



Submission to the Northern Territory Government
Climate Change Response: Towards 2050

October 2019



Jesuit
Social Services
Building a Just Society

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Jesuit Social Services

A just response to the climate crisis

Jesuit Social Services is a social change organisation. Our mission is to build a just society where all people can live to their full potential. We have over 40 years' experience working at the hard end of social justice, working in solidarity with people experiencing disadvantage and working to change policies, practices, ideas and values that perpetuate inequality, prejudice and exclusion.

In an increasingly complex era of climate crisis, environmental collapse and rising social inequity, new challenges to building a just society are appearing. Jesuit Social Services has always worked with the most marginalised. While often the least responsible for ecological risks and threats, these populations are the most affected by their emergence.

Recognising that environmental challenges pose particular risks to the communities with whom we work, for several years our organisation has sought to bring an ecological perspective to all our operations. The interconnection between environmental and social justice has influenced our practice, policy, and organisational identity. It has shaped our strategy to ensure we are equipped to address justice issues of the future, and to lead peer organisations around issues of ecological justice. More background on who we are and what we do, including our commitment to ecological justice is at **Appendix A**.

The community services sector is increasingly recognising the impact the changing climate is having on the people with whom we work: people who are more vulnerable to the current and predicted impacts because of where they live, their income, their age, health conditions, disabilities, or where they work.

Climate injustice is evident globally, and it is evident here in the Territory, where the effects of rising temperatures, more severe droughts, bushfires and other extreme weather events, are disproportionately impacting the lives of Aboriginal people in remote communities. Water scarcity, heat stress, food security, energy poverty, service disruption and the impacts of species loss on people's cultural and spiritual lives are not distant threats, but real and present challenges demanding an urgent response.

Alongside this submission, together with 17 other organisations and community groups, Jesuit Social Services has signed a joint statement calling for a just transition to a safe climate future in the Territory. This means:

- acknowledging the disproportionate effect that both the causes and impacts of climate change are having on Aboriginal land, culture and communities, and ensuring justice for Aboriginal people and respect for First Nations' knowledge is the foundation of our response.
- urgently committing to a comprehensive, long-term plan to reduce emissions and avoid the worst climate impacts, support people to adapt, build community resilience, and ensure everyone has the opportunity to participate in and benefit from the transition to a clean energy future.

A copy of the joint statement can be viewed [here](#).

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Recommendations

Recommendation 1

That within the next six months, the Northern Territory Government legislate targets of net zero emissions by 2050, with interim targets that set a clear pathway for emissions reduction across all industries and sectors.

To stay on track, the Government should develop 3 yearly action plans towards the interim targets.

The targets should be determined by independent experts and be sector specific, with Ministerial responsibility for reporting on progress within their portfolios – contributing to an annual whole-of-government progress report to Parliament.

Recommendation 2

That the Northern Territory Government commit to no new fossil fuel developments in the Territory, including implementing a permanent ban on oil and gas fracking, recognising that the industry's emissions profile is incompatible with a safe climate future and undermines the Government's positive steps towards clean energy transition.

Recommendation 3

Within the next six months, the Northern Territory Government introduce a Climate Change Act to embed climate policy objectives across government decision-making, including policy, budget, procurement and capital works decisions. The Act should embed a commitment to a just transition.

Recommendation 4

That the Northern Territory Government commit to an equitable clean energy and low-carbon economic development strategy that allows all Territorians to share in the economic benefits of transition, particularly those communities at the forefront of climate impacts. The strategy should:

- focus on public investment in investment in renewable energy supply and low-carbon economic development opportunities
- support community-controlled energy projects
- ensure jobs and income from new large-scale renewables projects flow to local communities
- outline a plan for a just transition for workers and communities away from gas and diesel power generation to jobs and economic development opportunities in clean energy and other ecologically sustainable industries.

Recommendation 5

That within the next six months, the Northern Territory Government develop a detailed adaptation plan outlining what actions it will take to prepare the Territory for the short, medium and long terms risks and impacts of climate change, and the opportunities presented by transition to a low-carbon future. The plan should:

- Be developed in consultation with the community, traditional owner groups, business and industry, technical experts, local and federal government and other key stakeholders.

- Prioritise actions to support those in our community who stand to be worst affected and who have the least resources and/or capacity to adapt.
- Communicate the risks and impacts of climate change on a regional level.
- Articulate the climate change risk considerations and adaptation actions that will be taken across key sectors (for example, disaster and emergency management, community health and wellbeing, build environment and infrastructure, water and natural resources and ecosystems).
- Articulate roles and responsibilities for adaptation across the three levels of government, business and industry, individuals and communities, non-government organisations and community groups, universities and research institutions and others.
- Be communicated in a way that helps all Territorians understand what action is being taken by Government and industry and how communities themselves can take action.
- Be independently evaluated, with the findings to inform subsequent planning.

Recommendation 6

That the Northern Territory Government's Climate Change response includes explicit strategies to address energy poverty including:

- access to affordable, decentralised clean energy for low-income households
- funding for targeted retrofits for tenants in public housing and other low-income households.
- energy efficiency standards for rental properties and incentives for landlords to improve the energy efficiency of rental properties
- supporting the uptake of energy efficient appliances by low-income households (e.g. low and no interest loan schemes)
- ongoing work with energy retailers to support customers experiencing financial hardship.

