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Submission on Climate Change (National Framework for Adaptation and Mitigation) Bill 2020

The Australian Rainforest Conservation Society Inc is pleased to have an opportunity to provide this submission to the House Standing Committee on the Environment and Energy which has been asked to review and report on the Climate Change (National Framework for Adaptation and Mitigation) Bill 2020.

1. General comments

The Bill is strongly supported. Should any amendments be recommended by the Committee, it is essential that the following elements be retained:

- net zero emissions target by 2050
- independent Climate Change Commission
- 5-yearly emission budgets
- Principle of fair employment transition
- Principle of national and international cooperation

2. Specific comments

The Objects

Setting a 2050 target of net zero emissions is essential. However, the need for significant emissions reduction is urgent. If significant reductions are not instituted now, there is little or no hope of keeping global temperature rise at no more than 1.5° Celsius.

In this regard, it is not clear that Section 3(1)(b) is an object of the Act and therefore applying to Section 25(1) and Section 26 (and possibly other sections).

Section 3(2)(h) refers to Australia's obligations under, *inter alia*, the Paris Agreement. The Paris Agreement sets the aim of "limiting warming to 1.5 to 2 degrees C above pre-industrial levels". Australia's commitment is to a 26–28% reduction on 2005 levels by 2030. In the light of evidence of current trajectories, it can be argued that Australia's commitment is not consistent with the overall aim of the Paris Agreement regarding a limit to warming.

The IPCC refers to a target of 45% reduction in emissions by 2030.

Scientific papers are being published progressively that warn of the urgency to limit emissions and protect prime carbon sinks sooner rather than later otherwise it will be too late to prevent uncontrolled climate collapse and all that that entails (Palmer 2020, Trisos *et al.* 2020).

To ensure that decisions under Sections 25(1) and 26 are consistent with the aim of limiting warming to 1.5° Celsius, we suggest that the intent of Section 3(1)(b) be incorporated in Section 3(2) so that it is clear that it is an object of the Act with which decisions made under the Act must be consistent. Possible wording might be —

ensuring that decisions under the Act are consistent with limiting the increase in global warming to well below 2°C above pre-industrial levels.

Appointment of members of the Commission

We suggest that the Commission should include a person with expertise in matters relating to the natural environment, e.g. impacts such as those on the Great Barrier Reef and mountain-top fauna, or the role of undisturbed forests and the process of proforestation as critically necessary carbon sinks (Barber *et al.* 2020, Mackey *et al.* 2020). Hence, Section 37(2) should include ‘environment’ or ‘biodiversity’.

References

Barber, C.F., Petersen, R., Young, V., Mackey, B. and Kormos, C. (2020). *The Nexus Report: Nature Based Solutions to the Biodiversity and Climate Crisis*. F20 Foundations, Campaign for Nature and SEE Foundation.

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Palmer, T. (2020). Short-term tests for long-term estimates. *Nature* 582, 185-186.

Trisos, C.H. Merow, C. and Pigot, A.L. (2020). The projected timing of abrupt ecological disruption from climate change. *Nature* 580, 496-501.

This submission is made on behalf Australian Rainforests Conservation Society Inc. by the Society’s President, Dr Aila Keto, AO, BSc., PhD, Hon. DSc.

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