

To:

27/11/2018

Department of Chief Minister
Economic and Environment Policy
GPO Box 4396
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Response to the Climate Change Strategy Discussion Paper

Anglicare NT is one of the largest providers of government-funded welfare, social justice and community development services in the Northern Territory. The organisation employs more than 420 staff and delivers support services to over 15,000 Territorians each year. Our purpose is to promote the enrichment of people's relationships, fullness of life and social justice for all in the Northern Territory.

Anglicare NT would like to congratulate the NT Government's commitment to developing a Climate Change Strategy for the Northern Territory. This is a positive step forward. There is no doubt that the global scientific consensus is that greenhouse gas emissions must decline rapidly to net zeroⁱ and that all Governments must provide leadership to achieve this.

Climate change is about people and the planet, it is an issue that effects everyone, but it's impacts will be felt disproportionately by those with the least resources and capacity to adapt. Indigenous people, the sick, the frail, the very young and the disadvantaged.ⁱⁱ The consequences on the lives of these Territorians, your constituents, must be considered in any climate change policy developed.

We believe there is a need to accelerate climate change action and that the NT Government's Climate Change Strategy is a significant opportunity to do this. This submission puts forward areas where we believe your policies can have impact.

Vulnerable people need to be protected

At the current trajectory, the predicted changes to the Northern Territory's climate are severe, and the consequences, catastrophic.

The effect of extreme heat and humidity on vulnerable people is of enormous concern. These are people who can't just turn on the air-conditioning or move to a more favourable climate. The CSIRO climate change modelling estimates that the number of days over 35 degrees in Darwin will increase from long term average of 11 days per year to around 44 days by 2030 and up to 227 days by 2070.ⁱⁱⁱ An Australian Institute report found that the number of days over 35 degrees in Darwin has already increased from 5.6 days per year in the early 20th century to over 20 days per year in the last five years.^{iv}

Extreme heat, when coupled with high humidity (over 70%) is considered 'extremely dangerous'.^v Research indicates that such conditions represent "a serious threat to the wellbeing of Darwin's population... even a short period of exposure, particularly in combination with physical exertion, can lead to serious heat disorders and even risk of death."^{vi}

Exposure to extreme heat is known to exacerbate mental health conditions, negatively impact on wellbeing, and increases levels of violence and suicide rates.^{vii} As the temperature rises, it is predicted that the 'heat, health burden' is likely to significantly increase.^{viii}

Other predicted impacts of climate change on Territorians include extreme rainfall and flooding, the inundation of freshwater wetlands with salty water due to sea level rise, higher bush fire intensity and less frequent but more powerful tropical cyclones.

The availability of bush tucker will be affected, it will be more difficult to fish, and natural and cultural tourism is likely to suffer.^{ix} The Climate Change Discussion Paper 2018 acknowledges many of the predicted impacts of climate change. The social and financial costs of a changed climate in the Northern Territory are unfathomable.

Adopt a robust target – net zero by 2050

The potential for harm to eco-systems, communities and of course future generations should not be ignored. Anglicare NT implores the NT Government to take this opportunity to create climate change strategy that is far reaching and results in deep reductions in greenhouse gas emissions.

This requires significant government will, and government action. It means legislating a firm emissions reduction target of at least net zero by 2050, including interim targets and industry specific targets, to ensure the overarching target is met.

The Northern Territory is well behind the rest of Australia. Victoria has legislated a net zero emissions target by 2050, with five yearly interim targets^x; NSW has committed to net zero by 2050^{xi}; Tasmania achieved net zero emissions in 2018^{xii}; South Australia has a net zero emissions by 2050 target and a legislated climate change framework^{xiii} Queensland has committed to net zero by 2050^{xiv}; and the ACT recently revised their net zero emissions target to 2045.^{xv}

A climate change strategy is time-critical. The recent release of the *IPCC Special Report on Global Warming of 1.5°C*^{xvi} which warns of the potentially severe consequences of just a 1.5 degree temperature increase, makes the decision even more pertinent. Investment and policy decisions made now, will shape the Northern Territories emission trajectory for the next decade or more.

