

EXECUTIVE BOARD SUBMISSION	
Report writer: Briar Wyatt and Grant Brookes	Date: 24/03/2021
Category:	Agenda number:
Classification: Strategic Goals consultation	



PSA Eco Network submission

Introduction

The Eco Network welcomes the opportunity to feed into the three-yearly review of the PSA Strategic Goals 2018-2024. The outcome of this important review will set the guideposts for the PSA over the next three years.

Under the Rules and Regulations of the New Zealand Public Service Association Te Pūkenga Here Tikanga Mahi, the Eco Network exists to promote environmental interests within the PSA, facilitate the sharing of information and resources and encourage engagement and action on the environment. We make this submission in fulfilment of these objectives. As part of preparing the submission, the Convenors have consulted members of the Eco Network and their views are reflected here.

This is our second submission to the Executive Board since the formalisation of the Network through the motion passed at the 2020 PSA Congress. We look forward to developing a lasting, positive relationship for our shared journey to advance PSA members' interests.

Summary

The PSA Eco Network recommends that:

1. A fifth Goal should be added to the PSA Strategic Goals 2018-2024. This Goal should be Climate Justice. By 2024: The climate crisis is being addressed through an imminent carbon neutral public sector (a target set

by the Government), and a just and equitable transition towards a zero carbon Aotearoa.

2. The current Goals are amended, as follows:

a) Stronger Public & Community Services – By 2024: Sustained political and public support for expanded public and community services that are driving the transition to zero carbon, properly funded to enable resilience.

b) A strong, modern & influential union – By 2024: Membership of the PSA is strong and growing, and the union is resilient, has achieved carbon neutrality and has growing alliances for sustainability.

c) Transformed Work – By 2024: Work is transformed so it's valued, secure and climate-friendly, and so members have influence through strong collective voice

3. By creating a fifth goal (Climate Justice), the PSA emphasises our commitment to, and understanding that, climate action is vital and urgent if we are to keep workers and their livelihoods safe. Having a visible and named goal focussing on this showcases our focus in this space. In addition, amending the current Goals will help clarify and build the narrative of the intersections between climate and workers justice.

Discussion

4. The current review of the PSA Strategic Goals is timely. The last major revision of the union's long-term strategy took place in 2011. The development of the PSA Strategic Plan 2011-2020 saw the addition of Equal Pay as a high-level goal. Subsequent revisions have introduced changes. The PSA Strategic Goals 2015-2024, for example, introduced Ngā Kaupapa and broadened the union's strategic focus from the public sector to include an explicit recognition of community services. No new Goal, however, has been added in the last decade.

5. It is in this context that the current review of the PSA Strategic Goals 2018-2024 takes place. It has been stated [PSA Secretariat, 2020] that the Board is generally happy with the direction and expression of the Goals. It is acknowledged, however, that they will need to be refreshed

to reflect the significant changes to our operating context and progress made since 2018.

5. Understanding of the climate crisis has developed significantly over the last decade. Among many markers of this changing operating context for the PSA are the Fifth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change [IPCC, 2014] and the Paris Agreement [UNFCCC COP, 2015].

6. The changes in our operating context have accelerated since the adoption of the current PSA Strategic Goals in 2018. The passage of the Zero Carbon Act in 2019, the Declaration of Climate Change Emergency in 2020 and the inaugural report of the Climate Change Commission He Pou a Rangi in 2021 represent large shifts for the PSA. In particular, the Carbon Neutral Government Programme which requires Government organisations to be carbon neutral by 2025 heralds major new challenges for PSA members and our communities.

7. For these reasons, it is the view of the Eco Network that climate action now warrants its own top-level Goal for our union. This is the approach taken by the International Trade Union Confederation [2021], which recently issued five key demands for a New Social Contract in a post-pandemic world, including: “1. Creation of climate-friendly jobs with Just Transition. Job-creating industrial transformation to achieve net-zero carbon emissions, along with jobs in health, education and other quality public services.”

8. Adding a fifth Strategic Goal gives the appropriate level of visibility and mana to this existential issue. There are no jobs, and no unions, on a dead planet. The addition of Equal Pay as a Strategic Goal in 2011 has driven a decade of successful action to ensure that all PSA members are paid equally for work of equal value. The Eco Network believes strongly that a similar drive is now needed for Climate Justice so that by 2024, the climate crisis is being addressed through an imminent carbon neutral public sector, and an equitable transition towards a zero carbon economy.

9. The Eco Network acknowledges a potential risk in a separate, standalone Goal. If Climate Justice is not also integrated into the work of

the PSA more broadly, it is possible that it will be approached in a tokenistic manner. Until recently, this approach has been commonplace for the Government and for the business community, and it remains an issue today. Therefore, the Eco Network proposes that the existing Goals should be amended in accordance with the fifth Strategic Goal. These should happen simultaneously, in order to maintain the emphasis on climate justice within a framework where work is also undertaken more broadly.

