland. For example, The Great Barrier Reef alone supports a \$6 billion tourism industry and secures 64,000 jobs (AMCS 2024). Moreover, these sectors will be heavily impacted by the consequences of climate change and therefore require equal if not more attention.
- Similarly, alignment with **SDG 9 'Industry, innovation and infrastructure'** is praised insofar the Bill underlines a sustainable, inclusive and resilient infrastructure and Queensland investment. This includes new industries such as hydrogen and onshore battery development, and a focus on rural and regional communities, especially those communities transitioning away from fossil fuel industries.
- The UNAAQ welcomes the alignment with **SDG10 'Reduced Inequality'** insofar the bill focuses on including the different stakeholders, including affected communities and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander voices in developing and implementing the transition plans, aligning with the overall SDG principle of Leaving no One Behind. UNAAQ encourages to ensure effective safeguards, such as the Expert Panel to ensure these voices are heard, respected and actioned upon.
- The UNAAQ underwrites the alignment with **SDG 11 'Sustainable cities and communities'** with respect to the proposed emphasis on participatory, integrated and sustainable planning of Queensland's climate change mitigation and the collaboration to that end between the regional, state and national level of policy making and implementation in line with **SDG 13 'Climate Action'**. In addition, UNAAQ recommends expanding this focus from climate change mitigation to include adaptation and



resilience, in line with the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030. Knowing that bold and ambitious emission reductions are key to the latter two.

- The proposed transparency of the Bill aligns with **SDG 16 'Strong institutions'** which could be strengthened if further accountability safeguards are taken. Further, the Expert Panel and the promised stakeholder consultation make a good start to ensuring inclusive, participatory and representative decision-making as the basis to strong institutions.
- Underlying all the above, the UNAAQ commends the proposed partnerships between the different governments, communities, industry and other partnerships in line with **SDG17 'Partnerships for the Goals'**.

Despite these alignments, the UNAAQ sees a **missed opportunity in the narrow job-focused approach of the Bill, excluding those aspects of sustainable development** that are at least equally important contributors to the wellbeing of Queensland. This includes the SDGs related to biodiversity (SDG14 Life below water and SDG15 Life on land), and basic needs such as hunger (SDG2), health (SDG3), education (SDG4), gender equality (SDG5) and clean water (SDG6) as these are all threatened by climate change if emission reduction targets and practices fall short (Figure 2).

In short, while the UNAAQ commends the alignment with many of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, and we encourage the Bill to expand the view on the wellbeing and sustainable development of Queensland beyond energy-related jobs.



Recommendation 3: Bill will support human rights in Queensland

The UNAAQ agrees with the Statement of Compatibility that the Bill will guarantee human rights in Queensland if enacted, which will implement Australia's treaty obligations under the UN human rights treaties.

- The UNAAQ emphasises that climate change forms one of the biggest if not the biggest threats to the fundamental Right to Life and various other Human Rights in line with the United Nations Human Rights Committee (OHCHR 2015). Moreover, these human rights challenges are not dispersed equally, but affect those already more vulnerable and disadvantaged disproportionately, leading to climate injustice.
- Therefore, the UNAAQ commends the recognition given in the Statement of Compatibility to the affected Human Rights by climate change and agrees that the Bill will guarantee these human rights in Queensland if enacted:
 - Recognition and equality before the law (section 15)
 - Right to life (section 16)
 - Freedom of movement (section 19)
 - Freedom of expression (section 21)
 - Taking part in public life (section 23)
 - Property rights (section 24)
 - Privacy and reputation (section 25)
 - Protection of families and children (section 26)
 - Cultural rights – generally (section 27)
 - Cultural rights—Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islander peoples (section 28).
- In addition, the UNAAQ recommends including the affected **Human Right to a Clean, Healthy, and Sustainable Environment**. The right to a healthy environment was declared a universal right by the UN General Assembly in recognition of this intersectionality of climate change, human rights, and climate justice (UNEP 2022). This human right underlines and strengthens if not enables the implementation of the 17 SDGs (Recommendation #2).
- Although non-binding to its 193 member states, the human right resolution has since then been incorporated into different national and subnational human rights declarations and legislative instruments, and has been accepted by the ACT Government and is under consideration by the NSW Parliament. In the current absence of the Commonwealth's recognition of this right, **Queensland can take a leadership position** by adopting the right to a clean, healthy, and sustainable environment in the state's *Human Rights Act 2019*. This is especially important considering the high vulnerabilities of the many Queensland communities exposed to climate risks, including flooding, bushfires, droughts, and extreme weather events.
- Similarly, UNAAQ commends the projected commitment of the Bill to include Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islander peoples in the consultation, and commends the recognition given to their Cultural Rights, noting the ongoing litigation in the Federal



