

# This decade, this year, today

---

*Penny D Sackett  
10-Feb-2020  
Parliament House, Canberra*

Today, we cautiously rejoice in the rain that has doused the worst bushfire season in Australia's history, and, we hope, reversed its longest period of extended drought and hottest year on record. I say *cautiously* rejoice because even now thousands of people on both coasts have been evacuated due to intense rainfall.

Nearly 10 years ago, Australia had a Climate Commission reporting to government. Its first report, titled the "Critical Decade," concluded:

*"The risks of future climate change – to our economy, society and environment – are serious, and grow rapidly with each degree of further temperature rise. Minimising these risks requires rapid, deep and ongoing reductions to global greenhouse gas emissions. We must begin now . . . **This decade is the critical decade.**"*

The decade just passed **was** critical for climate action, but for the most part, it was wasted in Australia.

The Climate Commission was disbanded.

After a brief drop, Australia's emissions flattened, even rising in some sectors.

Climate change became a football in a dangerous and divisive game of politics, across and within parties.

Australia travelled a path that was in direct contradiction to our own voluntary Paris emission targets.

Meanwhile, Australian droughts, heat waves, bushfires and extreme rainfall events became more and more severe.

We cannot afford to waste another decade.

Today, we have a chance for a fresh start.

Today, a new compact has been drafted between Parliament and the Australian people. This bill offers hope that not another year will pass without a framework established – in law – to respond to the risk climate change presents to the prosperity and security of Australians.

Climate Change Bill 2020 gives Australia and its elected officers a chance to make the next decade count where the last did not.

Why do I support this bill?

Climate Change Bill 2020 acts on climate science by requiring that national decision-making be consistent with the goal of holding global heating to 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels, and by legislating a target of a net zero emissions for Australia by 2050.

The bill recognises that effective governance is well informed, by establishing an independent Climate Change Commission to assess risks and advise Parliament.

And it acknowledges that good governance is transparent and accountable, by establishing procedures for monitoring and reporting.

Climate Change Bill 2020 anticipates a planned transition in a changing Australia, through five-year risk assessments, adaptation plans and national emissions budgets.

The bill recognises that government serves the people by requiring that climate action take into account fiscal responsibility, fair employment transitions, community engagement, and national and international co-operation.

And importantly, this bill requires climate action that is equitable across generations, regions and industries.

I support Climate Change Bill 2020, and it is my great hope that it will be enacted quickly.

May **this** year of **this** decade be the year in which climate action does **not** divide Parliament.

Instead, may **this** year unite Parliament in a common, determined climate response to safeguard Australia, and thus prepare the way for a healthy, modern future for all Australians.