



November 2021

SACOSS representation on the Premier's Climate Change Council

Background

The [Premier's Climate Change Council](#) was established under the *Climate Change and Greenhouse Emissions Reduction Act 2007* with the inaugural meeting held in 2008. The Council is currently in its fifth term, which commenced in September 2020.¹

The role of the Council is to provide independent advice to the Minister for Environment and Water on reducing greenhouse gas emissions and adapting to climate change, including providing advice on:

- achieving energy efficiencies
- increasing the use of renewable energy
- developing methods to remove greenhouse gases from the atmosphere
- establishing and achieving relevant targets
- considering the impact of climate change on business and the wider community
- assessing costs associated with reducing or limiting climate change (or failing to take action)
- commercial or other opportunities associated with climate change
- the effectiveness of targets under the *Climate Change and Greenhouse Emissions Reduction Act 2007*.

In addition to providing advice, the Council takes a leadership role in consulting with businesses, the environment and conservation sector, and the wider community about issues associated with climate change.

The Act stipulates that council members are appointed from a range of sectors, including state and local government, the business community, the environmental and conservation sector, the scientific community, and other sectors of the State's community more generally (s9(2)).

Policy Response

What is missing on the membership of the Premier's Climate Council is a representative to provide a voice for South Australians living with poverty and disadvantage who will be most impacted by climate change, and a voice for the community organisations that support those people.

¹ <https://www.environment.sa.gov.au/topics/climate-change/premiers-climate-change-council>

The impacts of climate change are not felt by all people equally, with people experiencing poverty, poor health, frailty and disability bearing the greatest burden due to:

- living in poor quality housing (often rental housing),
- living in higher flood or fire risk areas due to affordability,
- being under or un-insured,
- being unable to afford to implement mitigation or adaptation strategies, and
- because of the significant impacts that extreme heat, smoke, dust or pollen can have on their health. ²

The interests of these people must be reflected in climate discussions.

Further, the social service sector is a significant contributor to the South Australian economy³ and must be engaged in the fair and safe transition to a carbon neutral state. Having a representative at the Premier's Climate Change Council will reinforce the message that the sector has an important role to play in SA's efforts to become carbon neutral, and in addressing the impacts that climate change will have on the people and communities they work with.

Where the Act stipulates particular sector representation of local government and the conservation sector on the Council, it also mandates consultation with the peak bodies in those sectors before the appointment of their representative. A similar provision should apply to our sector, and as the peak body SACOSS should be consulted about the appointment of a sector voice on the Council.

SACOSS Proposal

The *Climate Change and Greenhouse Emissions Reduction Act 2007* should be amended to:

- include a representative of the non-government health and community services sector on the Premier's Climate Change Council
- require consultation with SACOSS before making the appointment of the sector representative.

² Australian Council of Social Service (2015) Disasters, Climate Change and Disadvantage
<https://resilience.acoss.org.au/the-six-steps/introduction/disasters-climate-change-and-disadvantage>

³ David Washington (2021) South Australia's not-for-profits are an economic and social powerhouse
<https://indaily.com.au/events/south-australian-business-index/2021/10/22/south-australias-not-for-profits-are-an-economic-and-social-powerhouse/> Indaily