United Nations Association of Australia QLD Division

Court about the impacts of climate on the Torres Strait. The right to a clean, healthy, and sustainable environment is even more important for the Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islander peoples considering their close and historically extensive relationship to the land and the duty to care for Country. We encourage the Bill to consider their involvement as the bare minimum and to implement safeguards to ensure these voices are not only invited, but also heard and effectively acted upon in line with the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNGA 2007). This is also consistent with the Pathway to Treat process. **First Nations experts should be included in the new expert panel to provide advice on emissions reduction progress.**



Recommendation 4: Queensland can show global leadership.

The UNAAQ urges the Committee to consider the Bill in the context of the upcoming Brisbane Olympic and Paralympic Games and the possible hosting of the COP31 in Brisbane in 2026, in conjunction with Pacific Island nations, where Queensland could be able to work closely with the United Nations be seen as a climate leader and not a laggard.

- **Historically, Australia has created an image as climate change laggard** in the international community due to the lacking climate ambitions despite its large contribution per capita to the global carbon footprint. This position contrasts sharply to the precarious climate change vulnerability of its Pacific Island neighbours.
- When hosting large international events such as the Olympic and Paralympic Games and the climate specific COP31, the **eyes of the international community** and of the Pacific Island nations are on Queensland. This implies the choice to continue the historical reputation of climate change laggard, or to turn the tide and become a climate change leader. The Bill could be a first stepping stone to changing this reputation.
- Furthermore, **Queensland has the global responsibility of being the custodian of unique world cultural and natural heritage**. Queensland encompasses sites that are listed by UNESCO as World Heritage, including the Great Barrier Reef, Gondwana Rainforests of Australia, Wet Tropics of Queensland, K'gari (Fraser Island) and the Australian Fossil Mammal Sites (Riversleigh/Naracoorte), and as Biospheres including the Great Sandy Biosphere Reserve, the Noosa Biosphere Reserve, and the Sunshine Coast Biosphere. It is Queensland's responsibility to protect these cultural and natural values for the world. Mitigating climate change is necessary to guarantee that people from across the world and over generations can continue to enjoy them. Previous shortcomings of the Australian government to protect the Great Barrier Reef, in contrast with SDG11.4 'Strengthen efforts to protect and safeguard the world's cultural and natural heritage', have put the World Heritage status at risk. This loss would have implications for the Reef, further endangering its protected status. Indeed, the Bill has a responsibility that goes beyond Queensland with a ripple effect that extends across geographic and temporal boundaries.
- Queensland is therefore in the unique position to influence whether Australia will be a climate laggard or leader at the next international event, in line with the expectations of the UN High-Level Expert Group on the Net Zero Emissions Commitments of Non-State Entities (2023) (subnational entities), recognising the important role of non-State entities to lead the net zero transition.

Therefore, UNAAQ recommends considering the Bill as a key piece in sharpening Queensland's position as climate change leader and being seen as serious and committed member of the international community and neighbours of the Pacific Island Nations.



