

I write as an ordinary citizen of Tasmania who has followed the development of responses at international, national, state and local government levels to the existential threat of global heating for many years. While Tasmania does, at least, have an act intended to address this, it has been almost unknown to the general population and largely ineffective. Revision of the Act is well overdue.

Climate Tasmania and the Tasmanian Independent Science Council have developed a response to the latest draft revision which I endorse wholeheartedly. However there are other observations and recommendations I wish to add.

In relation to their 'summary of recommendations' R.3 to R.7: For too long the TCCO has been self-congratulatory about our wonderful efforts resulting in net negative greenhouse gas emissions by 2013. I submit this conclusion may be entirely illusory. It is certainly temporary and unsustainable. It relies on the estimation that the so-called LULUCF emissions have gone from 9.2 Mt of CO₂ equivalent to absorption of 7 Mt, as documented in 2013. In 2021 these magical figures have gone to 11.37 Mt emitted in 1990 to 10.04 Mt absorbed in 2019. While the science behind these estimations is continually improving as our knowledge grows, they remain just that – estimations. Even if we do accept them the precipitous change is almost entirely associated with downturns in the timber industry including the collapse of Gunns, the collapse of overseas market and growing social and scientific concerns about old growth logging and the moves towards plantation timber. As plantations come on line it is likely these emission will rise again so we cannot go on pretending that all is well.

If the LULUCF numbers are removed from the calculations it is evident Tasmania has done practically nothing to reduce its remaining greenhouse gas emissions. (See Figures 4, 5 and 6 in the State Greenhouse Gas Inventory) While LULUCF must continue to be monitored, as in recommendations 6 and 7, our focus has to move to our use of fossil fuels.

Recommendation 8: While it may seem an onerous task it is imperative that we continually improve targets for lowering emissions. As I write COP 26 is drawing to a conclusion and it appears likely there will a resolution that reporting on emissions reduction targets be required annually, not just every five years as is current. As part of aligning with COP meetings I would like to see Tasmania do the same.

Recommendations 10, 11: The International Energy Agency has recently advised that no further development of fossil fuel reserves should be undertaken – **anywhere!** To comply with that advice I believe there should be an immediate moratorium on the issuing of any coal, oil or gas exploration licences in Tasmania. Furthermore a mechanism should be developed to encourage those currently holding such licences to understand approval for the development of any resources they discover will be extremely unlikely.

Recommendation 12: I strongly endorse this recommendation. After all, this enterprise is almost entirely about reducing and eventually eliminating the use of fossil fuels. If we don't actually measure what we want to reduce how can we genuinely measure progress?

Recommendation 13: Climate change is affecting everyone and everything. Not only must it be “considered in the development of government policies, plans and strategies” but there should be strong recommendations for affirmative action wherever possible. To me there are obvious areas where government policies could and should be doing such things as ensuring government vehicle fleets become all electric as soon as possible and all government controlled buildings should be fitted with solar panels, to name just two.

We actually face twin threats of climate catastrophe and catastrophic biodiversity loss and ecological collapse. A simple step Tasmania should take which will be effective for both is the cessation of old growth forest logging – everywhere and as soon as possible.

In conclusion, COP 26 has made it abundantly clear that current emissions reduction goals are still insufficient to reach the target of maintaining less than 1.5 degrees. Furthermore promises made at Paris have been broken and goals have not been met. The task is huge and the role of possible climate ‘tipping points’ in confounding predictions is extremely problematic. We are already seeing the catastrophic effects of global heating but thermal inertia in the oceans and the atmosphere guarantee that temperatures will continue to rise perhaps for another thirty years after atmospheric CO2 levels stabilise. Every individual, government and business has a part to play and the need is urgent.

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TAS

13th November, 2021

References: Tasmania and The Tasmanian Independent Science Council
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2. Tasmanian Climate Change Office, Department of Premier and Cabinet
“Tasmanian Greenhouse Gas Accounts
State Greenhouse Gas Inventory 2012-13”
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3. Tasmanian Climate Change Office, Department of Premier and Cabinet
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