

Dear Sir/Ms,

Thank you for the opportunity to make a submission to the review of the Climate Change Act. I note you aspire for a world-leading Act. Lamentably, the current draft is far short of that.

This letter is adapted from one submitted by Dr Clare Smith, a retired general practitioner with whom I went to medical school, in Newcastle, NSW. Despite that location, we each have deep connections to Tasmania, in my case since 1974. I am, once again, a Tasmanian resident.

I am a contributor to the health chapter of the 2014 report by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (one of three Australians and the only one linked to Tasmania).

I am also sole editor of the book *Climate Change and Global Health* (CABI, 2016).  
<https://www.cabi.org/bookshop/book/9781786391421/>

Like Clare, I can supply plenty of sources if you require them.

Following are my recommendations

### **Declare a Climate Emergency**

Following the closure of COP 26, the urgency for action this decade is strikingly clear to billions of people. Also clear is our shared responsibility to achieve the goals of the Paris agreement.

The Bill should declare Climate Change as an emergency that requires a comprehensive collaborative approach to action, equivalent to a state of war where the enemy is emissions. In this case, we would all pull together, making sacrifices as needed, caring for the victims and supporting each other. The science is now clear and the danger is no longer distant, or even imminent, it has started and is escalating. We need this Act to be so inspiring that it stands above politics. This was the stated aim of this bill. Unfortunately this document does not deliver - but it could.

**Such a step would draw well-deserved global attention to Tasmania** – and be excellent for tourism, building on the legacy of the world's first environmental party

### **Separate emissions and sequestration in all reports.**

This is the 7th iteration of a Climate Change policy yet in that time we have seen emissions and greenhouse gas levels rise. 'Net Zero' is a fantasy, and a dangerous delusion; as recently clearly stated by Sir Robert Watson and his colleagues <https://socialeurope.eu/climate-scientists-concept-of-net-zero-is-a-dangerous-trap>

Although sequestration of kelp is a promising strategy to bury significant carbon (and its promotion is likely to lead to new economic opportunities in Tasmania), it is likely to be inadequate at the scale needed. As Clare pointed out, forests are exquisitely vulnerable to fire. Affordable, energy efficient carbon capture from smokestacks with permanent sequestration is a marketing ploy, not based on reality.

Clare argues that the current proposal calls for only counting direct anthropogenic contributions, which includes trees growing but not trees burning. This is as stupid as estimating a bank balance by ignoring the withdrawals.

Carbon storage value decreases as forests mature. We should not be relying on this for our 'success' though we should certainly be protecting our forests. I note that I have maintained 130 acres of forest on property I own near Moina, for over 40 years. To my south artificial forests have been planted and killed. In 2019 so called "Sustainable Timber Tasmania" proposed to clear fell 40 hectares of my forest, on my boundary, burn the residue (without any fire fighting capacity including water on hand).

Therefore, all future reporting should separate emissions and sequestration.

### **Time frame far too long - we need more action **this** decade.**

The Bill suggests a review period of 5 years. Given this is the critical decade, that is far too long a time frame. An independent commission with interim second yearly reporting and plan adjustments would be better.

Promises for 2050, or even 2030 are meaningless, a form of deception and baton passing to our children. It is completely immoral, as well as vacuous.

### **We must have mandated targets.**

The Bill does not mandate targets in any meaningful way. To make the world-leading positive contribution we could strive for, we need a well-funded independent body to oversee plans in each sector to reduce emissions to be net zero by 2030 without relying on off-sets by 2050. A clear pathway to make substantial gains by each sector should be developed for each sector. There needs to be accountability built in for the head of each department. These targets should be mandated to meet net zero without relying on LULUCF.

### **Climate Change is a Health and Medical Emergency.**

The Climate Emergency is also a Medical Emergency, as proclaimed by the Australian Medical Association (AMA). Like Clare, I do not know why the Health sector was left out of the Act or the Independent Review. Each of the Jacobs' focus groups had at least one doctor representing Doctors for the Environment (of which I am a co-founding board member) and/or the AMA, and spoke strongly about the fact that Climate Change is the biggest existing threat to global public health. The Health Sector in other jurisdictions contributes about 7-8% of emissions so it should be included in sectors needing to plan for emissions reduction. The Health Sector is already, in some regions facing increased pressure from climate change; as is the insurance sector. The social determinants of health that are vital are deteriorating, including from climate change. Both primary health care and hospitals are already stretched. Focused planning on climate change needs would help safeguard our capacity to meet the impacts of a changing planet.

