



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

Submission Number: 8

Date Authorised for Publication: 12 March

2024

FRONT*RUNNERS*

Submission to: Inquiry into the ACT Environment Protection (Fossil Fuel Company Advertising) Amendment Bill 2024

Addressed to: ACT Legislative Assembly Standing Committee on Environment, Climate Change and Biodiversity

Submission from: FrontRunners Ltd

5th March 2024

About FrontRunners

FrontRunners works to protect the future of sport in a changing climate.

We know climate change is already impacting sport: from extreme heat to bushfire smoke, drought and flooding, it's striking at the heart of the games we love.

But with millions of passionate fans and followers, sport has the power to change the game.

FrontRunners helps sport go from sideline to centre court on climate action.

The Big Picture

A long-term warming trend from the burning of coal, oil and gas and ongoing deforestation is supercharging extreme weather events in Australia.

Australia's climate has already warmed by more than 1°C since 1910¹.

All extreme weather events are now occurring in an atmosphere that is warmer and wetter than it was in the 1950s². Generally, this means more intense extreme weather events and more devastation³.

Climate change is making many types of extreme weather worse, especially heat waves. Heat waves are lasting longer, reaching higher maximum temperatures and are occurring more frequently over many regions of Australia⁴.

¹ CSIRO and BoM (2018) State of the Climate 2018.

² Trenberth KE (2012) Framing the way to relate climate extremes to climate change. *Climatic Change*, 115: 283–290.

³ Climate Council (2017) Cranking up the Intensity: Climate Change and Extreme Weather Events.

⁴ Perkins S and Alexander L (2013) On the measurement of heat waves. *Journal of Climate*, 26: 4500–4517.

Record hot days have more than doubled since the mid-20th century, accompanied by an increase since the 1970s in the number of days over 35°C across much of Australia⁵.

Delaying rapid and effective climate action has devastating consequences that are already unfolding, like the catastrophic bushfires, intense heatwaves and flooding, devastating global coral bleaching and more powerful storms we have already lived through.

The severity of future extreme weather events depends on how fast and deeply greenhouse gas emissions can be reduced. Australia has a unique role to play in reducing these emissions as the world's third-largest exporter of fossil fuels, coming behind only Russia and Saudi Arabia and with a range of fossil fuel companies headquartered and operating on our shores.

This is especially consequential for sport as we are already seeing climate change seriously impact how we train and play. Despite that, we continue to see sports supporting the social license of the fossil fuel companies driving climate change through sponsorship arrangements that just won't quit.

That's why we support any initiative to exit fossil fuel sponsorship from our industry. This bill seeks to ensure that fossil fuel sponsorship no longer has a place at ACT sporting venues. As our submission will reflect, this isn't just a virtue signalling exercise, it goes to the heart of the future of the games we love.

Risks to sport from a changing climate

Player and spectator welfare, sports schedules, fixtures, seasons and governing rules all stand to be negatively impacted by unchecked climate change. Extreme weather events over the past few years have created havoc.

The examples below are by no means exhaustive, but they paint a picture of the kinds of impacts we are already living through and what the future is likely to hold if we don't take serious action.

Throughout the Black Summer Bushfires of 2019/20, we saw:

- The retirement from play of athletes at the Australian Open due to both extreme heat and the effects of bushfire smoke
- Sydney Thunder and Adelaide Strikers BBL game cancelled mid-match due to bushfire smoke
- The relocation of the Canberra Raiders and ACT Brumbies pre-seasons due to unsafe air quality
- Melbourne-based AFL teams moving preseason training sessions to indoor facilities

Across the last few years, unrelated to the fires, we've also seen:

- Impacts on player welfare, like the 2018 hospitalisation of English Cricket Captain Joe Root during 43C+ temperatures

⁵ CSIRO and BoM (2018) State of the Climate 2018.

- Impacts on facilities, for example, Queensland's Suncorp Stadium flooded with 1.5m of water in 2011 resulting in games being played elsewhere while the stadium was repaired
- Impacts on fixtures, like the December 2022 delay and postponement of A-League matches due to heatwave conditions

And the impact isn't just at the professional end of the game, it's also being felt keenly at the grassroots. We have seen climate-related extreme weather events impacting more than 500 grassroots Aussie Rules football clubs in the last three and a half years. Meanwhile, we are beginning to see clubs in flood and/or fire-prone areas lose their insurance due to worsening extreme weather events.

As far back as the Millennium drought, we were seeing the early indications of what we might face with a 23% increase in shoulder injuries in 2001 compared with 1994 due to ground hardening⁶, while in a single season in 2007, over half of Victoria's sports leagues were delayed or cancelled because of damage to playing fields from drought.

Unfortunately, this list is not exhaustive and only canvases physical risks.

In fact, we can now group climate risks across multiple categories (it is important to note that risks are "cascading" - they are not stand-alone, and the impacts of one quickly roll into another, making coherent and comprehensive climate ambition a necessity).

Physical: this includes risks to players, officials and spectators' welfare from extreme weather. It also includes physical risks to infrastructure.

Regulatory: we are increasingly seeing the rules and responsibilities for reporting on climate-related risk changing; this poses a risk to businesses that are not yet tracking their emissions or working to reduce them and a risk for those partnering with major emitters.

Contractual: this includes the possibility of breach of contract arising from the suspension or cancellation of a match due to extreme weather.

Reputational: this includes public backlash against choices made, ignored or deferred by sporting organisations, including but not limited to partnerships with companies contributing to worsening global warming.

Director's duties: this includes a potential breach of director's duties for a failure to consider the material risks of climate change.

So where to draw the line?

First, a bit of context setting.