Recommendation: Legislate an emission reduction target of at least net zero emissions by 2050 with interim targets and industry specific targets to ensure the overarching target is met.

Building capacity through rooftop solar

Anglicare NT believe there are policies that can be put in place in the short term that will significantly contribute to emissions reduction and build the capacity of vulnerable citizens to cope with the increasing heat.

Already, low income households spend a greater proportion of their income on water and energy than wealthier households, on average, twice as much.^{xvii} They are also far less able to invest in measures to combat the heat like air-conditioning or home insulation.

The Climate Change Discussion Paper points to opportunities to improve the energy efficiency of NT Government buildings and housing stock through measures such as installing home insulation.^{xviii}

While this and other energy efficiency measures are worthy initiatives which should be pursued, rooftop solar, coupled with battery storage, for all public and social housing would have even greater benefits.

The benefits of this initiative include:

- 1) Significantly reducing the emissions footprint of more than 5000 households in the NT
- 2) Efficiently increasing the capacity of vulnerable people to deal with heat increases
- 3) Reducing the energy cost burden on low income households, freeing up money to purchase other essentials like food or medicine
- 4) Boosting economic opportunities for the burgeoning renewables industry in the NT
- 5) Creating jobs and training opportunities
- 6) Creating infrastructure that may support the longer term uptake of electric motorvehicles.

This initiative is in-line with the recently released Australian Labor energy policy 'Neighbourhood Renewables' which aims to increase the uptake of solar and battery storage solutions for social housing.^{xix}

Recommendation: Invest in rooftop solar and battery storage on all NT Government-owned public and social housing.

Early intervention and prevention has been a key theme for the current NT Government. A Climate Change strategy should be no different. There is no doubt that the cost of collective inaction will be far greater than the cost of collective action.

Regards,



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Anglicare NT

Citations:

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- ⁱ Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), *IPCC Special Report on Global Warming of 1.5°C*; Pachauri et al., *Climate Change 2014: Synthesis Report. Contribution of Working Groups I, II and III to the Fifth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change*; Steffen et al., "Trajectories of the Earth System in the Anthropocene."
- ⁱⁱ Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), *IPCC Special Report on Global Warming of 1.5°C*.
- ⁱⁱⁱ CSIRO, *Climate Change in Australia's Top End*, 2014
<https://publications.csiro.au/rpr/download?pid=csiro:EP1310385&dsid=DS2> (Accessed 16/11/18)
- ^{iv} Hanna and Ogge, *Cooked with Gas: Extreme Heat in Darwin*.
- ^v Ibid
- ^{vi} Ibid
- ^{vii} Oppermann, Brearley, Law, Smith, Clough, Zander; *Heat, health, and humidity in Australia's monsoon tropics: a critical review of the problematization of 'heat' in a changing climate*, May 2017
<https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.1002/wcc.468> (Accessed 16/11/18)
- ^{viii} Ibid
- ^{ix} Op. Cit. CSIRO, *Climate Change in Australia's Top End*
- ^x Victoria State Government, "Emissions Reduction Targets."
- ^{xi} Government of NSW, *Achieving Net-Zero Emissions by 2050*.
- ^{xii} Tasmanian Government, "Tasmania Achieves Zero Net Emissions for the First Time."
- ^{xiii} Government of South Australia, "South Australian Climate Change Action."
- ^{xiv} Department of Environment and Heritage Protection, *Pathways to a Clean Growth Economy: Queensland Climate Transition Strategy*.
- ^{xv} Burgess, "ACT Brings Forward Zero Net Emissions Deadline to 2045."
- ^{xvi} Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), *IPCC Special Report on Global Warming of 1.5°C*.
- ^{xvii} Australian Council of Social Services (ACOSS) <https://www.acoss.org.au/climate/> (Accessed 16/11/18)
- ^{xix} Labor website, Bill's Media Releases, *Battery Boost of Households to Slash Power Prices*, 22 November 2018
http://www.billshorten.com.au/battery_boost_for_households_to_slash_power_bills_thursday_22_november_2018 (Accessed 23.11.2018)