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Developing a new climate change action plan

Introduction

To date Tasmania's climate action, including its target aspirations, has been fundamentally inadequate. I make this statement even though Tasmania under Kyoto accounting rules appears to be achieving or even exceeding "net zero emissions" in recent years.

However, it has been stated that today in 2021 Tasmania's climate is almost 1.5°C warmer than in 1910. It is quite clear that a climate 1.5°C warmer for Tasmania is too hot. Such climate change represents substantially increased risk to the natural environment, primary industries and citizens' safety in Tasmania.

The Australian summer of 2019/2020 was a 1.5 degrees warmed climate event and what did we see? An area on the Australian mainland and on Kangaroo Island about the size of three whole Tasmanias burnt down, with the plethora of bushfires being unable to be contained. They were called "natural disasters" but I referred to them as a product of anthropogenic climate change impacts.

I simply cannot understand why, when the summer of 2019/2020 (The Black Summer) was a 1.5 degree Celsius warmer climate event, that Australia would still pursue a ridiculously dangerous 2 degrees target for 2050. That would be, after a cold hard look at the catastrophe of the Black summer, that 2°C 2050 target would be ridiculous!

This (anthropogenic climate change) global human generated climate catastrophe is not merely an important issue. It is the most important issue, facing the collective survival of all life on this planet.

The earth is the only such habitable planet, which we currently know supports the considerable array of life, including humans. I repeat, it is the only one, at least to the best of our knowledge.

The rapidly escalating rate of climate change, which is occurring, now, in ecological terms, is catastrophic and will result in a wave of extinctions of a wide range of species. I wish to emphasise the foreseeable extreme consequences and risk associated with anthropogenic climate change, which is unfolding and which continues to be exacerbated by human development, including the displacement of nature and its life supporting systems and the relentless liquidation of carbon.

The rate of climate change is beyond the capacity of many species and indeed is also beyond the capacity of whole ecosystems to adapt. Climate change threatens virtually all life on our planet. Right now, before our eyes, during our single generational lifetime span the largest Marine biological entity on the planet, The Great Barrier Reef, is collapsing and dying at simply a horrendously massive rate, in ecological terms. As a society, Australia needs to rapidly wake up.

Society's economic systems remain mired in the past values of carbon drawdown and liquidation caused by relentless growth, ignorance and greed. This submission argues such systems including Australia's and Tasmania's need to be redesigned urgently and competently to account and reflect the conservation of carbon. For climate change (a term inadequate to define the catastrophe about to befall us), we urgently need to change from a Carbon Liquidation Economic System to a Carbon Conservation Economy. It is that simple.

We (Australia) need a price on carbon, a genuine trading scheme (such as perhaps the one in the EU) and a royalty system for those times when we diminish our carbon store or sink and create unsustainable emissions. It is so simple really. We need to also change our behaviour.

Tasmania needs to design and adopt its own carbon pricing system. One of the few very positive things about the COVID 19 pandemic was it proved our economic model is merely an artificial construct, a cultural artifice, which can be changed and tweaked at will, almost on a day-to-day basis, it seemed.

The other thing about the COVID 19 emergency was that it showed things can be changed quite quickly if there is the political will. Unfortunately, such changes were ad hoc, largely unplanned and mostly reactive. A bit of fear-motivation works marvels. COVID also showed that the States can take a leading role in firming up a knuckle dragging Federal government, which over and over and over again fails to plan properly, even when the matter is urgent enough. Well, for climate change things are urgent.

Comment on the Guiding Principles

I have taken the opportunity to read the guiding principles published for this review. It is not clear who wrote or decided to adopt such arbitrary principles. I consider them fundamentally inadequate and insufficient. I simply cannot understand why on earth you would seek to write a new strategy constricted by such arbitrary principles. They are not particularly helpful. They are artificial. They avoid the fundamental requirements and principles to be efficient, effective, and timely and to make decision based on sound scientific reasoning and reality, as far as I can see.

They supposedly seek to build on the old strategy. Why? Was it any good? Has there been a review of its effectiveness and utility? Is the whole package of those matters expressed as a cogent statement for the citizen to comment upon? No!

Thus in this submission, I am simply going to ignore them. I cannot agree they represent necessarily a valid relevant consideration for making strategic decisions. The reasons for their selection have not been given. They simply represent a fetter upon an open discussion about Tasmania's low carbon future. Nor do I feel compelled, in this submission to argue the toss over the validity of those unreasoned principles, nor am I going to provide an alternate set of them.

For a long time Government bureaucracies have taken the approach of compartmentalising and weaselling over various insignificant clauses and conditions and approaches and principles primarily I suppose to meet unintelligent legislation and to reduce the complexity, which cannot be intellectually processed by the department. But more likely

and additionally to preserve the status quo. That approach will not work here in this subject of developing effective and timely climate change action at this time of an emergency.

Kyoto Rules

I consider that the rules developed under Kyoto need revision to better reflect the science and the reality and to achieve better transparency.

