



LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
FOR THE AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

STANDING COMMITTEE ON ENVIRONMENT, CLIMATE CHANGE AND BIODIVERSITY
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Submission Cover Sheet

Inquiry into Environment Protection (Fossil Fuel Company Advertising) Amendment Bill 2024

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Peoples Climate Action Coalition

Peoples Climate Assembly Submission on the Environment Protection (Fossil Fuel Company Advertising) Amendment Bill 2024

The Peoples Climate Assembly (PCA) welcomes the opportunity to make a submission on the proposed Environment Protection (Fossil Fuel Company Advertising) Amendment Bill 2024 banning fossil fuel advertising at ACT stadiums.

The PCA is strongly in support of the Bill and urges for it to be expanded to include all ACT government property, corporate sponsorships and events, as called for by Comms Declare.

Climate Leader

The ACT is well known as a progressive global leader on meaningful climate policy and action. The ACT was an early adopter of the call to ban fossil fuel advertising, with restrictions on advertising fossil fuels on public transport as far back as 2015. The ACT declared a state of climate emergency back in May 2019; this declaration acknowledged the need for urgent action across all levels of government. The ACT has also joined the Carbon Zero Cities Declaration - a declaration to increase the climate change ambition of mid-sized cities. In the years since then, climate disasters have increased in frequency and severity. Advice from the IPCC is unequivocal, there can be no new fossil fuel projects if we are to avoid climate catastrophe. Despite this, the top polluters continue to apply for extensions, expansions and new fossil fuel projects.

Sportswashing

A study by [Swinburne University](#) for the Australian Conservation Foundation found that fossil fuel companies spend an estimated \$14m to \$18m a year sponsoring the Australian sporting industry.

The term “sportswashing” recognises that Fossil Fuel companies like Santos, Woodside, Tamboran, buy social licence by sponsoring sports teams, sports events and childrens’ sport. Australians love their sport and fossil fuel companies know that they can buy a better image and avoid being called out for their climate damage by infiltrating sports at all levels. It is a cynical power play, especially at a time when the world is urgently transitioning away from fossil fuels.

The Influence of Fossil Fuel Companies on Sport

Prof Ross Gordon, a Queensland University of Technology expert on marketing and behavioural change, said fossil fuel companies spend money on sponsorship because it is an “effective soft power”.

“It can sway consumer behaviour. It’s not the only tool they’ll use, but they certainly see it as one of the critical tools”¹

ACF campaigns director, Paul Sinclair states: *“When we see the Santos Wallabies or Woodside Fremantle Dockers on TV it has the effect of sanitising their role and image as big climate polluters.”²*

[Santos sponsors](#) the mens and womens Australian rugby teams as well as the Queensland Reds, NSW Waratahs, Western Force, Australian Women’s Sevens and the Santos Festival of Rugby. Santos’ Barossa Project in the Timor Sea is one of the [most carbon intensive in the world](#). Santos also sponsors and gives its name to the Santos Tour Down Under. Santos lobbies [against climate policy](#) including the [Safeguard Mechanism which is the Australian Government’s answer to climate action](#).

TotalEnergies is the official [Rugby World Cup](#) sponsor. Their LNG project, Ichthys, is one of the world’s biggest gas projects, has [exceeded allowed emissions by 10%](#) and is scaling up production.

Woodside Energy - Woodside CEO, Meg O’Neill, gave an audience at the National Press Club in April 2023 at which a Sky journalist, after thanking her for his dividends, prompted laughter in the room by offering to intervene if the Fremantle Dockers stepped away from their relationship with Woodside. In September 2023 the sponsorship partnership was extended for another two seasons. Mr Garlick, CEO of the Dockers said:

“We’re incredibly fortunate and grateful ... to have a partner like Woodside who’ve been with us for 14 years ... through thick and thin ... in an incredibly challenging and competitive industry, it’s a significant partnership and one that’s really important.”³

Woodside’s gas plant is damaging an ancient Aboriginal rock art site in Murujuga, Western Australia and is the second top polluter in Australia. They also have a 5-year naming rights for WA Nippers, in which children are given Woodside branded clothing for their Surf Living Saving Australia swim club.

