

Submission to the Victorian Government Parliamentary Inquiry on Tackling Climate Change in Victorian Communities

25/08/2019

To the Victorian Legislative Assembly's Environment and Planning Committee,

We represent a community of diverse undergraduate students from RMIT University, Melbourne, studying responses to climate change through adaptation and mitigation. Please find below our submission to the Victorian Government Parliamentary Inquiry on Tackling Climate Change in Victorian Communities.

We believe that in order to truly support community-level action on climate change, the Government must act as both facilitator *and* leader. Facilitation from State Government involves funding and awareness-raising support for community action, as well as inclusion of community into decision-making process. Leadership must be delivered in the form of the public communication of state priorities through the adoption of climate change discourses and frameworks in state procedures. Only through significant commitments and meaningful action can the state government truly support the community to act on the climate crisis that we are facing.

After examination of the IPCC's 2018 report on climate change and the Combet Report, we have based our views Friends of the Earth's review on the measures required to adequately deal with climate change. We believe the state government should act immediately on the following recommendations in order to keep climate change well below 1.5°C.

Recommendation 1: Adoption of science-based emissions reduction targets

For the government to set science-based interim Emissions Reduction Targets that aim to keep global warming below 1.5°C. The Combet Report noted reductions of at least 43 percent below 2005 levels by 2025 and 67 percent by 2030 would be needed to be 1.5°C compliant. Targets exceeding these reductions would demonstrate strong state leadership in climate change action, based on a commitment to solidifying a healthy future for the state in a global context rather than a 'bare minimum' level of responsibility. Measures of accountability should be established and enforced to ensure these targets are met.

Recommendation 2: Bipartisan support for the Climate Act

For the opposition to publicly commit to the *Climate Change Act 2017*. Bipartisan support for the legislation--which enshrines the target of net-zero emissions by 2050 into law and establishes clear pathways for target setting to achieve this across all levels--would give communities confidence in the long term commitment by government to climate change mitigation and adaptation.

Recommendation 3: Establish a dedicated Victorian Climate Change Action Fund

The Victorian government's \$4.3m *Climate Change Innovation Partnerships Grant Scheme* was dramatically oversubscribed. It received more than 240 applications, yet there was only enough funding to support 24 projects (nine in ten missed out on a grant). This demonstrates that while interest in climate action exists on a community level, government financing has been insufficient in supporting these initiatives. A dedicated \$100m Victorian Climate Change Action Fund (VCCAF) that operates like the New Energy Jobs Fund would be necessary in supporting community-driven action.

Recommendation 4: Deliver Victoria's first Climate Budget alongside the Declaration of a Climate Emergency

State level declaration of a Climate Emergency would demonstrate leadership to mobilise, inspire, and encourage community level action through the use of this discourse. At present the ACT has been the only state to declare a Climate Emergency. This would be reinforced with an action plan and budget to implement climate action frameworks and strategies. A state budget with a strong focus on investing in climate action will help build consensus among key community stakeholders towards meeting Emission Reduction Targets; achieving the objectives of the Climate Change Act 2017; implementing the state's forthcoming Climate Strategy and Climate Adaptation Plans, and supporting community efforts to tackle the climate crisis.

Recommendation 5: A commitment to climate justice principles (including)

5.1 The onus for cutting emissions should be on those most responsible for producing them. It would be unjust to place burden for cutting emissions onto future generations and those who have contributed least to climate change.

5.2 Supporting communities dependent on fossil fuels and extractive industries through the transition, and ensuring any impacts of mitigation strategies do not adversely affect vulnerable communities, particularly individuals with intersectional disadvantage.

5.3 Ensuring communities on the frontline of climate impacts are not only a central focus but present in development of relevant climate policy and have support to take the lead in designing and implementing local strategies and actions.

Recommendation 6: Scale up transition support and establish a Minister for Transition, alongside a dedicated Minister for Climate Change

Scaling up the Latrobe Valley Authority into a state-wide Just Transition Authority can ensure all communities have the support and prioritisation they need to prosper as Victoria moves towards a zero-carbon economy. The creation of a Minister for Transition would oversee this. The establishment of a dedicated Minister for Climate Change would ensure this issue is given necessary prioritisation in government.

Recommendation 7: A public education campaign on climate action

Leadership from the Victorian Premier and government can emphasise the importance of climate action for the general public. In the 2000s, the Bracks government demonstrated leadership and built consensus for tackling excessive water use during the Millennium drought. Victorians rose to the challenge and achieved dramatic water savings. The Victorian government can draw inspiration from this approach and embark on a public education campaign that elevates climate action as a high priority issue.

We trust that the Committee will take our recommendations into consideration in their inquiry to properly assess the state's role and responsibility in responding to climate change, so that meaningful action can be taken immediately to better encourage, facilitate and support community-level initiatives.

Kind regards,

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