Simply because, under the current Kyoto accounting, Tasmania appears to be carbon neutral, does not mean that our society in Tasmania has become sustainable in climate warming carbon dioxide emissions terms. Tasmania has much more to do and it is urgent

Aim to Return to the Holocene, Abandoning the Anthropocene

The natural world is vanishing at an ever increasing rate, and this trend to liquidate nature is present in Tasmania, albeit slightly more modestly perhaps. However, on a total per hectare basis or on a per capita basis, Tasmania's performance in terms of the liquidation of nature, and in terms of the numbers of extinctions, listed threatened species and so forth, is atrocious and is a cause for shame.

In recent times, the giant kelp forests of Tasmania have contracted by over 90%. This it seems was in essence the whole of an ecosystem. It was carbon. It is gone. How was it accounted? How was its loss considered? What caused its demise? Did humans destroy the giant kelp forests with climate change? If so, how will they be restored? What is necessary to restore the giant kelp forests of Tasmania? Can they be restored? How does one now apply the precautionary principle and the notion of intergenerational equity?

How many other ecologies, native species of plants and animals would likely suffer catastrophic decline and extinction under a 2°Celsius by 2050, climate warming scenario? Philosophically I ask: Do we have the right morally to cause such extinctions, especially when we can choose a more responsible path now? Do we have the right to not do everything in our power to ensure the generations that come after us do not inherit a nightmare?

I advocate that as a collective part of the global community Tasmania should do everything possible to return to the Holocene époque, aiming to undo the destruction of nature associated with the Anthropocene.

Social and Cultural Change Urgent

Social and cultural change, which includes a redesigning of society's economic system, so as to address anthropogenic climate change, needs to occur much faster than has been the case to date.

Tasmania's Economic System must be Redesigned

Move (that is redesign) the economic system of Tasmania from one of carbon liquidation and extraction to one of Carbon conservation and restoration.

Currently the ecosystem services, which enable our survival, are not valued economically in our artificial cultural economic system. This lamentable fact must change within a short, timeline schedule.

It is imperative that this lack of economic valuation of ecosystems including carbon sequestration is accompanied by a set of values and policies which cause considerably less drawdown on Carbon stores and its conversion to greenhouse gases, which is one of the main causes of the rapid anthropogenic change of the climate.

The carbon-based ecosystem of Tasmania and thus all the carbon-based life support services it provides must be valued in terms of the Tasmanian human society's economic system. The explicit, systematic inclusion of such economic valuation is essential. Currently that is not occurring.

Such an inclusion and diligent, realistic and careful valuation of life supporting services may appear at once both obvious and daunting but it is essential and extremely urgent.

The point of such an inclusion is to reflect the reality of our collective survival on earth for which we would surely wish to achieve a strategy to maintain a climate suited to our survival. Additionally it would generate a change of human behaviour away from harmful high emissions.

Only by connecting the activities and the economic consequences does one achieve a robust, effective and transparent change. We all need to understand that our actions and behaviour have a direct impact on our sustainable future on this planet.

Tasmania may be small in land area and in population but as an educated developed society, it potentially has an important role. Our state needs not only to play its part in reducing the emission of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases but can be in the influential position of demonstrating an early return to a sub zero emissions' economy.

Simply because Tasmania has reached net zero emissions status because of fortunate circumstances and an endowment and legacy of nature, should not be cause for complacency, avoidance or ignorance, because this is a global problem. We can claim to be showing of the way, to be leading the world and Tasmania is barely visible in those terms.

Currently Tasmania does not even have a genuine set of policies under any legislation regarding carbon sequestration, and carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gas emissions and the expansion of long term carbon sinks.

Mechanisms to discharge the current generation's responsibility to those future generations, which will hopefully be able to survive meaningfully on the planet bequeathed to them.

Currently Tasmania has a set of sustainability objectives, which are included in the resource management planning system (RMPS) of Tasmania and its subordinate legislation. However, these laudable objectives, based as they are largely on Brundtland's work from the 1980s, have never been enlivened, respected or even used most time. They sit without interpretation like a crumbling ivory tower deliberately and studiously ignored, even by the Tasmanian Planning Commission. This of course is entirely deliberate. The Tasmanian government exhibits no intent to achieve ecological sustainability. . Rather the notion of private property rights is increasingly enshrined, to our common disadvantage.

Such problems, which beset implementation of the public interest notion of sustainable development, where lip service is paid to the concept but no adequate State Policies (which are obligatory) or other mechanisms are put in place to protect the life supporting values of the place we call home. It's extraordinary and the deficiency is strongly criticised.

A State Policy under the State Policies and Projects Act, regarding climate change actions which need to be observed by the land use planning system and the other parts of the RMPS including the pollution legislation, needs to be drafted without delay. This is so urgent and important, I would describe it as crucial.

At no stage should such a policy be regulated to the virtually useless, optional Tasmanian Policies level.

Placing a Price on Tasmania's Carbon

Tasmania should, at its earliest opportunity, develop a scheme which places a price on Tasmanian Carbon. There is a myriad of reasons for adopting a carbon price scheme. The development of such a scheme will transform the Tasmanian economy. The Tasmanian carbon price needs to be coupled with the ability to trade Tasmanian carbon openly.

