

Steggall calls for conscience vote on zero carbon bill to kickstart Covid recovery

Michael Mazengarb

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Independent federal MP Zali Steggall has told a meeting of Australia's leading investors that the Morrison government should offer a conscience vote on the member for Warringah's Climate Change bill.

In an address to the Responsible Investment Association Australasia on Wednesday, Steggall said that the Climate Change Bill, the text of which was released in February had been designed based on successful legislation passed by the national governments of New Zealand and the United Kingdom.

"This bill is not revolutionary in that it is modelled on the United Kingdom's Climate Change Act, which has been in force for over ten years, as well as the New Zealand Climate Change Response Amendment Bill which came into force late last year," Steggall said.

"Since the UK enacted their bill they have managed to put climate politics behind them. Symbolic of how far they have come, the Conservatives intend to use decisive climate action to re-assert their bona fides on the world stage post-Brexit."

In May, the European Union announced a EU\$750 billion (A\$1.25 trillion) green stimulus package, that would ramp up the sales of electric vehicles and renewable energy projects, as well as investing in residential energy efficiency programs.

No such measures have been introduced by the Morrison government, instead it has looked to channel funding into homes undertaking renovations, without any consideration of the energy performance or supporting the transition to clean energy.

Steggall's climate change bill would enshrine a commitment to reaching a zero net emissions target into law, as well as establishing an independent climate change commissions which would advise the government on appropriate five-yearly emissions reduction targets, as well as reporting on Australia's progress towards cutting emissions.

Steggall called on the Morrison government to allow a free vote in the Federal parliament as a potential pathway to finding a compromise position on climate change policy, but noted that a vote on the legislation may be delayed to make way for more urgent parliamentary business relating to the Covid-19 response.

"Although the campaign is now paused, until this week we were publicly, calling for this bill to be a free vote.

Members are elected to represent their electorates," Steggall said.

"Members should feel free to be able to vote according to their values and those of their electorates. This is now a matter of safety for many and should be elevated beyond party politics. As individuals here and important stakeholders. I urge you all to reach out to your network, use this time we have wisely, and shore up support for this initiative."

Steggall pointed to the [One Million Jobs plan recently released by Beyond Zero Emissions](#), as an example of the kind of opportunities Australia could be pursuing as it looks to strengthen its economy after the Covid-19 caused disruption, that could quickly get Australians back to work.

"For Australia there is already work being done. On Monday, climate change think tank, Beyond Zero Emissions released a report detailing a sector by sector breakdown of the jobs opportunities that would be created through stimulus aimed at mature clean technologies in Australia," Steggall added.

The report estimates that we could put 355,000 people per year in work whilst modernising the Australian economy. Many of these projects can also be done quickly, in under two years

"We could be back on track by 2023. These initiatives could be funded through the Clean Energy Finance Corporation and the Australian Renewable Energy Agency."

Steggall's push follows an olive branch being [offered to the Morrison government by opposition leader Anthony Albanese](#), who said that Labor would consider supporting investment support for carbon capture and storage projects, as long as it meant that agencies like the CEFC and ARENA were not used to provide that funding.

"We won't agree that renewable energy agencies like ARENA and the Clean Energy Finance Corporation should have their funds for renewables raided in order to invest in carbon capture technology. If we are to advance the technology roadmap, then ARENA must be supported with further funding," Albanese told the National Press Club.