Recommendation 7

That the Northern Territory Government engage local communities in the finalisation of the Climate Change Response and develop a comprehensive communications plan to support its implementation.

Recommendation 8

That the Northern Territory Government:

- Support Aboriginal-led projects that promote the application of traditional knowledge for climate solutions.
- Support for communities, particularly remote communities, to access technical expertise and technology to inform local mitigation and adaptation responses.
- Resource community-led projects to develop, test and implement climate education, mitigation, adaptation and transformation activities.

Recommendation 9

That the Northern Territory Government support and resource initiatives to:

- increase awareness within the community services sector of issues of ecological and climate justice and build this into practice, operations and organisational culture
- improve community sector readiness for climate impacts
- support community sector organisations to develop, test and implement responses to improve community-readiness for climate impacts.

Recommendation 10

That the Northern Territory Government:

- advocate to the Federal Government for strong climate action.
- work collaboratively with local government to maximise shared efforts at mitigation, adaptation and transformation.

Recommendation 11

That the Northern Territory Government continue to invest in climate-related research, development and implementation to inform adaptation and emissions reduction

Introduction

Jesuit Social Services welcomes the opportunity to comment on the Northern Territory Government's draft Climate Change Response.

Our comments on the draft Climate Change Response follow our submission to the Government's initial Climate Change Response Discussion Paper in November last year. Our submission was one of 37 written submissions received by the Northern Territory Government. In our submission, we joined many others in calling for a legislated target and clear pathway to net zero emissions by 2050 and comprehensive adaptation planning to ensure the Territory is climate-ready.

Our submission emphasised the need for a just response that acknowledges and addresses the fact that the burdens of climate change are not being borne equally. Without specific action by government, it is already disadvantaged people and communities who will bear the brunt of climate impacts.¹ We called for an urgent, equitable and holistic response to protect our common home.

Since then, the calls for climate action have intensified in the Territory and across the globe. There is strong community expectation that governments will act on the science and lead transformational change to decarbonise our land use, energy, industry, transport, cities and infrastructure.

In September, record numbers of young people and adults turned out in Darwin for the Global Climate Strike – by some estimates, Darwin had the highest per capita attendance in the country. In Alice Springs 57 businesses closed their doors to call for climate action.

The recent NT Climate Justice Workshop, hosted by Jesuit Social Services in partnership with NTCOSS and the Environment Centre NT, received an overwhelming response. It was attended by 60 participants from across the Territory. The organisations represented included community service providers, Aboriginal community-controlled organisations, land councils, local government, the Northern Territory Government, industry experts and environmental organisations. This was the first time such a large and diverse group of stakeholders gathered to discuss climate issues affecting vulnerable communities in the Territory. A brief overview of the day is provided at **Appendix B**.

The call to action is clear and the Government's draft Response is an important step in the right direction. We are strongly supportive of the focus on building the renewables industry in the Territory. With the right approach, the growth of the industry has the potential to create thousands of new jobs and revitalise our regional economies, while providing the community with access to affordable clean energy and helping meet our emissions reduction targets.

However the development of the renewable energy industry is just one important part of the comprehensive strategy required to ensure a safe climate future for the Territory. The window to act is closing and the Territory urgently needs strong accountability mechanisms to ensure emissions reductions are achieved and detailed planning as to how those reductions will be achieved across all sectors and industries. Rapid and deep emissions reductions must go hand in hand with adaptation planning across the Territory to prepare our communities for those impacts that are unavoidable.

¹ See Jesuit Social Services (2018) Climate Change Discussion Paper Submission to the Northern Territory Government November 2018 ([online](#))

Most importantly, our response must be built on principles of climate justice: prioritising actions to mitigate climate impacts on people and communities who will be worst affected yet have the least resources to adapt, in particular those living in remote communities and people on low-incomes.

The draft response is a good start, but requires significantly more depth and detail.

What do we stand to lose?

The NT is facing some of Australia's most extreme climate changes, yet we don't have a robust plan in place either to reduce emissions or prepare the community, government or business for the impacts that are already unavoidable.

Sea levels are rising twice as fast in the Top End than on Australia's southern coasts and the global average – by 2050, we can expect the inundation of many of Darwin's coastal suburbs, including the suburbs of Cullen Bay, Parap, Fannie Bay, Rapid Creek, Coconut Grove and Bayview^{2,3} and almost half of Kakadu's freshwater wetlands inundated with saltwater.⁴

Darwin can expect to experience up to 132 days per year over 35°C by 2030 and 275 days by 2070, compared to current average of 22.2 days.⁵ The combination of heat and humidity at these levels is extremely uncomfortable for most of us, but potentially life-threatening for vulnerable groups including young children, the elderly, people with existing health problems or disabilities, people experiencing homelessness and outdoor workers.⁶

Many Central Australian communities are already experiencing water stress, with Yuendumu reported this year to be facing 'severe risk' of running out of water'.⁷

Climate change poses a direct and substantial threat to the biodiversity of the Territory; it is already having an impact on species such as the flatback turtle, affected by rising temperatures.⁸

These changes threaten the lifestyles we all love in the Territory, recreation for many and livelihoods for some. For Aboriginal people, who have cared for country sustainably for tens of thousands of years, these changes run deeper, affecting spiritual and cultural life.

Many of these predictions are acknowledged in the Government's draft response: we must let them sink in and feel what they really mean for our own lives, the places we love, species with whom we share this planet and future generations to come. And this must galvanise us to action.

