



3 November 2022

NSW Environment Protection Authority
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SUBMISSION ON THE DRAFT EPA CLIMATE CHANGE POLICY AND ACTION PLAN

About TRRA

1. The Tomaree Ratepayers and Residents Association Inc (TRRA) represents the community on a range of issues which affects the Tomaree Peninsula in Port Stephens LGA, including planning and development, economic development, cultural infrastructure and resources, the built and natural environment, tourism and other grass roots issues.

Positives

2. The draft policy is straightforward and sets minimum goals that are informed by the science and in excess of inadequate Commonwealth Government goals.

3. The Action Plan is comprehensive and well-laid out. The measures cover the key essential elements under the logical 'pillars' of 'Inform and Plan', 'Mitigate' and 'Adapt'

Points of Criticism - Action Plan

3 - Pillar 1 – Inform and Plan

4. Overall the measures under Pillar 1 are strong on persuasion and encouragement, but very soft on enforcement. Were this plan being put forward 20 years ago, such language would have been appropriate; however, it no longer reflects the urgent, existential predicament the World is in with climate change.

5. The Policy document quotes the Deloitte CxO Sustainability Report – Australia (2022). In this report Deloitte found that *'[m]ost executives believe the world is at a tipping point for responding to climate change' and '[t]he business case for change is compelling and broadly accepted – Australia stands to lose \$3.4 trillion by 2070 if we don't act fast, but could gain \$680 billion with rapid, focused action'*. However, the Action Plan, as a whole, fails to reflect the urgency of the action required, the absence of a second chance and the



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gravity of failure to meet necessarily ambitious goals – made so by unforgivable inaction in the past. That inaction and negligence alone would seem to dictate a more proscriptive plan that had more enforcement teeth.

6. A notable example of this low-key stance is the ‘recommendation’ that Development Applications (DAs) ‘should’ consider climate change input (p20). The reality is that DAs must be assessed in the context of climate change and strict guidelines enforced – not just as the plan suggests in relation to greenhouse gas emissions and sustainability, but with respect to the provision for and protection of green space to avoid the rising urban heat syndrome, rising stormwater absorption demands, etc.

4- Pillar 2 – Mitigate

7. **Enforcement** (p33). The targets are not enforceable – they should be for the reasons explained in paras 3 and 4 above.

8. **Licence Conditions** (p35). Targets are set to ‘guide and inform’ licensing conditions. Again, for the reasons cited, targets should be less negotiable and soft and considered as prerequisite to consent.

9. **Focus on High Emitters** (p36). While this seems logical, it should not be seen as adequate in itself. Prioritising high emitters is appropriate, but the urgency of the threat we now face and the lack of flexibility for missing what are essentially minimal mitigation targets, would dictate that progress needs to be made on all fronts, not just high emitters.

6 - Stronger regulatory responses we’ll consider in the future (p50)

10. This final chapter underscores again the fundamental weakness of this plan. The suggestions for the possible need to consider stronger measures and enforcement suggested in this chapter would have been reasonable 20 years ago. But now, and with the experience of scandalous inertia to address the issue of climate change meaningfully with just education and encouragement should provide a stark, lesson to be heeded. The possible measures and more are needed now.

General Comment

11. The essential structure and thrust of the Policy document and the Action Plan are undeniably sound. Where the latter fails is in the timidity of its attack. A timidity that reflects past practice in Government policy enforcement and, no doubt, the EPA’s historical role in Government as being an adviser to other client departments. An ‘adviser’ often seen as an obstruction to development and economic expansion. The environment has traditionally been a lower priority to these other demands and the protection of which has had a poor record of legislative enforcement.

12. We are now realising that ‘Gaia’ doesn’t negotiate and do deals. We have traded off our liveable future to its immutable limits. Our response to the need to turn the ‘supertanker’ of material progress, needs to be much more than business as usual. Regrettably, the Action Plan is

almost wholly framed in terms of business as usual with a tenor of 'relaxed encouragement' that completely belies our peril.

13. We have no objection to this submission being made public, in full, attributed and unredacted.



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