

The **Tasmanian Climate Collective** includes dedicated organisations and individuals from diverse backgrounds across Tasmania, united in their passionate advocacy for decisive measures against climate change. Comprising climate change, social, health and environmental groups, as well as grassroots organisations, the Collective has no political party allegiance. Its membership includes scientists, farmers, doctors, teachers, nurses, and other concerned citizens who collectively champion increased efforts to address the challenges posed by climate change.

We strongly support the idea that, for the first time in Australia, a law sets conditions to assure that the health and wellbeing of children and future generations has to be taken into account during political decision making. We further support the **Climate Change Amendment (Duty of Care and Intergenerational Equity) Bill 2023** since it acknowledges the threat climate change poses to health and wellbeing now and in the near future.

This is a piece of legislation of utmost importance because it mandates decision-makers to prioritise the health and wellbeing of Australian children when making political decisions with potential for negatively affecting climate change. These explicitly include decisions pertaining to big business in Australia, such as the exploration, extraction and use of coal, oil, or natural gas. Currently, Australian politicians on both sides appear unwilling to attempt to curtail the activities of these businesses despite understanding the threats they pose. These companies seem to wield much power, exerted through donations, gifts, advertising, an army of paid lobbyists with frequent access to politicians, and a close relationship with News Corp. It is difficult for community groups such as us to compete with this power.

This Duty of Care Bill is needed to balance the power of vested industries. For example, the gas industry effectively pays no royalties and minimal tax, has slashed its workforce since 2021 from 0.2% down to 0.15% of Australians, charges us international prices (despite record profits) and prioritises international over Australian consumers. The [influence of the gas industry](#) was recently demonstrated in the Australian Gas Strategy consultation paper that presented gas interests as those of Australia's. This consultation was released as an area bigger than Germany, France and Spain combined was on fire in northern Australia, and the east coast is looking at a marine heatwave of up to 4 degrees in surface temperature - literally off the scale.

The law is based on the robustly obvious notion, here called "intergenerational equity", that a chance for immediate, short term benefits will have to be measured against the long term impact of any particular political decision, whether this is a licence for new salmon farms in Tasmania, gas exploitation off WA coast or coal mining in Queensland. Under the proposed law, political decision makers would need to consider the impact of any given decision on the physical, emotional, cultural and spiritual health of present-day and future generations of children in Australia.

While still in a world within a +1.5°C range compared to preindustrial average temperatures, the effects of climate change is already evident. In a speech at the UN's 77th General Assembly, Antonio Guterres stated that **currently our planet "is literally on fire"**. Hence urgent action is needed. The contribution of greenhouse gases generated by the use of fossil fuels is now well known and the consequences, within narrow margins of error, well understood and predictable. These include further escalating global temperatures and the surge in extreme weather events, jeopardising the future stability of our society. We are confronted with a lifetime marked by heightened climate disasters, including flooding, heat waves and wildfires. The repercussions of climate change will further exacerbate a range of already existing issues like food and housing insecurity.

In this context we do believe that the Australian Government has the obligation and responsibility to set conditions that allow us to counteract these threats. As a first and logical step, new projects in the mining, exploitation, export and use of **fossil fuels would no longer be supported** by the government, while existing ones need to be phased out. The Australian government should not grant new licences in this field and ensure that sustainable standards are met in the existing ones. There are enough resources to supply Australian needs - less than 20% of the gas extracted - without the carbon bomb projects of large-scale fracking and off-shore gas extraction the gas companies are pursuing.

Maybe most importantly, the proposed law is not only a tool to limit or inhibit political decisions with potential harm for climate, but to the contrary, this new duty of care can and should also be used to promote and act on alternative solutions, such as the **transition to renewable energies, safe power storage strategies and nature based carbon sequestration**. It can also help to make decisions on improvements in public and private **transport**, including the promotion of electric vehicles and the development of affordable and efficient public transport systems, which can significantly reduce carbon emissions. Other areas where this bill could be of use are the creation of effective **waste management**, recycling initiatives and educational campaigns. By adopting sustainable waste management practices and promoting recycling, communities can reduce the environmental impact of landfills and minimise the extraction of new resources. The doubtful ideas of carbon capture and storage and direct air capture of carbon have been shown to be expensive failures. Furthermore, carbon off-sets no longer have a place in a world where we have to face the fact that we have to decarbonise. There is no 'business as usual' and the science is clear.

The world is on the brink of catastrophe with the combined threats of global warming, pollution, biodiversity collapse, geo-political instability, and the consequences of prioritising short term profit over our children's survival. Action is required, and it is required now.

For the above reasons, the Tasmanian Climate Collective calls on the federal parliament to pass the Climate Change Amendment Bill 2023, a much-needed legislation that imposes a Duty of Care and principles of "intergenerational equity" on political decision makers.