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Senate Standing Committees on Environment and Communications  
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RE: Submission to the Environment and Communications Legislation Committee inquiry on the *Climate Change Amendment (Duty of Care and Intergenerational Climate Equity) Bill 2023*.

Gecko Environment Council welcomes the opportunity to comment on the *Climate Change Amendment (Duty of Care and Intergenerational Climate Equity) Bill 2023*.

It is now scientifically clear and evident that climate change poses either multiple life-changing threats or a transformative opportunity for Australians.

A transition to a renewable energy powered country is vital and urgent to not breach 1.5 degrees of warming and undergo far more dangerous climate disruption. Accepting a duty of care to young people enables decision-making for a safer climate for all Australians today and future generations.

Currently Governments can continue to approve projects without consideration of the impacts on young and future generations. Most professions exercise a duty of care, so why is it that political representatives can make decisions without due care for their constituents and young people who will take their place?

The short-term profit of fossil fuel is far outweighed by the loss of a safe climate across the planet, especially for people already experiencing the hazardous impacts of climate disruption; the young, the elderly, people of colour, people living in the global south and equatorial countries.

On the Gold Coast climate risk is increasing in the form of heatwaves, flooding, intensifying rain events and storms, sea level rise and shifting long-term weather patterns. Climate shocks of global food and material supply disruption reverberate closer to home, and disease and escalation of mental illness is disproportionately affecting children's health.

A genuine renewable energy transition means not approving new coal and gas projects to continue a trajectory of carbon pollution beyond 1.5°C of warming to even more dangerous levels.

The UNEP's Emissions Gap Report 2023<sup>1</sup> finds that current pledges under the Paris Agreement put the world on track for a 2.5-2.9°C temperature rise above pre-industrial levels this century, pointing to the urgent need for increased climate action.

The Australia Institute has calculated that the 116 new coal and gas projects in Australia could contribute an extra 1.4 billion tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent into the atmosphere every year by 2030<sup>2</sup>. This would be nearly three times more than Australia's current domestic emissions. The International Energy Agency in 2021 was unequivocal: we cannot build new coal if we are to keep warming below 1.5 degrees.<sup>3</sup>

Young people across Australia have responded with resounding support for the Duty of Care Bill, an amendment to the Climate Change Act, which would drive a positive energy transition for a safe climate future.<sup>4</sup>

The rights of young people and all Australians to a healthy environment would also be supported by the consideration of a duty of care when assessing fossil fuel projects and their impacts. The bill's narrow focus makes it a political tool, a lever that can support other policies to transition with outcomes that support jobs, the economy, and liveable futures.

Gecko Environment Council supports the *Climate Change Amendment (Duty of Care and Intergenerational Equity) Bill 2023* which imposes a statutory duty on decision makers:

1. To consider the likely impact of decisions that could harm the climate on the health and wellbeing of current and future children as the paramount consideration; and
2. Not to make a decision that could harm the climate if the decision poses a material risk of harm to the health and wellbeing of current and future children in Australia.

**We call on the federal parliament to pass legislation that imposes this Duty of Care and act now if we want to protect the people and places we love.**

Yours Sincerely,



Sara Hicks

Gecko Environment Council

Gold Coast

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.unep.org/resources/emissions-gap-report-2023>

<sup>2</sup> The Australia Institute (2023) [New fossil fuel projects in Australia 2023](#)

<sup>3</sup> International Energy Agency (2021) [Net Zero by 2050](#)

<sup>4</sup> Anjali Shama & Senator David Pocock, QCC webinar Nov 21<sup>st</sup> 2023 <https://adutyofcare.davidpocock.com.au/>