

Pathways Call for Evidence Submission

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Parents for Climate
Submission to the Net Zero Commission of NSW

Decarbonisation Pathways for NSW

14 August 2026

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Parents for Climate represents over 27,000 parents, grandparents and carers from across Australia. We are Australia's leading organisation for parents advocating for a safe climate. Our supporters are from across the political spectrum, across all Australian electorates, and from varied socio-economic positions. We seek non-partisan responses to climate change and its impacts.

We advocate for Australian governments and businesses to take urgent action to cut Australia's carbon emissions to net zero as quickly as possible. We encourage Australia to take a leadership role on the world stage, leading by example and calling for other nations to take the necessary action to protect our children's futures.

For more information, visit www.parentsforclimate.org

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Submission

Parents for Climate welcomes the opportunity to engage with the Net Zero Commission on how NSW may achieve its emissions reduction targets of 50% by 2030 and 70% by 2035, relative to 2005 levels, and net zero by 2050. Climate change is the greatest, most urgent threat to lives and livelihoods in Australia, and its impacts have only worsened since NSW's emissions reduction targets were legislated in 2023. It is imperative that the government articulates a clear and decisive decarbonisation pathway to enable more ambitious climate action by the people and businesses of NSW.

We represent over 8,000 residents of NSW, including parents, carers, and grandparents seeking to secure a safe, liveable future for our kids. While our members are from a wide range of economic sectors and communities across the state, this submission centres primarily on our shared experiences with **(1) household emissions** and **(2) schools and early childhood centres** across NSW.

1. What opportunities or barriers could improve the effectiveness of NSW's transition to net zero?

The NSW Education and Training Sector currently accounts for an estimated 4%, or 2.23 million tonnes, of the state's total emissions from electricity use.¹ With targeted incentives and support, the government has an opportunity not only to have the sector powered entirely by renewables, but also to have these facilities join Virtual Power Plants (VPPs), or shared-energy schemes, supplying clean energy back to the grid during periods of peak demand.

Since 2020, more than 13,200 Australians have joined Parents for Climate's *Solar Our Learning* campaign asking state and federal governments to fund solar panels and batteries for every school and early childhood centre in Australia. Schools are not just buildings; they are community energy assets waiting to be activated. Across NSW there are more than 2,200 schools and 6,000 early learning centres, many with large, empty rooftops that could be used to generate clean power for surrounding neighbourhoods, drive down local energy costs, and ensure every student learns in a classroom that is comfortable, resilient and fit for a warming climate.

Recommendation 1: We call on the NSW Government to fund solar panels and batteries for every public school and early childhood centre in Australia, and support such installations in non-government schools and centres with means-tested loans.

¹ Snapshot Climate, '[New South Wales 2023/24 Emissions Snapshot](#)', [Public schools](#) were reportedly responsible for about 10% of total education sector emissions.

Among NSW households, solar usage has been growing, but there are still significant untapped opportunities in this space. Rooftop solar panels are now installed in more than a third of NSW homes, but as of 2025, only about 6% had batteries.² Recent state and federal incentives have been highly effective in boosting battery uptake, but certain groups are still unable to access these benefits due to funding and skills shortfalls among lower-income cohorts, or misaligned incentives in the rental market.

For the state to reach its Consumer Energy Strategy target of 3,400MW of VPP capacity by 2035, and 10,000MW of capacity by 2050,³ it will need to continue addressing not only financial barriers but also issues of access and equity. For example, by implementing minimum standards for rental property energy efficiency, the state government could enable renters to install portable solar panels, use electric vehicles as batteries, and encourage landlords to invest in decarbonising their investment properties.⁴

Recommendation 2: The introduction of minimum standards for rental property energy efficiency, ultimately enabling renters to use portable solar panels and Electric Vehicle-to-Grid (V2G) and Vehicle-to-Home (V2H) technology.

2. What are the opportunities and barriers to technology development and deployment for each sector?

As of September 2025, there were only about 20,000 batteries connected to VPPs across NSW, providing a total of 108 MW of potential capacity. This falls well short of the 2035 target, and includes only 79 public schools that have been connected to VPPs under the Smart Energy Schools Pilot Project.

Thousands more schools and early childhood centres across NSW and Australia are still unable to participate in VPPs due to issues with funding, skills, or logistics like pre-existing roofing design or electrical systems in heritage buildings. To overcome skills and capacity shortfalls, many schools currently rely either on community volunteers or groups like the not-for-profit Zero Emissions Solutions to inform their solar installations.

There is an opportunity for the NSW Government to help overcome these barriers to deployment by negotiating bulk purchases of solar panels and batteries, which would reduce costs for schools and provide more certainty to private sector installers and energy companies seeking to manage these VPPs.

² HighFlow Energy (2026), '[A Homeowner's Guide to Solar Batteries NSW](#)'.

