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**ANMF (Vic Branch)  
Submission to  
Climate Change  
Amendment (Duty of  
Care and  
Intergenerational  
Climate Equity) Bill  
2023**

**Lisa Fitzpatrick  
Secretary ANMF  
(Vic Branch)**

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## About the Australian Nursing & Midwifery Federation (Vic Branch)

The ANMF (Vic Branch) represents more than 100,000 nurses, midwives and personal care workers (the latter predominantly in the private residential aged care sector). Our members are employed in a wide range of enterprises in urban, rural and community care locations and within the public and private health and aged care sectors.

The core business for the ANMF (Vic Branch) is the representation of the professional and industrial interests of our members and the professions of nursing and midwifery.

The ANMF (Vic Branch) participates in the development of policy relating to nursing and midwifery practice, professionalism, regulation, education, training, workforce, and socio-economic welfare, health and aged care, community services, veteran's affairs, occupations health and safety, industrial relations, social justice, human rights, immigration, foreign affairs and law reform.

ANMF (Vic Branch) actively makes representations of behalf of members in governance settings. This includes environmental sustainability. ANMF (Vic Branch) has used the knowledge of our members along with the ANMF (Vic Branch) Environmental Health Officer to represent members interests in a broad range of settings. These include; ensuring healthcare was included in the Victorian Waste Education Strategy; and advocacy to the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to have pharmaceutical waste bins made available within healthcare, in accordance with [Operational Guidance](#). ANMF (Vic Branch) ensures all those who work and deliver healthcare are equipped to do so sustainably, developing resources for members via our [Sustainability Campaign Page](#). ANMF (Vic Branch) is also a supporter of the School Strike 4 Climate and have endorsed many of their demands and marched in solidarity.

The impact of climate change and its intersection with health cannot be ignored, and it is future generations that will experience the consequences of today's decisions.

### **Concern for climate change and environmental sustainability, locally and globally.**

Nurses, midwives, and personal care workers are at the forefront of providing care to affected individuals and communities, while often affected themselves. The negative health impacts of climate change and environmental degradation affect the key social determinants of health and damage social and community structures. These negative health impacts in turn increase pressure on already overloaded health services.

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change 6th Assessment Report recognises the vulnerability of Australia in what is one of the greatest threats facing humanity. The horror of Australia's Black Summer has not yet faded yet warnings are that 2023 will be the hottest

year on record. The November 2023 UN annual [Emissions Gap report](#) finds we are facing between 2.5C and 2.9C of warming without boosted and aggressive action. At 3C of warming, scientists warn the world could pass several catastrophic points of no return from the runaway melting of ice sheets to the Amazon rainforest drying out. This is an impossible future we must avert, requiring immediate and drastic action reflected in policy and practice. This is the opportunity before Australia now.

A [survey by Sustainability Victoria](#) included over 700 healthcare workers who overwhelmingly responded that more needed to be done. This aligns with a call from the International Council of Nurses (ICN) for individual nurses and national nursing associations to respond in professional capacity and in collaboration with government and industry to the threat of climate change.

### **Australia's role in the fossil fuel industry.**

Australia remains among the world's largest exporters of fossil fuels, yet fossil fuels are the largest contributor to global climate change, accounting for over 75% of global greenhouse gas emissions and nearly 90% of all carbon dioxide emissions.<sup>1</sup> Australia has been repeatedly cautioned that most fossil fuels must remain unburned to have any chance of keeping global warming to 1.5 degrees. The UN [Emissions Gap report](#) says the coal, oil and gas extracted over the lifetime of currently producing and planned mines and fields would emit over 3.5 times the carbon budget available to limit warming to 1.5°C, and almost the entire budget available for 2°C.

In addition to global warming, fossil-fuel combustion by-products are the world's most significant threat to children's health and future. They are linked with air pollution, impairment of cognitive and behavioural development, respiratory illness, and other chronic diseases, which may be "seeded" in utero, and affect health and functioning immediately and over the life course.<sup>2</sup>

Recently Australia announced [the Falepili Union](#), a treaty which includes climate refuge for Tuvalu citizens. It was heralded as acknowledgment that we are part of the Pacific family, with responsibility to act.

