

Submission on The Climate Change Act & State Government response to climate change

We are a group of friends from Hobart. We have been involved with climate action activities for twenty years. Weather events over the last 20 years have confirmed the science from the 1980's and 90's which predicted increasing extreme weather events as average temperatures increased and the oceans warmed.

The Climate Change Act & State Government response to climate change

We believe that the scientific evidence supports the requirement for climate change considerations to be paramount in policy making and decisions by State Government agencies and government business enterprises. Climate change science must be used to inform all government decisions. If the State Government takes a positive leadership role it can give the community confidence in the necessary changes.

The *Second Review of the Act in 2016* made five recommendations to the Tasmanian State Government. Including a requirement that state government agencies consider the contents of the Act in relevant decision making but this has not been enforced and so little progress has been made.

It is essential that the Tasmanian government systematically assesses and discloses the main risks associated with projected climate change. This would include all 4 impacts listed in the dot points of the *Discussion Paper in Section 3.2 [page 14]* with the addition of sea-level rise and fire in Tasmania.

All sections of the community need to be informed but especially Local Government and Business. School curricula should provide an understanding of how and why a warming planet will bring major changes to Tasmania. Sound economic decisions can only be made if the risks are understood and acted upon.

The Act must be prescriptive and accountable if it is to contain and reduce Tasmania's emissions and build climate resilience. It requires targets that are concrete, measureable and enforceable in law. This will require increases in staffing for community education and enforcement.

The stakeholder feedback in *Section 5.4 [page 25]* of the *Discussion Paper* reveals numerous strategies which would drive further decarbonisation of the Tasmanian economy. Government, Business and the University can combine their expertise to implement and fund initiatives. The Act should set targets for major sectors of the economy.

The Act should espouse principles that would guide consideration of climate change by government, its agencies and business enterprises.

- Actions led by science not politics
- Climate change effects should be a consideration in all policies
- Measureable actions with public reporting
- Net zero by 2035
- Emissions targets applied to all
- Justice and equality for all in the community

Global Climate Action & Tasmania

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Within the context of global agreements to action to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, the role of the Tasmanian government is to rapidly reduce carbon producing activities within the state. To achieve this they must:

1. Put the legislative framework in place
 - To establish and enforce carbon targets and mechanisms for all sectors of the economy – transport, agriculture, forestry, manufacturing,
 - To set the direction for economic and social activity
 - To align the science regarding climate change with policy
2. Ensure Tasmania is reducing its carbon producing activities:
 - Rapidly reduce our dependence on fossil fuels
 - Cease destroying old growth forests which are a carbon sink
 - Support local production rather than imports with a high carbon footprint.
3. Demand Federal Government action to reduce Australia's carbon footprint

The Tasmanian Government has relied on its historical advantage to claim low carbon success. Most electricity being produced from water gave an advantage but Government did not promote electric vehicles in the government fleet or in its purchase of new busses. The Government accepted credit for the credits created by the Regional Forest Agreement but as soon as it expired they allowed forestry to resume in many of these areas.

There have been positive steps taken under the *Climate Action 21 Implementation Plan* since 2017 mainly concentrating on educating businesses around energy efficiency and waste reduction; research into extreme events and climate change risks; and provision of online resources. However the evidence suggests a stronger more prescriptive response is needed in the next decade.

If Tasmania was a national or international leader in climate change responses the whole state would benefit and could provide a positive example to the rest of Australia and the world.

Low Carbon & Economy & Society

There will be risks but many opportunities for Tasmania as it continues to transition towards a low/zero carbon economy and society.

If the transition continues at its slow pace then the State risks major social and economic disruption as warming oceans affect aquaculture and fishing; increasing drought and flood events threaten agriculture; heat events cause health problems; and major bushfire threatens all of the community.

The State must act now and Government must take a leading role in the adaptations that are required. They will need to promote the opportunities available to agriculture and industry in making changes. Less dependence on fossil fuels would be a major cost saving. Promotion of local industry and employment opportunities benefits local communities.

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We support the benefits listed in the *Discussion Paper [page 38]* in the risk analysis of the net zero pathway.

The State government must support Tasmania's low/zero carbon transition:

1. Facilitate local government and community leadership to mitigate the effects of climate change
 - Support the Tasmanian Fire Service, the University Fire Centre and the Community in studies and activities that reduce bushfire risk.
 - Ensure safe community spaces in the event of fire or flood.
 - Proactive fire management – identify methods to reduce fire loads in forests
 - Buy local – food, wool, hemp
 - Providing health support – including for mental health trauma after events
 - Encourage local food economies with city farms, local markets and community gardens

2. Establish State Planning legislation which acknowledges the need to prepare for the effects of climate change
 - Prevent development in low lying coastal and flood prone areas
 - Legislate to ensure developments provide green spaces to mitigate the effect of increasing temperatures.
 - Protect fresh water supplies to ensure sufficiency in drought periods
 - Invest in landscape management
 - Urban canopy cover
 - Enforce housing energy efficiency
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3. Ensure Tasmania is reducing its carbon producing activities:
 - Assist farmers to implement regenerative farming practices
 - Encourage hemp production in Tasmania
 - Encourage public transport use
 - Support University research into practices that reduce emissions and promote sustainable industries.
 - Electrification of transport

Emissions Targets

Climate changes are determining the appropriate long-term greenhouse gas emissions or emissions reduction target for Tasmania. The 2035 target is the best offered in the *Discussion Paper* and although it will be difficult it is what the Government should adopt.

Providing a series of short, medium and long term targets for specific sectors of the economy would benefit all in the state. The *Discussion Paper* provides some good examples of opportunities to reduce emissions in various sectors as a starting point. Sectors could include agriculture, transport, forestry, energy, industry, education, tourism, government, fisheries and health. The Government could improve its use of energy by having Parliament work business hours instead of going late into the night.

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Sectoral emissions targets make it clear that the whole community is involved in making changes and give clear guidance as to how each sector can make a contribution.

The key factors influencing Government decisions in setting State, sectoral and/or interim targets should be the scientific evidence on climate change and the effects it is already having on the state. Encouraging tourism developments like that involve helicopter flights into the Central Highlands does not meet any of the requirements of a low carbon economy.

Climate Resilience & Adaptation

Climate resilience will be developed through an understanding of how the climate is changing and the effects this will have on communities in the state.

The main roles for State government in supporting Tasmanian communities, infrastructure, economic activities and environments to becoming more resilient to projected climate change involve

1. Legislative action which establishes clear and enforceable actions and targets for a low carbon emissions future
2. Ensure Food security
3. Implement a state policy on water quality management
4. Protect biodiversity
5. Financial support through a thoughtful, tailored set of subsidies, incentives and programs to implement changes.
6. Education through school curricula; community seminars; resource provision; websites
7. Provision of services at the local level. Provide crisis health services to deal with trauma and anxiety.
8. Support innovation and research which will assist local economies and provide new technologies
9. Support and inform Local Government to establish resilience in local communities.

We must take decisive action now because as the Climate Council reported recently: *There are political, technical and other challenges ahead because action has been delayed. However, the alternative – a decision to not do enough, or to delay – will lead to massive climate disruption. Catastrophic outcomes for humanity cannot be ruled out if we fail to meet the climate challenge this decade.* <https://www.climatecouncil.org.au/resources/net-zero-emissions-plummet-decade/>

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