² CoastAdapt (2017) Coastal climate impacts and responses in the Darwin Region ([online](#))

³ 'Climate change could see Darwin suburbs submerged by 2050', NT News, 28 November 2016 ([online](#))

⁴ 'Kakadu's wetlands will be partly under salt water in just over 50 years', CSIRO ECOS, 28 November 2018 ([online](#))

⁵ CSIRO (2014) Climate change in Australia's Top End: An information booklet on climate change for Aboriginal people living in Top End communities ([online](#))

⁶ Climate Council (2016) The silent killer: climate change and the health impacts of extreme heat ([online](#))

⁷ 'Yuendumu in Central Australia facing 'severe risk' of running out of water', ABC, 13 August 2019, (view article [online](#))

⁸ 'Climate change could make flatback turtle population be born all female or die out, warns scientist', ABC, 12 November 2018 ([online](#))

1. Legislated commitment to a low carbon future

Legislated emissions reduction targets

Despite these predictions, the NT is lagging well behind other jurisdictions in Australia and mapping out clear pathways to net zero emissions by 2050. As the Government's draft response acknowledges, all other states and territories have either achieved net zero emissions (Tasmania) or have already committed to the science-based target of net zero emissions by at least 2050.⁹

Business is also making the move: responding to a call-to-action issued in June this year by a group of business, civil society and UN leaders, 87 major companies have committed setting targets across their operations aligned with achieving net zero emissions by 2050 and challenged governments to match their ambition.¹⁰ In Australia, we are seeing investors drive action to reduce emissions across major infrastructure assets, including NT Airports.¹¹

While it is positive to see the Government's aspiration to work towards net zero emission by 2050, aspirations are simply not enough. The risks to our communities and natural systems are too great not to take decisive action to rapidly decarbonise. A legislated target demonstrates government's commitment and sends a clear signal to industry and investors that the Northern Territory Government is serious about reducing carbon pollution and pursuing a low-carbon growth strategy.

We must remind ourselves that the warming of 1.5°C projected if we reach net zero emissions by 2050 is not considered 'safe' – rather it is considered by the IPCC to be within the threshold at which the climate system is *likely* to remain in a habitable and stable state, while still posing significant risks to natural and human systems.¹² With these known risks, it is hard to see the case for anything less than legislated targets and strong accountability mechanisms to keep us on track.

⁹ Tasmania achieved net zero emissions in 2018, the ACT has revised their net zero emissions target from 2050 to 2045, Victoria has legislated a net zero emissions target by 2050 with five yearly interim targets, South Australia has a target of net zero by 2050 and legislated climate change framework, NSW has committed to net zero by 2050 and QLD has committed to net zero by 2050.

¹⁰ '87 major companies lead the way towards a 1.5°C future at UN Climate Action Summit', United Nations Global Compact, Press Release, 22 September 2019 ([online](#))

¹¹ 'Taking the lead on infrastructure carbon reduction in Australia', IFM Investors, October 2019 ([online](#))

¹² Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), *IPCC Special Report on Global Warming of 1.5°C*, October 2018

Recommendation 1

That within the next six months, the Northern Territory Government legislate targets of net zero emissions by 2050, with interim targets that set a clear pathway for emissions reduction across all industries and sectors.

To stay on track, the Government should develop 3 yearly action plans towards the interim targets.

The targets should be determined by independent experts and be sector specific, with Ministerial responsibility for reporting on progress within their portfolios – contributing to an annual whole-of-government progress reporting to Parliament.

Risk of litigation

Internationally we are seeing governments being held to account for inaction on climate change and support for industries contributing to climate change. The most well-known case to date is the *Urgenda* litigation in the Netherlands. In this case, brought by a Dutch NGO on behalf of 886 Dutch citizens, the Dutch appeals court upheld an historic legal order on the Dutch Government to accelerate emissions reductions, ruling that the severity and scope of the climate crisis demanded greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions reduction of at least 25 per cent by 2020 (from a 1990 baseline), compared to the Dutch Government's target of 17 per cent.^{13,14} The ruling required the government to immediately take more effective action on climate change.

The legal basis for the claim was that the Government had a duty to safeguard the protection and improvement of the living environment, with the duty arising from a combination of tort law and international obligations to which the Netherlands had signed up.¹⁵

In Australia, the first wave of climate change litigation has concerned challenges to decisions by governments and other regulatory bodies to approve projects and developments that may have significant direct or indirect greenhouse gas emissions, including coal mines, coal-fired power stations and gas exploration.¹⁶ Legal experts expect this type of climate change litigation to continue and likely grow more frequent, including challenges to projects such as oil and gas exploration, the expansion or construction of facilities for energy-intensive manufacturing and changes to land use.

No new fossil fuel developments

While the overarching policy directions in the Government's draft response are sound, Jesuit Social Services is deeply concerned that the response includes a place for the growth of the onshore gas industry in the Northern Territory. The development of new fossil fuel projects will work directly against our ability to achieve our required emissions reductions.

