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27/11/19

Re: Climate Change in WA Issues Paper

To Whom it May Concern

This is my submission on the Climate Change in WA Issues Paper. Thank you for the opportunity to contribute to such a vital policy area.

This is one of the most critical times we have experienced. Now is the time if ever there was one for true leadership and taking difficult but necessary steps and re-setting our direction. It is no exaggeration to say that our survival depends on it, not just the survival of generations to come, but the survival with a good quality of life for those of us alive now.

The International Panel on Climate Change made their 1.5 degree recommendations based on very extensive scientific evidence with an unusually high level of scientific consensus. It is not a matter of opinion and conjecture that we are living in a time of extreme and dangerous threats, people all over the world have already been devastated or killed by the effects of a warming climate caused by the rapid accumulation of Greenhouse Gases (GHG) since industrialisation. Already more have died than would have without climate change: from an increase in frequency and extent of extreme weather events including heat waves, droughts, floods, cyclones; from increased bushfires which are now often mega-fires; and from hunger in places in the world where the climate change effect on food production has been immediate and brutal because they did not have means to acquire food from elsewhere. Many people have committed suicide because of the drought in Australia, hundreds have died from bushfires. Denmark, which was one of our wettest towns, is now having to transport in water. Climate change has already dramatically negatively affected our ability to produce food here in WA as well as in the rest of Australia. Already ecosystems everywhere have been dramatically affected, extinctions are occurring at a rate not experienced in millennia. Pacific Island states are having their lands eroded and inundated by sea water, their drinking water is now not drinkable and they cannot grow food. Many health conditions and disabilities are exacerbated by a warming climate, just two examples are that people are now contracting Dengue Fever in Australia and the Ross River is prevalent in far more areas in WA than it was. These are just some of the effects of climate change; the IPCC and many other bodies including the Australian emergency services and medical bodies are instructing us that these and many other effects of a heated climate will get much worse as the climate gets warmer. The climate is in danger of warming above 1.5 degrees, it is already very close to that and already the effects are undeniable. A rise above 1.5 degrees, which will occur unless swift and broad ranging changes are made, will have even greater, unpredictable and irreversible effects on virtually every aspect of life as we know it. That is why we signed up to the Paris agreement, but the world cannot reach the pledged targets unless we take the needed measures.

The effects that will be felt more keenly in many other places in the world will nevertheless undoubtedly affect us as well, for example with exponentially more people seeking refuge from

places that have been made unliveable due to the effects of climate change and the increased conflict that will arise from the resulting growing scarcity of food, water and adequate shelter. It is not only morally incumbent on us to consider people in other places in the world but also sensible to consider the implications for our nation and state. These issues are at the same time state, national and international issues, it is all connected.

Australia agreed to a certain level of GHG emissions reduction under the Paris Agreement. Yet it will be impossible to meet these GHG targets without rapid and large cuts to our use of fossil fuels, reducing their use to zero as soon as possible. The increase in LNG production in the last 15 years in WA has largely been responsible for Australia's increase in GHG emissions. A large proportion of any abatement including from renewables that Australia has made has been negated by the large increase in pollution from WA's LNG industry. If the proposed Burrup Hub development proceeds it will be impossible for WA and Australia to meet its commitments under the Paris Agreement and will place an unachievable and expensive burden on the rest of the economy to try to reach the agreement.

There is an absence of reasonable direction and policy around climate at the Federal level, resulting in a huge tax burden in trying to meet modest abatement targets (because the Emissions Reduction Fund mechanism is not the most efficient, ie a carbon tax, and instead tax payers are paying for abatement measures). However the severe shortcomings of Federal policy does not mean that the states are not responsible for or capable of fulfilling Australia's Paris commitments – indeed it is almost always the states that must actually carry out and legislate for any treaties and agreements that the Federal Government makes. All other states have made firmer and more far reaching GHG reduction targets than WA – WA must step up its game and have ambitious targets including interim targets and legislation that will ensure we do our part to meet our Paris commitments, instead of blowing the carbon budget for the rest of the country due to the LNG industry like we're currently doing.

