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Wednesday, 27 November 2019 12:51 PM
Climate
Submission WA Future Climate Change Strategy

Please accept the following as a submission to *Climate Change in Western Australia* Issues Paper September 2019.

I feel that the State Government's environmental actions and objectives overall, while laudable, fall well short of what is needed and this is reflected in *Climate Change in Western Australia* Issues Paper September 2019.

Three fundamental responses to the document as a whole.

1. The coverage of the document is incomplete. It concentrates disproportionately on the *responses* to climate change while not putting enough emphasis on the *causes* which are within the State Government's power to influence or control.
2. The document seriously downplays the 'natural' environment and emphasises too exclusively 'the economy' and the human created environment.
3. The document is far too passive. It requires much stronger language to draw attention more forcefully to the climate emergency which threatens all of us. It should be more specific about the well-understood causes of climate change and what actions we, collectively and individually, therefore must take to minimise both its causes and its consequences in WA.

Although the WA government is backing major new renewable energy projects, supporting and expanding WA's production of renewable energy is surely one of the most important things the WA Govt. can do to help to reduce Australia's contributions to climate change. Climate change, or as most authoritative commentators are now calling it, the

climate emergency, must be addressed globally, by all nation states, their subsidiary entities – federated States, Territories, Local Governments – and the institutions and individuals which constitute them. To ensure WA adequately addresses its rising emissions and protects its people and planet for future generations, any robust climate policy must include:

- Firm targets that immediately reduce WA's carbon pollution and achieve net zero emissions as soon as possible but no later than 2040. Despite WA's vast renewable energy potential, renewable energy supplies only 16 per cent of the South West Interconnected System. The absence of a renewable energy or net zero emissions target has resulted in the state lagging behind the rest of the country in clean energy development. Without significant investment in renewable energy technologies -- which are the cheapest form of new energy -- Western Australia's greenhouse gas emissions will continue to skyrocket. While rising emissions from the energy intensive Liquified Natural Gas (LNG) sector is preventing Australia from meeting its Paris Agreement targets, and everyday increases the catastrophic impacts of climate change. The technology is there and available, we just need political will. The main challenges to decarbonising WA's electricity sector are:

- The lack of strong renewable energy targets and clear policy direction that create certainty among clean industry investors and ensure increased uptake of clean, reliable renewable energy.

- The lack of policies that regulate the increased pollution of the LNG sector and ensure any residue emissions are fully offset

- Adequate state government investment in renewable energy technologies - In the 2018/19 State budget, the state government spent more than three times the amount of taxpayers monies on the LNG and fossil fuel industries than it did on renewable energy.

- The willful campaign run at a state and national level to protect big energy polluters through misinformation about base-load power and the impacts of switching to renewables
- Ensuring decarbonisation happens rapidly enough to ensure energy security and reliability for all Western Australians, and helps avoid the catastrophic impacts of climate change
- Phase out fossil fuels -- including gas -- to achieve a renewable energy target of 100% by 2030
- Ban all new and proposed coal, gas and oil facilities
- Ensure the electricity sector must make a greater contribution to Australia's national greenhouse gas emission targets by avoiding, reducing and offsetting all emissions
- Ensure a just transition to a zero-emission economy, protecting those who are most at risk of the impacts of climate change. - A just transition for Collie to create low-carbon manufacturing jobs and protect workplace conditions - Ensure access to the benefits of renewable energy for low-income households
- Establish a State Government Department responsible for reducing emissions, including greenhouse gas emissions, with powers to ensure that all Government policies support emission reduction aims
- Promote local offset industries in agricultural, forestry and land use regimes in which photosynthetic sequestration of carbon dioxide exceeds its emission to the atmosphere
- Transition the Transperth bus fleet to full electric
- To fully address the impacts of climate change to WA, there must be multi-disciplinary and cross sector engagement as climate change impacts all sectors

- The big polluters have had too much input into our climate policies as demonstrated through the government's reaction to the recent EPA recommendations on emissions. It would be better if our state government implemented a proper solution developed with a whole of community approach, rather than a series of questions that don't seem to speak to the heart of the problem. Big polluters are currently allowed to donate significant sums of money to the political parties in this state and it leads to questionable outcomes when it comes to issues like this. We need a separation of government from these donors so that we can have meaningful action on climate change. 'Natural' gas does not have, nor should it have, *any place* in attempts to develop a coherent and effective response to the climate emergency we face and are beginning to experience. 'Natural' gas is largely methane, it is a fossil fuel which is itself a greenhouse gas and, while the actual burning of it might produce somewhat lower carbon dioxide per unit of energy used than burning coal, escapes of methane during its production, transport and use are greater than these reductions. In addition, locking in large, expensive 'natural' gas projects for many years into the future will reduce the capacity, the finance available and the perceived need to develop the genuine renewable energy sources which are essential to a coherent climate change policy. The WA government's aim should be to reduce *all* greenhouse gas emissions as rapidly as possible.

In this context, fracking, largely to obtain methane tightly held in sedimentary rocks, is not mentioned in the Report. As well as its other intrinsic problems fracking is carried out to obtain fossil fuels which contribute significantly to global warming. We believe the WA Government's rather tortured response to fracking should be further reviewed and this should be mentioned in the report to which we are responding.

There is no discussion of land clearing in general and deforestation in particular. In particular the logging of native forests and the impacts of prescribed burning to meet what are large, rather arbitrarily determined targets, have a variety of major environmental consequences including

influencing our climate both locally and more widely. (Several distinguished contributors to the prescribed burning conference held in Perth in July/Aug 2019 emphasised this point very forcefully.)

Land use in changes are one of the major causes of greenhouse gas emissions yet this is not mentioned in section *10 Protecting biodiversity*. The emphasis in this section is on developing policies which might alleviate the consequences of climate change. Important as these are, they are less important in our view than implementing measures which would slow the rate of climate change as soon as possible. This is one of those issues which requires global action, but this must usually be initiated at a local level.

Related to land clearing are agricultural practices and food production generally. The encouragement of biogas plants using waste streams (not biochar) would provide closed systems of regenerative agriculture providing beneficial soil fertilisers so necessary in our sandy and low nutritive soils.

At a recent 'Climate Summit' held in Margaret River, attended and contributed to by a wide range of representatives from active groups in the region, eleven local projects were selected as priorities on which to focus. These initiatives illustrate and emphasise what local groups, supported by local government, can contribute. They add focus to the State Government's paper.

- 1. Assist AMR Clean Community Energy Group to develop the major community renewable energy project it has initiated.*
- 2. Develop a community renewable energy power trading and sharing system.*
- 3. Support the transition to electric vehicles.*
- 4. Support agricultural transition to regenerative farming.*

5. Incorporate sustainability planning regulations into the Local Planning Scheme.

6. Develop and promote programs to think local, buy local, swap, share and recycle.

7. Revegetate riparian zones, buffers, shelter belts.

8. Support the development of new, sustainable and local industries.

9. Provide low carbon public, tourist and school transport.

10. Lobby for changes in environmental policies at the state and federal political level.

11. Coordinate, champion and implement the Augusta Margaret River Climate Action Plan