⁶ The Age (2001) Drought proves painful in other ways. Accessed at <https://www.theage.com.au/sport/cricket/drought-proves-painful-in-other-ways-20021217-gduxz7.html>.

You may have heard of the IPCC or the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. The IPCC was set up in 1988 by the World Meteorological Association and the UN's Environment Program. It has 195 members and works on 6 - 7 year cycles. Throughout that time thousands of scientists and other experts examine and synthesize all the available literature in a kind of giant meta-analysis to inform governments about the natural, economic and social impacts and risks posed by climate change and how we might respond to them.

It has been described as the biggest peer review process in the scientific community - coming in at over 3 million words. In 2015 the IPCC began its sixth assessment cycle. That cycle concluded in March 2023, and its findings were not good. The report found that many of the bad and worst-case scenarios once slated for 2030 and beyond have already happened between 2011 and 2020.

In handing down the last of the reports for this cycle, the Chair of the IPCC, Hoesung Lee said, "We are walking when we should be sprinting."

What this makes clear is that, according to the peer review, to end all peer reviews, we need to act faster and with more ambition. And this action must be targeted at the root cause of climate change: fossil fuels. Almost 90% of global CO₂ emissions come from the production and use of coal, oil and gas.⁷ There is a growing chorus of scientists that unequivocally state a "rapid and managed fossil fuel phase-out is required to stay within the Paris Agreement target range".⁸ Despite this, the world's governments are planning to produce 110% more fossil fuels by 2030 than would be allowed under a 1.5°C temperature scenario.⁹

Make no mistake, we need to dramatically reduce the amount of fossil fuels we're extracting and burning while increasing the amount of greenhouse gases we're sequestering, all while scaling up clean green technologies.

But what does this mean for sport? Sporting clubs and governing bodies, of course, have a responsibility to reduce their own actual emissions and the UNFCCC Sport for Climate Action Framework highlights some of the work that can be done to achieve this. FrontRunners and others also exist to help sports organisations undertake this work.

But in the scheme of global emissions, the impact of sports emissions is relatively small, even when you include flying and fan travel. For sports organisations that have sponsors that are contributing to fuelling the climate crisis, there is a much bigger fish to fry than their own emissions.

Consider for a moment that all of the impacts on sport we've already experienced have happened in a climate that has warmed just 1.2 degrees. For every fraction of a degree of warming, extreme weather events become more frequent and severe. This is why scientists

⁷ Friedlingsten et al., 2022, 'Global Carbon Budget 2022', Earth System Science Data, <https://doi.org/10.5194/essd-14-4811-2022>

⁸ 'A rapid and managed fossil fuel phase-out is required to stay within the Paris Agreement target range', 10 Insights Climate Science, 2023, https://10insightsclimate.science/wp-content/uploads/2023/12/10NICS-2023-Report_digital.pdf

⁹ SEI, Climate Analytics, E3G, IISD, UNEP, 2023, "Phasing down or phasing up?" Top fossil fuel producers plan even more extraction despite climate promises', UN Production Gap, https://productiongap.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/11/PGR2023_web_rev.pdf

and global agreements have focused on limiting warming to 1.5 degrees or “well below two” degrees.

So what is incompatible with 1.5 degrees of warming? Thankfully we know enough about the science of climate change to have a few guiding principles.

1. We cannot open up any new fossil fuel reserves.
2. We cannot expand any existing fossil fuel reserves.
3. We must significantly reduce the amount of fossil fuel we are extracting and burning and support the transition of workers and communities that rely on these industries into the industries of the future.
4. We must employ land management practices that sequester the carbon we have already released into the atmosphere.

This helps create clear boundaries for what activities are acceptable if we’re going to reduce emissions and have a stronger chance of limiting global warming to below two degrees.

It means any organisation committed to climate action should not be participating in or promoting activities that: open new fossil fuel reserves, expand existing fossil fuel reserves, increase the amount of fossil fuels being used, or contribute to deforestation or land degradation. But also, given the urgency of action, organisations should commit to not encouraging the consumption of fossil fuels, which stimulates additional demand.

Our view, based on the science and the harms to sport that unchecked climate change creates, is that organisations committed to climate action should not enter into or continue partnerships with companies whose business is the extraction, sale or use of coal, oil and gas. And further, they should not enter into or continue partnerships with companies who are involved in the financing and insuring of the fossil fuel industry.

Fossil fuel companies have no place in the arena.

Conclusion

In 2015, the ACT was one of the first jurisdictions in the world to prohibit fossil fuel advertising on light rail transport. At FrontRunners, we applaud the leadership of the ACT government on this and so many aspects of climate policy. A national leader in many regards, the ACT has exhibited qualities lauded in our own industry - courage, conviction and perseverance. Legislating the Environment Protection (Fossil Fuel Company Advertising) Amendment Bill 2024 would be another step towards this kind of leadership.

And this legislation would not be without support or precedent. Restrictions on fossil fuel advertising have been backed by Doctors for the Environment and The Royal Australian College of General Practitioners (RACGP) as well as Comms Declare who, through their Fossil Ad Ban, have worked to gain the support of 15 Australian Councils, including the City of Sydney. It is also an action suggested under the [Fossil Fuel Non-Proliferation Treaty](#), which the ACT is a signatory to.

France has banned ads for all fossil fuel energies. A Bill has been introduced in Canada's parliament for a national tobacco-style fossil fuel advertising ban. Bans have also been enacted in dozens of cities and council areas across the globe.

We urge all members of the Legislative Assembly to vote in favour of this Bill to protect the future of sport, the future of all of us. There is no place for fossil fuel advertising in our public life, certainly not on the field of play, where there is already so much evidence of the negative effects of climate change.