

Committee Secretary
Senate Standing Committees on Environment and Communications
PO Box 6100
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

23 November 2023



Dear Environment and Communications Legislation Committee,

Submission on 'Climate Change Amendment (Duty of Care and Intergenerational Climate Equity)' Bill 2023

Scouts Australia would like to first thank the committee for the opportunity to make a submission regarding this Bill. We wish to convey our support of the Bill.

Scouts Australia is Australia's largest youth development organisation, providing around 51,000 children and young people aged 5 to 25 with opportunities to grow through an adventurous, fun, challenging and inclusive non-formal educational program. Our mission is to contribute to the education of young people through a value-based system, to help build a better world where people are self-fulfilled as individuals and play a constructive role in society.

We are a member of the World Organisation of Scout Movement, with 174 National Scout Organisations across the globe and a combined total of over 57 million members – most being young people.

Of particular relevance to this Bill, Scouting teaches young people to do what is right, to use resources wisely, to care for others and the environment, and to face challenges with courage. These are key pillars in the Australian Scout Law.

The proposed amendment is an important step toward a fairer, safer, cleaner and brighter future for young people. It provides a legislative mechanism for young people to be considered in a decision-making process from which they are often otherwise excluded. This aligns with our organisation's core philosophy of "youth leading, adults supporting".

Youth survey

Scouts Australia conducted two surveys of our members over 2023 to understand their views on issues facing young people. These surveys included responses from all states and territories.

We found that overwhelmingly – out of all the UN Sustainable Development Goals – our members wanted to see SDG 13 "climate action" prioritised (the second-most selected SDG was SDG4 "quality education"). Our members told us they feel scared, anxious, and distressed when thinking about the impact of climate change on their futures. They are worried that temperature rises will stop people from experiencing outdoor adventure, and they fear the effects on local ecosystems and livelihoods.

There was a common theme telling us that many young people feel government and business should do more to reduce the impacts of climate change. Around two thirds of our survey respondents were not confident that leaders are acting in the best interest of future generations.

We asked what message our members would like to send to Australia's leaders about climate change. Here are some of their responses:

- "So many problems that we currently have, like cost of living, natural disasters, pollution, and poverty can be solved or improved by acting on climate change. I want generations to come to be able to feel the joy of connecting with nature, and this may not be possible if you do not act."

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- “Do more. Listen when we speak. You won't be here to live with the consequences. We will be.”
- “Nothing will change overnight, in fact it is unlikely to change in your government, but that doesn't make the actions you make less important. If anything they are more important.”
- “Listen to the youth, we are the ones that will be affected by your choices. Start more discussions with youth to get proper input.”

These responses send a clear message that young people want governments to act now to reduce the impacts of climate change. They do not feel listened to, and they do not feel that the government is taking enough action.

Scouts Australia supports this Bill as it provides a clear legal framework to consider the interests and impacts on young people and future generations.

Suggestions

Scouts Australia provides opportunities for children and young people to be engaged in decision-making at all levels of our organisation. This stems from our unequivocal organisational belief that young people have the right to have a say in decisions which affect them.

The amendments in this Bill could be further strengthened by adding a requirement for the relevant Minister to consult with a national youth body, such as the Australian Youth Affairs Coalition, the new Office for Youth's Youth Steering Committee, or community organisations like Scouts Australia.

We thank the committee for the opportunity to provide comment in support of the proposed amendment. Scouts Australia would be happy to speak further with the committee about this important matter.

Yours in Scouting,

Toby Phillips
Chair
Scouts Australia

Ezgi Bridger
Deputy Chief Commissioner (Australia)
Scouts Australia