

Response to the new Climate Change (State Action) Amendment Bill 2021

Overview

In reviewing the Climate Change Act 2008, it is important to recognize that one of the major sources of carbon emissions in Tasmania is from transport – in particular private cars. In rural areas this accounts for about 30% of emissions.

Many households own more than one car, which is costly and wasteful of resources. Tasmania is also “at the end of the line” for provision of fuel (petrol and diesel) so would be severely impacted in the event of a supply chain failure to Australia.

The 2020s is a time of great change with belated recognition by governments that the high levels of greenhouse gases (GHG) already in our atmosphere are causing changes in the climate globally, and increasingly obviously in Australia. While the changes may (or may not) be so dramatic in Tasmania, it is critical that strong action is taken as soon as possible and the Government therefore needs to take strong and positive action and to review progress every year to ensure that the proposed actions are effective.

Transport

As a resident in a rural area I am very aware of the problems faced by those living without a car and the cost of car ownership may be beyond low income families.

Also, many workers commute for distances up to 50km or more into Hobart for work. Mostly they travel in their own car, often as the only occupant. Very few use public transport.

The introduction of four express bus services from Huonville in the morning and late afternoon is an example of forward thinking to increase passenger numbers. However, this is not enough: many live in outlying areas and there is no community transport to enable commuters to easily reach Huonville. This may mean that even if they take the bus from Huonville to Hobart they may take a car to Huonville so the family at home requires a second car.

Well-organised and flexible community transport, as well as car-pooling and ride-sharing, with provision of information through the mobile phone network would help to solve these problems and reduce single occupancy car use by commuters. This would not only reduce GHG emissions but also reduce congestion which is increasingly affecting major roads into Hobart. This approach is consistent with the recent Legislative Council investigation into traffic congestion around Hobart which found that the best solutions involve public transport and active transport rather than building more roads which only exacerbates the problems.

If less public money were allocated to road-building and instead funds were allocated to subsidising fares (almost to zero?) on public transport for two years, with reporting on the success in terms of GHG emissions over that period, the approach could demonstrate the effectiveness of public transport.

It is critical at this time of rapid population increases in Tasmania that the actions in the amendments to the Climate Change Act 2008 are not just “more of the same” but enable a different approach to be taken.

Thank you for the opportunity to contribute to this review of the Climate Change Act.

Yours sincerely

Dr Liz Smith

Taking a global perspective, CEH is gravely concerned about world emissions and how little time the planet has to avoid catastrophic climate outcomes. Climate scientists advise that there is a finite amount of carbon that the world can emit in the future to keep global warming at or below 1.5C. It is referred to as the ‘carbon budget’ and is around 440 billion tons. Applying current world emission rates this budget will be depleted in 10 or 11 years, which is why the 2030 deadline for massive reductions is critical. It is therefore extremely important that further action is taken as soon as possible – and this includes Tasmania.

1. Climate change action plan – 5A.

We support the general intent of this section of the Amendments Act but are concerned that the timing for action plan is 5 years. CEH thinks that the first plan should be produced far sooner than 5 years (eg 2 years) and that there can be ongoing changes added to the plan on a continuous basis.

Recommendation 1.

- Set an ambitious emissions reduction target for fossil based fuels – coal, gas, petrol, diesel - for 2030 within one year of the Bill being enacted.
- Continuously amend plans rather than waiting for up to 5 years to write a new plan.

2. Statewide climate change risk assessment – 5B.

CEH supports the development of statewide climate change risk assessments, but is concerned about the timelines proposed in the draft Bill.

Recommendation 2.

- Draw up the first climate change risk assessments within 1 year of the Bill being enacted and amend the assessment on an ongoing basis.

3. Sector-based transition planning – 5C.

3.a.

It is not clear who is to produce sector-based transition plans, the Minister or the industry sector? Either way it is important that it is executed expeditiously – waiting five years for the first plan, given the global imperative to reduce emissions, is far too long.

Recommendation 3.

- That all sector-based transition plans are written within 18 months of the Bill being enacted and updated on an ongoing basis.

3.b.

While clause (f) includes ‘any other sector or sub-sector determined by the Minister ‘ This leaves too much to the discretion of the Minister, and does not consider the reality of business and industry in Tasmania. Sectors such as tourism, construction, hospitality and retail, all of which are responsible for comparatively large emissions, have not been mentioned in the Act.