The 2023 UN annual [Emissions Gap report](#) speaks of new ambition, targets and opportunities.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.un.org/en/climatechange/science/causes-effects-climate-change#:~:text=Fossil%20fuels%20%E2%80%93%20coal%2C%20oil%20and,of%20all%20carbon%20dioxide%20emissions.>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC5800116/>

## A fossil fuel free alternative for Australia

In October 2021, the Business Council of Australia, the Australian Council of Trade Unions, the Australian Conservation Foundation and World Wildlife Fund for Nature Australia released a shared report, 'Sunshot: Australia's \$89B clean energy export opportunity.'. The analysis outlined Australia's major renewable export potentials, with opportunity for 395,000 jobs in renewable energy industries, injecting \$89 billion into our economy by 2040. The report demonstrates how cutting our exported emissions and providing the necessary leadership to scale the technologies of the future will bolster Australia's prosperity and ensure a safe climate for all.

Recent scenario modelling by Monash University's Climateworks Centre, shows that Australia can still achieve our Paris commitment, but that a decarbonised electricity system is crucial to this delivery.

### In the same storm, but not in the same boat - Inequity.

According to World Bank report it is estimated that an additional 68 to 135 million people could be pushed into poverty as soon as 2030 because of climate change.

UNICEF's report, "The Climate Crises is a Child Rights Crisis," which includes a Children's Climate Risk Index. The simplest summary of this report is that:

Climate change is the greatest threat facing the world's children and young people. One billion children are at 'extremely high risk' of the impacts of climate change. That is nearly half of all children. And it is happening today. We must acknowledge where we stand, treat climate change like the crisis it is and act with the urgency required to ensure today's children inherit a liveable planet.

Further to this "Save the Children" add the following statistics on the effect of climate change and children;

1. 90% of diseases resulting from the climate crisis are likely to affect children under the age of five.
2. By 2050, a further 24 million children are projected to be undernourished because of the climate crisis.
3. By 2040, it is estimated that one in four children will be living in areas with extreme water shortages.
4. Almost 160 million children are exposed to increasingly severand prolonged droughts.
5. The education of around 38 million children is disrupted each year by the climate crisis.

6. The climate crisis is forcing families to migrate. By 2050, there could be 143 million more migrants due to the climate crisis.

A 2022 report by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) revealed that rapidly increasing climate change poses a rising threat to mental health and psychosocial well-being; from emotional distress to anxiety, depression, grief, and suicidal behaviour.<sup>3</sup> The 2022 *Mission Australia Youth Survey* shows 26% of young people in Australia are 'very' or 'extremely concerned' about climate change, and nearly 38% of those respondents also experienced high psychological distress. Following the Australian Institute for Disaster Resilience survey, recognition was given, that young people are agents of change and should be given opportunity and mechanism for contribution to the reduction of risk in their community<sup>4</sup>.

### Policy precedent for future generations

Local and international policies already state consideration of the impact on future generations needs to be taken into account when considering environmental policy.

A widely accepted definition of sustainability is that provided by the United Nations Brundtland Commission, *meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs*. The commitment to sustainability extends to Australia, having ratified the Rio Declaration of which [Principle Three](#) includes, *The right to development must be fulfilled so as to equitably meet developmental and environmental needs of present and future generations*.

Further to above, all Australian jurisdictions have endorsed, [The National Strategy for Ecologically Sustainable Development](#), which defines the goal as, *development that improves the total quality of life, both now and in the future, in a way that maintains the ecological processes on which life depends*.

Clause 3.5.2 of the [Intergovernmental Agreement on the Environment](#) includes intergenerational inequity, with the statement, *the present generation should ensure that the health, diversity and productivity of the environment is maintained or enhanced for the benefit of future generations*.

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<sup>3</sup> <https://www.who.int/news/item/03-06-2022-why-mental-health-is-a-priority-for-action-on-climate-change>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.aidr.org.au/news/our-world-our-say-australia-s-largest-youth-survey-on-climate-change/>

## Statement of support.

Missing in Australia's legislation is clear obligation for Ministers and other government decision-makers to take into account the potential impacts of the climate crisis on children's wellbeing – either now or into the future. ANMF (Vic Branch) welcomes this proposed amendment that would change that.

In addition, we recognise the importance of a future that is not only zero emissions, but also integrates just transition, the protection of biodiversity, and eliminating modern day slavery.

ANMF (Vic Branch) 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.

ANMF (Vic Branch) welcome the opportunity to contribute to the Climate Change Amendment (Duty of Care and intergenerational climate equity) Bill 2023 and supports the proposed changes. We further suggest that any reference to a zero emissions future also include environmental and human rights protection.