



ENGINEERS  
AUSTRALIA

Committee Secretary  
Senate Standing Committees on Environment and Communications  
PO Box 6100  
Parliament House  
Canberra ACT 2600  
Via email: [ec.sen@aph.gov.au](mailto:ec.sen@aph.gov.au)

24 October 2023

Dear Committee Secretary,

**Re: Inquiry into the Climate Change Amendment (Duty Of Care And Intergenerational Equity) Bill 2023**

Engineers Australia welcomes the opportunity to prepare a response for the Inquiry into the *Climate Change Amendment (Duty Of Care And Intergenerational Equity) Bill 2023*.

Engineers Australia is the peak body of the engineering profession representing the collective voice of over 115,000 individual members. Constituted by Royal Charter, our mission is to advance the science and practice of engineering for the benefit of our communities.

Engineers Australia is also formally [accredited as an observer](#) to the business of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA) and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), and so our vision extends to international best practice and guidance where applicable.

Engineers Australia recognises the scale and urgency of the challenges presented by climate change, the disruptions it causes, and the pivotal role of engineering in enabling a socially just transition to a sustainable society. Engineers Australia encourages governments, investors, the private sector and the wider community to work with the engineering profession to accelerate engineering innovation for a swift transition to a sustainable economy. In this context, Engineers Australia is a strong supporter of developing low carbon industries and partnerships that strengthen the engineering workforce while working towards our goals of net zero and a circular economy.

Intergenerational equity is a pillar of ecologically sustainable development, and our commitment to engineering a low carbon future, minimising resource use and eliminating wastes is symbolic of our desire to maintain human and environmental health for the benefit of all future generations. Accordingly, Engineers Australia supports the *Climate Change Amendment (Duty Of Care And Intergenerational Equity) Bill 2023*, and offers the following comments for consideration.

**Caring for Country:** The Outline (paragraphs 4 and 5) has the perspective of protecting the environment in order to meet the needs of present and future generations. This anthropocentric focus excludes the perspective of our role as custodial species which is an integral component of many First Nations peoples' emphasis on Caring for Country.

1. Engineers Australia recommends including principles of Caring for Country with attention to the environment, culture, social justice, physical health and mental health, which are crucial to achieving long-term sustainability.

Engineering House  
11 National Circuit, Barton ACT 2600  
Phone: +61 2 6270 6555 | Facsimile: +61 2 6273 1488  
[engineersaustralia.org.au](http://engineersaustralia.org.au)

**Include Indirect Risks:** The two proposed additional statutory duties outlined in the Bill focus on the impacts of greenhouse gas emissions on Australian children. Engineers Australia would like to highlight that the impacts of climate change are a global occurrence, as recognised in paragraph two in the Outline.

A consequence of focussing solely on impacts to Australian children is that it does not address the unequal geographic, socioeconomic, and developmental impacts of climate change internationally, which may not be tolerable for other communities.

The assessment of tolerability for Australian children risks neglecting the unequal impacts in other nations, which may result in a decline in global economic productivity, a decline in affordability of insurance, degradation of security situation, increased food insecurity, and so on. All of these factors have the potential to negatively impact the health and wellbeing of Australian children and future generations.

2. In this context, Engineers Australia recommends including indirect risks in the assessment of likely material risk of harm to the health and wellbeing of current and future Australian children.

**Further Define 'Children':** The term 'children' may be interpreted narrowly as pertaining only to paediatric health rather than today's children when they become adults. It would be unfortunate for it to be deemed irrelevant if risk of harm applies only to adults such as economic opportunities for working aged people or health conditions that develop later in life.

It should be recognised that degradation of economic conditions that affect working adults will have an indirect impact on the health and wellbeing of their children. It is important that these indirect impacts on children are included in the consideration of impacts.

Similarly, a wholistic perspective of the wellbeing of children includes their ability to look forward to meaningful work and economic opportunities when they become adults, rather than bearing the brunt of funding a greater degree of climate change adaptation than would otherwise be required if the previous generations had taken appropriate action to adequately mitigate greenhouse gas emissions.

3. Engineers Australia recommends amending the wording of the statutory duties to include the lives of current and future Australian children rather than simply until they become adults.

**Items 3 & 4, Section 5, Clause 9, Scope 3 emissions definition:** Engineers Australia supports further definition of the Scope 3 Emissions; however, the statement "It is intended to capture exported emissions, which includes coal, oil and gas..." excludes the export of embodied emissions from products.

4. Engineers Australia recommends amending the context to include embodied emissions from products in addition to the emissions generated from the export of fossil fuels from Australia.

**Item 6, After Part 4 (Part4A):** Engineers Australia queries the ability of this provision to actually deny approvals for projects that are deemed to contain unacceptable climate change and intergenerational impacts.

5. Engineers Australia recommends reviewing the wording of this clause to ensure the outcome achieves prohibiting approval rather than mandating indecision.



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### **Next Steps**

Engineers Australia is available to participate in future opportunities to discuss any of the issues raised in this submission.

Please do not hesitate to reach out if you would like clarification or to discuss anything further. The policy team can be contacted via email on [policy@engineersaustralia.org.au](mailto:policy@engineersaustralia.org.au).

Sincerely yours

Jenny Mitchell  
General Manager, Policy and Advocacy