¹³ See *Urgenda, The Climate Case* ([online](#))

¹⁴ 'Dutch appeals court upholds landmark climate change ruling', *The Guardian*, 10 October 2018 ([online](#))

¹⁵ Corrs Chambers Westgarth, 'A new era of climate change litigation in Australia?', 8 April 2019 ([online](#))

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

The recent report by Griffith University’s Emeritus Professor Ian Lowe found that extracting the Northern Territory’s gas reserved at the rate projected by industry would do more to accelerate climate change than Australia’s entire current activity. Professor Lowe concluded that “given these pollution figures, it would be criminal to allow the gas fracking industry to expand across the Northern Territory.”¹⁷

While the Government’s draft response notes that, consistent with recommendation 9.8 of the Pepper Inquiry, the Northern Territory has committed to working with the Australia Government to ensure there is no net increase in the lifecycle emissions emitted in Australia from any onshore shale gas produced in the Northern Territory, we are yet to see how the Government plans to do this. We note that that cost of fully offsetting emissions from fracking the Territory is estimated to be \$4.3 billion, once the industry is in full production by 2030.¹⁸

It is inconsistent and irresponsible of the Northern Territory Government to continue to support the development of this industry given the risks to our climate, water, land and health. It would be an injustice to our communities now, and generations to come.

Recommendation 2

That the Northern Territory Government commit to no new fossil fuel developments in the Territory, including implementing a permanent ban on oil and gas fracking, recognising that the industry’s emissions profile is incompatible with a safe climate future and undermines the Government’s positive steps towards clean energy transition.

A Climate Change Act for the Northern Territory

As highlighted in the draft response, climate change risk considerations need to be embedded across all aspects of government decision-making. Effective adaptation planning will require climate impacts to be considered across a wide range of policy areas, in particular relating to health and community services, emergency management, the natural environment, agriculture, water and the built environment. Mechanisms are also needed to ensure policy and legislative decisions do not work against the Government’s ambitions to reduce emissions in line with the Paris Agreement target.

The introduction of a Climate Change Act, such as introduced in the United Kingdom and Victoria, provides a means to do this.¹⁹ A Climate Change Act would enable the government to embed key climate policy objectives of reducing emissions, preparing for climate change and facilitating a just transition across government decision-making, providing certainty and transparency on the direction, pace and progress of its climate change response.

¹⁷ Professor Lowe found that if industry projections play out, fracking the NT’s reserved could contribute 600 million tonnes of CO₂ equivalent, while Australia’s total domestic emissions for the most recent year (the highest ever) were 560 million tonnes. Lowe, I. (2019) Climate Change Impacts of Proposed Shale Gas Development in the Northern Territory ([online](#)).

¹⁸ Ogge, M. (2018) Options for the implementation of Recommendation 9.8 of NT Fracking Inquiry, The Australia Institute ([online](#))

¹⁹ The UK’s Climate Change Act was passed in 2008 and the Victorian Climate Change Act was passed in 2017.

Recommendation 3

Within the next six months, the Northern Territory Government introduce a Climate Change Act to embed climate policy objectives across government decision-making, including policy, budget, procurement and capital works decisions. The Act should embed a commitment to a just transition.

2. A just transition

Just transition: a fair, inclusive and transformative process

The concept of 'just transition' has been commonly understood to focus on ensuring workers' rights and livelihoods are secured in the transition to ecologically sustainable economies. However climate justice coalitions internationally and locally have articulated a wider vision of what is needed for a just transition that extends beyond labour practices and industry transitions.

In its wider sense, a just transition can be understood as the process by which we move from current untenable economic and social systems to an ecologically sustainable, zero greenhouse gas emissions world in a way that ensures those least able to cope with climate change receive the help they need to successfully adapt.

"Just Transition is a vision-led, unifying and place-based set of principles, processes, and practices that build economic and political power to shift from an extractive economy to a regenerative economy. This means approaching production and consumption cycles holistically and waste-free. The transition itself must be just and equitable, redressing past harms and creating new relationships of power for the future through reparations. If the process of transition is not just, the outcome will never be."²⁰

This wider vision speaks clearly to the transformational potential of a just transition, and the need to ensure that the transition to a clean energy and low-carbon future does not replicate existing power structures that are harmful or exacerbate existing social and economic inequalities.

A clear message from the recent NT Climate Justice Workshop was that our actions to respond to climate change can and must reduce the deep inequality that exists in the Northern Territory.

We are pleased to see the draft response indicate priority for actions that deliver meaningful emissions reduction, while also delivering benefits to Territorians and our natural systems. This requires an explicit commitment to a just transition to ensure considerations of equity, inclusion and the reduction of existing inequalities guide decision-making: prioritising support for those worst impacted and with the fewest resources to adapt, and ensuring the benefits of transition flow to communities who need it most.

²⁰ See climatejusticealliance.org

Sharing the benefits of a clean energy transition and low-carbon future

The draft response articulates a very positive vision of the potential for clean energy to power the Territory's economic future. As the response notes, it is estimated that the clean energy industry could generate over 8,000 new jobs and over \$2 billion in revenue by 2030,²¹ while hydrogen exports could contribute \$1.7 billion and provide 2,800 jobs by 2030.²²

It is an exciting vision. With the right policy settings and public investment, renewables have the potential to drive down our emissions, generate long-lasting economic renewal for the Territory, create thousands of new jobs and provide access to affordable, clean energy for our communities.

While it is positive to see strong interest from private investors in renewables projects in the Territory, we would be concerned to see an overreliance on private enterprise in the Government's response. Public investment and a policy framework that focuses on local benefit is needed to avoid economic returns flowing to private companies and investors while communities in the Territory are left behind. The Victorian Social Procurement Framework and Major Project Skills Guarantee are examples of procurement and industry policy designed to promote fair, inclusive and sustainable development.

