

## INQUIRY INTO 2024 ANNUAL REPORT OF THE NET ZERO COMMISSION

**Organisation:** Healthy Futures

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## **Submission to the NSW Parliament's Joint Standing Committee on Net Zero Future: Inquiry into 2024 Annual Report of the Net Zero Commission | Healthy Futures, February 2025**

Healthy Futures, one of Australia's leading health and climate advocacy organisations, welcomes the opportunity to submit to the NSW Parliament's Joint Standing Committee on Net Zero Future's Inquiry into the 2024 Annual Report of the Net Zero Commission.

We recommend the NSW Government for establishing the Net Zero Commission and its commitment to ambitious climate action under the *Climate Change (Net Zero Future) Act 2023*. We were also pleased to see that their first report signals that the commission intends to focus policy attention to the ways in which NSW can speed up the replacement of gas appliances in homes and buildings with all-electric technologies.

Healthy Futures has approached to the NSW Government on numerous occasions, sharing our concerns for the health and climate impacts of continued reliance on fossil gas in homes and buildings across NSW. This submission similarly focuses on the urgent need to phase out fossil gas use in buildings, especially in homes - a critical step to reduce emissions, protect public health, and align with NSW's net-zero targets. We urge the Committee to recommend action to support NSW residents remove gas from their homes, as a health matter and a priority that can help NSW achieve its net zero goals.

### **The health and climate impacts of fossil gas use in buildings**

As outlined in the Net Zero Commission's report, greenhouse gas emissions from the built environment grew by 91% between 2005 and 2022, with the onsite use of fossil fuels such as gas for heating, hot water, and cooking being the largest source of direct emissions. The Net Zero Commission's report also explains significant abatement in this sector is possible, with the technologies to decarbonise are already commercially available.

The continued use of gas in the building sector, not only undermines NSW's climate goals but also poses serious health risks to residents. Gas appliances, particularly inside homes, emit harmful pollutants, such as nitrogen dioxide (NO<sub>2</sub>) and carbon monoxide (CO), that can exacerbate respiratory and cardiovascular conditions. Children, the elderly, and those with pre-existing health conditions are particularly vulnerable. The health impacts from indoor gas use are preventable, and transitioning to electric alternatives—such as induction cooktops and heat pumps—can significantly improve indoor air quality while reducing emissions.

### **The need for decisive action: protecting public health and committing to net zero goals**

The Net Zero Commission has rightly called for more decisive action to address emissions from the built environment. Healthy Futures strongly supports this recommendation and urges the NSW Government to take immediate steps to phase out fossil gas use in buildings. The continued expansion of gas infrastructure, including new gas connections in homes and businesses, is incompatible with NSW's climate targets. Every new gas connection locks in decades of emissions and delays the transition to cleaner, healthier alternatives. As the Commission's report notes, the technologies to decarbonise this sector are already readily available, and the barriers to adoption are largely political and regulatory, not technical.

## Recommendations

To ensure NSW meets its climate targets and protects public health, Healthy Futures urges the Committee to consider the following recommendations, that align with advice in the Net Zero Commissions 2024 Annual Report:

1. **Phase out fossil gas in new buildings**
  - Mandate all-electric building standards to ensure new constructions are aligned with NSW's net-zero goals, ensuring they are free from fossil gas connections.
2. **Support the transition to electric appliances in existing buildings**
  - Establish a statewide program to replace gas appliances with electric alternatives, prioritising low-income households and vulnerable communities.
  - Provide financial incentives, such as rebates and low-interest loans, to support households and businesses in making the switch to all electric appliances.
3. **Accelerate the promised gas decarbonisation roadmap**
  - Request, within the gas decarbonisation roadmap, a firm plan for phasing out fossil gas use in buildings by 2035, including interim targets and milestones.
  - Request the accelerated completion and release of the roadmap as soon as possible, in early 2026 if not before then.
  - Ensure the roadmap includes measures to address equity concerns, such as support for renters and social housing residents.
4. **Improve public awareness and education**
  - Invest in a public awareness campaign highlighting the health benefits of transitioning away from gas, especially targetting people with asthma, other respiratory illnesses and compromised cardiovascular function.
  - Provide clear, accessible information on electric appliances' health, financial and environmental advantages.
5. **Regulate indoor air quality standards**
  - Introduce regulations to limit indoor air pollution from gas appliances, ensuring all homes and buildings meet safe air quality standards.

The continued use of fossil gas in buildings is a significant barrier to achieving NSW's climate targets and poses serious risks to public health. The Net Zero Commission's report makes it clear that decisive action is needed to address this issue, and Healthy Futures urges the Committee to prioritise the phase-out of gas in homes and buildings. By transitioning to clean, electric alternatives, NSW can reduce emissions, improve air quality, and protect the health of its residents. This is not only a climate imperative but also a public health necessity.

Thank you for considering our submission. We welcome the opportunity to provide further information or participate in consultations on this critical issue.

Sincerely,  
**Healthy Futures**