



# CatholicCare NT

## CatholicCare NT: Response to NT Government's "Northern Territory Climate Change Response - Towards 2050"

### Introduction:

CatholicCare NT is a non-government social services organisation under the auspice of the Diocese of the Catholic Church of Darwin, which covers all of the Northern Territory. Our services give us the opportunity of a strong connection with some of the most vulnerable and disadvantaged people in the Northern Territory, and in Australia as a whole. Currently we have 21 programs across 17 sites throughout the NT and into the APY Lands. We offer counselling and social services in the areas of mental health, alcohol and other drugs, financial wellbeing and capability, housing, community development services, aged care advocacy, family support, contact centres, NDIS support and domestic and family violence. We work collaboratively with many agencies. A great percentage of our work is with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in remote and urban communities. We are certainly in a position to observe the effects of climate change on the land and the rich resources it has provided in the past, and specifically how it is affecting the people who rely on the land and rivers for their basic existence. We would therefore like to submit the following as our response to the paper.

### Affirmation of the Report:

As an organisation working with extremely disadvantaged people in both the remote communities and in the urban cities of the NT, we would applaud the NT Government's recent response document on Climate Change and the overall high level strategy that is evident in the document. In particular we note:

- Reference to climate science and the global greenhouse gas emissions, and the International Panel on Climate Change (IPPC) predictions.
- Assertion that responding to Climate Change provides the opportunity for a responsible economic strategy, pointing out *"... our solar resources, our skills and expertise and our infrastructure, the Northern Territory is an ideal place to invest in low-carbon economic growth."*
- Identification of the myriad reasons why the NT could have a good renewable energy possibilities and how the NT could build on existing initiatives
- Points to the Aboriginal Carbon Industry and the possibility for a renewable hydrogen industry.
- Articulation of how the NT Government is already taking action to reduce greenhouse gases across different sectors and some plans for the future.
- Refers to what other states are doing with regard to net zero emission targets and highlights that Tasmania achieved net zero emissions in 2018.
- Refers to the NT Government's role in leading by example and sending a signal to industry, investors and the community that the NT Government is serious about

addressing climate change and unlocking the social, economic and environmental benefits. It also points out that the NT Government will embed climate change considerations across decision-making.

- Addresses some next steps that the Government will undertake toward achieving the stated goals.

### **Challenges to be examined:**

Climate change cannot be separated from the health, wellbeing and social fabric of society. The social, mental and general wellbeing of people is at the heart of our Mission. In light of this we would like to see:

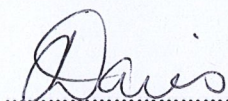
- Further developed implementation plans with specific targets, dates and who is responsible for actions. While the current plan highlights issues, it is not specific in its implementation
- That further work be done on industry emissions as these are generally currently rising rather than decreasing. There is a great need to reduce emissions from all sectors such as agriculture, transport, commercial and residential with further attention given to waste disposal methods and their associated emissions. These industries need to set specific targets and plans to achieve the targets.
- That further transparency be given regarding economic development. For example, in relation to the Solar farm to be developed in the Barkly region. What is the benefit to the local people? We acknowledge that, while the workers are in the area completing the building and installation of the solar farm, they will contribute to the economy of the region in the short term. However, and more importantly, how much of the generated power from the solar farm will be available for use within the region and more widely for the NT and how much will be sent offshore? How will the solar farm decrease our carbon footprint? In the project's development plan is this addressed with the local people in mind? Will the jobs from this project be given to the local people, especially to our Indigenous people, or will the workers be brought into the NT from overseas and employed by the company contracted to undertake the project?
- Further attention be given to deforestation throughout the Territory, especially in the area of pastoral deforestation. Burning of forests outside of the annual burn off by Indigenous people has increased, and the number of bushfires from this is evident. As trees are known to be necessary in the reduction of carbon emissions, how will such deforestation be remediated? Is it part of the Climate action plan?
- With the projects outlined in the response paper, further attention be given to the sustainability of the livelihood of people in the remote communities, and low income earners.
- With the current housing crisis for people in the NT, but particularly in the remote communities, climate change will add to the already devastating effect on health, social and cultural connection. How is future planning for housing taking the effects of Climate Change into account?
- Through our work at Daly River we understand that Power & Water has installed solar power to that community. This is a great initiative! However, we also understand that

there has been no ownership involvement or connection with the community, resulting in no resultant benefit to them. We would like to see further examination of future projects, so that community involvement is at the centre of the project.

- It is noted that climate change is a huge issue for young people. This has been evidenced by the recent marches led by young people throughout the world and their courage to take this issue to the United Nations. The mental health of young people is a factor that needs to be addressed in developing strategy. How are young people's voices being heard in future planning?
- The issue of Fracking as a way to produce onshore shale gas is generally not supported. We do recognise that the NT Government did have an inquiry into fracking and has decided to go ahead with fracking throughout the NT. However, it is also noted that in the final report, the NT Fracking Inquiry's committee led by Justice Rachel Pepper who wrote: "It must be noted that the strong antipathy surrounding hydraulic fracturing for onshore shale gas demonstrated during the consultations did not abate. For a significant majority of the people participating in the inquiry, the overwhelming consensus was that hydraulic fracturing for onshore shale gas in the NT is not safe, is not trusted and is not wanted." We urge the NT Government that, in the future development of the plan and strategies, we would like to see how the emissions from fracking will be offset with set dates and targets. We hope that all the initiatives outlined in the paper will offset all the emissions that come from fracking. We also note that this will be a challenge!
- That any future development plans and strategies have a much wider consultation process with all people at all levels of the Northern Territory, in particular with our Indigenous people. Living in coastal communities or in the remote desert communities, they are the people who are currently, and will continue to be, the main group of people feeling the effects of climate change. They truly understand the lands and waters on which they live and have an invaluable contribution to make.

#### Conclusion:

CatholicCare NT takes this opportunity to thank the NT Government for its initiative to develop the ***Northern Territory Climate Change Response - Toward 2050***. We acknowledge the work that has gone into such a plan and strategy. We also thank the Government for giving the community the opportunity to respond to the paper and we thank you for considering our response. We look forward to the next steps, so that together we can all work together for a better future for our Earth and for all of us who inhabit it.



Judy Davis for Jayne Lloyd  
Acting Director



Leone Wittmack  
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Signed: Thursday 24 October 2019