### **Homelessness driven by climate refugees.**

The rate of homelessness is escalating as climate refugees (and rent seekers, fuelled by the general encouragement of individualism rampant in Australia, endorsed by all state governments) snap Tasmanian properties; this trend will steepen as more and more of Australia and the rest of the world becomes unliveable. Clare points out that in her final years in general practice it was very clear that climate was the driving motivation for migration. Anecdotally, I endorse that view.

There are two issues here. In the past the poor have had to move 'out' to what were less attractive and cheaper rural areas to find affordable housing, but that was always a small finite resource and 'out' is pretty much full now. This leaves no-where to go for too many, it is absurd to manage illness living in a tent, let alone attend to nutrition and well-being. Second, incoming migrants are no longer largely Tasmanians returning but are socially unconnected. This reduces social connectedness, and entails many risks, including racism.

### **The Health Sector must be at the table.**

The Health Sector should be represented at the table in planning for dealing with climate change. This is particularly true given the fact that our system is already broken and struggling, yet much more will be required of it. A major concern is the mental health of the young. A very recently released report by UNICEF found that 86% of Australian children and youth are already very concerned about climate change. Both Clare and I have met young adults seriously considering never becoming parents. They don't need baseless reassurance, they need to see action from their leaders. They need genuine leadership. I am most concerned about climate change because, unless checked very soon, it has the capacity to lead to the incremental and then very rapid demise of civilisation.

### **Climate change requires more planning for disasters, including health resources.**

Because climate change drives more intense weather events (including drought and heat waves, exacerbated by inexorable sea level rise), the Act needs specific provision to address this reality. Safety, health, food security, transport, communications, domestic violence and social dislocation all need to be considered. As for a fire threat, being prepared is the key. Where is this in the Act?

### **Identification and planning around specific vulnerabilities missing.**

Every single vehicle from all of Tasmania south of Macquarie Street HAS to cross Macquarie St to go north, including to get to the Royal Hobart Hospital. This is an unacceptable vulnerability, yet this Bill does not seem to have made any provision for identifying and addressing such risks, and no doubt there are more.

### **There is a gap in identifying and supporting newer technologies to urgently get to scale.**

There is also a gap in the Bill in providing mechanisms for identifying and supporting new technologies that can help, such as the seaweed projects providing carbon dioxide drawdown and methane reduction in cattle, or green hydrogen. The problem with getting newer technologies to actually make a difference at scale is that they need both time and a great deal of up-front investment while they compete with established cheaper offerings or demonstrate their worth. We don't have the time for the business as usual way of letting these technologies slowly emerge. We need active support with substantial investment.

### **Where are the lines of accountability?**

One of the most concerning features of this bill is that there do not seem to be any lines of accountability. It lacks teeth. Some counting and consulting is needed - but that is simply not enough when it is Code Red for the planet. The proposed Act is a toothless tiger.

### **Transport emissions and stranded assets for the poor.**

A major source of emissions is transport. Australia accepts dirty fuels and dirty vehicles that no other OECD country would tolerate. As fossil fuels prices inevitable continue to rise, internal combustion engines will join coal mines as stranded assets. Tasmania lacks (at present) sufficient population density to drive public transport. This stranded asset burden will fall hardest on those least able to afford it, as they have no hope of buying an electric vehicle. Tasmania, with its clean energy, can again show national leadership on this issue.

### **We need a plan that is not up to the Government of the Day.**

At this time of Code Red for the planet, we need a serious plan with real power for change that is not vulnerable to short political cycles. A robust legislative framework will provide the framework for the investment and development we need to achieve a real and substantial decrease in emissions.

### **No more coal, gas and oil exploration or extraction - land or sea.**

No more exploration or extraction of new fossil fuels - not coal and not gas, not in Tasmanian and not in our waters. There can be no excuse. The revenue streams can never make up for the harms. These will definitely include exposure to litigation for compensation as the science is clear - as Big Tobacco also found out.

### **What we DON'T need: Blah blah blah.**

There is a great deal of community appetite for something real and significant. We all now that massive change is upon us and it is not going to be a pain-free process. We need to make sure the load is spread with the poor protected. Let's have a really strong and visionary climate change bill that really delivers.

### **I strongly support a robust and much more ambitious Climate Change Act, with an independent Climate Commission to administer it.**

Your sincerely

Colin

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