Tasmania obviously has massive carbon advantages. Those carbon advantages can only be fully pursued with a price on Carbon. The promotion of such a scheme, which by necessity should include the 42% of Tasmania which is securely reserved, has the potential, if well designed, to significantly benefit Tasmania, its people and its economy.

Tasmania should move quickly to develop a carbon pricing and trading scheme which includes and values Tasmania's natural conservation reserves, both on public land and especially on private land which recognises the enormous contribution both public and private reserve owners make to mitigating climate change impacts. This initiative is highly important.

Other parts of the world have carbon pricing and trading but Australia has knuckle dragging. Tasmania therefore should not be afraid to also encourage the rest of Australia to do so as well. Tasmania can lead in this important sphere.

It has been statistically shown that when Australia introduced a carbon pricing and trading scheme, the emissions of Australian greenhouse gases declined. So why would Tasmania not do it now? Indeed, I cannot understand why Australia does not still have such a scheme.

Garnaut 2019 on his book Super-Power states:

“William and Nordhaus has demonstrated that pricing carbon is a relatively efficient form of taxation. The economic costs of collecting some revenue in this way are lower than the costs of income taxation at the rates currently applied in the United States. To the extent that carbon pricing reduces the incidence of more distorting forms of taxation, mitigation is an additional benefit. This was captured in the (Australian) Clean Energy Future legislation that was in effect from 2012 to 2014.”

I wish to pose the question: why would citizens of Tasmania value the conservation of the earth's carbon store, aiming to reduce our liquidation of the earth's carbon, when the government fails to value it in any meaningful way and indeed actually supports actions, legislation, planning instruments and policies which diminish Tasmania's carbon assets?

It's not reasonable, fair or just that citizens of Tasmania shoulder the burden whilst the Tasmanian government continues with policy and encouragement for certain sectors to continue liquidation activities in a business as normal situation. I cannot emphasise strongly enough that the days of hood-winking the Tasmanian populace have gone.

Taxing Greenhouse Gas Emissions Generating Industry and Activity

An alternate side of this economic change would be to design and develop a transparent system of royalty payments that is, in essence, a tax that has the explicit effect to necessarily and effectively discourage the generation of unsustainable greenhouse gas

emissions from the liquidation of carbon and land use practices in Tasmania. This alternate would appear to be an obvious early step towards a lower carbon economy.

Tasmania has an unparalleled opportunity to implement such a tax on greenhouse gas emissions because its electricity power system generates virtually no emissions.

Feed In Tariffs

These Feed-In Tariffs remain relevant to encourage greater contribution from Tasmanian citizens to our energy system.

The Federal Proposition for an Australian Gas Led Recovery Nonsense

The Federal government recently has been talking about a 'gas led recovery' (from COVID) and using technology to meet our Kyoto and Paris commitments. Thus in recent times it has avoided almost entirely talking about emission targets, climate change temperature goals and the pressing transitions from coal to renewable energy generation and the use of batteries.

There are times when governments simply prevaricate and procrastinate so as to maintain the status quo, because amongst other things, they simply don't know what to do and they wish to not create a circumstance where change may impact their political donors. Nor do they want to be seen as not knowing what to do next.

There is nothing to be gained by Tasmania agreeing to a Federal gas led recovery. Nothing! Indeed the opposite is true. Tasmania will benefit when Australia genuinely begins the rapid but planned and orderly transition to a carbon-based economy.

Better Regulation and Laws to End most Land Clearing in Tasmania

Sustainable solutions to our climate warming and water crisis problems will not ever be found in the further removal and degradation of natural environmental ecologies and ecosystems.

Land clearance occurs for a multiplicity of development purposes, for example:

1. Grazing, farming and horticulture,
2. Dam construction and impoundments,
3. Suburban expansion,
4. Artificial forestry plantations,
5. New roads,
6. Mining.

Surely, in Australia, given the Climate Change imperative, we do not need to clear more land for our population of 25 million. The same applies even more so to Tasmania with its population of about 540,000.

I cannot believe that despite our current knowledge of land clearance, its deleterious impacts and threats, its EPBC listing, that Australia and Tasmania continue to stupidly allow it.

The RFA in Tasmania had weak, inadequate commitments over land clearing which were rorted and in my view, this remains an area of very poor NFPS and RFA performance, which has never been adequately controlled or regulated.

Land clearing must end. Land clearing is a nationally listed EPBC Threatening Process. Land clearing liquidates carbon and significantly reduces carbon sequestration. Land clearing also causes the unsustainable decline of threatened species. There is no public interest outcome from land clearing in Tasmania, yet current policy legislatively and administratively controlled by the Forest Practices Authority, remains inadequate and in breach of the original intent of the Regional Forest Agreement. Land clearing should simply be regarded as a crime.

Private property rights needs to be tempered with a proper specified and effective right to contribute meaningfully to the public good, including retention of the growing standing, carbon rich forests across Tasmania.

