Amending the *Climate Change (State Action) Act 2008*

November 2018
About TasCOSS

TasCOSS is the peak body for the community services sector in Tasmania. Our membership includes individuals and organisations active in the provision of community services to low-income Tasmanians living in vulnerable and disadvantaged circumstances. TasCOSS represents the interests of its members and their clients to government, regulators, the media and the public. Through our advocacy and policy development, we draw attention to the causes of poverty and disadvantage, and promote the adoption of effective solutions to address these issues.

Please direct any enquiries about this submission to:

Kym Goodes
CEO
Ph. 03 6169 9500
Email: Kym@tascooss.org.au
Introduction
Thank you for the opportunity to make a submission to the review of the Climate Change (State Action) Act 2008 (the Act).

TasCOSS advocates on behalf of low-income Tasmanians who often live in vulnerable and disadvantaged circumstances. Our submissions and advocacy are strongly informed by the expertise of our members and the lived experiences of the Tasmanians we represent.

In Tasmania as elsewhere, climate change will affect low income households and disadvantaged communities disproportionately. Low income earners tend to live in areas more likely to be adversely affected by climate change, have less ability to move or make other necessary adjustments to their living circumstances, and are less likely to be able to afford insurance or other additional costs.1 Addressing climate change, both in terms of mitigation and of adaptation, is therefore a social justice issue.

The independent review of the Act has delivered a series of recommendations, several of which align well with TasCOSS’ submission to the first state of the review of the Act in 2016. In that submission, TasCOSS argued for a target of zero net emissions by 2050. Given that Tasmania in fact achieved zero net emissions in 2016, the challenge now is to maintain this status in the face of changing climate conditions, which may lead to greater pressures on the state’s hydroelectric system and to higher emissions from bushfires. We support the recommendation that Section 5 of the Act should be amended to establish a new long-term emissions target, and recommend that this target should be maintenance of zero-net-emissions status from this point forward.

We also argued for the principle of integrated decision-making to be enshrined as one of the guiding principles of the Act. We therefore support the recommendation that a new section be inserted in the Act stating that Tasmanian Government agencies should consider the target, objects and proposed principles of the Act in relation to relevant decisions.

At the broader level, however, we remain concerned that the Act fails to adequately incorporate a human-rights based approach, and in particular a clear focus on social equity in all approaches to climate change policy, mitigation, and adaptation. This focus has not emerged in the proposed amendments to the Act.

We continue to recommend that the Act include a set of guiding principles modelled on the Victorian Climate Change Act 2017 that include specific reference to:

- The principle of equity, both current and intergenerational
- The principle of community engagement.

In addition, although supporting the general approach of consolidating the objects of Section 4 of the Act around a more limited number of themes, we recommend that the Act’s objects be:

1 https://www.acoss.org.au/climate/
• Object 1: to set a target to maintain greenhouse gas emissions in Tasmania at zero net emissions.

• Object 2: to respond and adapt to the impacts and projected impacts of climate change, with particular concern for the impact on vulnerable and disadvantaged communities.

• Object 3: to monitor, evaluate and report on progress made in relation to the target and on the ongoing and developing impacts of climate change, with particular focus on the impact on vulnerable and disadvantaged communities.

• Object 4: to complement national and international climate change initiatives.

Finally, although we appreciate the current Tasmanian Government’s commitment to addressing climate change through the release of Climate Action 21, we support the recommendation that a Climate Change Action Plan be made a statutory requirement to ensure that future governments continue the current Government’s positive steps towards a cohesive climate change action plan.