

SUBMISSION BY GETUP ON NSW EPA DRAFT CLIMATE CHANGE POLICY AND CLIMATE CHANGE ACTION PLAN 2022-2025

THURSDAY 3 NOVEMBER 2022



GetUp welcomes the opportunity to provide a submission on behalf of our members across New South Wales to the NSW Environment Protection Authority (EPA) draft Climate Change Policy and Climate Change Action Plan 2022-2025.

In this submission we outline key recommendations to improve the plan and attach submissions from GetUp members, including members representing communities affected by climate disasters, industry, farmers, and health workers.

ABOUT GETUP

By combining the power of one million members, movement partners and a central team of expert strategists, we work to have extraordinary impact on the issues that matter.

GetUp members come from every walk of life, coming together around a shared belief in fairness, compassion and courage. It is GetUp members who set our movement's agenda on the issues they care about, in the areas of Climate Justice, First Nations Justice, Human Rights, Economic Fairness and Media and Democracy. Our work is driven by our shared values, not party politics.

GetUp is an independent, not for profit community campaigning organisation, incorporated as a company limited by guarantee. GetUp receives no political party or government funding, and every campaign we run is entirely supported by voluntary donations.

GetUp's purpose is set out in our constitution – to advance progressive public policy in Australia. We do this by empowering everyday people to have their say.

GetUp is also guided by a Statement of Independence, which defines us as an active values-led participant in our politics, independent from the control, direction or influence of political parties and politicians.

Our Statement of Independence is here:

<https://www.getup.org.au/about/getup-statement-of-independence>

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS TO IMPROVE THE PLAN

From Mauree to Malua Bay, Lismore to Dubbo, people shared their perspectives, experiences and expertise.

Based on these submissions from GetUp members, we recommend the following key improvements to the plan.

1. Enforceable, science based emissions targets.

The EPA should have comprehensive, science based emissions reduction targets that are legally enforceable within the next 3 years.

2. A timeline to escalate action.

The EPA's plan should have a timeline for escalating action and using all tools available to cut greenhouse gas emissions.

3. Consult climate impacted communities

The plan should include consulting with communities affected by climate change on decisions that affect them.



FURTHER INITIATIVES AND ACTIONS TO INCLUDE IN THE PLAN

1. Stop coal.

Develop a plan to phase out coal - including ending all coal exploration, preventing any new coal mines from being developed, and shutting down existing coal mines by 2030 - while also supporting coal workers and their communities through the transition.

2. Support the transition to renewables.

Work with other government departments to support the uptake of household renewable energy.

3. Get off gas.

Work with the NSW Government to develop a plan to get NSW off fossil gas, following in the steps of the ACT & Victoria.

4. Prevent pollution.

Work with the Department of Planning to consider climate impact when approving or rejecting polluting plans, not just regulating projects after they're already polluting.

5. Methane emissions.

Develop stronger measurement methodologies so that industry and accurately report on their methane emissions, as one of the most potent and damaging Greenhouse gases. This would facilitate the EPA to have better regulation around methane - particularly for coal and gas.

6. Consult climate impacted communities

Partner with communities affected by climate disasters to ensure resilience initiatives are needed, relevant and effective.

7. Electric vehicles.

Partner with communities to incentivise electric vehicles through more charging points, programmes to make them affordable, and targets.

8. Electrify homes.

Electrify homes through providing incentives and regulation - such as subsidies for replacing gas appliances like hot water heaters or stoves with electrical appliances.

SUBMISSIONS FROM INDUSTRY

There is a consensus amongst submissions from GetUp members representing industry that the NSW EPA draft Climate Change Policy and Climate Change Action Plan 2022-2025 is a positive step, and more can be done to strengthen it.

The key industries represented were the agriculture, tourism, housing, technology, environmental services, education, and health industries.



Of the submissions from industry, a significant number had been seriously impacted by climate disasters - including bushfires, flooding, and droughts - and that this informed their support for stronger climate protections in the Climate Change Policy and Climate Change Action Plan.



My husband and I are beef cattle farmers in the Upper Hunter in NSW. Up until 3 years ago we were severely affected by drought, which cost us an enormous amount to buy scarce feed to keep our animals alive.

In the last 3 years we are having to pay to restore the infrastructure such as fences, roads and to replace pumps washed away in floods. I strongly believe that these extreme weather events are the result of climate change.

Jenifer Finnie, NSW



I am a cattle farmer. Like many farmers we are having to battle with increasingly unpredictable weather. Before we bought this farm we studied the records of temperature and rainfall. Clearly, this was a safe area with reliable winter and spring rainfall.

In the past 20 years the rainfall has been characterised by increasingly extreme variability. We had 3 years when rainfall was 50% of average and now we are in our third year where rainfall is about double the long term average. And the forecast is that this variability will get worse.

- Rod Hoare, NSW

Further actions & initiatives called for in Industry submissions

"The EPA needs teeth - to be able to issue meaningful fines to those who are damaging Country and people. We need regulation but also strong initiatives to encourage investment in what is good for the planet."