Better Regulation of Irrigation Practice

Currently and over the last two decades, there has been a massive expansion of irrigated agriculture in Tasmania. This has largely been an open slather style of expansion where irrigation schemes have fed an agricultural practice which typically results in a significant drawdown on soil carbon. Irrigation expansion is a protected land use in Tasmania yet it draws down on soil carbon and facilitates land clearing. Government scientists have scientifically documented this drawdown on soil carbon in Tasmania. This is known but seemingly ignored by many under-educated farmers and the current government.

Any intensification of agricultural practice must be offset by the landowner who is engaging in the intensification, creating a permanent carbon sink reserve to replace and sink the carbon otherwise being lost due to irrigation or indeed other unsustainable agricultural practices. Drawdowns on soil carbon are unsustainable.

Burning of Carbon Fuel Reduction Burns and Bio-mass Burning

The burning of forests, croplands and other ecosystems, as well as wild fires should be included in greenhouse gas emissions reporting by and/or for Tasmania.

Don't you think it is fascinating that carbon, in the form of the humus layer of the forest soil and the litter which is in the slow process of decaying into humus, which is otherwise known as carbon, has for at least 60 years been called "fuel" by the people who light and ostensibly manage vegetation based fires?

It should be recognised that fuel reduction burning, especially using broad acre Napalm application within reserves is not socially acceptable and certainly not environmentally satisfactory either.

Quantify the amount of carbon dioxide equivalent emissions from vegetation based burning in Tasmania, including by sector and bioregion. This loss of carbon obviously needs to be accounted.

I advocate that 'Fuel reduction burns' should be renamed as 'carbon liquidation burns'.

It is imperative we get the message portrayed accurately and reiterate the impacts of liquidating carbon and generating greenhouse gas emissions which indeed, in more than one way, pollute the atmosphere.

Develop alternate strategies for protecting natural and built assets and the safety of people.

Reduce the amount of fuel reduction burning. Tasmania should not make this practice into another protected industry, acting against the common good of a lower emissions' future.

Increase Bushfire Fighting Capacity and Resources of the Tasmanian Fire Service

It has been highly evident and obvious that an aggravation of climate change by the global community and economies across the globe have an impact on temperatures, exacerbating bushfire risk and consequences in Tasmania.

Improve the legislation, systems and capacity of the Tasmanian Fire Service. Employ Permit Officers. Overhaul the Permit System of the Tasmanian Fire Service, improving its transparency and accountability, and significantly improve the publicly available documentation regarding registered burns. Account for such burns in terms of their emissions.

Increase bushfire-fighting capacity in Tasmania, including capacity for fighting remote fires and those in difficult country.

The lighting of vegetation-based fires should now be considered to be risky at any time of the year and should always require a Permit.

The registration burn and bushfire alert website of the Tasmanian Fire Service has significant inadequacies and urgently need an upgrade.

It is important that the Tasmanian government considers that those human lit fires are a part of the climate warming problem, which is centred around the human liquidation of carbon.

Bushfire Hazard Code within land use planning controls under RMPS

The Bushfire Hazard Code (for land use planning and building purposes) should be revised so as to improve resilience and to prepare for the foreseeable increased severity of bushfire events.

The bushfire hazard code should include a mandatory requirement upon landowners in areas subject to bushfire hazard to develop a practical bushfire emergency plan. Traditionally the populous has not embraced such plans, and yet with climate change bushfire emergencies are expected to become more severe.

Electric Vehicles

Australia is, so far, a slow adopter of electric vehicle technology. We are being left behind. The attitude is inexplicable, unreasoned and illogical.

A Tasmanian electric vehicle transition strategy should be developed now. The aim of such a strategy would be to accelerate the introduction and wide scale use of electric cars and other vehicles in Tasmania.

Design both an encouragement program and including incentives, aiming to accelerate the introduction of electric cars including their purchase by the general public. This program should include incentives to encourage Tasmania's change over from petrol powered, polluting conventional vehicles to electric ones.

Do not develop a road tax on electric vehicles, which likely would have the impact of delaying their adoption.

Design a robust and practical Statewide network of charging facilities for electric vehicles.

Convert parking meters in major towns and cities into electric vehicle charging bays. So when, you park your electric vehicle, pay for your parking, you have the ability to charge your batteries. Fossil fuelled vehicles would, I advocate, pay for their parking at the same rate as the electric vehicles.

The new Spirits of Tasmania should have comprehensive capacity and ability to charge large numbers of electric vehicles within the vehicle bays. One needs to have forward planning for such transitions.

There should be no more diesel buses purchased in Tasmania to operate on suburban routes.

Mandate the purchase of electric vehicles for vehicle fleets owned by the State Government, its departments, politicians and Local Government, wherever possible. Exemptions to this mandate should require proper justification.

It is essential that there be a government initiated transition strategy to give confidence to car retailers to stock, more extensively, a wider range of electric vehicles Tasmania.

People, once they realise just how fantastic an electric vehicle is, will readily purchase them especially if they are affordable. So there is a need for government to lead, kick start and incentivise this transition, as well as to ensure sufficient infrastructure is widely distributed across the state.