Origin Energy continues to frack in the Northern Territory against the wishes of Traditional Owners and sponsors Netball Australia and youth netball programs

Tamboran Resources are also fracking the Northern Territory and ignoring Traditional Owners and sponsor The Dolphins NRL.

Parallels with Tobacco Industry

¹ <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2023/sep/02/woodside-wa-western-australia-nippers-campaign-fossil-fuel>

²

https://350perth.org.au/sportswashing-is-the-same-as-tobacco-sponsorships/?link_id=9&can_id=b61f8095b73a67b18259f1ace350f0ee&source=email-november-newsletter-from-350-boorloo-perth-3&email_referrer=email_1742398&email_subject=november-newsletter-from-350-boorloo-perth

³ <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2023-09-28/fremantle-dockers-criticised-over-woodside-sponsorship-deal-af/102909870>

The tobacco industry ban on advertising in sports provides a precedent. In the 1980s, the three largest tobacco companies were also the three biggest sponsors of Australian sport.

The Minister for Sport banned tobacco sponsorship in 1992, making Australia one of the first countries to legislate an end to tobacco sponsorship in sporting events. Similar to sustained advocacy on ending fossil fuel sponsorship, this ban followed efforts from athletes, fans, clubs, doctors, and everyday people.

Arguably the harm caused by fossil fuels is on a far greater scale, with communities devastated by the impacts of climate disasters. We know that more and more sports events will be impossible in an ever hotter climate. Well-loved sports will be impossible to play, or increasingly dangerous, because of the heat.

Leadership Needed

We need bold leadership to remove the tendrils of the fossil fuel industry into sports, schools, charities and community activities and events.

We are already seeing a shift in sports with sporting leaders like Australian cricket test captain [Pat Cummins](#) raising ethical concerns with Cricket Australia over a \$40 million sponsorship deal with Alinta Energy. And former Wallabies Player, Senator David Pocock strongly advocating for a fossil fuel advertising ban.

There is a growing rejection of the fossil fuel industry in artistic and cultural institutions, such as [Fringe World](#) and [Perth Festival](#) ending their sponsorship by Woodside and Chevron.

Several Australian councils including Merri-Bek, Lane Cove, Waratah-Wynyard and Yarra - have all banned fossil fuel advertising. Restrictions on fossil fuel advertising have been backed by Doctors for the Environment and The Royal Australian College of General Practitioners (RACGP). It is also an action suggested under the Fossil Fuel Non-Proliferation Treaty, to which the ACT is a signatory.

Banning fossil fuel advertising and sponsorship seems a natural next step for the ACT, which is always leading the way and able to cut through in sectors where others have not gained traction. It would seem incongruous for a government that has declared a Climate Emergency over four years ago to be comfortable to continue supporting a social licence for fossil fuel companies.

We would love to discuss further with the Committee during the hearings, alongside the drivers for fossil fuel advertising bans, Comms Declare.

Yours sincerely

Amy Blain (she/her)

Chair of the Peoples Climate Assembly

5 March 2024

Peoples Climate Assembly

The Peoples Climate Action Coalition T/A Peoples Climate Assembly (PCA) is a coalition of various climate groups including Australian Parents for Climate Action Canberra, 350/Move Beyond Coal Canberra, the ACF Community Canberra, Climate Action Canberra, Conservation Council ACT Region, and Extinction Rebellion ACT. The PCA is an organisation that believes we need to Act Now to reach zero emissions at emergency speed.

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The Peoples Climate Assembly acknowledges that we live on the stolen land of the Indigenous people of Australia. We acknowledge the Ngunawal and Ngambri people, the traditional custodians of the land on which Canberra is situated. Their sovereignty was never ceded. We pay our deepest respects to our nation's First Peoples and to Elders, past and present.