



Submission of Sustainable Living Tasmania to the Tasmanian Government's Consultation on a Sustainability Strategy October 2023

Introduction to SLT

Sustainable Living Tasmania (SLT) is a community organisation in its fifty first year of activity (beginning as the Tasmanian Environment Centre in 1972). Our work includes community engagement/information programs like the Big Weekend of Sustainable Living Ideas and energy consultancy work that helps businesses and organisations reduce their emissions footprints and power bills. We are building our role as a co-ordinating body for smaller sustainable living groups throughout Tasmania, encouraged by the recent Sustainable Living Gathering of representatives of sustainable living groups from across Tasmania, convened by SLT. We believe that communities working together will be essential for the successful implementation of a sustainability strategy.

Here is our current vision statement:

Our Vision

Tasmania leads the world on climate mitigation and adaptation and our communities are kind, welcoming and strong. Our island becomes an example of what is possible when we address the climate and ecological crises and ensure no one gets left behind.

Our Purpose

We exist to help create the conditions necessary to enable Tasmanian communities, governments, individuals and businesses to take action for an island that contributes to a safe global climate and is ecologically sound.

Our What

We **educate**, **facilitate**, and **catalyse** communities for action.

Our How

We do this by:

- **Connecting** organisations and people with each other
- **Inspiring** hope and possibility by seeding ideas, sharing solutions and showcasing successes
- **Supporting** communities to develop their own actions and activities
- **Advocating** for change as a powerful collective of sustainability organisations across the state

We Know That

- There is no time to lose
- We are stronger together
- We need to work beyond the usual geographies and communities
- Good work can be done across party lines
- Something is better than nothing
- From little things big things can grow

Context for the Proposed Strategy and Recognition of Urgency

Tasmania is a special place, with a benign climate, good soils, strong civil society, beauty and wildness. We are so fortunate to live here. SLT understands the importance of communicating this positivity in the strategy and the emphasis on social and economic benefits of sustainability actions but there is also a need for us as a Tasmanian community to recognise that sustainability is not optional. There is a powerful scientific understanding of how close we are as humans to compromising the capacity of the planetary systems to support us. We have taken on board the recent publication of research that argues that 'Earth is now well outside of the safe operating space for humanity' (Richardson, Steffen et al 'Earth Beyond six of nine planetary boundaries', Science Advances Vol. 9 No. 37) and we believe that Tasmania must respond with honesty. Tasmania has a special place in the world to show what can be done.

The Brundtland definition of sustainability is now almost redundant because of the climate emergency and the overuse of global resources and ensuing waste crisis. 'Sustainability' must include restoration and regeneration, and recognition of urgency. The United Nations Sustainable Development Goals are a useful checklist but Tasmanians can create our own path.

'Sustainability', given a new more powerful meaning beyond just 'sustaining' but also 'restoring'/'regenerating', could be an integrating principle over the many policies and strategies that have been developed by government – climate change action, circular economy and waste, wellbeing and so on. This is clearly identified in the PESRAC recommendations that initiated the development of a sustainability strategy, calling for 'a consistent and coordinated government approach to sustainability'. The PESRAC final Report also emphasises 'building community connection'. SLT affirms both of these as principles.

Suggestions for Additions to the Key Action Areas

Transport: This element needs to be recognised separately and must include a clear commitment to ending fossil fuels, electrification of public transport, integrated transport systems, greater electric vehicle usage including e-bikes, infrastructure support for active transport, promotional campaigns supporting cultural change, and incentivising reform of the goods transport sector.

Community Enablement: Community groups have a large part to play in changing hearts and minds and motivating action. They need to be properly resourced to activate the community and to model and celebrate sustainable living practices, creating community momentum for change.

Biodiversity: The maintenance and restoration of biodiversity helps us to take breath – literally and metaphorically - and will be increasingly necessary for the resilience of our population. Tasmania has become globally recognised for its diverse natural habitats which support a variety of life, which sustains us spiritually, physically, psychologically and economically.

Agriculture and Food: One of Tasmania's strengths is the resourcefulness of the agricultural sector and its ability to produce a diversity of products. Given climate change, this diversity is changing - increasing in some areas and decreasing in others. We need to adapt and provide incentives for farmers to diversify in a climate-responsive way and provide more and cheaper healthy, organic food. The



agricultural sector providing food (rather than niche products) should be incentivised and peri-urban farmlands should be maintained and encouraged. We need a food sector that does not rely on huge carbon-emitting transport modes.

Conclusion

Given the urgency to sustain, restore and regenerate our Earth and all its complex systems, the Tasmanian government is in a prime position to make our State a model of sustainability. We already have the capacity, wealth, know-how and motivation within the community. We just need the will of the government to enable positive change. We believe that in all the key action areas, communities will be pivotal in driving change. Community groups can be strengthened and resourced to work for a sustainable Tasmania alongside positive government action, thereby ensuring that change happens quickly and with social licence and broad-scale support.

This needs to be a major priority of the government.

Margaret Steadman
President
for the Board and members of Sustainable Living Tasmania