

MEDIA RELEASE – JULY 10, 2020

Strong foundations but goal of net zero emissions must be legislated

The NT Government's Climate Change Response lays strong foundations for addressing the challenge of climate change, however the goal to achieve net zero emissions by 2050 must be enshrined in legislation to hold future Governments to account, says Jesuit Social Services.

"Jesuit Social Services welcomes the Territory Government's commitment to working with the community services sector to address the risks that climate change poses to the communities we work with", says Jesuit Social Services' Northern Territory General Manager John Adams.

"We are also pleased to see the inclusion of specific initiatives that will be transformational for communities as we transition to a zero-carbon future, including the expansion of solar for remote communities, jobs on country, the incorporation of green building design in new social housing and better environmental design in remote housing."

Mr Adams says climate change is already affecting Territorians and is hitting vulnerable communities the hardest. Aboriginal people living in remote communities in particular are bearing the brunt of more extreme heat, water shortages, poorly adapted housing and infrastructure, expensive dirty energy and the cultural loss associated with ecosystem damage and biodiversity loss.

The Climate Change Response acknowledges the serious health and wellbeing impacts of climate change, and it is very positive to see the accompanying Three-Year Action Plan outlining short and medium term actions that the Government will take towards emissions reduction and building community resilience, working with the community, business and industry.

However, the response falls short of committing to legislating to ensure these goals are achieved.

"It is good to see the government is following the science, but a policy goal isn't enough. We need legislation that holds this government and all future governments to achieving the net zero emissions reduction target by 2050 or sooner," says Mr Adams.

It is also deeply concerning that the response explicitly leaves open the possibility of new fossil fuel developments, when we are already seeing climate impacts accelerate faster than expected.

"Last summer communities across the Territory sweltered through record temperatures and we are facing the same this year. For people living in remote communities, poorly built public housing, or sleeping rough, the rise in extreme heat days is a matter of survival."

"The Government has listened to stakeholders and the community on many aspects of the response, however a Climate Change Act and a commitment to no new fossil fuel developments would assure Territorians that the Government is serious about protecting our future."

"Legislative action on climate change will be transformative for Territory: catalysing a sustainable economy, healthier communities and a healthier environment – so let's not hold back."

Media enquiries: Kathryn Kernohan, 0409 901 248 or kathryn.kernohan@jss.org.au