


Clean Economy Jobs Bill 2024

Submission No: 13
Submitted by: Lock the Gate Alliance
Publication:
Attachments: No attachment
Submitter Comments:

Reply to: Ellen Roberts
National Coordinator
PO Box 55
Helensvale, QLD 4212


7 March 2024

Committee Secretary
Clean Economy Jobs, Resources and Transport Committee
Parliament House
George Street
Brisbane Qld 4000

by email: cejrtc@parliament.qld.gov.au

Thank you for the opportunity to make a submission to the *Clean Economy Jobs Bill 2024*.

We welcome action on climate change and acknowledge the important step the Qld Government has taken in introducing this Bill to Parliament. We do not take any legislative action on climate change lightly and recognise its significance.

However, we are deeply concerned about the lack of ambition in the Bill with regard to the 2030 target and the failure to require the targets to be considered and applied when making decisions on fossil fuel projects.

Failure to make deep emissions cuts by 2030 and enabling expansions in coal and gas mining consigns the globe to devastating outcomes that will do immeasurable and irreversible damage to Queenslanders' health, livelihoods, food production and economy.

Our short analysis below highlights key measures including in NSW and Victorian climate laws that are missing in this Bill.

We recommend that:

- The 2030 target is increased to at least 50% emissions reduction target;
- The Bill should be amended to require it to be explicitly considered when making decisions under relevant laws such the *Environment Protection Act 1994*;
- The Bill should be amended to enable the Clean Economy Panel to provide advice and make recommendations to DESI and the Coordinator General on proposed developments, including fossil fuel expansion proposals;
- A ratchet mechanism should be included in this Bill, requiring the targets to be reviewed regularly and increased where so advised by the Clean Economy Expert Panel.

2030 target is vastly inadequate

Maintaining a 30% by 2030 target is vastly inadequate to the urgent emissions reductions required to prevent global heating exceeding 1.5 degrees.

Whilst a relatively ambitious emissions target of 75% by 2035 (compared to some other Australian states and territories) is positive, maintaining a 30% target for 2030 is drastically flawed and puts achieving the 2035 target at risk by deferring most abatement to the last five years before that deadline.

Both Victoria and NSW have more ambitious 2030 targets: Victoria has a target of 45-50% and NSW has a target of 50% by 2030. It is widely acknowledged that early abatement reduces the risks of climate change by limiting the accumulation of greenhouse emissions in the atmosphere. Timely action avoids the risk of catastrophic levels of warming and creates conditions for orderly transition so a higher target sooner is in Queensland's interests.

A recent submission by Professor Penny Sackett, former Chief Scientist of Australia, to the recent NSW [Climate Change \(Net Zero Future\) Act 2023](#) (NZFA), dramatically exposed the weaknesses of even the NSW proposed 50% by 2030 emissions reduction target.

Professor Sackett stated that:

As it currently reads, the Bill would set targets for reducing net GHG emissions in NSW by at least 50% by 30 June 2030 from the net GHG emissions in 2005, and by June 2050 to reduce net GHG emissions in NSW to zero. These targets are insufficient for consistency with holding heating as close to 1.5°C as possible, or with holding it to well below 2.0°C.

She further highlighted that:

Given that humanity emits about 40 Gt CO₂ per year, with no sign yet of decreasing below that level, at current 'spend' rates the 1.5°C budget will be exhausted in about 6 years, that is, by 2030. The carbon budget for holding heating to 1.7°C with a two-thirds chance would be exhausted in about 13 to 14 years at current emission levels, well before 2040. This is just one way to understand that emissions must be cut much more swiftly than the targets currently set in the Bill.

Needless to say, the far weaker ambition of the Qld 2030 target makes this criticism even more telling in relation to this Bill.

The consequences of failing to reduce emissions rapidly, especially in this vital decade, are almost unimaginable and will forever change life in Queensland and across the globe.

Professor Sackett notes that unless deep emissions cuts occur urgently than global heating of 1.5°C will likely be upon us, at least as a temporary fluctuation, by 2027 or sooner. She states that at 1.5°C of global heating, we can expect that:

- *Peak heatwaves that occurred only once per 30 years in pre-industrial times in Australia, can be expected every 2.7 years.*
- *Many coastal areas in Australia will experience what are now considered 'once-in- 100-years extreme-sea-level events' at least once a year by 2100.*
- *What used to be Australia's hottest year on record (2019) is now an average year.*
- *The likelihood of crossing some Earth tipping points becomes significant.*

We strongly encourage you to [read her short submission](#), to remind you of the magnitude of what is at stake here, and how far this Bill currently falls short of what is needed.

Failure to bind decision-makers

It is very disturbing to read this paragraph in the explanatory memoranda –

“While the Bill will increase accountability for achieving the State’s emissions reduction targets, it is not intended that the Bill operate as a legally binding constraint in any future statutory decision or approval processes. The Bill does not seek to override existing statutory decision-making processes, rights and obligations, including those that already consider emissions such as those under Queensland’s development, planning and environmental laws. Similarly, the Bill itself does not impose any requirements on industry to achieve the State’s targets”.

If big industrial emitters are not forced to do their bit on climate, or are effectively exempted from being required to do so, then the deep emissions reductions needed will not ensue and the burden of the task will also fall disproportionately on governments and regular Queenslanders.

It is very difficult to understand why everyday Queenslanders should carry the can for a predominantly foreign-owned mining sector dominated by multi-nationals, or how the state’s targets will be achieved if there is no expectation for the industries creating the emissions to achieve them. We note that there are mine and gasfield expansion plans seeking approval under the *Environment Protection Act 1994* with the potential to add millions of additional tonnes of emissions annually. A link between decisions of this nature and the legislated emissions reduction targets is a crucial tool for Queensland government decision-makers to ensure the state achieves those targets.

Both the Victorian [Climate Change Act 2017](#) (CCA) and the NSW NZFA include mechanisms to specifically link their climate change laws to decisions.

Section 17 of the Victorian CCA contains a schedule of decision makers who must have regard to climate change in decision-making, and section 15 (3) of the NSW NZFA provides a power for the Net Zero Commission to provide advice and make recommendations to decision-makers, including to the Independent Planning Commission.

The Bill should be amended to require that it is explicitly considered when making decisions under relevant laws such as the *Environment Protection Act 1994*.

It should also be amended to enable the Clean Economy Panel to provide advice and make recommendations to DESI and the Coordinator General on proposed fossil fuel development projects.

Absence of a target ‘ratchet’ mechanism

Both the NSW and Victorian climate laws enable targets to be increased over time without requiring legislative changes. The failure to provide such a ‘ratchet’ mechanism in this Bill exacerbates the grave concerns we have over the lack of ambition with the 2030 target.

A ratchet mechanism should be included in this Bill, requiring the targets to be reviewed regularly and increased where so advised by the Clean Economy Expert Panel.