

#CLIMATE ACTNOW



Climate Change (National Framework for Adaptation and Mitigation) Bill 2020

Climate change is real for Australia, with immediate and deepening risks to our natural environment, economy and way of life. Our unprecedented early summer bushfires are a clear indication of the worst of those risks, and how they will affect some communities more than others. But there are also opportunities to prosper, given our enormous natural, human and financial wealth.

To protect our economy and environment, Australia must have strong national plans to adapt to increasing impacts of climate change, to reduce and mitigate its risks and to leverage its opportunities.

This Bill sets out a clear framework for national plans to be put in place and updated by the Australian Government, and for progress to be rigorously monitored and reported.

This national framework will ensure that Australia has:

1. **a positive response to the challenges of climate change** that is transparent and effective, and that pursues new opportunities, generational equity and just transitions
2. **national plans for adapting to a changing climate**, so that the different parts of our continent and economy can respond positively to changing physical conditions and international policies
3. **national plans for reducing greenhouse gas emissions**, to meet emissions reduction targets that align with scientific imperatives and State government and international commitments, and
4. **transparent monitoring, reporting and accountability** for national adaptation planning and emission reduction actions, with an independent Climate Change Commission (CCC) to advise Government and Parliament.

In putting this framework in place, Australia is fortunate to be able to learn from the debate and experience of other countries, including the United Kingdom, Germany, France, and New Zealand.

1. A positive response to the challenges of climate change

The Bill aims to ensure Australia has a clear and positive national response to the challenges of climate change. That is what a large and growing majority of Australians call for, and what Australia needs.

The framework leaves national action in the hands of our elected Government but mandates an effective process for national targets, actions and reporting. It introduces the CCC as a respected, independent body to assess risks, advise Parliament and monitor climate change actions and impacts.

Both the Government and the CCC must act consistently with the principles that action on climate change should take into account fiscal responsibility, fair employment transitions, community engagement and national and international co-operation.

2. National plans for adapting to our changing climate

Australia is starting to experience more severe and frequent bushfires, droughts, floods and heatwaves. While we cannot avoid their impacts, we can better prepare for them.

The proposed legislation would require:

- the CCC to complete an annual National Climate Change Risk Assessment, reviewing changes to national and regional climates, water availability, vegetation cover and air quality, and possible changes to international climate and trade policies. It would identify risks across Australia's economy, society and environment, to which Australia will need to respond.
- the Government to set five-year national adaptation plans for the nation and for nominated regional and economic sectors (such as agriculture, biodiversity, national parks, marine parks, health, energy, transport, services, education, planning, construction, infrastructure etc).

3. National plans for reducing greenhouse gas emissions

To play its part in keeping global warming within safe limits, Australia must reduce its own emissions and constructively influence international agreements.

The proposed legislation would require:

- a long-term national emissions target that aligns with scientific imperatives, State government policies and global commitments. Currently, that target is net-zero emissions by 2050. The target is reviewed every five years by the Independent Climate Change Commission taking into account the best available science.
- five-year national emissions budgets set in advance, with safeguards to ensure an achievable yet equitable reduction path through to the long-term target
- five-year plans set in advance, to ensure that Australia meets its emissions budgets, and
- principles by which Australia would engage in international climate change negotiations.

4. Transparent monitoring, reporting and accountability

Government and the CCC will work together on the adaptation plans, long-term target, interim budgets and mitigation plans (the elements) in a transparent and accountable way:

- the CCC will help ensure that adaptation planning and emissions budgets are equitable across generations, regions and industries
- The CCC will make recommendations to Government
- Government will present each element to Parliament, with reasons for any variation from the CCC recommendations, and
- the CCC will report annually on Australia's national and sector emissions progress against targets, the extent to which the Australian adaptation and mitigation plans are being delivered, and the extent to which their objectives are being met

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If passed, this Bill will enable Australia to make an immediate, positive and nationally supported response to the risks, challenges and opportunities of climate change.