

Queensland Climate Transition Bill 2023

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Submission on the Queensland Climate Transition Bill 5 May 2023

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the Queensland Climate Transition Bill. Queensland Conservation Council is the peak body for environmental groups in Queensland and has been supporting communities to protect their environment since 1969. We believe that Queensland can and must be powered by 100% renewable energy by 2030 to achieve a safe climate future.

Queensland communities and iconic environments such as the Great Barrier Reef and Wet Tropics World Heritage Area, are already suffering climate impacts. The Great Barrier Reef has suffered four devastating bleaching events in just seven years, including in a La Nina cycle¹. In 2019, at the end of the last El Nino cycle, bushfire penetrated the Wet Tropics². Thousands of Queenslanders are still rebuilding after destructive floods in 2021 and 2022. The latest Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) report gathered more evidence about the escalating impacts, particularly to the Great Barrier Reef, likely if we exceed 1.5 degrees of warming. To have a chance of saving the Great Barrier Reef, we need the Queensland Government to reach our international obligations under the Paris Agreement to limit warming to 1.5 degrees.

The Queensland Government's current emissions reduction target of 30% by 2030 is deeply inadequate. It is not in any way aligned with a 1.5 degree trajectory. It is likely to be exceeded by Federal Government policy and private industry driving investments in clean energy and land carbon. We need the Queensland Government to deliver a plan to transition Queensland's economy away from fossil fuels in a way that preserves our natural environment, delivers outcomes for communities, and strengthens First Nations connection to Country.

We welcomed the Queensland Energy and Jobs Plan as a good first step in planning a pathway away from dependence on coal in the energy sector. In particular, the Clean Energy Jobs Guarantee which provides for power station workers is a useful framework to look after workers in the transition to new economies. We need the Queensland Government to step up the implementation of the Energy and Jobs Plan including rapid review of the Planning frameworks to protect nature & cultural heritage, and extend the ambition to other sectors of the economy.

The Queensland Climate Transition Bill illustrates what could be achieved by the State Government and we urge the Government to take on the following key elements.

¹ Climate Council (2022) [No region spared](#).

² Guardian (2019) [World Heritage Queensland rainforest burned for 10 days and almost no one noticed](#)

1. A stronger target

Queensland could achieve a 60% emissions reduction by 2030 through just 8 policies³. This shows that a science based target of at least 75% by 2030 and net zero by 2035 is achievable for Queensland.

This will need significant step up in ambition from all sectors - an acceleration of the Queensland Energy and Jobs Plan, enforceable emissions reduction targets within the Low Emissions Agriculture Roadmap, a plan to reduce transport emissions rapidly through electrification, active and public transport, and crucially, **no new coal and gas**.

Queensland's coal and gas fields contributed 15% of Queensland's 2021 emissions through fugitive leaks of methane⁴. The International Energy Agency has reviewed new satellite data which shows that these emissions are likely to be underreported by up to 60%⁵. If the new Queensland coal and gas proposed all goes ahead, it would add to our emissions at a time when we are trying to reduce emissions in other sectors.

This is before we even start to account for the global climate change caused by the fossil fuels after export. The first step to achieving greater climate action is clear; **don't open new coal and gas**.

An increased emissions target also needs a mechanism by which to meet it. A policy without this is purely aspirational, and provides no leadership. We have seen this with the 30% emissions reduction target. There was a lack of detail in the pathway provided and a resulting lack of confidence in meeting it, until recent positive actions such as Federal Government action on the Safeguard Mechanism and a pathway to reduce emissions from the electricity sector through the Queensland Energy and Jobs Plan. A Queensland Climate Transition Strategic Plan would provide a way to map out the emissions reductions by sector.

The Queensland Climate Transition Bill focuses on a way to phase out fossil fuels, which is a large part of the challenge to meet the drastic emissions reductions we need, but we also recommend that the Queensland Climate Transition Bill should set out a mechanism to reduce emissions from agriculture, transport and industrial processes as well.

³ Accenture for QCC, WWF and ACF (2022) [Queensland CAN Roadmap](#)

⁴ [Australian National Greenhouse Account 2021](#)

⁵ International Energy Agency (2022) [Global Methane Tracker](#)

2. A way to protect nature and cultural heritage

Renewable energy is the best way to decarbonise our electricity, and unlock the benefits of electrifying transport, heat and industrial processes. Building renewable energy at the scale we need to decarbonise will have impacts on Queensland's landscape, ecosystems and communities. Our planning frameworks are not set up to facilitate the speed and scale of renewable energy in a way that doesn't adversely impact biodiversity, cultural heritage and communities. Alongside the Queensland Climate Transition Bill, the Queensland Government should:

- Urgently improve State Code 23 to mandate better community consultation and environmental protection, and create an equivalent code for large-scale solar
- Develop a renewable energy zone roadmap that avoids areas of high biodiversity, protects cultural heritage and meaningfully consults host communities
- Plan future transmission to reduce conflicts between renewable energy and nature

3. A framework to deliver jobs and strengthen communities

The Queensland Government's Clean Energy Workers Guarantee shows what can be achieved by a State Government willing to provide leadership to affected workers. We need that to be delivered at a much larger scale as we build new industries and move away from fossil fuels. The Queensland Climate Transition Authority is a good start. It should be facilitated through networked regional bodies that are independently funded to determine the best future pathway for each region to achieve decarbonisation and economic security.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the Queensland Climate Transition Bill. We hope that this is the start of more ambitious climate action in Queensland. We are happy to talk to any of the points raised here.

Yours sincerely,

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Director