Electric Light Rail Passenger Transport

Re-purposing existing rail infrastructure to create a low carbon passenger transport system, replacing and reducing the suburban dependence on motor vehicles especially for people working in Hobart, seems elementary and obvious. This long-standing proposal should be progressed urgently with the dual aim of both reducing greenhouse gas emissions and reducing congestion on the road network of Hobart.

Part of that light rail plan should include a works program aimed at a reduction in the number of level crossings.

The Commonwealth's Diesel Subsidy

The Tasmanian Government should without delay in its strategy become opposed to all subsidy schemes pertinent to fossil fuels. This is an important part of a transition to a low carbon economy. It sends the message which needs to be sent. Change now!

I wish to therefore also encourage the Tasmanian Government to advocate for the orderly and planned short term removal of the Commonwealth's diesel subsidy.

It is in Tasmania's interests to see such arcane polluting subsidies removed from the Commonwealth sphere.

Exploration for Fossil Fuels

The exploration for fossil fuels should no longer be allowed in the Tasmanian jurisdiction.

Tasmania and the rest of the world do not need to discover more fossil fuels.

Tasmania's Conservation Reserve System

The Tasmanian reserve system is extensive, covering about 42% of the area of the state. It is comprised of some 850 public reserves and about 900 private reserves. Private reserves are reserves established on land which is in private ownership. The Crown, under a variety of tenures, owns public reserves. These reserves currently have been established for biodiversity or wilderness or world Heritage or recreational purposes and reasons.

However, the Tasmanian reserve system undeniably sequesters substantial carbon dioxide emissions and sinks a very substantial amount of carbon as well. Currently, in terms of a carbon price income, they simply represent an irrational irrelevance. Tasmania's reserve system, covering 42% of Tasmania, should be an enormous opportunity in terms of carbon conservation economics.

Tasmania's Public Conservation Reserve System

Tasmania, as mentioned above has about 850 public conservation reserves. The majority of these, perhaps about 600 or more, do not have a management plan, despite commitments under the regional Forest agreement to do so. The relevance of this lamentable inadequacy is that there is no transparency or formal public input into the development of site-specific management prescriptions for Tasmania's world class reserve system.

It is clear that Tasmania has the capacity and the skills to develop management plans for the public reserves, thus significantly improving the management potential of the public reserve system. A management plan for each gazetted reserve should be developed without delay.

Within such a set of management plans, covering the large number of conservation reserves which comprise our reserve system, the issue of the sequestering and conservation of Carbon should be a relevant consideration when management plans are being developed.

It is clear of that under climate change currently being experienced across Tasmania, the lighting of campfires within Tasmania's conservation reserves is a risky activity, which has led to some very unfortunate escaped fires.

This practice of lighting campfires, usually of course, using biomass gathered from within the reserve itself should, regardless of the source of the fuel, be permanently banned in all land from all of Tasmania's public reserve properties. I cannot see a single benefit to the public interest in allowing campfires within conservation reserves. I can see many deleterious consequences including the loss of carbon from escaped campfire burns. This is a simple policy change, which should apply consistently to all reserves and indeed to other public land also.

Tasmania's Private Conservation Reserve System

About 30% of all forests in Tasmania occur on private land. This is an area in excess of 900,000 ha. Currently, only about 110,000 ha of those forests have been reserved, mainly under RFA programs, which now no longer operate.

These existing private reserves were mainly created under the Regional Forest Agreement for the purposes of satisfying our international obligations for the conservation of biological diversity. Those targets have not been fully satisfied.

Almost all of these private reserves have a prescriptive conservation covenant and a prescriptive, site specific nature conservation (management) plan or operations plan. The liaison function interacting with private landowners has been privatised.

Without some financial incentive to conserve nature and carbon, the economic imperative remains firmly linked to liquidation activities, associated with development, which are obviously inadequately regulated in Tasmania.

There is no adequate functioning ongoing private reservation system for nature conservation priorities in Tasmania today. The departmental expertise in this important and public interest program is now at risk of being lost. The lack of a proper program is shameful and inexcusable. The schemes should be revitalised, repurposed and funded now.

These, mostly in perpetuity conservation reserves, sequester a significant amount of carbon dioxide emissions. Their owners receive no benefit for the life support services of Carbon sequestration. Some reserve owners received a once off financial benefit for their conservation of their biological diversity assets but no one has received a fiscal benefit for their sequestration of carbon dioxide greenhouse gas emissions.

Private Timber Reserves

Tasmania's private, forested estate includes between 400,000 and 500,000 ha of land, which is permanently set aside for logging and attendant depletion of carbon without any planning control under the peculiar Tasmanian land tenure of Private Timber Reserve. In such areas, highly threatened vegetation continues to be removed and stupidly there are no rights of appeal for the public to try and ensure public interest outcomes are achieved.

Thus, a far higher area of dedicated private logging reserve is in place in Tasmania on private land than has been achieved for conservation purposes on private land. This massive disparity between the significant extent of public conservation reserves and the private ones in Tasmania, coupled with the significant amount of Listed species, which inhabit private forested land, should be a significant concern to the Tasmanian Government and to the RMPS, which ostensibly seeks the goal of sustainable development. PTRs avoid the RMPS.

