

Clean Economy Jobs Bill 2024

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Climate Council of Australia

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About the Climate Council

Climate Council is Australia's own independent, evidence-based organisation on climate science, impacts and solutions.

We connect decision-makers, the public and the media to catalyse action at scale, elevate climate stories in the news and shape the conversation on climate consequences and action, at home and abroad.

We advocate for climate policies and solutions that can rapidly drive down emissions, based on the most up-to-date climate science and information.

We do this in partnership with our incredible community: thousands of generous, passionate supporters and donors, who have backed us every step of the way since they crowd-funded our beginning as a non-profit organisation in 2013.

To find out more about the Climate Council's work, visit www.climatecouncil.org.au.

Introduction and context

The Climate Council thanks the Committee for the opportunity to comment on the *Clean Economy Jobs Bill 2024*.

Legislating climate targets and establishing a framework for monitoring progress towards them is a critical step in advancing climate action. It provides communities, businesses, and investors with a clear roadmap for decarbonisation and ensures that regions can reap the benefits of early and decisive action. To fully realise this potential, the *Clean Economy Jobs Bill* should outline a comprehensive plan for significant and rapid emissions reductions in this current decade, aligning with the urgent scientific imperative to avert the most devastating impacts of climate change.

The Climate Council's recent report, titled "[Mission Zero: How Today's Climate Councils Will Reshape Australia](#)" (2023a), underscores the urgency of this mission. We are already witnessing the devastating effects of climate change on Queensland, including unprecedented bushfires, destructive floods, extreme heat waves and cyclones. This 2023-24 Queensland summer, with devastating cyclones and floods, sends a strong message that we must act now.

Queensland is Australia's highest emitting state; therefore, it has an important role in reducing emissions during this crucial decade. The Climate Council's analysis of the latest climate science and available carbon budgets shows that effective action means reducing emissions by 75% from 2005 levels by 2030 and achieving net zero emissions by 2035 nationally.

Queensland can do its part in achieving these targets to protect the community - and all Australians - from further climate harm. This transition also brings substantial opportunities for Queensland, particularly in its new energy potential, with wind and solar creating regional jobs and cheaper energy driving down household bills (Climate Council 2023b).

Given that climate change is already jeopardising lives and livelihoods in Queensland and the immense potential of renewable energy, the *Clean Economy Jobs Bill* should establish a strong pathway that sees the state playing its part in limiting global warming as close as possible to 1.5°C. This submission outlines how the *Clean Economy Jobs Bill* can be strengthened to achieve this goal.

Seeing all parties in the Queensland Parliament back this Bill will help maintain the current positive momentum in delivering clean energy infrastructure, boost investment confidence and ensure Queenslanders see

the benefits as soon as possible. For this reason, the **Climate Council strongly recommends its passage and rapid implementation.**

Climate change is already threatening lives and livelihoods in QLD

Queensland is on the frontline of climate-fuelled extreme weather. According to the Commonwealth Science and Industrial Research Organisation (2021), the number of days with dangerous weather conditions for bushfires has increased. We saw this just this Summer with bushfires burning down homes and nature across parts of the state.

Cyclones have also become more ferocious. The 2023-24 Summer, with higher than usual sea temperatures, led to heavy flooding and devastating cyclones sweeping through communities and causing widespread infrastructure and property damage.

Queensland faces an uncertain future of rising temperatures and increasing climate risks. Under a high emissions scenario, the state can expect average temperature rises of up to 2.5°C by 2050, leading to more than four times the number of hot days (>35 °C) in Brisbane (CSIRO 2021). The state would also experience approximately 40 percent more fire days in this scenario (CSIRO 2021). Sea levels are expected to rise by around 26 centimetres along the coast and parts of Brisbane may be inundated by water by 2050 under a high emissions scenario (NCCARF 2016).

Biodiversity hotspots like the Gondwana Rainforests in the state's South, the Wet Tropics in the North, and the iconic Great Barrier Reef will be deeply affected (Climate Council 2023a). For example, climate change is threatening nine endemic bird species and subspecies in the Wet Tropics, with an additional five categorised as near threatened (WTMA 2023).

These forecasts underscore the urgent need for strong climate action to address these risks. The future climate of Queensland will be determined by the effectiveness of our shared efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Strong and effective climate legislation can underpin these efforts, so it is vital to get this right.

