



Centre for  
Environmental Rights  
Advancing Environmental Rights in South Africa

# WHAT IS THE CLIMATE CHANGE BILL AND WHY IS IT IMPORTANT?



**A Bill is a draft version of a law.** The Climate Change Bill was tabled in Parliament in February 2022. The Bill will now go through various public participation and law-making processes in order to become South Africa's Climate Change Act. This important law will have an enormous influence on South Africa's climate change response. It has the potential to protect our rights, help ensure a safe and climate resilient South Africa and a prosperous low carbon economy.

## WHAT IS THE INTENTION OF THE BILL?

The Bill is intended to ensure that South Africa is empowered to respond adequately and safely to climate change and its risks and impacts.

### SPECIFICALLY:

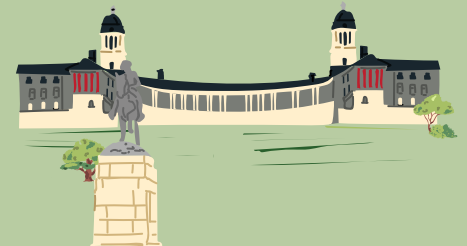
**1.** It regulates climate change **mitigation** - the reduction of greenhouse gas carbon emissions to slow down and stop climate change. The Minister responsible for the environment must assign carbon budgets to companies to limit their carbon emissions.



**2.** It manages climate change **adaptation** – adapting to impacts such as flooding, drought, wildfires, excessive heat and water and food insecurity – impacts which will intensify as climate change worsens. The government is obliged to assess all of the risks and expected impacts, and create response plans. This happens at a national, provincial and local level.



**3.** It also defines **responsibilities for different national government departments**, as well as for provincial and local government, including **municipalities**. This ensures that all relevant role-players are mandated to do their part in responding to climate change, and work together effectively.



## WHY IS A CLIMATE CHANGE ACT IMPORTANT?

**1.** There is a need for regulation to hold government and emitters accountable, and create obligations to prevent harmful activities.



**2.** There is a need to allocate responsibilities to government sectors and organs of state to create measures and take action to manage the threat that climate change poses to our Constitutional rights.



3. There is a need for legal certainty to motivate more ambitious climate action in terms of emission reductions and also adaptation measures.

4. South Africa will be more likely to access climate finance and support if we demonstrate that we are serious about climate change by having a strong Act.



## WHAT DOES THE BILL NEED IN ORDER TO BE EFFECTIVE AND EFFICIENT?

1. Strong enforcement and penalties for companies exceeding their carbon budgets with excessive carbon emissions.



2. The climate crisis is upon us, and the Bill must reflect the urgency of the situation, with appropriate timeframes and deadlines for important tools such as the carbon budgets and adaptation plans.



3. Because climate change affects everyone, transparency and access to information are critically important. We need to be able to see what carbon budgets are in place for emitters, how much they are emitting and whether they are complying and on track to reducing emissions at the necessary level for a safe climate.

4. The Bill needs to contain strong emission reduction targets that are based on the best available and latest science to ensure that we stay within 1.5°C of global warming – the scientifically-confirmed minimum safe limit for our climate and survival.



## WHAT CAN WE DO TO ENSURE A ROBUST CLIMATE CHANGE ACT?

1. Learn about and discuss climate change, the Bill and what the concerns are.



2. Speak to political leaders, ask them if they know about the Bill and what they can do to address your concerns.



3. When there are calls for comments or public participation meetings, raise your concerns and ask questions.



4. Engage with community and faith leaders, sharing your concerns.



5. Tell your stories about climate change and what you are worried about – in your community, on social media, with friends and family.

6. If you belong to any social or environmental justice groups, speak about the Bill. Consider joining groups like this if you don't belong to any yet.

