

Proposed amendments to the Climate Change (State Action) Act

Submission

The Australia Institute Tasmania
November 2018

The Australia Institute welcomes the opportunity to respond to the proposed amendments to the *Climate Change (State Action) Act 2008*.

The Australia Institute recommends that:

- 1) The title of the *Climate Change (State Action) Act 2008* be renamed to the *Climate Change Emergency Response Act 2018*
- 2) A preamble be added to the Act that includes: Tasmania recognises that, along with other Australian States, Tasmania must take action to respond to the climate emergency and that the level of response must match the urgency of the crisis. Tasmania through its leadership position on renewable energy and its clever and connected communities is in a position to be a leader for the rest of the nation.
- 3) A climate change advisory body be set up to advise the Premier on climate risks and opportunities. The advisory body would include leading experts from the scientific, industry, biosecurity, emergency services and community sectors.
- 4) The Act require a sectoral analysis of threats and opportunities associated with the changing climate over the next decade, based on the best available science and that the analysis is completed within 12 months of the amendments to the Act being passed, with the climate change advisory board to take charge of it.
- 5) The Act require an analysis of the State's emergency services capability to respond to the changing climate over the next decade and that the analysis is completed within 12 months of the amendments to the Act being passed.

The independent review made the following five recommendations for amending the Act:

Independent review Recommendation 1

Set a new aspirational long-term emissions reduction target of zero net greenhouse gas emissions by 2050;

Australia Institute response: That the climate change authority are tasked with proposing a new short – 2025, medium – 2035 and long – 2050 term emissions reduction targets

Independent review Recommendation 2

Consolidate the objects of the Act around four themes.

Australian Institute response: This recommendation should not be implemented by reducing the existing objects of the Act to four; rather the existing objects should be organised around the proposed four themes – and, if necessary, new objects should be added.

The proposed four themes are logical and could be supported by objects including, but not limited to:

Independent review recommended Theme 1: to set a target to reduce greenhouse gas emissions in the State;

Australia Institute proposed addition:

- a) Ensure that Tasmania exploits its natural advantage and reduces its greenhouse gas emissions as quickly as possible.
- b) Take advantage of Tasmania’s largely renewable electricity supply, large renewable resources and relatively small population and settled area to test approaches and technologies for transitioning away from fossil fuels.
- c) Prevent new fossil fuel exploration and production activities in Tasmania.
- d) Within 12 months of the amendments of the Act being passed by parliament, publicly release a plan that charts Tasmania’s path to being 100% fossil free
- e) In consultation with major industries and scientific experts, set reductions targets for industries and sectors
- f) Work in coordination with the federal government policies and the safeguards mechanism that puts a baseline on emissions for the 100 largest polluters in the country, including some that operate in Tasmania.

Independent review recommended Theme 2: to monitor, evaluate and report on progress made in relation to the target;

Australia Institute proposed addition:

- a) Provide information, assistance, and data to Tasmanians on climate change and on progress with the energy transition.
- b) Provide an independent assessment of the likely greenhouse gas emissions of all significant projects that includes but is not limited to: how the proposal aids or impedes the State reaching its emissions reduction target. Any proposed measures to mitigate emissions. Consideration of alternatives.
- c) Require industries and sectors to report, on a three-yearly basis, progress against pre-defined emission reductions targets.

Independent Review Theme 3: to respond and adapt to the impacts and projected impacts of climate change;

Australia Institute proposed additions:

- a) Ensure Tasmania’s planning and associated decision making systems and its physical infrastructure design standards are consistent with the prudent management of the risk of extreme weather events and sea level rise associated with climate change.
- b) Ensure Tasmania’s public health system is prepared for the risk of extreme heat waves, and other potential health risks associated with climate change.
- c) Provide assistance to Tasmanian community and businesses to improve energy efficiency.
- d) Assist major industries to respond to the effect climate change is having and will continue to have upon their industries.
- e) To produce an action plan and liability framework for coastal properties – public and private – that will be affected by rising sea levels.
- f) Assist businesses, industries and communities who enter into voluntary Energy Transition Plans.

Independent review recommended Theme 4: to complement national and international climate change initiatives.

- a) The Paris Agreement, which Australia has ratified and which entered into force on 4 November 2016, has the central aim to strengthen the global response to the threat of climate change by keeping a global temperature rise this century well below 2 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels and to pursue efforts to limit the temperature increase even further to 1.5 degrees Celsius. For Australia and, at a state level, Tasmania, to align with the Paris Agreement, we need to do our fair share. Australia’s emission reduction target to reduce emissions by 26% from 2005 levels by 2030 is insufficient to meet the Paris Agreement’s central aim. Given Tasmania’s largely renewable electricity supply, small geography and population, our state should not just meet but exceed this target and seek to exploit any advantages that could be secured by doing so.

Independent review Recommendation 3.

Require Tasmanian Government agencies to consider the target, objects and proposed principles of the Act in relation to relevant decisions;

Australia Institute response: The Government response to recommendation 3 treats climate change as different to, rather than a part of, community wellbeing and economic growth. A more robust approach would be to require all agencies to produce a climate emergency plan that identifies all threats and opportunities associated with climate disruption and produce a set of guidelines that must be adhered to rather than just considered when assessing or suggesting projects. These plans should be made in consultation with community, scientific, economic and industry experts.

Independent review Recommendation 5

Continue to prepare a plan for mitigating and adapting to climate change, and make it a statutory requirement for the Tasmanian Government to have a climate change action plan.

Australia Institute response: This planning should be detailed and identify opportunities as well as threats including but not limited to:

- a) take advantage of Tasmania's largely renewable electricity supply, small geography and population to test new storage technologies and roll out the country's first state wide electric vehicle charging network.
- b) Project Marinus, including a cost benefit analysis of its impact on the NEM, not only Tasmania
- c) A program to develop demand-side resources and empower consumers and solar 'prosumers' and battery owners
- d) Aggregated demand response of consumer and small commercial consumers, to lower their costs and improve the efficiency of the market including reduced network augmentation