Having carbon reduction and renewables targets that are line with what the IPCC is calling for is what we must do. Studies have shown that carbon abatement and offsets can create 4000 additional jobs in WA and thus employ drastically more people, in a far more sustainable way, than those employed by the LNG industry. This would benefit the economy, communities, the natural environment and ecological biodiversity. Many of these jobs would be regional, something we sorely need.

Many of these jobs would be in re-forestation. Countless studies have shown that trees are one of the most important and efficient carbon sinks that we have – we need them to help remove the excess carbon from the atmosphere. You must also stop logging any old growth forests and fix the cynical current definition of old growth forest which puts many old growth forests at risk, even though logging them is not even profitable. The benefits of old growth trees in carbon abatement and habitat provision is crucial – replacing them with other trees does not provide the same irreplaceable benefits.

We also need to rapidly move to a hydrogen economy (where the latter is not sourced from or powered by fossil fuels) in addition to renewables and storage.

With the rapid reduction in the cost of renewables and storage that is occurring and with advances in and increased demand for hydrogen power, LNG is at high risk of becoming a stranded asset. It does not make sense for our State Government to be encouraging it, promoting it and subsidising it. Similarly fracking is environmentally extremely destructive and unnecessary, there should be a state wide ban on any fracking exploration and development.

There is a huge economic cost to climate change: to health, insurance, erosion abatement and prevention, cooling, food production, bushfire fighting and to mental health to name some costs. You should be looking after our future economy by quickly phasing out the fossil fuel industry and investing in abatement, renewables, storage, carbon farming and hydrogen power development.

As outlined above, for many well-being, environmental, moral and economic reasons you should not allow any new extraction of fossil fuels, including by the LNG industry. You should ensure that there are meaningful, monitored and enforceable offsets required of the current fossil fuel projects, that are set by the EPA (not by industry).

Other measures, such as increasing electric car use and infrastructure, enhancing public transport, increasing energy efficiency, good urban planning (not continuing to allow the destruction of bushland and increasing urban sprawl) and making solar power available to renters are all necessary as well, but any gains made in these and other sectors will be dwarfed by the pollution made by the current and proposed LNG industry if you allow the industry to continue as it has and if you approve the proposed Burrup Hub.

This simply cannot be a time for business as usual, no matter what the threat feels like in terms of winning elections and placating a wish that things can continue as they have done with reforms that tinker at the edges. To do so threatens our very existence let alone our quality of life right now and will have even more traumatic and unpredictable effects for people who are young today.

Just because a sector has existed for a long time and seemingly has a lot of power, like the resources sector, specifically the fossil fuel industry, does not mean that they must continue to be listened to and supported. Slavery seemed inevitable and unavoidable when it was unashamedly prevalent and dominated the economy. It seemed unthinkable to move outside of it. But the world did (well we still have it but it is not predominant and is not openly backed by governments) move outside of it to a better society and economy. Now is the time for very courageous steps, our long term survival and current quality of life depends on it. Your stewardship is called for. Yes it will be difficult and will cause disruption and much clamouring from very powerful interests – but you are actually the ones with the power because the community will back you in the long term. It is risky in terms of elections to do the right thing, but you are risking our lives and those of future generations if you don't. To know that you have done the right thing at a critical moment in history would be invaluable I would imagine, and I think you will be surprised at the level of backing and support you will get from a vast number (an election winning number) of people if you take the bold and absolutely necessary steps. The times are changing rapidly and the last Federal election is not an indicator of where people are at, or can move to, with the right type of vision and leadership.

Of course if you are guided by the science and do what is best for the long term health of the economy and people there is no argument –your climate change policy will reflect what I, the IPCC and many scientific and reputable bodies have called for.

Yours sincerely

Fiona Moran

