

**A submission to the**

**Inquiry: The Climate Change (National Framework for Adaptation and Mitigation) Bill 2020 and Climate Change (National Framework for Adaptation and Mitigation) (Consequential and Transitional Provisions) Bill 2020**

**Personal submission from Dr Marianne Hanson**

Summary:

The world has known about climate dangers since at least 1972 when the United Nations held its Conference on the environment in Stockholm. That is almost 50 years ago, yet the Australian government has not taken this issue seriously, and put in place an effective regime to address and minimise climate change. As a University professor who sees the despair held by many of my students, and as a parent, I urge the Federal Government to take urgent action to rectify this position. I want a habitable world for my children and grandchildren. Under international law, we owe this to future generations.

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Dear Members of the Inquiry on the Climate Change Bill, introduced by Independent MP Zali Steggall, and referred to the House Standing Committee on Environment and Energy.

Thank you for the opportunity to make this submission.

I have been teaching and researching international politics formally for over 30 years, first at Oxford University, and latterly at the University of Queensland. During this time, it has become clear to me that environmental issues are having an increasingly negative impact on the peace, prosperity, and stability of our world.

I first became involved in these issues as an observer in 1972, when the United Nations launched the UN Environmental Program (UNEP) following its conference on the Human Environment in Stockholm that year. That conference raised several important issues, and urged all states to take action to prevent or minimise the foreseeable dangers of climate change.

I would like to draw your attention again to that date: 1972. ***That is almost 50 years ago.*** And yet, the Australian government still refuses to take this issue seriously and put in place effective action. I have lived in the UK, the US, parts of Western Europe, Canada, and New Zealand. Nowhere have I met a more obstinately ineffective government when it comes to climate change than I have in Australia.

I believe this is an appalling state of affairs. Climate change is an existential threat to all Australians and to the global community. But short-term considerations, an insistence on denying the scientific facts, and a shameful subservience to the Murdoch press and to fossil-fuel industries have all prevailed. The losers in this approach are the ordinary people.

I am aware that Australia emits a relatively 'small' number of emissions. Nonetheless, we are one of the biggest per capita emitters in the world, and if we take into account the emissions caused by our continuing exports of fossil fuels, Australia is one of the biggest emitters. But even if this were not the case, the Australian government can be doing much, much more to assist its population by transitioning quickly to a zero-emissions economy, generating thousands of green-energy jobs, and providing affordable renewable energy

to all. Unfortunately, I see no evidence of anything like a sustainable energy plan, even though many conservative governments elsewhere – eg. in Britain – have risen to the occasion and promised meaningful climate targets.

I have two children, and I fear for their future. They are deeply worried about climate change, and they are frustrated that the LNP government is doing so little to address this urgent issue. Many hundreds of the undergraduates I teach are similarly concerned. I have noticed that they despair and are by now deeply contemptuous of a government that is not responding to their needs. By not acting, the Australian government risks the further alienation of these young adults, and this can have huge impacts in terms of future social stability and community cohesion.

International law is increasingly addressing the issue of inter-generational justice. We owe it to our children and to their offspring to hand over a world that remains habitable and beautiful. As a parent and an educator, I see this as an urgent task.

In conclusion, I ask you to imagine a scenario: 50 years ago, Australia and other states took this problem seriously; they put in place policies which limited greenhouse emissions; they protected the Great Barrier Reef (and in turn protected Queensland's tourism industry); and they led a renewable energy transition, by focusing especially on solar and on creating green-driven jobs. Imagine what might have been achieved if these things had been put in place 50 years ago, or even 20 years ago.

(As an aside, I recall being surprised when I first visited Germany in 1978 and witnessed an extensive solar panel presence there. I wondered at the time why cloudy and overcast Germany could put in place such policies when Australia, with its abundant sunshine, had not even entertained the idea at the time.)

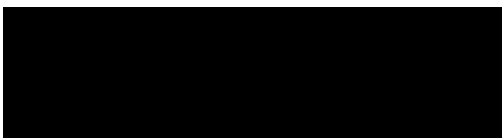
The time for inaction is over.

Intergenerational justice requires that the current government moves away from fossil fuels very quickly and takes action to preserve our environment as best we can. Even though 50 years have been wasted, it is not too late to act.

If politicians do not act, they will be guilty of violating the rights of their own people, and the rights of generations to come.

I commend Zali Steggall's initiative, and request that the Australian government acts urgently in the interests of its people, rather than in the continued interests of a small group of corporations.

Please do not hesitate to contact me should you require any further information.



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