

**CATHOLIC
DIOCESE
of
BALLARAT**



DIOCESAN SOCIAL JUSTICE COMMISSION

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The Ballarat Diocesan Social Justice Commission and Catholic Earthcare Ballarat are submitting this letter in support of a Climate Change Act for Australia. We support the introduction and passage of Ms Zali Steggall's proposed *Climate Change (National Framework for Adaptation and Mitigation) Bill 2020* which is similar to legislation already adopted in the United Kingdom, France, Germany, New Zealand and sixteen other countries.

The objects of the Bill are to create a framework to address climate change. It sets up a Climate Change Commission, with seven members – the Chair, Australia's Chief Scientist and 5 others. Apart from the Chief Scientist, members are to be appointed by the responsible Minister with the approval of a Parliamentary Joint Committee on Climate Adaptation and Mitigation. Members must have a background in climate science, business or economics, agriculture, environmental management, energy, transport and industry or regional development. The Commission is not subject to direction.

The Commission prepares 5-yearly national climate risk assessments, in response to which the Minister prepares national adaptation plans. The Commission evaluates the implementation and effectiveness of those plans annually and the Minister responds to those evaluations. The Commission advises the Minister on the effect of Australia's fossil fuel export emissions in meeting the objects of the Bill.

The Bill sets a target of zero net accounting greenhouse gas emissions by 2050, to be reached by a series of steps (emissions budgets) in 4- or 5-year emissions budget periods. The Minister sets emissions budgets and related emissions reduction plans after receiving the advice of the Commission. The advice of the responsible State and Territory Ministers is also obtained on the plans. The target may not be reduced but the time frame for its achievement, the required levels of emissions and sinks, the greenhouse gases targeted and the means of meeting the target may all be changed. Actions of the Commission and the Minister are tabled in the Parliament and published.

We suggest that the Bill deserves your support because it provides a framework for the systematic development of policy, it involves the Parliament in that development and subsequent assessment, it requires the Commission and the Minister to act in a fiscally responsible way and it supports no particular source of energy, e.g., renewable, fossil fuels, nuclear. We note that the cost of achieving the 2050 target cannot be assessed at this time because the actual measures including the emissions budgets and emissions reduction plans are not known and many will be taken in the distant future.

Thankyou for your time and consideration of this submission,

The Ballarat Diocesan Social Justice Commission and Catholic Earthcare Ballarat