

Wed 7 Nov 2018

Tasmania's Climate Change (State Action) Act 2008 (the Act) review 2018

Thank you for the opportunity to provide input into the review of the Act. Being a scientist, I have found it disappointing in recent years that the Government appears to be acting quite slowly on Climate Change. While we are tardy in action we cannot impart to others in Australia and overseas the importance of taking urgent action on reducing greenhouse gas emissions. Nor can we benefit from the economic gains in pursuing the new technologies and discarding the old. In recent years and the coming decades this failure to take climate change as a serious, urgent issue is becoming increasingly costly to both Tasmanians and others. There is nothing for society to gain from slow action on climate change, and much to lose. My submission follows, below,

Regards,



Ms. M. C. Jones.

Recommendation 1.

Although the zero emissions by 2050 probably looked reasonable several months ago, time has shown, with the release of the latest report from the IPCC (ref.1), that this will be inadequate to make our contribution to worldwide zero emissions by 2050. The urgency of acting on rapid and meaningful greenhouse reduction policies cannot be over-estimated. Tasmania should take the economic opportunity to become a net exporter of clean energy, with the other major sectors achieving zero net emissions earlier than 2050. A 2040 target for a fossil-free Tasmania, including ending exports of fossil fuels, with each of the five major sectors achieving zero or below zero carbon emissions by 2040 is achievable, and desirable. The legislated target must be not just aspirational, but legislated with the relevant minister accountable for achieving it via subsidiary, annual to five yearly milestones.

The Parliament must recognise in the Act that the international community has reached agreement to hold the global average temperature increase to well below 2 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels and to try to limit the temperature increase to 1.5 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels. This can be included in the Act, with the opportunity to update as new international agreements, IPCC reports and advice become available.

Recommendation 2

Q1. Do you support the proposed revised objects of the Act? If not, what other objects should be considered?

The revised objects may be easier to read than the 2012 version, but the resulting amendment to Section 4 (Objects of the Act) omits the need for elimination of greenhouse gas emissions as a priority. The proposed objects are too weak on ways to achieve zero net greenhouse gas emissions in a timeframe that is necessary to prevent dangerous climate change. As they stand they argue for setting of targets, monitoring, evaluating, reporting and responding to impacts but they do not explicitly call for preventative action. Thus, the objects are not contributing to achieving the target in Recommendation 1.

Local Councils and individuals are at the forefront of climate action in Tasmania. The objectives could provide support to climate change reduction projects at the levels of state and local government, small business, community and consumer.

One objective could be emissions-reduction as a priority in all government departmental programs and agencies.

There is too little emphasis on emissions reduction strategies, but these are the most important part of climate action policies to reach net zero emissions in all sectors, and below zero emissions in some. The Act should recognise that the changing climate is leading to an uncertain and ever-changing future to which, by its nature, adaptation is increasingly difficult, and will become impossible if we do not end all fossil fuel extraction urgently.

The Act should set out the framework for meeting interim targets that will lead to achieving the 2050 target.

It is time to account for, and reduce to zero, or below zero, Tasmania's exported and imported emissions. This can be included in the Act.

Recommendation 3

The statutory requirement to have regard to climate change needs stronger wording than 'require' or 'should' or 'consider'. Tasmania's climate action so far has effectively been no reduction in emissions and no regulations made. The downturn in the forestry industry accounts for all of Tasmania's significant greenhouse gas emissions reductions to date. The wording of 'relevant decisions' is also weak and does not require Government to routinely make decisions across all departments and Acts with climate change in mind.

The State Government policies in all agencies need to aim for rapid investments in climate change reduction projects at the levels of state and local government, small business, community and consumer. This may require emissions-reduction as a statutory requirement in all government departmental programs and relevant activities.

Recommendation 4

Q2. Do you support the proposed principles to guide decision making? Are there other principles that should be included? If so, why?

This set of principles seems to make greater emphasis on adapting or taking into account likely climate changes relating to a decision. It appears to repeat the objects and it does not seem to drive any emissions reductions. The recommendation from the independent review was using important terms like abatement initiatives, actions that benefit a low carbon economy, adaptation where risks are greatest.

A new Tasmanian Climate Action Council could have a role to play in this recommendation. So the Act should be amended to enable the ongoing presence of a new Tasmanian Climate Action Council, of a similar type to the one that was ended a few years ago.

It really is essential to be ensuring that decisions seek to minimise adverse contributions to climate change, and seek to maximise beneficial contributions to greenhouse gas emissions reduction. Decision making processes need to aim to optimise their contribution to Tasmania's greenhouse gas emissions reduction target. The complementarity with national policies, programs, initiatives, standards or commitments relating to climate change is probably desirable, but we need to be more proactive, and join with other state initiatives as well where these are beneficial to reducing

greenhouse gas emissions and to Tasmania. We must not be held back by inaction or slow action at the federal level.

In subsection e) a *proactive* management approach is desirable to allow for evaluation of the decision, policy, program or process and to encourage continual improvement. An adaptative approach is not likely to encourage improvement.

Recommendation 5

Even though the government has *Climate Action 21*, we still need to retain in the Act that the Climate Action Plan be a statutory requirement. It does not need to be linked to the electoral cycle and we should hope for continuing strategies straddling electoral terms. A four year plan is unlikely to be any more practicable than a five year plan. Multi-party agreements should be sought in preference to partisan plans, especially given the urgency that is now upon us.

Q3. Do you have any other comments or suggestions relating to the proposed amendments to the Act?

The Act needs to provide for an expert advisory panel to government, like the Tasmanian Climate Action Council that existed a few years ago. This Council should advise not only the progress in science and impending impacts of climate change, but also on ways to achieve the overall target of maximising Tasmania's contribution to average worldwide temperature rise of no more than 1.5 degrees centigrade, while managing inherent risks.

A statement in the Act recognising the urgency of taking effective climate change minimisation actions would help.

There are some valuable initiatives in *Climate 21*, however, much more needs to be done including ending all exploration and extraction of fossil fuels; the phasing out fossil fuels in transport in favour of electric or hydrogen powered vehicles; recognising that the use of biomass for fuel can only ever be used for very small volume, specialised power sources. Some of these can and should be legislated to occur well before 2050.

Reference 1.

web search term: - IPCC_WG1AR5_TS_FINAL.pdf

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