



Circular Economy Huon

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

Circular Economy Huon (CEH) welcomes the opportunity to comment on the draft CLIMATE CHANGE (STATE ACTION) AMENDMENT BILL 2021. CEH is a community group based in the Huon Valley that over the past four years has been involved in organizing climate change forums for the community, advocating on improved transport systems and better housing options, responding to government policies and papers and has worked collaboratively with the Huon Valley Council on several of these issues.

Overview

Tasmania is in a comparatively fortunate position in terms of emissions - our electricity supply is getting closer to emissions free, we are able to sequester CO₂ in our forests and have a comparatively low population. However, there are many activities where the State Government has either not addressed emissions, or still address comprehensively. So while we may not have emissions at the scale of other Australian states it is timely that the Climate Change Act 2008 is being reviewed.

CEH is confident that while greater effort is needed in Tasmania to reduce our emissions, action on climate change can also make a positive contribution to our social, economic and environmental way of living if we target our efforts strategically. We can use this as an opportunity to improve living standards for those that are less well-off and struggling with the high cost of inefficient housing options and transport.

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 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 timeliness 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 discretion to 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 of 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 pertinent 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 transitions 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 effective outcomes. 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, all houses built before 2013 in Tasmania were not energy rated. In most cases this results in these properties producing high emissions from heating and cooling and it is very costly to residents. Some other jurisdictions, (eg the ACT) mandate that all properties are energy assessed prior to sale or re-letting. This is a stimulus for improving the thermal performance and energy use in dwellings and raises the selling price or rental rates for a home.

It is important that affordable housing is built to at least the same thermal standard as other domestic dwellings. This includes ensuring 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 to 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 match homes built on 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, which is 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 emissions it is important to also introduce other solutions. This would 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 and use state-of-the-art technology.
- Plan and implement active transport routes within all communities and, as appropriate, to link 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. This will enable those assessing the

development to judge the implication of each development against the 'carbon budget' and ensure governments are considering the mitigation and adaptation implications of all new projects in Tasmania.

Recommendation 11.

- Establish a standardized process for budgeting and reporting the carbon footprint of all new projects in the State calculated both prior to the project commencing and updated annually, and publicly reported.
- Require all new development applications put to councils and projects of 'state significance' to include a projected carbon budget for the development.
- All new state government projects will have a carbon budget included in the development statement.

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