



Tasmanian Council of Social Service Inc.

TasCOSS Submission on Climate Change Act

April 2021



INTEGRITY
COMPASSION
INFLUENCE

About TasCOSS

TasCOSS' vision is for one Tasmania, free of poverty and inequality where everyone has the same opportunity. Our mission is two-fold: to act as the peak body for the community services industry in Tasmania; and to challenge and change the systems, attitudes and behaviours that create poverty, inequality and exclusion.

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 our members and their service users 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.

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Thank you for the opportunity to make a submission to the review of the *Climate Change (State Action) Act 2008* (the Act). Our comments are informed by conversations with Tasmanians and with our members, as well as research by TasCOSS and ACOSS.

As the evidence for the acceleration of global heating and of its emerging impacts builds, climate change is now:

- **A key issue for Tasmanians.** The ABC's 2019 Australia Talks survey found that 82% of Tasmanians agreed that Australia needs to take action on climate change, even if larger polluters do not act, and that 67% would be willing to pay something personally to this end.¹
- **A key issue for Australians on low incomes.** The ABC's 2019 Australia Talks survey found that among Australians with weekly incomes of under \$600/week, 74% agreed that Australia needs to take action on climate change, even if larger polluters do not act, and 57% would be willing to pay something personally to this end – \$100 or more a year, said 35%.²
- **A top priority issue for young Australians and Tasmanians.** The ABC's 2019 Australia Talks survey found that 89% of Australians aged 18-24 agreed that Australia needs to take action on climate change, even if larger polluters do not act, and that 71% would be willing to pay something personally to this end--\$100 or more a year, 54% said.³ In the same year:
 - 43% of respondents to the ABC's annual youth survey aged 18-29 identified climate change as the biggest issue facing their generation, replacing jobs and housing.⁴
 - 53% of Australian girls and young women identified climate change as the single most pressing issue facing both their personal futures and the world.⁵
 - Participants in the Tasmanian Commissioner for Children and Young People's (CCYP) Youth Ambassador Program identified climate change and environmental health as one of their seven key concerns.⁶

In 2020, 44.1% of Tasmanian participants in Mission Australia's Youth Survey identified the environment – a category which included climate change – as the most important issue in Australia today, making it the top-ranking issue in the state.⁷

¹ <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2020-12-10/australia-talks-data-explorer/12946988#/responses/how-much-more-would-you-personally-be-willing-to-spend-each-year-to-help-prevent-climate-change>

² (<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2020-12-10/australia-talks-data-explorer/12946988#/responses/how-much-more-would-you-personally-be-willing-to-spend-each-year-to-help-prevent-climate-change>). Unfortunately, Tasmanian results currently cannot be broken down by income level.

³ <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2020-12-10/australia-talks-data-explorer/12946988#/responses/how-much-more-would-you-personally-be-willing-to-spend-each-year-to-help-prevent-climate-change>

⁴ <https://www.abc.net.au/triplej/programs/hack/whats-up-in-your-world-survey-names-climate-change-top-issue/11525658?fbclid=IwAR2X-rjI8XhUsvlyWiUgs12SzFzLOuekgGn743UK5WWaPxEQkO3DJ8Hh5vA>

⁵ <https://www.plan.org.au/-/media/plan/documents/learn/publications/she-has-a-plan-report.pdf?la=en&hash=902A1FC5F2DA721908503F2B83639A99B8676A0D>

⁶ <https://www.childcomm.tas.gov.au/wp-content/uploads/CCYP-Listening-to-Children-and-Young-People-Report-2019-WEB.pdf>

⁷ <https://www.missionaustralia.com.au/publications/youth-survey>

While all Australians are vulnerable to the effects of climate change, the impacts of climate change are and will be felt inequitably, and will drive social inequality in the future.⁸ Mitigating future climate change and adaptation to ongoing climate changes are therefore social justice issues, particularly for young Tasmanians.

But the ways in which governments mitigate and adapt to climate change also have the potential to be socially inequitable. Zero-net-emissions targets, for instance, may tolerate a situation where, as long as emissions from agriculture are declining due to new animal feeds, Tasmanians on low incomes who cannot afford a new vehicle are left driving fossil-fuel-powered vehicles which are increasingly expensive to run day-to-day, while better-off Tasmanians drive electric or hydrogen-powered vehicles at lower day-to-day cost.

We reiterate our positions in previous TasCOSS submissions on this issue.⁹ We argue that Section 5 of the Act should be amended to establish new long-term emissions targets. However, we also recommend that sector-specific targets be set that lay the groundwork for all Tasmanians to be supported into lower-emissions technologies, ranging from heat pumps to electric or hydrogen-powered vehicles.

We recommend that these targets be:

- Maintenance of zero-net-emissions status from this point forward.
- By 2050, zero-net-emissions status in all three areas of Tasmania's energy sector: electricity generation, direct combustion, and transport, with five-yearly interim targets and a five-yearly review to keep Tasmania on track to meeting this target.¹⁰ For example, Australia-wide, in order to reach zero net emissions in the road transport sector by 2050, a reduction in road transport emissions of 11% will be necessary by 2030.¹¹

We also argue for the principle of integrated decision-making to be enshrined as one of the guiding principles of the Act. We therefore agree 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 and intergenerational equity in all approaches to climate change policy, mitigation, and adaptation. This focus is already identified in the legislation of other jurisdictions, for instance the the Victorian *Climate Change Act 2017*, the ACT *Climate Change and Greenhouse Gas Reduction Act 2010*,¹² and the federal *Climate Change Authority Act 2011*.¹³

⁸ <https://www.un.org/development/desa/dpad/publication/wess-policy-brief-the-nexus-between-climate-change-and-inequalities/>

⁹ <https://tascoss.org.au/home/for-members/vaults/?folderid=bf20a5c7-01b4-4a2d-950e-44738a666e7e>

¹⁰

http://www.dpac.tas.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0010/573094/Tasmanian_Greenhouse_Gas_Emissions_Report_2020.pdf

¹¹ <https://www.climateworksaustralia.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/Decarbonisation-Futures-March-2020-full-report-.pdf>

¹² <https://www.legislation.vic.gov.au/in-force/acts/climate-change-act-2017/005>

¹³ <https://www.legislation.gov.au/Details/C2011A00143>

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:

- Object 1: *to reduce Tasmania's greenhouse gas emissions through the setting of a permanent target of zero net emissions for the state as well as interim and long-term targets for individual sectors.*
- 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 and for intergenerational equity.*
- Object 3: *to monitor, evaluate and report on progress made in relation to the targets and on the ongoing and developing impacts of climate change, with particular focus on the impact on vulnerable and disadvantaged communities and on intergenerational equity.*
- Object 4: *to complement national and international climate change initiatives.*

Finally, although we appreciate the current Tasmanian Government's commitment to addressing climate change, 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.