

Appendix 2: Policy challenges, drafting of legislation

Policy Challenge #1 – Deciding an emissions reduction trajectory

Much has been written about what emissions reduction targets should be adopted and why. Such discussions are usually filled with technical detail about carbon budgets, about what probability of exceeding 2 °C warming is acceptable, about equality of response amongst countries and communities, and so on. We think that a much more direct risk management approach is a better way of looking at our current predicament, along the following lines:

- 1 The policy needs to consider very adverse possible outcomes (such as the “hothouse earth”), even if their probability is thought to be low;
- 2 prudent risk management leads to reducing emissions as fast as possible; and
- 3 early reductions are particularly valuable, even if they start small and build up over time.

Policy Challenge #2 – What are “emissions reductions”?

Climate Tasmania thinks that the phrase “emissions reductions” is not recognised by many Tasmanians as being relevant to their day to day lives, nor do they necessarily know what “greenhouse gases” are. The reality is that if humanity were not using fossil fuels – coal, petroleum and gas – then we would not have a problem. Since the use of fossil fuels is the primary source of the problem, then policy needs to directly address the use of fossil fuels, by explicitly working to phase out their use. Further, it is not clear to us that enough Tasmanians recognise coal, petroleum fuels and gas as being fossil fuels: talking about phasing out “fossil fuels” may not provide direct meaning to as many Tasmanians as possible, and it may be better to talk about “phasing out coal, gas, petrol, diesel and other petroleum fuels”.

Policy Challenge #3 – Minimising economic disruption

Measurement and reporting fossil fuel use

What is measured, is managed. The amended Act should thus set annual usage trigger levels for coal, petrol, diesel and gas. Users of fossil fuels exceeding these levels (only large and medium users initially, varying from fuel to fuel) would need to make annual reports of their usage to a public database. All Government Departments and GBEs would have to report into the database regardless the level of their usage. Entities that reach the trigger level for one fossil fuel should be required to report all fossil fuel use. If compliance is likely to be a problem, parallel reporting from sellers of fuels could also be required.

Energy transition plans

Energy Transition Plans should be at the heart of the Act’s mitigation strategy. The transition should ideally be the total phasing out of fossil fuel use by the entity making the plan. The plans should:

- cover full phase-out, with detailed actions in the first few years and identified pathways to further reductions in later years;
- be made with the full engagement of all stake-holders;
- attempt to mitigate possible impacts on employment and local economies (a “just transition”); and
- be public, and with public annual reports of progress.

The development of Energy Transition Plans can be both voluntary and mandatory. Any business, association or community could volunteer to develop an Energy Transition Plan; these could claim assistance in developing and implementing plans but if so will be required to report publicly.

Mandatory Energy Transition Plans could be required of the top few fossil fuel users in each fuel category, with government departments and GBEs in a separate list. New users would be added annually to the list.

An Energy Transition Authority could administer and enforce both reporting of fuel use and developing and implementing Energy Transition Plans, and possibly to assist voluntary plan developers. It would be required to report publicly at least annually on progress and common roadblocks or problems.

Other matters to be addressed by the Act

Other matters which the amended Act should include are:

- emissions reduction target by sectors of the economy;
- a mechanism for including climate change in many planning decisions;
- processes for guiding the adaption of public and private assets and infrastructure to increasing extreme weather events and to sea level rise;
- processes for developing public health plans for threats and disease processes likely to made worse by climate change.

Development of detailed amendments

Climate Tasmania stands ready to work with any Member of either House interested in developing a new Act aimed at providing clear practical leadership to all Tasmanians and responding appropriately to the climate change risk. If you are interested in this, please respond to climatetasmania@gmail.com. We will contact you to set up a meeting with Members who have expressed interest.