³ NSW Climate and Energy Action, '[Consumer Energy Strategy](#)'.

⁴ Rewiring Australia (2026), '[Electrification for Renters](#)'.

Recommendation 3: NSW Government should introduce a state-wide clean energy infrastructure policy for the Education and Training Sector, including an agreement that allows all schools and early childhood centres to take part in a “virtual power plant” (VPP) so they can trade their excess solar power with the community.

Overseas in the US, the state of California is further leveraging school infrastructure for its clean energy transition by deploying electric school buses that may connect to VPPs using V2G technology. These vehicles run on highly predictable schedules, have large battery capacities, and, like school solar systems, tend not to be used on weekends and in the afternoons, during periods of high electricity demand, making them ideal VPP nodes.

The NSW V2G market is still in very early stages. Only a select few EV models officially support bidirectional energy export, and homeowners and businesses need to request formal approval from their energy distributors before installing V2G hardware on their properties.

Recommendation 4: NSW Government should work with energy distributors, carmakers and installers to help develop and grow the V2G market by supporting the rollout of public bidirectional charging points, and deploying V2G vehicles where appropriate in the public transportation network and the NSW Government fleet.

3. What are the opportunities to foster demand reduction and behaviour change?

Parents for Climate has long advocated for sustainable, active transport to cut emissions and clean the air around schools. The NSW Government’s ‘Get NSW Active’ and ‘Get Kids Active’ programs have enabled many residents to rely more heavily on walking and cycling for their everyday commutes, but more can be done to reduce demand for private vehicles.

As the NSW Government rolls out its housing plan, there is an opportunity to improve the design of neighbourhoods and transportation networks to enable and encourage people to choose better, healthier transport options instead of private cars.

Evidence from Parents for Climate's Active Transport Working Group and partners such as Better Streets points to a consistent set of low-cost, high-impact interventions: safe, separated cycling infrastructure, lower speed limits around schools, and secure end-of-trip facilities. As the NSW Government finalises its housing plan, embedding these features into planning requirements for new precincts, rather than retrofitting them later, would lock in mode-shift gains at a fraction of the cost. Sustained, guaranteed funding for programs like the Active Transport Fund, paired with 'safe routes to school' initiatives in high-growth LGAs, would directly build on the momentum of 'Get NSW Active' and 'Get Kids Active'.

Recommendation 5: NSW Government to guarantee multi-year funding for active transport infrastructure (including the Active Transport Fund), and to mandate safe, connected walking and cycling infrastructure, including safe routes to school, in design standards for all new housing and precinct developments.

4. What policies or market mechanisms could accelerate emissions reductions, and what barriers exist to their adoption?

Parents for Climate opposes the use of carbon offsets to legitimise continued fossil fuel extraction and combustion, and recommends the Commission treat offset-reliant abatement claims with caution when assessing whether NSW industry is on a credible pathway to net zero.

In 2025, Parents for Climate took EnergyAustralia to the Federal Court over its use of carbon offsets to market "carbon neutral" electricity generated largely from coal and gas. The case settled with EnergyAustralia publicly conceding that **"offsets do not prevent or undo the harms caused by burning fossil fuels,"** dropping its Carbon Neutral product, and acknowledging integrity problems with the Federal Climate Active scheme.

This is not an abstract concern for NSW. Producers covered by the Safeguard Mechanism can buy low-cost offsets instead of cutting pollution at the source; recent analysis found covered facilities have cut emissions by only 0.4% against a legislated 4.9% target, while fossil fuel facilities' pollution rose overall. The proposed Hunter Valley Operations coal continuation (which the applicant has told the Independent Planning Commission will lean heavily on the Safeguard Mechanism and offsets rather than genuine abatement) illustrates the risk: government can point to modelled compliance while nothing changes on the ground. A similar dynamic is emerging around the Great Koala National Park, where credits generated from forest protection risk becoming a bargaining chip to offset new fossil fuel approvals, rather than delivering an additional climate outcome.

For NSW's decarbonisation pathways to be credible, we recommend the Commission's modelling clearly distinguish genuine emissions reductions from offset-based compliance, and that pathway assumptions not treat offsets as equivalent to abatement for high-emitting fossil fuel facilities.

Recommendation 6: NSW Government and the Net Zero Commission should discount reliance on carbon offsets (including Safeguard Mechanism offsets and ACCUs) when assessing whether new or continuing fossil fuel projects are consistent with the state's

legislated emissions targets, and should advocate to the Federal Government for a cap on the use of offsets by facilities operating in NSW.

Conclusion

Thank you for considering Parents for Climate's submission on NSW's decarbonisation pathways. As taxpayers and citizens who want to achieve a fair, safe and secure future for our children, we recognise that immediate climate action is needed, and urge the Government to accelerate our progress towards net zero. We welcome the opportunity to engage further with the Committee on this topic.