

View results

Respondent

14

Anonymous

02:54

Time to complete

1. Do you agree with the proposed vision and goals for the action plan? Which goals are you most supportive of? Are there any other goals that should be considered?

Firstly, it is a pleasure to have a climate change action plan at all, and to have the opportunity to comment on it. It is a good start.

The vision is heading in the right direction but there are no actual targets. If there are no targets, how are we to measure success, or otherwise? Furthermore, there seems to be a jump to modeling and providing information about our future climate challenges without enough focus on a transparent and robust assessment of where our emissions are coming from now. The amended Climate Change (State Action 2008) requires the government to 'Prepare and publish an annual greenhouse gas emissions report and an annual climate change activity statement'. I would have thought this might figure more strongly in this Action Plan. It is implied in suggesting that 'communities, government agencies, business and industry will be able to make informed decisions about our emissions and managing climate risks and opportunities.' Without really accurate information about where we are starting from, how can this happen? The influence of the fossil fuel industry globally and in Australia has seen massive under-reporting of actual emissions, recognized in most independent assessments. In Tasmania, the forestry industry is apparently a surprisingly powerful player considering the degree to which it has required extensive support from taxpayers, and the fact that felling old growth forests is probably our biggest single emitter. If we are to have science based action, we need a robust scientific assessment of these emissions as starting point, and I would like it to include an assessment of emissions including fugitive emissions from the use of domestic and commercial gas.

Health is a foundational community asset, and climate change has been declared by the WHO to the biggest threat to health, yet health is barely mentioned. In the documentation around this consultation, there is extensive discussion about learning from past disasters to better future management strategies, as there should be. However there is nothing here about including planning for the provision of health services - general practice, community pharmacy and community nursing - during an emergency. In the 19/20 mainland fires, GPs were left to set themselves up in garages or other non-practice venues with borrowed generators and very little formal support as best they could, trying to support evacuated populations, sometimes presenting with no medications or personal health records, and other services were scrambling to do the same. The goals should include planning provision of medical services in the case of disasters. It should also be a specific goal of this plan, in collaboration with the Healthy Tasmania Strategic Plan.

An important health issue that is not addressed are the impacts of climate change and related threats to mental health, particularly in young people and in those who have experienced a disaster. I am please to note that resources have been directed at developing climate change resources for schools, but the focus seems to be directed at understanding the science, though there is a mention of applying critical thinking to how society and our economy will need to build resilience and adapt to its impacts. I am not sure that this captures the current level of 'high or very high' concern amongst Australian students, up around 70%, and in my own experience noticeable even in Grade 1 (6-7 year olds). Eco-distress is very real and contributes to poor mental health outcomes, particularly when in combination with other stresses. These include high heat days when both domestic violence and Emergency Department presentations rise.

There has not been one mention of the fact that every single vehicle from south of Macquarie St has to cross or traverse Macquarie St to get to the Royal Hobart Hospital or any other northern destination. In the case of a major disaster, like those we are expecting, this is an unacceptable vulnerability.

2. Will the three priority areas -

(1) information and knowledge

(2) transition and innovation and

(3) adaptation and resilience, help Tasmania achieve its legislated 2030 emissions reduction target, and its vision for action on climate change?

Are there other issues not covered by the three priority areas?

The issues I don't see as adequately covered include a lack of specific planning for climate change fueled disasters, particularly a lack of consideration of health impacts, both acute and long-term, physical and mental, and the increased demands on a health system already struggling. The statement: 'Supporting actions to protect priority populations from the impacts of climate change such as extreme weather events' may imply this, but whose actions is it supporting? Is this going to be left up to anyone out there who addresses something just on their patch? Something as important as this needs specific investment and commitment. I propose a fourth goal - 'The Protection of the Vulnerable'. This would include our most vulnerable human populations, on whom these impacts always weight more heavily: our poorest, particularly those already homeless or close to it, the very old and very young, those with existing poor health, those subject to domestic violence, our First Nations people, those living alone or socially isolated or in rural and remote areas. It would also include vulnerable species, habitats and ecosystems. This has to be more than a nice idea that will fall over the moment a company wants, for example, to build a tailings dam where it is cheaper but more dangerous, threatening irreplaceable habitat, or extend a farming practice like growing salmon in a spot despite the environmental degradation already in evidence there. This whole climate plan is nothing more than greenwashing if it does not have the power to intervene if the science says harms are occurring, and impose actual and effectively deterrent penalties. All the goals read as very nice - but rather soft. I can see a lot of work has gone into them to this point, and are a great early step and an advance on where we were only a few years ago, but given the seriousness and urgency of the challenge we are facing, for survival, they seem inadequate.

On (1), only if there is a robust scientific assessment of our current emissions with no exclusions, and willingness to curb them, even if this includes stopping old growth logging and any new fossil fuel extraction, including gas in the Bass Straight, and coal on the mainland.

On (2), only if there is real action on poor fuel standards, poor emissions control setting on vehicle importation and support and incentives to get Tasmanians off gas. There will be opportunities for replacement industries that need support to be identified and established. An example might be a mainland company that already cannot meet demand to convert utility vehicles to electric - a much smaller industry than a full car making industry, and one that if applied to light vehicles in Tasmania could aid a much more rapid transition to affordable EVs.

Legislative and policy decisions have to made that have real teeth and will drive real change, even if painful in the short term, to face what is ahead.