Appendix



Figure 1: Climate Council, 2023, 15 April, 'Impacts at 1.5 and 2 degrees of warming', viewed 2 March 2024, <https://www.climatecouncil.org.au/resources/impacts-degrees-warming/>



Sector	Climate risks* ↑ = increase, ↓ = decrease	Impacts*
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ↑ heatwaves ↑ fire weather ↑ inundation and flooding ↑ tropical cyclone intensity ↑ sea level 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Erosion and infrastructure damage along the coastline • Increased maintenance costs • Increased disruption to services • Increased energy and water usage
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ↑ temperature ↑ heatwaves ↑ fire weather ↑ tropical cyclone intensity ↑ sea level 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased threats to tourism infrastructure • Damage to popular environmental sites • Risks to tourists unfamiliar with conditions
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ↑ heatwaves ↑ fire weather ↑ rainfall intensity ↑ inundation and flooding ↑ tropical cyclone intensity ↑ sea level ↑ sea temperature 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Disruption to supply chains • Disruption to workplaces and infrastructure • Loss of customers during emergency recovery • Increased flood damage • Increased maintenance costs • Increased disruption to water supplies
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ↑ heatwaves ↑ fire weather ↑ flooding ↑ sea level 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Damage to cultural sites • Loss of significant ecosystems
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ↑ temperature ↑ hot days ↑ heatwaves ↑ fire weather ↑ drought risk ↓ rainfall ↑ tropical cyclone intensity ↑ sea temperature 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Changed distribution of pests and diseases • Heat stress on livestock and crops • Farms affected by bushfire • Reduced water security • Crops destroyed by cyclones • Increased heat stress
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ↑ temperature ↑ hot days ↑ fire weather ↑ drought risk ↓ rainfall ↑ tropical cyclone intensity ↑ sea level ↑ sea temperature ↑ ocean acidification 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Changes to habitat • Altered disturbance regimes • Changing dynamics of invasive species • Cyclone and storm tide inundation damage to landscapes and natural systems • Coral bleaching • Existing threats to flora and fauna are exacerbated
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ↑ heatwaves ↑ fire weather ↑ flooding ↑ tropical cyclone intensity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More stress on health and emergency services • More heat-related deaths, particularly among the elderly and disadvantaged • Mental health effects • Changes in disease occurrence
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ↑ heatwaves ↑ fire weather ↑ rainfall intensity ↑ inundation and flooding ↑ tropical cyclone intensity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased fire season duration and fire intensity will affect urban fringe communities • Increased sea level and storm intensity will affect coastal communities and increase inland flooding risk

Figure 2: State of Queensland, Department of Environment and Science (DES QLD) 2019, 'Climate Change in Queensland', viewed 2 March 2024, https://www.qld.gov.au/data/assets/pdf_file/0023/68126/queensland-climate-change-impact-summary.pdf