It is particularly positive to see the draft response highlight the opportunity for remote communities to participate and share in the revenues from renewable energy systems located on Aboriginal land. We note that a number of remote Aboriginal communities in the Northern Territory are currently working on locally-owned solar projects that have the potential to deliver environmental, economic and social benefits for their communities, and the Territory as a whole. Support for these kinds of projects should be a priority in the Government's clean energy and low-carbon development strategy.

Planning is also needed to ensure the transition away from fossil fuels is fair for the workers currently employed by those industries and the communities they support. The Northern Territory Government's response should articulate its plan for a just transition, including industry and workforce planning and development, and skills and training initiatives, to avoid workers being disadvantaged in the structural adjustment to a clean energy, low-carbon economy. Communities currently or soon to be in transition away from mining provide exciting opportunities to demonstrate new ecologically and economically sustainable development pathways.

²¹ Beyond Zero Emission (2019) The 10 Gigawatt Vision: How renewable energy can power jobs and investment in the Northern Territory ([online](#))

²² Hydrogen Strategy Group, Hydrogen for Australia's future. A briefing for the COAG Energy Council (2018) cited in the Northern Territory Government *Climate Change Response: Towards 2050* (2019).

Recommendation 4

That the Northern Territory Government commit to an equitable clean energy and low-carbon economic development strategy that allows all Territorians to share in the economic benefits of transition, particularly those communities at the forefront of climate impacts. The strategy should:

- focus on public investment in investment in renewable energy supply and low-carbon economic development opportunities
- support community-controlled energy projects
- ensure jobs and income from new large-scale renewables projects flow to local communities
- outline a plan for a just transition for workers and communities away from gas and diesel power generation to jobs and economic development opportunities in clean energy and other ecologically sustainable industries.

Detailed regional adaptation planning

The Northern Territory Government's draft response appropriately includes responding to climate risks and adapting to the observed and projected impacts as a core objective. While the policy directions are sound, much more detailed policy work is urgently needed to address to prepare the Territory for the climate risks that are already emerging.

Alongside strong commitments to emissions reductions, other governments across Australia have agreed adaptation plans in place to enhance the resilience of people, the natural environment, built environment and the economy to a changing climate. See for example Victoria's *Climate Change Adaptation Plan 2017-2020* and the ACT's *Climate Change Adaptation Strategy: living with a warming climate (2016)*.²³

The Northern Territory similarly needs a blueprint for action to help us meet the challenges and act on the opportunities presented by climate change: to sustain a thriving natural environment and safeguard the health and livelihoods of our communities.

Adaptation planning must be done through the lens of a just transition, prioritising actions to mitigate the risks for communities most vulnerable to the impacts of climate change, directly engaging and listening carefully to communities and supporting locally-driven solutions.

Acknowledging that adaptation is an ongoing and iterative process, we support the proposal to review the Climate Change Response in 2023. The review of the response should be informed by a robust monitoring and evaluation framework, including establishing and measuring baseline indicators to monitor the success of the Territory's adaptation efforts in the longer term.

²³ See [here](#) for the Victorian plan and [here](#) for the ACT strategy.

Prioritising planning for remote communities

The urgent need for detailed regional adaptation planning, particularly for people living in remote communities and outstations, was a key priority identified by participants at the NT Climate Justice Workshop. A focus of a number of the presentations and group discussion was the serious impact that climate change is already having on people's lives and livelihoods in remote communities.²⁴ In the context of already extreme conditions for many communities, government support is urgently needed for improvements housing and community building design, water, energy and food security, access to health and other services, transport and emergency management. Strategies to improve communities' climate resilience should be integrated across housing, health, regional development and other relevant policy areas.

Recommendation 5

That within the next six months, the Northern Territory Government develop a detailed adaptation plan outlining what actions it will take to prepare the Territory for the short, medium and long terms risks and impacts of climate change, and the opportunities presented by transition to a low-carbon future. The plan should:

- Be informed by a comprehensive vulnerability assessment to analyse sectoral and regional vulnerability across the Territory.
- Be developed in consultation with the community, traditional owner groups, business and industry, technical experts, local and federal government and other key stakeholders.
- Prioritise actions to support those in our community who stand to be worst affected and who have the least resources and/or capacity to adapt.
- Communicate the risks and impacts of climate change on a regional level.
- Articulate the climate change risk considerations and adaptation actions that will be taken across key sectors (for example, disaster and emergency management, community health and wellbeing, build environment and infrastructure, water and natural resources and ecosystems).
- Articulate roles and responsibilities for adaptation across the three levels of government, business and industry, individuals and communities, non-government organisations and community groups, universities and research institutions, and others.
- Be communicated in a way that helps all Territorians understand what action is being taken by Government and industry and how communities themselves can take action.
- Be independently evaluated, with the findings to inform subsequent planning.

²⁴ See workshop notes at **Attachments A** and **B**, including presentations from the Central Land Council, Geoff Evans from Julalikari Aboriginal Corporation and Dianne Stokes, Warumungu and Warlmanpa Traditional Owner.

Alleviating energy poverty

Energy poverty is also a key issue affecting low-income households and communities across the Territory.²⁵ Alongside work to increase renewable energy generation, the Government's response must include strategies to ensure that energy is available to Territory households, including through solar for rental and public housing, energy efficient design of public housing, access to efficient appliances (e.g. through low and no interest loan schemes), improved energy literacy and ongoing work with energy retailers to support customers experiencing financial hardship.