Reserving Carbon Sinks on Public and Private Land

It is now important for Tasmania to be able to set aside in reserves, forests which contribute to the sequestering of carbon dioxide and the sinking of carbon. This should have a system of reservation for both public and private land.

“Tasmania has a unique emissions profile within the Australian context, due to the extent of carbon sequestration (absorption of carbon dioxide from the atmosphere) by its native forests and forestry plantations and its almost complete reliance on renewable energy for electricity production.”

Clearly the opportunity to sequester CO₂ and sink carbon especially with private forests which constitute some 30% of Tasmania's forest estate and where landowners may be sympathetic and economically motivated by such an opportunity, were there a useful price on the CO₂ being sequestered.

For Tasmania, this is an important opportunity, to generate much more income from carbon sequestration and its forested Carbon sinks.

Tasmania is Australia's poorest state (and has long been so). It has a poorer health system, shorter life spans, lower educational attainment, higher rates of illiteracy and poorer health

outcomes. In OECD terms, it is significantly a poorer performer than every other State of Australia.

It was thus offensive when the wealthy State of Western Australia advocated that Tasmania should become even poorer because it was generating Australia's wealth during the negotiations with the Commonwealth, some years ago when there was negotiation about the distribution of Commonwealth funds.

However there are some glimmers of hope, Tasmania stating:

“Climate change is an important issue that requires local, state and international action. Communities around the world are already experiencing increased climate impacts including droughts and floods, rising sea levels and extreme weather events. The World Economic Forum's Risk Report continues to rank these environmental threats as having the greatest impact on our economy. Since the Paris Agreement, there have been significant developments regarding climate-related financial and liability risks to government and business.”

Well, Tasmania is sequestering CO₂, generating oxygen for the world, yet apparently that currently has no value, says Australia. That of course is simply ignorant rubbish. Of course Tasmania's lungs are simply primarily its forests. Tasmania's forests have traditionally, simply been taken for granted, pillaged in the spurious name of jobs. Now it can be seen that by the retention of forests Tasmania becomes a climate change superpower.

In a climate centric world, which is the world we are now entering, Tasmania's opportunity relates to its natural advantages and its renewable energy advantages. Tasmania certainly does not benefit from the short term liquidation opportunity of forest destruction which is currently still being encouraged, subsidised, propped up and being implemented by the current government, I argue, is inexplicably behaving with a lack of precaution, erroneously as well with a lack of foresight and economic sophistication.

This important opportunity to capitalise by monetising the conservation of Carbon could conceivably transform the wealth profile of Tasmania and Tasmanians forever.

On Targets

I think one needs targets. These targets need to have meaning, be aspirational, achievable, realistic and bold.

In May 2020, Tasmania's latest greenhouse gas emissions figures (the 2018 Australian Government's State and Territory Greenhouse Gas Inventories (STGGI)) were released. This showed Tasmania has achieved its target of net zero emissions by 2050 for the fourth year in a row. In 2018, Tasmania emitted negative 2.19 megatonnes of carbon dioxide equivalents, which represents a 111 per cent reduction from Tasmania's 1990 baseline emissions of 20.10 megatonnes.”

Tasmania needs to do better than this obviously obsolete, otiose target. Tasmania has the potential to do considerably better and urgently should adopt far more relevant targets.

The 'net zero emissions' mantra is not at all helpful in a situation where the globe is on target to a level of warming which would be highly dangerous for both Australia and Tasmania. This very disturbing trend globally needs to be turned around very quickly. Tasmania can lead on such matters and should do so now.

Indeed, I think it's appropriate here to say to the Tasmanian government just how disappointing the approach, the mantra, the rhetoric of our Prime Minister and his delinquent energy minister to be. Australia is rightly regarded as recalcitrant: as an

Australian citizen, I am embarrassed. Tasmania, now ostensibly in zero or emissions has no interest in supporting or pursuing such irrational recalcitrance.

Ross Garnaut, in his 2019 book 'Super-Power, Australia's low carbon opportunity' states:

"But today, public policy based on marshalling knowledge through research and analysis, and then nurturing public understanding of the issues, seems a distant dream. That it is not contemporary reality is the essential problem behind the tragedies of the Murray-Darling Basin and of policy on climate change and the energy transition."

Tasmania should formulate more realistic climate related targets than its current 2050 'net zero emissions' target which has clearly been exceeded from 2014 to 2018. It just shows you what can be done, without even trying. The fact that the Liberal Tasmanian government wishes to undo this enviable performance is noted and not supported.

Tasmania should aim for a target that it least returns the world (if everybody followed suit) to 1°C or less of global climate warming. I do not know exactly what achieving that target entails but I do know that Tasmania can and should put in place such an aspiration and believe it can be achieved realistically, if only the rest of the globe would cooperate. This is highly important and would bring Tasmania accolades.

Tasmania does not have to go along with Australia's recalcitrant ignorant posturing. I can assure you that such an enlightened position would be good for business, if only there was a business strategy to capitalise on such a responsible and laudable public interest position.