On (3), again it all sounds good as far as it goes, but that is not far enough. In particular, surely health should get a section to itself. The risks to health are huge, and include things we have not had to deal with before, like the incursion of diseases associated with warmer weather, increased high pollen count days in combination with higher winds and temperature adding to allergic distress, more mould exposure after floods and heavy rain. Supply chain issues for medication are already problematic. Poor air quality from wildfire smoke is directly harmful to health and particularly to unborn and newborn babies. Provision of health services during and after disasters needs urgent planning. Mental health impacts are already huge. Talking about it does not make it worse, but doctors and teachers need support to help their patients and students, where the mental health impact is already high. I would like to see

specific investment in the provision of resources to provide evidence based tools to respond to these demands.

3. Will the key actions under Priority area 1 help support decision making for you and your community or organisation? What types of projects should be supported under the final action plan?

Scientific, transparent assessment of current emissions without dodgy land use accounting or undercounting direct and fugitive emissions as a baseline is essential, sectorally based and including the health sector - often a high emitter and producer of waste, though I can't see we have even looked to see in Tasmania. First a baseline, then a real target, then a real assessment of progress and a real penalty for failure.

4. Will the key actions under Priority area 2 support Tasmania to achieve its 2030 emissions reduction target and continued emissions reduction across Tasmania? What types of projects should be supported under the final action plan?

Addressing our poor fuel standards and acceptance of extremely high emissions vehicles not accepted anywhere else in the OECD, particularly utes, needs to be addressed urgently. Apply maximum pressure to the federal design makers - but do we have to wait for them? I'd like to see projects focusing on waste reduction, waste recycling, development of a biochar industry to put carbon back into soil along with other soil health initiatives, support for regenerative farming and care of waterways, cool burning and other best practice fire management strategies. (Note that although not counted as man-made emissions, the climate change fueled bush fires of 2019 released a vast amount of carbon dioxide as well as presenting a direct health threat from air pollution.) Personally I think using wind farm energy to support pumped hydro in Tasmania would be a much better investment than the Marinus link which looks like being obsolete before it is even completed, given the rapid roll out of renewables and battery storage in mainland states. Keep the power here and use it for green hydrogen, pumped hydro and other green industries. All these initiatives need to be assessed independently for carbon footprint for every stage - building, running and decommissioning. Micro-grid developments where community solar and battery resources are interconnected have great potential. And there are many other innovations in the pipeline. The main threat in my view is the vested interests and political capital of existing big players like forestry and mining exerting undue influence as if it is 'business as usual' - but it is not, and the stakes are too high.

5. Will the key actions under Priority area 3 build resilience and support adaptation planning across Tasmania? What types of projects should be supported under the final action plan?

Lots of these ideas, again, are good but limited and vague. One of the impacts of global climate change is going to be mass movements of humans, as previously habitable environments cease to be livable, whether because of sea level rise, other climate and ecological disasters and conflicts or simply opportunities for a better life. Tasmania has already been identified as a particularly desirable place to live and population growth is increasing much faster than expected. In the next 10 years we are expecting around 80,000 newcomers, mostly from overseas. Where will these people live? If they displace locals, where will they go? Traditionally the displaced poor had to move further out, but that was always a finite resource and it has been used up. How will we set about integrating these newcomers? What will happen to them if their community is affected by a natural disaster? Historically Tasmanians have been likely to have relatives or other connections they could stay with, but who will the newcomers turn to? We need to plan for this, and for a possibly much great number of immigrants.

Addressing eco-anxiety and directing it into action as a therapeutic step needs urgent and well-resourced action. (On this point I have to comment that the new draconian anti-protest legislation has had an extremely negative impact on the community, particularly the young, as the barriers to peaceful protest have become far too daunting and getting it wrong far too punitive.) Doctors, teachers, psychologists, social workers etc need access to well-formulated strategies for themselves and those they care for. These resources exist but a specific funding target could be to identify the key players and resources here, and support their distribution. We need some new models of care to address the dire shortage of trained psychologists and climate-aware medical practitioners, able to deliver help at scale. An expansion of the Curious Climate program could be considered, along with working with professional training colleges and their accreditation requirements to include this training for all relevant practioners.

6. Are there other ways the government could make its action on climate change, and progress towards meeting its targets, more transparent and accessible?

As above on baseline greenhouse gas assessments and reporting. Publish facts on the gas emissions reports that are verified by an independent and respected process, including on the emissions from old growth forestry, mining and gas use, waste management, agriculture, transport etc, set a real world firm target in each area and report on actual progress.

Report back on innovative strategies - which strategies are working and how can these benefits be magnified and exported.

Make businesses more responsible for their waste, particularly the construction industry - measure what is happening now (eg plastic use audits), set targets and check again. For example, make it MUCH more expensive to dispose of demolition/building project waste and encourage much better recycling, as has been done in other countries. At the very same time that building materials are in short supply, re-usable materials are demolished brutally and discarded. These materials could be channeled into creative re-use in providing cheaper housing, including social housing. Provide support to salvage and recycling operations and monitor the impact, report back to parliament.

7. If you have any further questions or feedback please add it here

How are people like me and many others going to have an avenue of passing on information about innovations that might be suitable for Tasmania, or to make comments on what is happening with the Action Plan?

This submission has been complicated by being overseas with inadequate internet and unsaved portions, my apologies for any parts that might appear incomplete or disorganized. I can certainly clarify these later.

8. Please provide your full name, or the name of your organisation *

Dr Clare Smith

9. Please provide your email address (optional)

10. Do you give permission for the Climate Change Office to publish your submission? *

Yes

No