

Please accept my comments about the proposed changes to the 'Tasmanian Climate Change Act'

First the name. It is the nature of climate to change. Climate is a balance of many dynamic elements that constantly change. Rather than just follow blindly, we should be referring to a Climate Balance Destabilisation Act for Tasmania.

Our careless acknowledgement of natural processes is endemic, yet obvious solutions are being ignored by those empowered to act. This inaction is depriving future generations of access to the time and resources that will be needed, for our way of life to persist. That calls for something more than motherhood statements. Insurance companies are not procrastinating, with rising policy costs that match the increasing prevalence of natural disasters.

Most state governments choose to disagree with the federal government's viewpoint which is obviously based on the perspective of the mining community. The ACT, South Australia and Victoria, a major coal producer, have already taken positive steps to cash in on the business opportunities that stem from climate remediation initiatives.

Other than setting a zero emission target by 2050, so far the proposed review of the Tasmanian Act, has come up with little in the way of affirmative action. Rather it is offering the option of even more procrastination. Serious penalties and real benefits for Tasmanians are on the table, so, despite any political inconvenience, the proposed review needs to get it right.

Tasmania needs to assess what technologies are likely to rise to the surface over the next 25 years and come up with strategies that will position it amongst the leaders rather than the followers. That means investment in research, in research commercialisation and in development of capacity.

Given its established Hydro assets, Tasmania is well positioned to take advantage of the opportunities on offer. Hydro supplemented by wind on the west coast, and solar photovoltaics in the south east where cool sunny conditions maximise output, potentially could leave Tasmania with a valuable generation excess. In order to make the most of the situation, there needs to be strong government policy stimulating sustainable energy industries, not forgetting rooftop solar.

Action is needed to address the issue of workforce capability. A workforce able to support growth of the sustainable energy industry would require access to a range of skills, from basic R&D to management, to fabrication, to construction then to power electronics and control system development. Meeting those needs could virtually eliminate youth unemployment in the state, providing suitable training facilities were put in place to match the potential industry growth.

Given that the state is already relying on a complex generation mix, it could only benefit from establishing an international centre of excellence for power electronics and control system development, perhaps accessing federal climate action funding for the initiative.

Tasmanian transport policy is begging for an injection of common sense. Fast rail is now the norm for any developed economy. The technology is not rocket science. Only third world countries and Tasmania still have to put up with antiquated rail rattlers. Tasmania has the advantage of being small, with the bulk of its population on a North South axis. A fast rail linking Devonport to Hobart via Launceston is a 'no brainer' for its climate action policy.

There are many ways of reducing the impacts that contemporary transport infrastructure is inflicting on climate balance. A light rail system servicing Hobart's northern suburbs would alleviate pressure on the CBD for parking, as well as encouraging the owners of private vehicles to leave them in the garage more often.

A further tranche of climate action opportunities provided by the transport industry includes a range of emission reduction opportunities. A coordinated, logistical simplification of the state's existing transport infrastructure i.e its road, rail, air and shipping systems while would lead to innumerable efficiency improvements. For example, a Hobart bypass from Grove to New Norfolk/Bridgewater, would not only reduce trip distances for many motorists, but would also help to relieve traffic congestion in Hobart..

Perhaps less obvious, any electricity generation surplus could be used as an incentive to attract more manufacturing activity to the state. As well as boosting job opportunities, it reduces the transport cost associated with importing consumables.

Mankind is destabilising the climate balance faster than most life forms can assimilate the change. Minimising the negatives associated with the change, is going to require society, as we know it, to modify its behaviour on an equivalent scale. We have access to the technologies needed to meet the challenge. However, we lack the social coherence that might enable us to apply those technologies effectively. Business opportunities based on improving our understanding of how we might apply technology to better effect will abound.

Improving the situation will require the Tasmanian government to fast track an education program aimed at coordinating universal access to, and appreciation of, the potential for new technologies to remediate environmental damage. The Labour Party's policy initiative of re-instituting free education for any Tasmanian who wants to take the option up, is fundamentally sound.

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