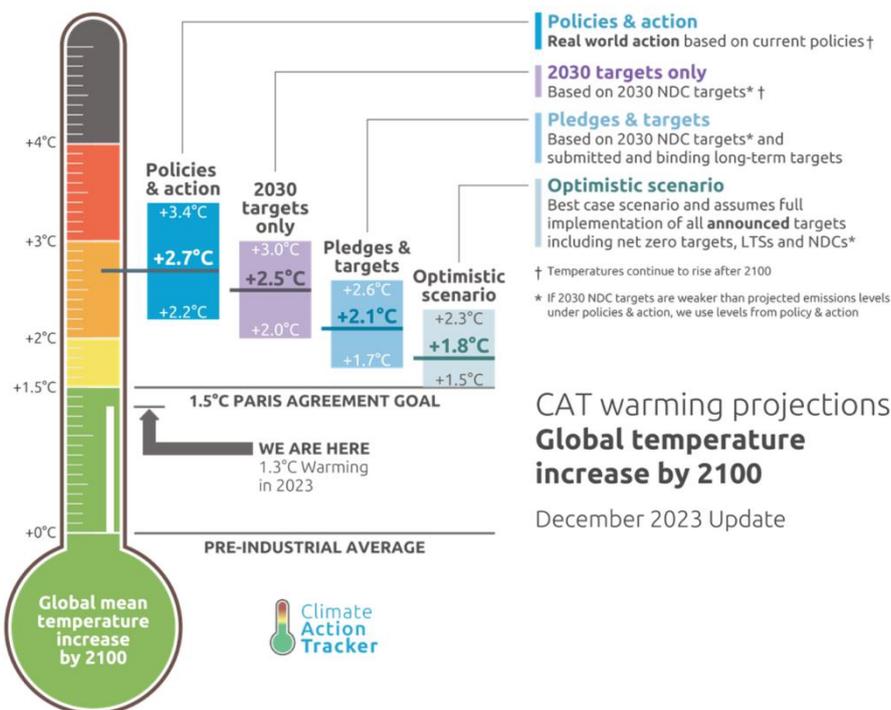


Figure 3: Climate Analytics and NewClimate Institute (2023, December), 'The Climate Action Tracker Thermometer (CAT)', <https://climateactiontracker.org/global/cat-thermometer/>



Figure 4: The specific targets for each SDG that are touched upon by the Bill, showing room for those left out.



References

- Australian Marine Conservation Society (AMCS) 2024, February 14, 'QLD's climate legislation can't be passed fast enough with extreme weather battering the state', viewed 2 March 2024, <https://www.marineconservation.org.au/qlds-climate-legislation-cant-be-passed-fast-enough-with-extreme-weather-battering-the-state/>
- Climate Analytics and NewClimate Institute (2023, December), 'The Climate Action Tracker Thermometer (CAT)', viewed 2 March 2024, <https://climateactiontracker.org/global/cat-thermometer/>
- Commonwealth of Australia (Commonwealth) 2023, 13 December, 'COP28 Umbrella Group Closing Statement', viewed 2 March 2024, <https://minister.dcceew.gov.au/bowen/speeches/cop28-umbrella-group-closing-statement#:~:text=The%20Stocktake%20affirms%20the%20latest,countries%20prepare%20most%20ambitious%20NDCs>
- High-Level Expert Group on the Net Zero Emissions Commitments of Non-State Entities 2023, 'Integrity Matters: Net Zero Commitments by Businesses, Financial Institutions, Cities and Regions', https://www.un.org/sites/un2.un.org/files/high-level_expert_group_n7b.pdf
- Millman, O. 2023, 21 September, 'Humanity has 'opened gates to hell' by letting climate crisis worsen, UN secretary warns', article The Guardian, viewed 2 March 2024, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2023/sep/20/antonio-guterres-un-climate-summit-gates-hell>
- United Nations (UN) n.d.a, 'For a livable climate: Net-zero commitments must be backed by credible action', United Nations, viewed 2 March 2024, <https://www.un.org/en/climatechange/net-zero-coalition#:~:text=To%20keep%20global%20warming%20to,reach%20net%20zero%20by%202050>
- United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) 2022, 18 July, 'In historic move, UN declares healthy environment a human right', viewed 2 March 2024, <https://www.unep.org/news-and-stories/story/historic-move-un-declares-healthy-environment-human-right>
- United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) 2023, 13 December, 'COP28 Agreement Signals "Beginning of the End" of the Fossil Fuel Era', UNFCCC, viewed 2 March 2024, [https://unfccc.int/news/cop28-agreement-signals-beginning-of-the-end-of-the-fossil-fuel-era#:~:text="In%20early%202025%2C%20countries%20must,for%20change%2C"%20Stiell%20added](https://unfccc.int/news/cop28-agreement-signals-beginning-of-the-end-of-the-fossil-fuel-era#:~:text=)



**United Nations
Association
of Australia**
QLD Division

United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) 2007, '61/295. United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples', viewed 2 March 2024,
https://www.un.org/development/desa/indigenouspeoples/wp-content/uploads/sites/19/2018/11/UNDRIP_E_web.pdf

Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) 2015, 'Understanding Human Rights and climate change', Submission of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights to the 21st Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, viewed 2 March 2024,
<https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/Documents/Issues/ClimateChange/COP21.pdf>