Queensland's *Clean Economy Jobs Bill* can guide the way for strong state action

Laws such as the *Clean Economy Jobs Bill* are being enacted globally at national and subnational levels to codify emission reduction goals and organise efforts to achieve these. The World Bank (2020) has analysed dozens of framework laws in place and identified a range of features considered best practice. These include:

- enacting long-term targets, including net zero;
- enacting interim and sectoral targets;
- mandating climate risk and vulnerability assessments;
- requiring climate change strategies and plans;
- enabling policy instruments;
- sourcing independent advice;
- establishing co-ordinations mechanisms for government;
- requiring stakeholder engagement;
- aligning financing implementation;
- requiring measurement and reporting; and
- providing parliamentary oversight.

The proposed *Clean Economy Jobs Bill* shares many of these features, but there is room to make it more effective. A strong and effective law can help to protect the Queensland community from climate harm and ensure we seize the opportunities that come with transitioning the state's economy.=

In light of this, the Climate Council suggests the Bill could be further improved in the following ways.

Clear science-based purpose and objects

While the Bill clearly articulates a core purpose of reducing emissions, it could more effectively link this to the cause (fossil fuels) of the problem (climate change) and what we need to do to solve it (science-aligned action). The Bill could be strengthened to make this explicit. For example, the Government can look to sections 3 and 4 of NSW's *Climate Change (Net Zero Future) Act 2023*.

2030 and 2050 target

Climate Council's research, using a fair and equitable carbon budget approach, shows that reaching net zero by 2050 is too late. Owing to decades

of failure to adequately reduce emissions, the remaining global carbon budget for a high chance of limiting warming to 1.5°C by the end of this century is either now extremely small or is already exhausted. Table 1 below outlines the remaining carbon budget at different probabilities of temperature rise.

Table 1: Global carbon budget.

	Two in three chance (67 percent probability) of limiting warming to 1.5°C		Two in three chance (67 percent probability) of limiting warming to 1.7°C	
Base budget from 1 January 2020 (IPCC 2021a)	400 Gt CO ₂		700 Gt CO ₂	
Emissions for 2020, 2021, 2022 (Friedlingstein et al. 2022)	-121 Gt CO ₂		-121 Gt CO ₂	
Accounting for non-CO ₂ greenhouse gases	Our best estimate -90 Gt CO ₂ (Climate Council 2021b)	IPCC range ±220 Gt CO ₂ (IPCC 2021a)	Our best estimate -90 Gt CO ₂ (Climate Council 2021b)	IPCC range ±220 Gt CO ₂ (IPCC 2021a)
Carbon cycle feedbacks	Our best estimate -97 Gt CO ₂ Taking the upper end of IPCC's range, based on a precautionary approach to carbon cycle feedbacks.	IPCC range 26 ±97 Gt CO ₂ 39 Gt CO ₂ (26 x 1.5) is already included in the base budget. (IPCC 2021a).	Our best estimate -97 Gt CO ₂ Taking the upper end of IPCC's range, based on a precautionary approach to carbon cycle feedbacks.	IPCC range 26 ±97 Gt CO ₂ 44 Gt CO ₂ (26 x 1.7) is already included in the base budget. (IPCC 2021a).
Remaining budget to net zero emissions	Our best estimate 92 Gt CO ₂	IPCC range 280 ±317 Gt CO ₂	Our best estimate 392 Gt CO ₂	IPCC range 580 ±317 Gt CO ₂
Date at which net zero emissions must be achieved globally, assuming linear rate of decline (based on our 'best estimate' figures above)	2027		2043	

As a developed country with high emissions and significant opportunities for renewable energy and other climate solutions, we need to reduce emissions at a rate faster than the required global average and achieve net zero emissions sooner than much of the rest of the world. In 2014, the Climate Change Authority, using a modified version of a framework known as 'Contraction and Convergence', concluded that to play its part in global emissions reduction efforts, Australia could use no more than 0.97 percent of the available global carbon budget.

In line with this approach, Australia would need to achieve net zero emissions by 2038 to align with a global carbon budget that provides a 67 percent chance of limiting warming to 1.7°C, and 2027 for a 67 percent chance of limiting warming to 1.5°C. Net zero by 2035 represents a point in this range (2027-2038) that balances the maximum rate of emissions

reduction we believe is possible for Australia, with the need to limit warming as much as possible and with the highest probability of success.