These strategies are necessary to avoid maladaptation (e.g. through overreliance greenhouse gas-emitting appliances such as air-conditioners) and alleviate the financial burden of effective adaptation (e.g. through switching to energy efficient appliances, solar installation and energy efficient home retrofits) on low income households.

Recommendation 6

That the Northern Territory Government's Climate Change response includes explicit strategies to address energy poverty including:

- access to affordable, decentralised clean energy for low-income households
- funding for targeted retrofits for tenants in public housing and other low-income households.
- energy efficiency standards for rental properties and incentives for landlords to improve the energy efficiency of rental properties
- supporting the uptake of energy efficient appliances by low-income households
- ongoing work with energy retailers to support customers experiencing financial hardship.

Who is enduring the worst of the impacts?

As highlighted above, a just response to climate change must consider who is on the frontline of enduring increasingly extreme conditions and the intersecting injustices that lead people to be more vulnerable to the impacts of climate change.

Overseas, there is an increasing body of literature looking at failure of authorities (intentional or otherwise) to mitigate extreme heat conditions for people in detention facilities. In Australia, the failure to mitigate extreme heat conditions at Don Dale Youth Detention Centre was highlighted to the *Royal Commission into the Protection and Detention of Children in the Northern Territory*. The Commission heard that, along with food, "the other universal topic [that dominated complaints made by children at Don Dale] was the lack of air conditioning, and the discomfort it caused."²⁶

²⁵ See for example case studies on energy poverty in remote Central Australian communities

²⁶ Statement by Official Visitor, Williams (2013), cited in Elferink, J.W. (2017) "Statement: Annexure 16, Part 1", Exhibition 321.018, 27 April, p. 30.

As explained by one young person in a witness statement provided by NAAJA to the Royal Commission:

“The cells did not have air conditioning and it was extremely hot (...) (T)here was no clean water provided within the cell so I had to ask the guards to bring me some water every time I was thirsty. It would usually take the guards between ten to fifteen minutes to return with water in a foam cup. I often had a headache from the heat while I was in the cell.”²⁷

In December last year, people in the Alice Springs Correctional Centre rioted after enduring 50-degree heat in chronically overcrowded cells without airconditioning.²⁸

Embedding consideration of climate impacts across Government is needed to ensure all our systems are playing their part in mitigate the impacts on the community, and that the weather does not become another form of punishment.

3. Community engagement and cross-sector collaboration

Engaging the community and resourcing community-led solutions

An effective response to climate change will engage the whole community. A clear message from the NT Climate Justice workshop was that communities need more information about the predicted impacts of climate change in their region and what actions the Government is taking to respond. It was emphasised that efforts at engagement must extend beyond online channels, to include face-to-face engagement and materials in-language to communicate the Government’s Climate Change Response and what communities themselves can do to take climate action.

Recommendation 7

That the Northern Territory Government engage local communities in the finalisation of the Climate Change Response and develop a comprehensive communications plan to support its implementation.

When discussing climate solutions, participants emphasised the need for government to listen to communities to understand how they are experiencing climate change. This was true for the community generally, but particularly for Aboriginal people, recognising the role of traditional knowledge in providing climate solutions. Projects like the 2013-15 Ltyentye Apurte Rangers and CSIRO Project were provided as examples to two-way learning projects with practical environmental and community education outcomes. The need for communities to be able to access the necessary technical expertise to inform their decision making and have equitable access to technological and other mitigation and adaptation solutions was also emphasised.

²⁷ Exhibit 270.001, Statement of AM, 11 February 2017, 7 [30], [40] cited in NAAJA (2017) Submission on Youth Detention to the Royal Commission into the Protection and Detention of Children in the Northern Territory, p.24 ([online](#))

²⁸ ‘Call for air-conditioners in ‘inhumane’ cells after outback heatwave triggers prison riot.’ ABC News Online, 31 December 2018 ([online](#))

Recommendation 8

That the Northern Territory Government:

- Support Aboriginal-led projects that promote the application of traditional knowledge for climate solutions.
- Support for communities, particularly remote communities, to access technical expertise and technology to inform local mitigation and adaptation responses.
- Resource community-led projects to develop, test and implement climate education, mitigation, adaptation and transformation activities.

Supporting the role of the community sector

As noted earlier in the submission, the community sector has an important role to play in supporting groups in our community most vulnerable to the impacts of climate change prepare for and cope with the changes ahead. Community service organisations provide critical frontline services for the most disadvantaged groups in the community, they are frequently among the first responders to emergencies, support communities in disaster recovery, and work over the long term to build community cohesion and resilience.

Yet a study by the National Climate Change Adaptation Research Facility (NCCARF) found that community service organisations are highly vulnerable and not well prepared to respond to climate change or extreme weather events themselves: it found that many small and medium-sized organisations would risk permanent closure as a result of major damage to physical infrastructure and disruptions to critical services.²⁹

Our engagement with other community sector organisations has shown a willingness to help the communities with whom we work understand, prepare for and cope with the impacts of climate change, an appetite to do more to integrate environmental awareness into their practice, operations, advocacy, and need to build their own climate resilience.