Recommendation 4.

- Prepare sector-based transition plans for all industry sectors operating in the Tasmanian economy and prioritise completion on the basis the scale of emissions.

3.c.

Section 5C requires the Minister to consult with business and industry representatives but this will only provide a part of the whole picture. The Minister should also be consulting state government

departments, local government and the community. The university sector is also likely to be able to provide a perspective on transition planning.

Recommendation 5.

- The Minister should consult state government departments, local government, the community and other interested parties in the preparation of transition plans.

3.d.

Preparing industry transition plans for the Tasmanian economy will be a considerable amount of work. To ensure it is done thoroughly and in a timely way will require adequate resourcing.

Recommendation 6.

- Adequate resources will be required for the preparation of transition plans and should be built into the Amendment Act.

4. Additional measures for reducing carbon not in the Amended Act

There are a number of additional measures not included in the Amended Act that will assist Tasmania to reduce its fossil fuel emissions.

4.a Local government

There are 29 local government areas in Tasmania with very different strategies to address climate change. Many have no policies at all. It is important that the role of local government is set out in the Amended Act. This should include both the responsibilities of local councils for mitigation and adaptation for the council and the general community, and should be consistent throughout Tasmania to ensure effectiveness. It will also require funding packages to enable councils to take action on climate change.

Recommendation 7.

- State the role of local government for dealing with climate change for the organisation and the community and provide resources to facilitate realistic action.

4.b. Housing

New domestic dwellings are required to comply with a 6 star home energy rating. This needs to be reviewed as in many cases it is too low to deliver comfortable housing during hot summers and cold winters. Many experts now think the standard should be lifted to 7.5 stars. Additionally much of the older housing in Tasmania has no energy rating and this can result in high emission and become very costly to residents.

It is important that new affordable housing is built to at least the same thermal standard as other domestic dwellings. This includes good design that ensures a high level of insulation, good thermal mass and orientation to take full advantage of solar gain for heating in cooler weather.

Recommendation 8.

- Review the home energy rating standard and increase to 7.5 stars.
- Require all homes being sold or rented have a home energy rating as advice to buyers and renter.
- Set and apply minimum standards of construction for all new affordable housing in Tasmania that more than matches homes built for the open market.

4c Improving housing for low income Tasmanians

The majority of lower priced rental properties in Tasmania have poor thermal performance and are not equipped with low energy appliances, solar panels or solar water heaters. Lack of these amenities is expensive for tenants and increases emissions and energy usage. To overcome these shortfalls a scheme, underwritten by state government and rolled out by councils need to be introduced. Other

jurisdictions have established schemes where improvements are provided for householders at low or minimal costs and the full cost is then paid back over time, with the money that the householder saves through energy efficiency of the dwelling.

Recommendation 9.

- Establish a scheme to assist households improve the thermal efficiency and equipment performance underwritten by state government and run by councils.

4d. Transport

Electric vehicles will be part of the solution leading up to 2030 but without Federal government facilitating ways to reduce the price, the uptake is likely to be sluggish. As transport emissions in Tasmania are currently around 30% of total C-emissions it is important to also introduce other solutions. This will start with designing integrated transport plans for the whole of Tasmania so that people can use community transport, public transport, car-pooling and ride-sharing, as well as adopting active transport practices. In addition to encouraging a modal transport shift, less emphasis needs to be placed on building new roads, widening roads and facilitating higher speeds on roads.

Recommendation 10.

- Accelerate the introduction of integrated transport plans for the State and reduce the reliance on road construction.
- Properly fund and resource public and community transport and a statewide car-pooling system using state-of-the-art technology.
- Plan and implement active transport routes within all communities and, as appropriate, linking communities.

4e. Carbon accounting

All new projects, whether government, business or community, should provide a statement about the carbon that is likely to be generated as a consequence of the development, both as embodied energy and ongoing emissions.

Recommendation 11.

- Establish a standardized process for budgeting and reporting the carbon footprint of all new projects in the State.
- Require all new development applications put to councils to include a projected carbon budget for the development.
- All new state government projects will have a carbon budget included in the development statement.