



# MEG WEBB MLC

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Friday, 20 October 2023

To Whom It May Concern,

**Re: Submission to *Tasmanian positive: our state's sustainability strategy***

I welcome the opportunity to make a submission to the development of Tasmania's *Sustainability Strategy* (hereafter referred to as "the Strategy"). The Strategy is an encouraging opportunity to develop a strategic and future-looking plan to enhance the well-being of all Tasmanians, protect our natural environment, and contribute toward the global target of achieving all 17 United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by 2030.

I have been consistently on the record urging the government to integrate the SDGs into our immediate, short-term and long term strategic and policy frameworks, to underpin a robust, resilient and equitable community now and into the future. As part of that call, I emphasized the need and opportunity for the state to forge a SDG implementation strategy as a key component of my submission to the former 2020 Premier's Economic and Social Recovery Advisory Council process (PESRAC). Although PESRAC's final report did recommend the Tasmanian government develop a "*sustainability vision and strategy*" which should "*be focussed on Tasmanian priorities but be aligned with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals*" there was little immediate follow up on this recommendation, or guidance on how to best enact it (*PESRAC Final Report*, March 2023: pg 69).

It was also a little concerning at the time that the PESRAC Report appeared to frame up the SDGs as primarily environmental, when in fact the UN SDGs clearly identify the holistic challenge and opportunities of integrating community, environmental and economic considerations in policy.

To be meaningful and effective, the current proposed Tasmanian *Sustainability Strategy* must also be clear that it is taking a holistic approach, rather than attempt to treat the environment as something 'other' and 'separate to' a healthy, resilient and robust Tasmanian community and/or economy.



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Similarly, in relation to the current discussion paper for the forthcoming *Sustainability Strategy* although it outlines possible approaches for Tasmania to implement SDGs, provides several examples of Tasmania's sustainability achievements to date, and assigns various SDGs to existing Tasmanian policies, it does not identify any current problems or challenges, nor does it provide a comprehensive analysis of potential challenges we may face into the future. I acknowledge that the Department is seeking feedback from Tasmanian stakeholders on the composition of the final Strategy; however, I am concerned that in the absence of clearly identified problems, practical plans to address them will not be developed. Without these, the Strategy is at risk of becoming a window-dressing exercise which does not necessitate any meaningful improvement to the sustainability of Tasmania's current practices.

The OECD recognises this holistic challenge in its recommendation *on Policy Coherence for Sustainable Development*, which aims to provide a comprehensive standard to support policymakers in achieving the 2030 Agenda.<sup>1</sup> This OECD recognises the challenges in forging a coherent implementation of the 2030 Agenda SDGs and recommends policy makers develop the following:

- A strategic vision for implementing the 2030 Agenda underpinned by a clear political commitment and leadership to enhance policy coherence for sustainable development.
- Effective and inclusive institutional and governance mechanisms to address policy interactions across sectors and align actions between levels of government.
- A set of responsive and adaptive tools to anticipate, assess and address domestic, transboundary and long-term impacts of policies.

To ensure the Strategy is successful, it should be based around the following objectives:

#### **1. Identify sustainability problems.**

The Strategy should clearly define the areas in which Tasmania must improve in order to achieve the identified 17 UN SDGs. Without a clear map of sustainability issues that must be addressed, there is little purpose served by developing a Sustainability Strategy.

The Strategy should be centered on a commitment to protect Tasmania's marine and terrestrial natural environment. Human wellbeing depends on a healthy environment, and Tasmania cannot achieve sustainability outcomes without prioritising the conservation and precautionary management of Tasmania's natural environment and resources.

Climate change poses a significant threat to social, economic and environmental sustainability in Tasmania. It is therefore critical that taking building climate resilience and taking ambitious action on climate change is central to Tasmania's Sustainability Strategy. While the discussion paper praises Tasmania's renewable energy production and net zero status, it must also acknowledge the consequences of failing to take ambitious action to address and adapt to climate change and set out clear, ambitious targets and timeframes for doing so.

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<sup>1</sup> [OECD Recommendation on Policy Coherence for Sustainable Development:  
https://www.oecd.org/gov/pcsd/oecd-recommendation-on-policy-coherence-for-sustainable-development.htm](https://www.oecd.org/gov/pcsd/oecd-recommendation-on-policy-coherence-for-sustainable-development.htm)



## **2. Establish priority areas supported by quantifiable targets.**

Streamlining the SDGs into a set of priority areas is most appropriate for Tasmania, and I am supportive of the six priority areas proposed in the discussion paper (climate and renewable energy; natural environment; health and wellbeing; education and skills; circular economy and waste; housing and liveability; fair, equitable and inclusive society). These priority areas are appropriate but must be supported by clear, ambitious, quantifiable targets with interim updates so all progress can be tracked, measured and evaluated. Targets should necessitate improvement to current policies, programs, and practices. For example, “net zero or lower by 2030” is not a suitable target, as Tasmania achieved and has maintained net zero emissions since 2014.

## **3. Commit to regular reporting against SDG Indicators and publish interim updates.**

The Strategy must be accompanied by a framework for regular reporting against a set of indicators and targets. The Australian Government’s Reporting Platform on the Sustainable Development Indicators<sup>2</sup> provides a template for SDG progress reporting, using the indicators determined by the United Nations SDG framework. This format should be adapted for Tasmania to provide a thorough and transparent reporting platform against established indicators for SDGs. The Strategy should also commit to publishing yearly update reports so that progress can be evaluated, and priorities refocused if necessary.

A comprehensive Tasmanian *State of the Environment Report* would provide critical information on the condition and trend of Tasmania’s environment; however, the Tasmanian government has failed to produce an SOE report since 2009 meaning Tasmania’s *Sustainability Strategy* is being developed in absence of an up-to-date SOE report. The Tasmanian government has committed to producing a *State of the Environment Report* by June 2024, and I strongly recommend that the findings of this report inform the Strategy’s targets, and remain an integrated component of the Strategy’s evaluation and reporting against established SDG indicators.

### **Concluding comments**

Thank you for the opportunity to provide feedback on the development of Tasmania’s *Sustainability Strategy*.

I look forward to seeing a draft Strategy that clearly identifies where Tasmania must do better by when, and provides an ambitious integrated roadmap towards achieving sustainability for Tasmania’s environment, people, and economy.

Kind regards.



**Hon. Meg Webb MLC**  
**Independent Member for Nelson**

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<sup>2</sup> <https://www.sdgdata.gov.au/reporting-status>