



Media release: Tasmania is NOT a world leader in climate action

Climate Tasmania today questioned the common claim that Tasmania is a world leader in mitigating climate change. “If we ignore the effects of changes in forestry practices, our emissions have actually increased by around 6% in the past 24 years” said spokesperson John Hunter. “While it is true that there has been a large decrease in emissions from forestry, this situation was brought about simply by a decrease in logging, rather than by any climate-related policy. This decrease in emissions, which is caused by the regrowth of previously logged forest, is also only temporary. It is imperative that Tasmania makes drastic cuts in emissions from the other sectors such as transport, industry and agriculture which, on a per-capita basis, are among the highest in the world.”

Climate Tasmania today released the second of a series of Fact Sheets on climate, addressing the claim that Tasmania is a world leader in climate action. It explains the reasons why emissions from forestry should be omitted from emissions targets and associated performance measures. The fact sheet is one of several the independent, science-based group plan to release during the State election campaign.

Spokesperson John Hunter said: “Climate change will profoundly impact Tasmania’s future, and Climate Tasmania urges Tasmanians to ask candidates in the May 1 election to give clear and detailed statements as to their plans for responding to the climate emergency. Voters will then be able to take climate change into account as they decide how they will vote. We hope that our Fact Sheets and other information will assist Tasmanians to vote for the climate on 1st May”.

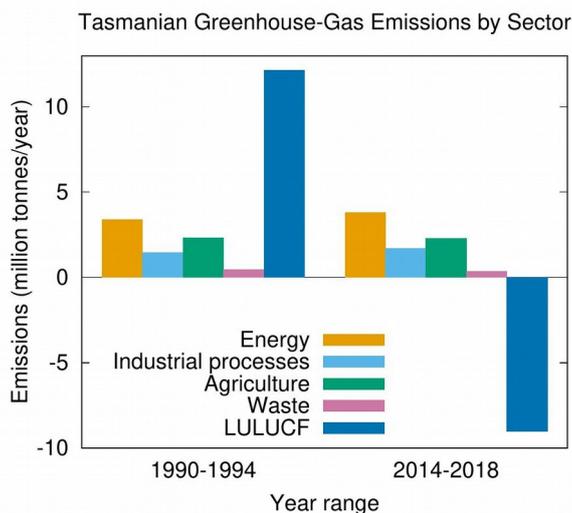
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Fact Sheet: Tasmanian Emissions and Forestry

The Tasmanian Government boasts that its “net emissions” are now negative - in other words that, overall, Tasmania is absorbing greenhouse gases from the atmosphere. So what are “net emissions”? They are those related to land use and forestry (technically called “Land Use, Land Use Change and Forestry” or LULUCF) plus everything else, which comprises emissions predominantly related to energy production (burning coal, oil and gas), industrial processes and agriculture. In Tasmania, LULUCF is primarily associated with forestry.



The figure (based on data from the Australian National Greenhouse Accounts) shows the components of annual emissions averaged over the 5-year periods 1990-1994 and 2014-2018. Over 24 years, emissions from energy, industrial processes, agriculture and waste barely changed (they actually increased about 6%), while LULUCF switched from around 12 million tonnes per year of emissions to 9 million tonnes per year of absorption (i.e. negative emissions), primarily due to a reduction in logging and draw-down of carbon dioxide into regrowing forests. Over the period 2014-2018, absorption by LULUCF more than offset all other emissions, giving rise to the claim of negative net emissions. So, is it fair to count LULUCF in our emissions? We say “no”, for the following reasons:

- Estimates of LULUCF are very uncertain and the methodology is opaque.
- It is unclear which parts of LULUCF are natural and which have human causes.
- Carbon dioxide can move from forests to the atmosphere relatively quickly (for example, during a forest fire).
- The present draw-down of carbon dioxide is not permanent and will reduce as regrowing forests mature.
- The present draw-down of carbon dioxide is a direct result of decades of logging, during which Tasmania had among the highest per-capita emissions in the world.

There is therefore a strong argument for omitting LULUCF from emission targets and associated performance measures.

A longer version of this Fact Sheet is at:

www.climatetasmania.org/is-tasmania-really-a-climate-leader

Climate Tasmania is a group of concerned professionals who have a diverse range of expertise, spanning scientific, legal, economic, health, energy, social and policy aspects of climate change. Our aim is “To provide timely, independent and authoritative advice to Tasmanian business, government and community leaders on climate change and appropriate policy responses.”

Details of the members of the Climate Tasmania board and expert advisers are available at www.climatetasmania.org/members/

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