The *Clean Economy Jobs Bill* should provide a lever to continue accelerating interim targets as momentum builds and Queensland makes progress in cutting emissions in the years to come. By doing more in this make-or-break decade for action, Queensland will be well-placed to go further than a 75% cut to emissions by 2035.

To achieve this, the Bill should incorporate a ratchet mechanism like that included in the Federal *Climate Change Act 2022* and NSW's *Climate Change (Net Zero Future) Act 2023*. This mechanism would mandate regular reviews of climate targets, including the 2030, 2035 and net zero targets, to consistently strengthen them over time. Crucially, it would ensure that targets can be increased as technology improves and the state gains momentum with its decarbonisation pathway. It would also guard against backsliding by ensuring these targets cannot be revised downwards.

If we do not rapidly drive down emissions before 2030, we risk locking in escalating global warming for decades to come and potentially triggering devastating ecological tipping points (Climate Council 2023a).

Legislated duties to meet emissions reduction targets

Part 2 sets out targets for reducing greenhouse gas emissions. Climate Council recommends this section include a duty for the relevant Minister of the day to ensure the targets are met. Implementing a duty on the Minister - and through them, the government as a whole - can enhance accountability and commitment to the Bill's goals. For example, a duty is contained within NSW's *Climate Change (Net Zero Future) Act 2023*. This may lead to better environmental, economic and social outcomes for Queensland.

Regular adaptation and mitigation planning and a climate risk assessment

The Bill could be strengthened by requiring the Government to produce mitigation and adaptation plans at regular five-year intervals. The advice of the Clean Economy Expert Panel would inform these plans. The adaptation plan should be underpinned by a comprehensive Climate Change Risk Assessment that identifies risks across the economy, environment and communities. By requiring the periodic production of these plans, the Queensland Government can ensure a systematic and well-informed

approach to climate action, promoting transparency, accountability and certainty for industry, business and communities.

Regular independent reviews of the legislation

It is best practice to include regular independent reviews, at intervals of five years, of the performance of the legislation in meeting its purpose and objectives. This will ensure that the legislation remains fit for purpose as the need for climate action accelerates and science and clean technology progress.

Summary of recommendations

Recommendation 1: Clear science-based purpose and objects

Effective legislation should be grounded in clear scientific purpose and objectives. While the Bill aims to cut emissions, it could be improved by directly linking these reductions to their cause—fossil fuels—and the broader issue of climate change and providing science-based solutions. For a stronger Bill, lawmakers might consider the approach of sections 3 and 4 of New South Wales' Climate Change (Net Zero Future) Act 2023 as a guide.

Recommendation 2: Review and ratchet of targets

The Climate Council recommends incorporating a ratchet mechanism akin to the Federal *Climate Change Act 2022* into the Bill. This mechanism would require periodic evaluations of climate targets, ensuring they are continually strengthened. Importantly, this mechanism would preclude any backsliding or regression in setting targets. It would also provide a means to review and strengthen Queensland's 2030, 2035 and net zero targets as momentum accelerates.

Recommendation 4: Legislated duties to meet emissions reduction targets

The Climate Council recommends adding a requirement for the current Minister to ensure these targets are met. This responsibility could enhance government accountability and commitment to the Bill's aims. A similar duty in New South Wales' Climate Change (Net Zero Future) Act

2023 has shown potential for positive outcomes in the environmental, economic, and social spheres of Queensland.

Recommendation 5: Mitigation and adaptation planning and a climate change risk assessment

The Climate Council recommends that the Queensland Government enhance the Clean Economy Jobs Bill by incorporating provisions mandating the development of mitigation and adaptation plans at regular intervals. These intervals should align with each budget period, occurring at intervals of 5 years and should be underpinned by a climate change risk assessment.

Recommendation 6: Regular independent reviews of the legislation

The Climate Council recommends requiring independent reviews every five years to assess how well the legislation is achieving its goals. This ensures the law stays relevant and effective as climate action urgency increases and advancements in science and clean technology evolve.

Conclusion

Climate change is already having devastating impacts on Queensland and its community. Unless we reduce emissions by switching from fossil fuel power to abundant and cheap renewable energy, much worse is in store. That is why this Bill is vital. The Bill introduces clear goals for renewable energy and a plan to ensure Queensland benefits from the change. As the findings of this polling show, the community is behind this transition. All parties should support this Bill to maintain and then accelerate the positive momentum building behind renewable energy in Queensland today.

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