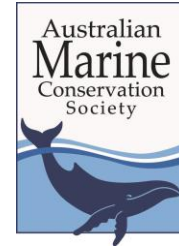


Clean Economy Jobs Bill 2024

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Submission to Parliamentary Committee on the Clean Economy Jobs Bill 2024

6 March 2024

Email: cejrtc@parliament.qld.gov.au

Submission via this link: <https://qldparlcomm.snapforms.com.au/form/cejrtc---submissions---clean-economy-jobs-bill-2024>

Thank you for the opportunity to make a submission on the *Clean Economy Jobs Bill 2024* (the Bill) and associated Explanatory Notes and Statement of Compatibility.

The Australian Marine Conservation Society (AMCS) is Australia's peak marine conservation organisation. Representing over 300,000 people from all around the country, we work to protect our oceans and coastal environments for the benefit of our environment, current and future generations of Australians, jobs, and the economy and the health of our nation, and have done for almost 60 years. AMCS supports the Bill as an important step towards a science-based approach to reducing Queensland's greenhouse gas emissions to avoid some of the worst impacts of climate change on our globally renowned coastline and ocean ecosystems.

Queensland's Oceans and Coasts

Queensland's marine ecosystems are invaluable, providing habitat for thousands of unique and endemic species, contributing billions to our economy, and supporting Australian livelihoods and a way of life. However, these ecosystems face unprecedented threats due to the impacts of climate change, such as rising sea temperatures, ocean acidification, and extreme weather events.

Tragically, the Great Barrier Reef is facing yet another coral bleaching event, the 5th since 2016. This event is part of a global coral bleaching event, affecting tropical coral reefs throughout the Southern Hemisphere. As UNESCO has noted in its report to the World Heritage Committee, holding global average temperature rise to 1.5°C is a critical threshold for the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage area. Beyond 1.5°C, the IPCC has found tropical coral reefs will rapidly deteriorate, with a greater

than 99% loss at 2.0°C. This would be a catastrophe for Queensland and the world.

In short, it is imperative that climate science drives climate policy, legislation and action to protect and restore the Great Barrier Reef and Queensland's other precious coastal and marine environments by urgently and drastically reducing our state's greenhouse gas emissions.

The following aspects of the Bill are strongly supported by AMCS:

- Setting a 2035 target that is one of the strongest in Australia;
- Setting interim targets for 2040 and 2045;
- The establishment of an independent advisory Clean Economy Expert Panel; and
- The requirement for annual progress statements to advance transparency and accountability.

The following aspects of the Bill should be improved:

1. Main Purpose of the Bill

The Bill states that the main purpose is to “reduce greenhouse gas emissions in Queensland by stating emissions reduction targets”. Compared to other similar legislation, this wording is loose and lacks urgency. For example, the Cth *Climate Change Act 2022* states:

“(aa) to advance an effective and progressive response to the urgent threat of climate change drawing on the best available scientific knowledge; and

(a) to set out Australia's greenhouse gas emissions reduction targets which contribute to the global goals of:

(i) holding the increase in the global average temperature to well below 2°C above pre-industrial levels; and

(ii) pursuing efforts to limit the temperature increase to 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels;”

The NSW *Climate Change (Net Zero Future) Act 2023* also has a similar purpose. Queensland could set a new national standard by referencing only the need to hold greenhouse gas emissions to 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels, given the unrelenting evidence of severe climate impacts already when global average emissions stand at 1.2°C.

2. Emission Reduction Targets

Whilst being a major step forwards beyond 2030, the Bill retains the existing 2030 30% reduction target. As long ago as 2014, the national Climate Change Authority recommended Australia adopt a 2030 emissions reduction target (ERT) of between 45 - 65%, based on 2005 levels. The best available climate science demonstrates that to get on track to limit the global average temperature rise to 1.5°C, consistent with the Paris Agreement, Queensland's 2030 target should be increased to 60%.

In addition, climate experts argue that Queensland must reduce its emissions by 70% by 2032, 90% by 2035 and net zero by 2038 to have a 50% chance of limiting global heating to 1.5°C.

3. *Strengthening the role of the Expert Panel*

AMCS welcomes the establishment of the Panel, however, we believe its functions should be further strengthened in the Bill. The Panel currently does not have the power to:

- Provide an annual report to the Minister on the latest climate science and whether Queensland's emission reduction targets should be strengthened in line with the latest climate science and impacts in Queensland;
- Consult publicly on its advice, including ensuring First Nations interests and knowledge are incorporated into its advice.

Currently, there is no requirement in the Bill for the Panel's advice to the Minister to be publicly released. We recognise that, under the Bill, the Minister is to report to Parliament, however, we believe accountability and transparency would be substantially enhanced by a requirement for the Panel's report to be tabled as well. This is the case with the Cth *Climate Change Act*.

In addition, the Panel is not empowered by the Bill to provide advice to the Minister at its own discretion. Other than 14.(a), the Panel requires a request from the Minister.

To ensure integrity, it is crucial that Panel members do not currently work for, receive income from, or have recently (in the last 5 years) worked for the fossil fuel sector. In addition, Panel members must be barred from working for the fossil fuel sector for 5 years after leaving the Panel.

4. *Emission Reduction Plans*

The legislation does not require sector specific emission reduction plans to have their own emission reduction targets and timelines. It is important that each industry sector has its own target by which to measure success. Including this requirement would significantly enhance the effectiveness of the Bill.

5. *Explanatory Note*

AMCS is very concerned that the Explanatory Note to the Bill contains the following paragraph:

"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."

This paragraph has the potential to undermine the purpose of the Bill. It risks decision makers throughout government placing diminished weight on the targets based on the understanding that Parliament did not intend them to operate as a constraint on statutory decisions. The Note should be amended to ensure that targets must be considered where relevant, for example under planning and environment legislation, to ensure that decision makers do not act inconsistently with emissions reductions.

AMCS Recommendations

1. Strengthen the main purpose of the Bill. For example: to set out Queensland's greenhouse gas emission reduction targets consistent with undertaking Queensland's fair share of national and global emissions reduction to limit the global average temperature rise to 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels.
2. Strengthen the functions of the Clean Economy Expert Panel:
 - a. Provide an annual report to the Minister on the latest climate science and whether Queensland's five yearly emission reduction targets should be strengthened in line with the latest climate science and impacts in Queensland;
 - b. Require the panel to consult publicly on the report;
 - c. Ensure First Nations interests and knowledge are incorporated into the report;
 - d. Require the Minister to table the report in Parliament;
 - e. Empower the Panel to provide its own advice to the Minister without a requirement for a request from the Minister.
3. Strengthen the integrity of the Expert Panel by ensuring members do not currently work for, receive income from, or have recently (in the last 5 years) worked for the fossil fuel sector. In addition, Panel members must be barred from working for the fossil fuel sector for 5 years after leaving the Panel.
4. Require industry sector emission reduction plans to have their own five year emission reduction targets and timelines.
5. Amend the Explanatory Note to ensure that government policy and decision makers do not act inconsistently with emissions reduction targets and timelines in this Bill.

Once again, thank you for the opportunity to provide comments and recommendations on the Bill. We urge all Parliamentarians to amend and pass the legislation at the earliest possible opportunity.

Yours sincerely



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