

CLIMATE CHANGE AND GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSIONS REDUCTION BILL 2020

Introduction and First Reading

Bill introduced, on motion by **Hon Tim Clifford**, and read a first time.

Second Reading

HON TIM CLIFFORD (East Metropolitan) [10.07 am]: I move —

That the bill be now read a second time.

Western Australians are facing an unprecedented risk due to the climate crisis. At just one degree of heating, our vast state has already suffered drought, water shortages, bushfires, heatwaves and marine heatwaves, biodiversity and wildlife loss, air pollution and widespread health impacts. And this is just the beginning. The climate crisis is rapidly uprooting all that is familiar. It is tearing down the traditional economic, environmental and social structures and systems that we have relied on so heavily for the past century. The climate crisis is changing our world, and if we want to survive these catastrophic changes, we too must change with it. That is why I am introducing the Climate Change and Greenhouse Gas Emissions Reduction Bill 2020. This landmark bill sets out the critical legislative framework that Western Australia needs to survive and thrive in the face of the climate crisis. By legislating net zero emissions targets, renewable energy targets and ensuring that climate change is at the centre of all government decision-making, we can create the structure that will maximise the opportunities available in clean industries, while revitalising the regions and protecting our most vulnerable.

The science behind climate change and the action we must take should be familiar to us all by now, but just to reiterate: the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change's special report of 2016 could not have been clearer when it stated that if we are to limit global heating to 1.5 degrees above pre-industrial levels, emissions must reach net zero by the middle of this century. In order to do this, we must rapidly transition our energy, land, infrastructure including transport and buildings, and industrial systems. To ensure that this transition is undertaken in a cohesive and transparent manner, this bill will establish a climate change council to provide expert and independent advice to the minister. It will also require the minister to create a climate change strategy, with a clear pathway and time lines on how the proposed targets will be met.

I recognise that the McGowan government has said that it is committed to taking action on climate change and that it has an aspiration of net zero emissions and will be releasing a climate change policy this year. However, this bill is not about making a statement or political point scoring; it is about ensuring that current and successive governments take the action that is required for this situation. This bill is about giving members of the community the confidence that they, their children and their children's children will have access to clean air and water, healthy ecosystems, a stable job and a place to call home, just like we all had. This bill is about acting now to reduce the costs we will incur if we do not take rapid action. If we continue with business as usual, the costs to Western Australians will be great and far reaching. These are estimated at \$584.5 billion by 2030 for the whole of Australia, and according to the Climate Council, costs could blow out to over \$5 trillion by 2100. This is not alarmism. This is the future we are facing, and this is why we must set out the frameworks to counter this.

Before I discuss the key elements of the bill, I would like to thank all the stakeholders we consulted with during the creation of this bill; without them, this bill would not be possible.

I now turn to the bill itself and will outline the major aspects of each part.

Part 1 sets out the objects of the bill, which in broad terms are to minimise WA's contribution to the climate crisis by reducing our greenhouse gas emissions and increasing our generation of renewable energy. The bill also aims to promote opportunities that may arise as a result of the transition to a clean energy economy, particularly in regional areas, and ensure that vulnerable individuals and communities are supported through this transition. These objects are to be pursued having regard to the precautionary principle, the principle of intergenerational equity and the principle of social equity.

Part 2 sets out the targets for the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions and the increase in renewable energy generation. The long-term emissions target is to achieve a net zero level for all emissions, including scope 3, by 2040, with an interim target to reduce emissions to 50 per cent of 2005 levels by 2030. The long-term renewable energy target is to achieve 100 per cent renewable energy by 2030, with an interim target of 50 per cent by 2025. Western Australia has never had a legislated emissions reduction or renewable energy target. The government announced a net zero aspiration last year; however, it has so far elected not to enshrine that aspiration in legislation. WA Labor did at one stage have a renewable energy target as part of its platform; however, this commitment was overturned just prior to the 2017 election. Let me be clear: setting hard, legislated targets will not only signal that this Parliament takes its climate responsibility seriously, but also create certainty for affected industries and for companies looking to invest in renewable energy and clean technologies.

Part 3 sets out the functions of the minister, which broadly are to develop a climate change strategy to be reviewed every five years, which must include pathways and time lines for meeting the targets and a just transition plan for workers and communities who may be impacted; develop policies and strategies that will contribute to meeting the targets; promote opportunities arising from the transition to a net zero emissions economy, including the creation of jobs in renewable and clean energy technologies and in regional areas; and provide support for sectors of the community that are particularly vulnerable to the effects of climate change and the transition to a net zero emissions economy. The minister is also required to report to Parliament annually on the progress of meeting the targets and every second year on what has been done in the performance of its functions. These robust reporting obligations will ensure transparency and accountability to the public.

Part 3 also establishes the climate change council, whose primary functions will be to provide independent, expert advice to the minister on how to meet the targets and address climate change, including mitigation, adaptation and disaster risk reduction measures; and evaluate, monitor and review the minister's progress in achieving the targets. The council will ensure that the minister receives the necessary advice for implementing a cohesive climate change strategy.

Part 4 contains provisions that will ensure that climate change is at the heart of government decision-making. The climate crisis is an existential threat to our communities and our planet and has the potential to affect every policymaking area. This bill requires that government decisions or actions that have the potential to contribute to greenhouse gas emissions or impact WA's ability to adapt to climate change must take climate change into account. Part 4 also prohibits decision-makers from taking action that will allow a new project if that project will exceed a specified threshold of annual greenhouse gas emissions or non-renewable energy consumption or production. If we are to reach net zero emissions by 2040, we cannot afford to continue increasing our emissions in the short to medium term. This provision will ensure that no new large emitting projects will come online.

In conclusion, this bill is about creating the framework to transform Western Australia's energy system, cut down emissions and ensure that successive governments focus on creating a healthier future. This bill is about our future and the future of our loved ones. It is about the world our generation will leave to the ones who will come after us. It is about equity, it is about not leaving people behind, it is about social and environmental justice and it is about what we are going to do about it. We cannot wait for, or expect, a technological silver bullet to come along and solve the climate crisis, but what we can do, as leaders and legislators, is build the frameworks to find solutions and to protect our communities. The climate crisis extends beyond politics, which is why I urge all members to consider this bill as the first step towards bipartisan action on climate change—action that is desperately needed.

Pursuant to standing order 126(1), I advise that this bill is not a uniform legislation bill. It does not ratify or give effect to an intergovernmental or multilateral agreement to which the government of the state is a party; nor does this bill, by reason of its subject matter, introduce a uniform scheme or uniform laws throughout the commonwealth.

I commend the bill to the house and I table the explanatory memorandum.

[See paper [3711](#).]

Debate adjourned, pursuant to standing orders.