Ross Garnaut, in his 2019 book 'Super-Power, Australia's low carbon opportunity' states:

"So the fall in global interest rates and the structural changes in the economy that are its cause consistently to lower temperature targets, more emissions reduction and earlier progress towards targets than was justified in the economic environment of 2008. These changes strengthen the case for a 1.5°C objective and for moving early into the emissions reductions that are necessary to achieve that outcome."

Ross Garnaut of course is talking about an Australian target, not a Tasmanian one. I remain of the view that Tasmania should remain a negative emissions' economy.

Garnaut also states at page 165:

"There is a chasm between a world that quickly breaks the link between modern economic growth and carbon emissions, and the world that fails to do so. The side of the chasm that we (Australia) are now on is a dangerous place. It would be reckless beyond the normal human irrationality for us to stay where we are. ...

"With only half the warming we can expect from 1.5°C, we have already had to deal with dreadful impacts of more severe, earlier and more frequent bushfires, of reduced flows into the Murray Darling River system, degradation of the Great Barrier Reef, a shift to desalination to supply water for Perth, reduced moisture in our southern farming soils and high tides lapping at the steps of the beach huts at Brighton in Victoria."

Tasmania's Role in Australia's Transition to a Low Carbon Economy

"The global transition to a low carbon economy is another important consideration. Given Tasmania's low emissions status and high proportion of renewable energy generation, Tasmania has the potential to leverage key

economic opportunities and play our role in Australia's transition to a low carbon economy."

It must be stated here that one third of all energy worldwide is generated by coal. That reality urgently needs to change. The global transition needs to accelerate and be adopted by all countries including China which generates 30% of emissions compared to USA's 17%.

In my view Tasmania has a role of showing the rest of the world that long term dependence on non-polluting power generation systems not only works and is cost-effective, but results in a more resilient place. Tasmania's economy needs to be redesigned to capitalise on this excellent achievement.

A worldwide end to future investment in fossil fuel is something that Tasmania should be calling for, including to the Australian Government. Australia does not need to build more coalmines, more natural gas or any other fossil fuels, or build more power stations.

Bringing more fossil fuel out of the ground simply disadvantages Tasmania. This simple reality is undeniable. To date no sufficient action over such matters has been taken by Tasmania, yet ironically Tasmania is in a position strategically to lead the world.

Forests and Forestry Policy

"Changes in forest policy in Tasmania have led to significant increases in carbon sequestration. The area of native forest harvested in Tasmania's (public forests) has decreased, which has paved the way for regeneration and regrowth and has increased sequestration rates. This has resulted in the land use change forestry sector moving from being an emissions source to a major carbon sink, offsetting the emissions from other key sectors in Tasmania."

Tasmania does not have a Forest policy per se. One could never describe the Tasmanian Regional Forest Agreement as a policy. It has been widely criticised and does not have a social license. The quest for a social license through certification remains tenuous.

Tasmania currently has a series of public land reserve proposals, (from the Tasmanian Forest Agreement process) which remain unsatisfied and, despite the clear implications of the above statement, from the climate change office and despite the reality and benefits of sequestration. Liberal policy remains to liquidate that 350,000 ha or thereabouts of high conservation native forest, if it possibly can.

Indeed native forest logging needs to end. Native forest logging generates emissions, liquidates carbon and reduces sequestration. It is quite an energy intensive activity, in fact.

Mostly native forest logging in Tasmania occurs for woodchip; supposedly a waste product where over 90% of the life supporting, carbon rich native forest, is termed waste. It's an outrageous proposition which is propped up by the rhetoric of jobs.

Clearly, the Tasmanian forestry industry has been on an old growth forest liquidation path for decades, hence the increasing numbers of threatened species on the various threatened species legislations lists.

I see no reason to retain the artificial Category One Crown Sawlog Quota at all. It represents an irrational distortion of the market and creates unsustainable logging activity, which results in an unnecessary carbon drawdown. A much faster transition out of inefficient, biologically destructive, native forest forestry will occur in its absence.

I also wish to strongly advocate the removal of the numerous planning exemptions, which prop up, in numerous ways, for the native forest logging industry.

Incidentally some of Tasmania's forests are already suffering stress at the current level of warming and would not likely survive at 2 degrees Celsius.

Tasmania's Next Emissions Target

“Engagement with government, business and industry, and communities to understand stakeholder sentiment towards the settings of emissions targets has assisted in developing a view of important considerations to appropriately set Tasmania's next emissions target. A snapshot of some perspectives is provided below:

- *A 2050 NZE target is too conservative and is not consistent with broader responses to climate change. Conservative setting of targets can result in climate inaction due to the lacking sense of urgency.*
- *It is not appropriate to primarily rely on carbon sequestration from the LULUCF sector in achieving emissions targets.*
- *Targets must be considered in a practical sense to ensure adverse impacts are not placed on the State's economy and communities.”*

Tasmanian Government's population growth policy.

Amazingly, there is no national population policy to guide Australia. This would appear to me to be a fundamental action of any Federal government. Greater, competent consultation and openness regarding Australia's future population aspirations and impacts is required. Likewise for Tasmania.

