

23 March 2016

Tasmanian Climate Change Office  
GPO Box 123  
HOBART TAS 7001

Sent via email to: [climatechange@dpac.tas.gov.au](mailto:climatechange@dpac.tas.gov.au)

Dear Sir/Madam,

Master Electricians Australia (MEA) appreciates the opportunity to provide feedback on Tasmania's draft climate change action plan 2016-2021.

MEA proposes the following actions be made a priority over the next five years in the Tasmanian government's response to the issue of climate change.

#### INVESTMENT IN BATTERY STORAGE

MEA supports the Tasmanian Government's commitment to facilitating further investment in technologies such as battery storage. One of the main objections to the broad-scale uptake of renewable energy technologies such as solar PV is the issue of intermittency, i.e. solar technologies only produce power when the sun is shining. Battery storage offers a potential solution to this obstacle. However, currently the cost of storage technology can be prohibitively high making it quite unattractive for those who have the option to simply buy relatively cheap electricity from the grid. If more resources can be directed to refining this storage technology in order to make it more affordable, there is likely to be a stronger uptake of solar power as an energy alternative.

#### STUDY INTO ELECTRIC VEHICLES

The long term benefits of innovations such as electric vehicles on the environment could be substantial. However, the high upfront cost to purchase these vehicles and the significant expense involved with the inevitable replacement of a battery is a deterrent to many consumers.

In order to overcome this obstacle, MEA recommends that a study be undertaken to investigate the new infra-structure that would be required to support the electric vehicle energy demand. It is important that such a study incorporate an assessment of the measures that have proven to be successful internationally in realising the benefits of electric vehicle technology. Making the results of the study readily available to consumers could boost public confidence in the effectiveness and the long-term cost savings of an electric car. Such a study could also include a cost/benefit analysis of introducing tax incentives and rebates for drivers who purchase electric vehicles. This information would give consumers the information they need to be able to make the decision as to whether an electric vehicle is worth their investment both from a financial and environmental perspective.

## ENERGY AUDITING PROGRAM

MEA welcomes the Tasmanian Government's commitment to delivering the YES Affordability program to support vulnerable customers reduce their energy consumption. Education is critical to the success of any climate change strategy and it is for this reason that MEA has always supported government policies that recognise the value of in home energy auditing. The benefits of a comprehensive home energy efficiency assessment performed by a skilled tradesperson are far reaching for both householders and the environment.

Unfortunately, the federal government's failed Green Loans scheme, which was introduced in 2009, significantly damaged the emerging market and reputation of energy auditing. This subsidised program was generally delivered by underqualified and inexperienced auditors; was limited and inadequately considered energy savings measures (principally advising on light bulbs); and had a poor record of customer service and for providing inadequate advice. However, despite the failure of this specific program there is no doubting the potential for energy auditing performed by qualified technicians to facilitate real change in consumer behaviour.

Recognising the growing demand for energy efficiency expertise, industry developed a nationally accredited qualification to support the skills needed to be a competent energy auditor - the Certificate IV in Energy Efficiency and Assessment. The Certificate IV stands out from other energy auditing qualifications requiring a current electrical licence as pre-requisite. This ensures that only technicians with a high level of skill and experience will receive the qualification, resulting in more comprehensive, practical and effective energy audits and advice for consumers. The Certificate IV qualification should be entrenched as the minimum level any person completing an electrical energy audit should complete. We strongly recommend that the energy assessments performed under the YES Affordability program only be undertaken by tradespeople holding this qualification.

The No Interest Loan Scheme (NILS) is another program that has MEA's support. Providing advice on reducing energy consumption is certainly critical but enabling consumers to implement the recommendations is a much needed measure if they include purchasing expensive energy efficient electrical products.

For those consumers who may not be classed as vulnerable for the purposes of the YES Affordability program there may be a reluctance to make the initial financial outlay for an accredited auditor to perform a full audit on their home. The funds required to apply the changes, which could include the purchase of new appliances or engaging an electrical contractor, may also deter consumers from implementing an auditor's recommendations. These costs act as a significant barrier to the success of energy auditing.

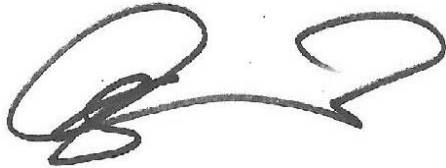
In order to overcome these obstacles, we propose that the Tasmanian Government adopt a policy, in addition to the programs for vulnerable consumers, whereby a householders who pay for an energy audit performed by an accredited energy auditor will be able to reclaim the full audit fee against the costs incurred in implementing the changes. This policy would not only encourage more households to engage an energy auditor, but would also provide the incentive for consumers to invest in actual changes.

## INDUSTRY CONSULTATION

In developing Tasmania's climate change policies we urge the Tasmanian government to engage in industry consultation prior to implementation. There have been a number of state and Federal Government programs intended to boost energy efficiency and combat climate change that have not been as successful as they could have been had thorough industry consultation been undertaken. The Federal Government's Home Insulation Program is a tragic example of what can go wrong when policy makers do not actively seek the advice of industry experts. Green Loans and the NSW Greenhouse Gas abatement scheme also failed to meet expectations due, in no small part, to the lack of industry consultation.

MEA is committed to supporting the Tasmanian Government in achieving its climate change goals. We would be eager to participate in any further consultations on this important issue.

Yours sincerely,



Simon Tengende  
State Manager - Tasmania