- Manda Kaye, NSW

Industry submissions put forward several further actions and initiatives that should be included in the plan, most notably around protecting living habitat, and initiatives to encourage investment in climate-friendly business.



There should be more active measures to encourage sustainable housing, by recycling buildings and building materials, and discouraging destruction of living habitat (which is also hard-working carbon sink) for "housing".

Unproductive cleared land should be the target for housing estates, not forest and native bushland.

-Duncan Marshall, NSW

Farmers called for the EPA to develop more research and guidelines into methane, as one of the most problematic greenhouse gases, and what methods of production were the least emissions intensive.



"There needs to be more research on the production of methane by livestock. Which method of production causes the most emissions -- open range grass fed, compared with intensively managed feed-lot regimes?"

- Jenifer Finnie, NSW

SUBMISSIONS FROM CLIMATE DISASTER AFFECTED COMMUNITY MEMBERS



Almost 20% of GetUp members who made submissions are from communities that have been directly impacted by flood, bushfire, or drought. In their submissions, they share their experiences of climate disaster, and call for faster, strengthened climate protections in the NSW EPA's Climate Change Policy and Climate Change Action Plan 2022-2025.

People made submissions from climate impacted areas all over NSW including the Hawkesbury, the mid North Coast, the Northern Rivers, the Central Tablelands, the South Coast, the Central West, the Mid West, the Hunter, and the outer suburbs of Sydney.

Some have lost their homes to bushfire or flood. Others have had their livelihoods destroyed - losing livestock, infrastructure, machinery, fencing. All were clear that every government agency should be using every power at their disposal to mitigate further climate damage, and invest in long term adaptation for communities experiencing climate disasters now.

Submissions from people from climate impacted communities highlighted the social and economic effects of climate disasters.



Living in the Byron Shire I see daily the impact of climate warming. People homeless and sleeping in cars, living in vans in their yards, shops still closed and boarded up, a huge waiting list for tradies, restaurants not open every day with staff shortages, the dunes eroded, people anxious when wet weather is predicted, and mental health deteriorating across all ages.

Olga Tresz, NSW



We are small scale farmers living on the edge of the Nattai National Park south west of sydney.

We have experienced every disaster on offer over the last 10 years - droughts, fires, flooding, rodent plagues, crop/animal diseases brought on by climatic stress. We can no longer farm.

We still have not managed to repair our fences since the fires. We have got rid of all our livestock, we no longer expect harvest from our fruit trees, sections of our vegetable gardens have been underwater for the greater part of the last two years.

The bridge on our road was broken by flood waters meaning we had no access to town without 4WD for 6 months. During the drought we had no water in the dam or roof tanks. We have to start looking at things differently.

- Lucy Nias, NSW

SUBMISSIONS FROM HEALTH WORKERS

GetUp members working in health, including psychiatry, nursing, general practice, and psychology, made submissions to the NSW EPA's Climate Change Policy and Climate Change Action Plan 2022-2025. A common thread through their submissions was the strain on the mental and physical health of NSW residents caused by the impacts of climate change.



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I am an anaesthetist. In 2019 our area suffered one of the longest burning peat fires, blanketing my house and our hospitals in smoke for 6 months that meant we could not see more than 5m in front of us at times. We know there was a spike in respiratory and cardiovascular conditions as a result of the smoke - sometimes the air quality was worse than the most polluted city in the world of Dehli.

The oncologists wonder if breathing this air equivalent to smoking >100 cigarettes a day will lead to increased cancer in the future.

Dr. Yoon Ooi, NSW

A number of these submissions also raised the economic and social issues that follow bushfires and floods, and the impacts of these issues on psychological and physical well being.



In addition to being a concerned member of the community I am a Child and Family Psychiatrist working in outer Metropolitan Sydney. The families who seek out my services are multiply disadvantaged and are already experiencing the effects of rising night time temperatures on their sleep, daily functioning, physical and emotional/mental health.

Higher overnight temperatures mean that people who cannot afford air-conditioning, or are not able to install energy- and cost-efficient solutions to cool their homes are already struggling.

Please know that these effects are occurring on ALL age groups, not just adults or the elderly. It remains completely unknown just how severe the impacts of just this one aspect of climate impact will have on the physical, cognitive and mental development of children - especially as they have not known any different.

- Dr. Lisa Newling, NSW



I'm a psychologist and I'm seeing the severe effects on mental health (and the mental health budget) of the increased need due to:

- (a) fear of climate change and a sense of powerlessness
- (b) trauma when people are affected by bushfires and floods
- (c) housing crisis, which is exacerbated by flooding and increasingly rising sea levels
- (d) grief related to the loss of natural spaces and wildlife
- (e) severe anxiety for their children's future
- (f) stress related to cost of living pressures, which includes a need for stable, renewable local energy sources
- (g) anxiety and depression related to insecure employment and a need for a renewable energy, recycling and farming sectors to replace coal and gas-based jobs.

- Katharine Clarke, NSW