Just as I believe that fossil fuels currently under the ground should remain there, I consider that the current Tasmanian population growth policy, which has never been enshrined or indeed has never even been comprehensively considered by the Tasmanian public, represents a problem for Tasmania in several different ways.

It is good that this issue of the population growth policy has been mentioned in the climate change unit's literature, because such significant per capita population growth has adverse greenhouse consequences.

“The Tasmanian Government's population growth policy could also alter the direction of the State's emissions. The State Government's Population Growth Strategy (2015) sets a target for 650,000 people in Tasmania by 2050.

Recent ABS data published in June 2020 record Tasmania's population at approximately 540,000 persons, suggesting population growth is in-line with this target.”

Population growth is in fact in developed countries virtually the only way of achieving economic growth. Yet here we are and we have not worked out anyway of making the planet bigger. So, the population growth proposition is to simply cram more humans into the space we have supposedly already designed for human habitation. But possibly not designed and planned at all!

It is abundantly clear when I visit Hobart these days that Hobart has a chronic traffic congestion problem exacerbated by an unregulated influx of new settlers and many people are homeless. This is obviously due to a lack of adequate forward planning.

The consequence of this population growth policy is that land clearing for housing development is occurring in threatened species habitat and the road system is at breaking point at many different locations especially across the greater Hobart area.

I can remember a couple of years ago sitting in a queue of traffic coming from Sorell which stretched back some several kilometres, trying to get through the Hobart airport roundabout. It was a ridiculous time wasting situation. Hobart is not actually suited to the current population growth strategy.

My nearest large town is Launceston, almost an hour from my home and I have noticed increased traffic congestion in this city as well. It is not as severe but such places do not have adequate traffic infrastructure to cope with an increase in population which is ostensibly planned and being encouraged. However there is no adequate plan. Just an open slather expansion where the infrastructure is playing catch up. Again. How unwise.

Meander Valley Council asked people in Deloraine what they wanted in population terms some years ago and the people in the main stated they wanted a steady state population situation. That is neither a decline nor a growth. Asking Tasmanians their views about a population strategy would appear fundamental and its avoidance massively unfair.

Increasing the population of Tasmania will, unless significant other measures are taken, increase the greenhouse gas emissions of Tasmania. This is inevitable with the current planning laws, absence of adequate land clearance policies, dependence on fossil fuel vehicles and increasing agricultural irrigation.

It raises the fundamental issue of the purpose of our society. Is it to cause the demise of the natural world? Is it to threaten our own future?

In 2011, the Federal Government produced 'Sustainable Australia – Sustainable Communities, A Sustainable Population Strategy for Australia'. The Minister (Burke) stated:

"This document, our nation's first ever sustainable population strategy, outlines the Gillard Labor Government's vision for a sustainable Australia."

However, in its 2009 State of the World Population report, the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) had said:

"Greenhouse gases would not be accumulating so hazardously had the number of earth's inhabitants not increased so rapidly, but remained at 300 million people, the world population of 1,000 years ago, compared with 6.8 billion today."

Such human induced Climate Change impacts can now be evidenced. Examples provided in this submission, such as the Great Barrier Reef and its death from climate induced bleaching, the horrendous Murray Darling Basin fish death incident, the Queensland floods, Black Summer 2019 and the massive Tasmanian fires of 2016 and 2019.

Do we know the purpose of such a large increase in our population? How will Australia meet its national and international obligations? I note that we do not have such international obligations to increase our population in the extraordinary way we currently do but rather we have the Paris Agreement and we have the Aichi Targets and we have RAMSAR to use a couple of examples.

The Productivity Commission in 2010 stated:

"Australia's population has increased at an average annual rate of approximately 1.6 per cent since 1960, more than doubling in size. This is a higher growth rate than for most OECD countries."

I quote that because an increasing population has increasing impacts on Australia's and Tasmania's environment. Australia is the world's most urbanised continent. It is the least forested, habitable continent. It may even have the world's biggest degraded catchment.

Tasmania wishes to emulate the rest of Australia? That is a bad mistake.

How are we, as a society, going to genuinely solve these issues? Because, I am convinced, there are solutions which as a society we have the intelligence to embrace.

Conclusion

The author believes we all need to make sacrifices in moving to a low carbon future, but cannot understand the irrational inequity in our economic system which remains in favour of carbon liquidation and use of non-renewable and harmful resources.

The earth is sounding warning bells all around us, we ignore them at our peril.

Yours sincerely,

Andrew Ricketts

PS: I give permission for my submission to be published, minus my signature and address details, please.

About the Author:

The author has, since 1991, lived in the Meander Valley Municipality, in Northern Tasmania, owns, initiated and manages two private covenanted forest conservation reserves, which cover about 90% of the 330 acre (128 hectare) property, which adjoins other reserves.

The off grid home is powered with solar (photovoltaics) and micro-hydro power, which run the usual array of domestic appliances. Over a decade ago the 1998 vehicle was converted to run on LPG, significantly reducing emissions. Air travel is avoided.

Home heating is achieved simply through having sited the fully insulated but modestly sized house to face North, combined with hydronic heating connected to a wood heater. At the time of building I was told, reference the insulation: "You do not need to do all that!"

END