Recommendation 9

That the Northern Territory Government support and resource initiatives to:

- increase awareness within the community services sector of issues of ecological and climate justice and build this into practice, operations and organisational culture
- improve community sector readiness for climate impacts
- support community sector organisations to develop, test and implement responses to improve community-readiness for climate impacts.

For more background on Jesuit Social Services Ecological Justice programs, see **Appendix A**.

²⁹ NCCARF (2013) Adapting the community sector to climate extremes: Final report ([online](#))

Strong partnerships across all levels of government

An effective response to climate change requires action and cooperation across all levels of government. Strong advocacy to the Federal Government climate action at the national level should be a priority, alongside collaboration with local government in the Territory on emissions reduction and adaptation strategies.

Local governments in the Northern Territory are already leading the way on climate action, including the City of Darwin in their work to develop a climate emergency plan, and work of the Alice Springs Town Council through their Climate Action Plan. Local governments play a critical role in helping their communities adapt to climate change: their local knowledge means they are often best-placed to recognise the need for adaptation at a local scale and they are often the first to respond to localised impacts. While they are well-placed to effect change in a number of areas (for example, planning and land-use decisions, waste management and encouraging behaviour change at the community level), they will be more effective with support from the Territory Government to overcome constraints on their ability to adapt. For example, support increased of use low-emissions public transport in Greater Darwin.

Recommendation 10

That the Northern Territory Government:

- advocate to the Federal Government for strong climate action.
- work collaboratively with local government to maximise shared efforts at mitigation, adaptation and transformation.

Investing in research and innovation

Our understanding of climate impacts and the solutions available is rapidly evolving. The unique context of the Northern Territory, our leading scientists, traditional knowledge holders and existing research networks position the Territory well do contribute world-leading climate research.

The Northern Territory Government should continue to invest in research to provide the most up-to-date information on climate impacts, and in research, development and implementation of climate solutions, including through collaborative partnerships with research institutions, industry, community sector organisations and the community.

Recommendation 11

That the Northern Territory Government continue to invest in climate-related research, development and implementation to inform adaptation and emissions reduction.

Conclusion

Jesuit Social Services congratulates the Northern Territory Government on the significant work to date to develop the draft response and look forward to continuing to work with the Government to support the development of the final response and its implementation. With a response that is urgent, ambitious, collaborative and equitable, we can protect the future of our communities and country, for a Territory that is climate ready and thriving.

Appendix A. Jesuit Social Services

Who we are and what we do

Jesuit Social Services is a social change organisation working to build a just society where all people can live to their full potential.

For over 40 years we have been working at the hard end of social justice with some of the most disadvantaged and marginalised members of our community, who are often experiencing multiple and complex challenges. Jesuit Social Services works where the need is greatest and where we have the capacity, experience and skills to make the most difference.

We have a presence in Victoria, New South Wales, the Northern Territory and internationally, through our leadership of the Justice in Mining Network and involvement in the Jesuit Prison Network.

Our practical support and advocacy covers five main areas:

- Justice and crime prevention for people involved with the criminal justice system.
- Mental health and wellbeing for people with multiple and complex needs and those affected by trauma, suicide, and complex bereavement.
- Settlement and community building for disadvantaged communities, and recently arrived migrants and refugees.
- Education, training and employment for people with barriers to sustainable employment.
- Gender and culture providing leadership on the reduction of violence and other harmful behaviours prevalent among boys and men, and building new approaches to improve their wellbeing and keep families and communities safe.

The promotion of education, lifelong learning and capacity building is fundamental to all our activity. We believe this is the most effective means of helping people to reach their potential and exercise their full citizenship. This, in turn, strengthens the broader community.

Research, advocacy and policy are coordinated across all program and major interest areas of Jesuit Social Services. Our advocacy is grounded in the knowledge, expertise and experiences of program staff and participants, as well as academic research and evidence. We seek to influence policies, practices, legislation and budget investment to positively influence participants' lives and improve approaches to address long term social challenges. We do this by working collaboratively with the community sector to build coalitions and alliances around key issues, and building strong relationships with key decision-makers and the community.

Our Learning and Practice Development Unit builds the capacity of our services through staff development, training and evaluation, as well as articulating and disseminating information on best practice approaches to working with participants and communities across our programs.

Our commitment to ecological justice

For more than forty years Jesuit Social Services has been committed to building a just society and in 2008 we commenced the journey into understanding the relevance of ecology for the organisation.

In an increasingly complex era of climate crisis, environmental degradation and rising social inequity, new challenges towards building a just society are appearing. Jesuit Social Services works with the most marginalised and vulnerable. These populations are often the least responsible for ecological risks and threats but are the most affected by their emergence.

In 2008, Jesuit Social Services began to incorporate ecological justice into our organisational culture, program delivery and advocacy. Our 2017 paper, [Ecological Justice – Expanding the Conversation](#), outlines this journey and the commitment to building a just society inclusive of both social and environmental justice. Our commitment to ecological justice is now reflected in both our programs and advocacy, including:

- the integration of ecological considerations into *Our Way of Proceeding*, across the three domains of human spirit, our practice framework and business processes.
- the establishment of the Ecological Justice Hub in Brunswick, Victoria, that provides a range of community education and advocacy activities; skills, training and employment support into green economy jobs for people experiencing barriers to employment; and green living demonstration projects for the wider community that support climate change reduction and environmental recovery.
- an ongoing series of cross-sector workshops focused on climate justice, including the recent inaugural NT Climate Justice Workshop hosted in Darwin in September this year, in partnership with NTCOSS and the Environment Centre NT.
- the incorporation of indicators of environmental risks and threats into our nation-wide research on place-based disadvantage, *Dropping of the Edge (DOTE)*.

