TRANSPORT KEY TO REDUCING OUR EMISSIONS

FUTURE-PROOFING THE STATE WILL TAKE NEW TECHNOLOGY AND COMMITMENT, WRITE RICHARD ECCLESTON AND MEG LANGRIDGE

Tasmanians are increasingly concerned about climate change and support state and federal plans to cut emissions. The challenge is knowing where to start and how best to make a difference as individuals and as a community.

Effective climate action requires a collaborative, whole-of-community effort. Which is why the University of Tasmania is partnering with the Mercury and the RACT to get your feedback on the best ways to achieve a low-emissions transport future.

Beyond Tasmania, the main focus is on increasing renewable electricity generation and reaching net-zero. Fortunately, we're almost self-sufficient in renewables and have been net-negative for almost a decade.

While we have a headstart in the transition to a low-carbon future, our next challenge is to start the hard work of reducing emissions across the entire economy from heavy industry and agriculture to transport.

Reducing emissions across the Tasmanian economy will support our claims of being a leader on climate action and will help future-proof Tasmanian businesses in an increasingly carbon-conscious world.

This is an important agenda but there is a lot of work to be done.

Our 'absolute' emissions – the carbon pollution we pump into the atmosphere – have not changed for 30 years and, if anything, are trending upward. According to the most recent data, Tasmania was the only Australian state other than Western Australia to see an increase in its transport emissions. Compared to mainlanders, Tasmanians own the most vehicles per capita, are among the most car dependent, and drive the oldest, least efficient cars. On the plus side, our compact state means we drive slightly fewer kilometres per year compared to the national average.

Cutting emissions will be hard and will require new technology and real commitment to living more sustainably. Despite these challenges,

transport is widely regarded as the best place to start driving down emissions because of the growing range of climate-friendly transport options. This is why the Tasmanian government's first Emissions Reduction and Resilience Plan will focus on transport and is due to be completed by November 2023.

In light of this, UTAS is in the process of developing and promoting innovative policy options we think should be included in Tasmania's transport emissions reduction plan.

The good news is that the range of zero-emissions vehicles (ZEVs) in Australia is growing rapidly and slowly becoming more affordable and the technology needed to decarbonise heavy vehicles and buses will become increasingly available over the next decade. In the meantime, tackling cars and light commercial vehicles is a good place to start, as they're responsible for about 63 per cent of our transport emissions.

Because the average car in Tasmania is driven for 22 years, many petrol- and diesel-powered models bought today will still be on the road in 2040, despite fuel becoming increasingly scarce and expensive in the 2030s. Our modelling suggests that if 67 per cent of new cars sold in Tasmania in 2030 are ZEVs, they will represent about 20 per cent of all cars on roads.

The widespread adoption of zero-emissions vehicles will help cut Tasmania's transport emissions over the medium- to long-term, but we will also need other complementary strategies to achieve the necessary reductions in dangerous emissions.

We will have to reduce our dependence on private vehicles and encourage and enable more Tasmanians to live and move around our communities differently. This will include greater use of active and public transport, and eventually redesigning our cities to support healthier, more connected lives.

In the process, we need to ensure that these greener transport options are more equitable, accessible, and affordable for everyday Tasmanians.

UTAS is therefore promoting a two-pronged approach to transport emissions in which we encourage ZEV uptake and reduce our dependence on private vehicles.

In our Driving Net Zero Discussion Paper, we identify several specific policy options that Tasmania could pursue, such as:

DEVELOPING a ZEV sales target to rival Australia's other states and territories.

INSTIGATING a revenue-neutral subsidy scheme to encourage ZEV purchases.

INCREASING public transport options, including activation of Hobart's northern suburbs transport corridor.

PROMOTING active transport and the designing communities to achieve this goal.

EMBRACING remote or flexible working arrangements.

SUPPORTING ZEV ride-sharing models.

But we would also like to hear further suggestions and insights from Tasmanians through our online survey to inform our future transport emissions work and help shape the state government's transport emissions plan.

Ultimately, this is a question of how we would like to live and move around our communities in 10 years' time, and the kind of planet we want to leave for our children and grandchildren.

These are challenging issues but ones we can address if we work together.

The UTAS discussion paper, Driving net-zero: Options for reducing transport emissions, and a link to our community survey on the best options for the future of transport in Tasmania can be found at:

https://www.utas.edu.au/community-and-partners/tpe/net-zero-transport

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