

## **Incoming Territory government must legislate for climate action**

More than 50 business, Indigenous, health and community organisations have come together urging parties to commit to legislate for climate action ahead of the Northern Territory election.

They will deliver an open letter to party leaders today that calls for a Climate Change Act setting a legally binding pathway for the Territory to meet the Paris Agreement target of net zero emissions by 2050.

The act would compel future NT governments to consider climate risks in all portfolios and make decisions in the best interests of current and future generations of Territorians.

The NT faces some of the most extreme impacts from climate change, yet lags behind other jurisdictions that are already implementing a clean energy future.

Victoria, South Australia and Tasmania all have laws to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, as do countries such as New Zealand, the UK, Mexico, and many states in the US and Europe.

*“The Territory finally has bipartisan support for reaching net zero emissions by 2050, but unless that becomes law, we can’t be confident that the target will be reached,”* says Shar Molloy, Director of the Environment Centre NT.

*“The NT’s recent climate change response is a strong policy foundation, but we have seen good policy thrown out before when governments change. A Climate Change Act will make sure future governments are held accountable for protecting our futures.”*

Unprecedented heat waves, reduced rainfall, species loss and ecosystem damage are already threatening NT lives and livelihoods.

Climate change is threatening the very survival of Aboriginal communities because its impacts compounds inequalities in housing, health, food and energy security.

*“Our people are on the frontline of climate change,”* said Central Land Council executive member Michael Liddle.

*“Our overcrowded hotbox houses are becoming less habitable every year and a falling water table and reduced rainfall are threatening our drinking water and the plants and animals we depend on.”*

*A climate change law would help us to fight those risks and make a faster transition to affordable, clean energy that creates jobs in our communities.”*

The open letter calls for Aboriginal knowledge to inform the Territory’s climate change response and for Aboriginal representation in an independent expert NT Climate Advisory Council overseeing the delivery of a Climate Change Act.

*“We have a lot to contribute because we have cared sustainably for country for tens of thousands of years and we want and need to be part of the solution,”* said Mr Liddle.

*“We need to educate ourselves about the causes of climate change, how it impacts on the bush foods that are becoming harder and harder to gather and how that in turn affects our cultures and identities.”*

As the Territory moves into another hot summer, the need to prepare the community for a heating world is increasingly urgent.

*“The rise in extreme heat days is already making more and more people sick and killing them, and if we don’t take action we’ll see even more heat-related deaths,”* says doctor and ANU Senior Lecturer Simon Quilty.

*“Strong climate legislation would help us create more liveable and resilient communities, for example by investing in environmental health – shade, green spaces and cool spots in our urban spaces and remote communities.”*

A Climate Change Act will send a clear signal to industry and investors that the NT will recover from this pandemic by creating jobs in industries that are good for jobs, the environment and regional economies.

It is also an opportunity to make sure the response to climate change is fair and equitable.

*“Responding to the challenges of climate change is a chance to make the Territory a better and more equal place for everyone. We can tackle disadvantage at the same time as providing climate solutions – by investing in social housing, cleaner, clean affordable energy, and supporting local jobs in sustainable industries,”* says John Adams, Jesuit Social Services General Manager NT.

*“As we’ve seen with COVID-19, we know that climate change will hit some groups in our community harder than others – because of their income, where they live, where they work, age or disability. Working with the community sector will be critical to ensure needs of the most vulnerable groups are prioritised.”*

Community members can support the call for a Climate Change Act by signing the petition launched today by the Environment Centre NT:

[https://www.ecnt.org.au/2020\\_climatechangeact\\_petition](https://www.ecnt.org.au/2020_climatechangeact_petition)

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