For more detail, see pp.14-16 of our most recent discussion paper in our ecological justice series on [just transitions](#).

Examples of projects at Jesuit Social Services' Ecological Justice Hub

'Hammertime' program – for women who want to develop carpentry skills and enter a trades career

Linking training at the Hub and employment opportunities on Victoria's major construction projects

Just Habitat – building small eco-friendly homes, for skill-building and employment opportunities

Just Energy – solar power systems for redistribution to people on low incomes.

Just Nourishment – establishing permaculture gardens that produce fresh, healthy food.

Just Hammertime – workshops to provide skills in carpentry and construction for young women.

Just Mushrooms – workshops to demonstrate the benefits of growing mushrooms.

Just Honey – promoting local bee keeping.

Just Compost – turning Brunswick and city waste resources into garden compost.

Our work in the Northern Territory

Jesuit Social Services' work in the Northern Territory commenced in 2008 with an invitation to work collaboratively with the Central and Eastern Arrernte people in Santa Teresa and Alice Springs.

Since then, at the invitation of a number of other communities and Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations, our work has grown to include the communities of Atitjere and Engawala on the Plenty Highway and Tennant Creek. Our work in Central Australia has focused on building the governance and service delivery capacity of the communities and organisations we work with.

To enable a more strategic response to the structural issues we see playing out in the lives of people on the ground, in 2015 we established an advocacy presence in Darwin. Over the last three years, we have developed a strong network of relationships within government and community leaders and have been strong advocates on youth justice issues.

Responding to a need identified by Aboriginal legal services in the Northern Territory, in early 2017 we received funding from the Department of Territory Families to pilot the Northern Territory's first Youth Justice Group Conferencing program in the Darwin, Palmerston and Katherine regions. With the success of this pilot, we are working with other organisations and government to promote restorative practices in the Top End and Central Australia.

We acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of all the lands on which Jesuit Social Services operates and pay respect to their Elders past and present. We express our gratitude for their respect for and care of the land and all life.

Appendix B. NT Climate Justice Workshop

The first of the NT Climate Justice workshop series was held in Darwin on 26 September 2019. It was attended by 60 participants from across the Territory. The organisations represented included community service providers, Aboriginal community-controlled organisations, land councils, local government, the Northern Territory Government, industry experts and environmental organisations.

Key themes from the day were the importance of building cross-sector partnerships across the Territory, the urgent need for adaptation planning on a regional level, prioritising remote communities, community-controlled renewable energy, and supporting Aboriginal-led solutions.

An overview of the presentations and list of organisations represented is provided below.

Session 1 – A ‘just’ response to climate change?

Presenter: Dr. Bronwyn Lay, Ecological Justice Coordinator, Jesuit Social Services

Session 2 – Overview of the Northern Territory Climate Change Response: Towards 2050

Presenter: Dr. Ellin Lede, Climate Change Policy Adviser, Officer of the Chief Minister

Session 3 – How are our communities experiencing the impacts of climate change?

Panellists:

- Geoff Evans (Julalikari Council Aboriginal Corporation)
 - Dianne Stokes (Warumungu and Warlmanpa Traditional Owner)
 - Eric Lede (Acting Coordinator, Indigenous Carbon Industry Network)
 - Thomas Mayor (CFMMEU National Indigenous Officer, Maritime Union of Australia NT Deputy Branch Secretary and Assistant Secretary NT Trades and Labour Council)
 - Karrina Nolan (Executive Director, Original Power)
-

Session 4 – Incorporating environmental and climate challenges in our work

Panellists:

- Julie Edwards (CEO, Jesuit Social Services)
 - Josie Douglas (Policy Manager, Central Land Council) and Georgia Stewart (Senior Policy Officer, Central Land Council)
 - Shenagh Gamble (Executive Manager, Environment and Community, City of Darwin)
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Session 5 – Planning the way forward

Facilitator: Karrina Nolan, Executive Director, Original Power

Workshop attendees included representatives from:

- APO NT
- AMSANT
- Anglicare
- Arid Lands Environment Centre
- Atitjere Community
- CatholicCare
- Central Australian Aboriginal Congress
- Central Land Council
- City of Darwin
- Climate Action Darwin
- Ecologist David Liddle
- Environment Centre NT
- Environmental Defenders Office
- Indigenous Carbon Industry Network
- Intyalheme Centre for Future Energy
- Jesuit Social Services
- Julalikari Council Aboriginal Corporation
- Katherine Banatjarl Strongbala Women's Association
- Katherine Regional Aboriginal Health and Related Services
- Local Government Association of the Northern Territory
- Malak Malak Rangers
- National Disability Service
- Northern Land Council
- NT Shelter
- NT Solar Doctor
- NTCOSS
- Protect Council Alliance NT
- Smart Energy Alliance
- Social Ventures Australia
- Tangentyere
- Territory Families
- The Hon. Warren Snowdon MP
- Venture Housing
- Warumungu and Warlmanpa traditional owner, Dianne Stokes
- West Arnhem Regional Council
- Office of the Minister for Renewables, Energy and Essential Services
- Office of the Chief Minister