10. The Goal of Stronger Public and Community Services should be updated. A rationale for this, which also suggests how it might be amended, is provided by PSI [2020]: “The impact of climate change is ever more obvious. Greater risks to human health, food security, water supply and sanitation have already been widely identified. This means that world wide people will need more and new public services to cope with these greater risks and changes in our environments. Without an expansion of universal public services – public service workers themselves will be placed under greater stress, service quality will inevitably decline, and the general population will suffer.”

11. The 2024 Goal of “Sustained political and public support for properly funded innovative public and community services” could therefore be amended as follows: “Sustained political and public support for expanded public and community services, properly funded to enable resilience”. Further sub-goals could elaborate on this.

12. By 2024, a strong, modern & influential union is one which is contributing to an equitable transition towards a zero carbon economy through campaigns for climate justice, reductions in its own carbon footprint, and one which is forming strategic partnerships with Climate Justice allies. As PSI [2020] explains: “Too often governments do not want trade unions involved in broader socio-economic issues. They prefer to keep unions restricted to the workplace and to negotiating around workplace issues. This means public service unions must work with others, build alliances and join progressive coalitions. Trade unions need to be putting as much pressure as possible on governments to confront the climate crisis and to prioritize a just and equitable transition.”

13. Therefore, the 2024 Goal that “Membership of the PSA is strong and growing, and the union is resilient and sustainable” might be amended to read: “Membership of the PSA is strong and growing, and the union is resilient, has achieved carbon neutrality and has growing alliances for sustainability.”

14. “A zero-carbon economy requires more than technological change – it requires fundamental change in how people produce and consume; how wealth is created and distributed, and how cities and economies are organised and planned” [PSI, 2020]. This speaks directly to the Goal of Transformed Work. We therefore propose that the 2024 Goal that “Work is transformed so it’s valued and secure, members have influence through strong collective voice” is updated: “Work is transformed so it’s valued, secure and climate-friendly, and so members have influence through strong collective voice.”

15. “Climate change is not gender-neutral”, states PSI [2017]. “Women bear the brunt of energy poverty in the home, in relation to food scarcity, health and water and have less resources available to deal with climate-related challenges.” As outlined by Project Drawdown [2017], one of the most effective tools for addressing climate change is the empowerment of women.

16. For these reasons, we support a continued strong focus on pay equity for the PSA and see this as an essential part of achieving the equitable transition towards a zero carbon economy. We propose no change to the 2024 Goal that: “All PSA members are paid equally for work of equal value.”

17. Finally, the Eco Network wishes to address an objection which has been raised in relation to our recommendation that a fifth Strategic Goal should be added. It has been suggested that the addition of a Climate Justice Goal would mean that other goals need to be dropped. We do not see the review of the PSA Strategic Goals 2018-2024 as a zero-sum game. Instead, we see significant synergies in the addition of the fifth Goal. As suggested in paragraphs 10-16 above, Climate Justice will be achieved to a large extent through work programmes which are budgeted for already.

18. In conclusion, we would like to reiterate that the review of the Strategic Goals 2018-2024 presents the PSA with an historic opportunity. Climate change, in the memorable words of Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern, is this generation's nuclear free moment. Our courageous forebears ensured the PSA was an early and strong campaigner against nuclear weapons. The 2019 election survey of PSA members highlighted just how important climate change is to members today. Members ranked climate change in their top three issues in election year, after "health and housing" and "families and people", and above "pay, work and cost of living".

19. We therefore hope that the Executive Board will seize the historic opportunity to make the PSA an even more innovative union in this space, reflect member priorities and use the considerable relevant experience of the Eco Network to boost the profile of climate change in the union network in Aotearoa.

20. The Eco Network, and in particular our members with NGO and public sector experience and expertise, are more than willing to work with the Board and the wider union in order to design and implement tangible actions and sub-goals that give strength to a fifth strategic goal focused on Climate Justice.

References

Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. 2014. *Climate Change 2014: Synthesis Report. Contribution of Working Groups I, II and III to the Fifth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change*. Geneva, Switzerland.

https://www.ipcc.ch/site/assets/uploads/2018/02/SYR_AR5_FINAL_full.pdf

International Trade Union Confederation. 2021. *New Social Contract: Five workers' demands for recovery and resilience*.

<https://www.ituc-csi.org/new-social-contract-five-demands>

Project Drawdown. 2017. *Solutions*. <https://www.drawdown.org/solutions>

PSA Secretariat. 2020, 27 October. *Process and timeline for refreshing the Strategic Goals*. Unpublished Executive Board Paper

Public Service International. 2017. *People Over Profit: PSI Programme of Action 2018-2022*.

https://pop-umbrella.s3.amazonaws.com/uploads/2d8c7e54-ee41-4baa-9cad-76560ac4fa95_EN-Vol-1-Draft-PoA-adopted-by-Congress-Nov-2017.pdf

Public Service International. 2020. *Confronting the Climate Crisis: Time to Act*.

https://pop-umbrella.s3.amazonaws.com/uploads/dd79a26a-5ed5-4b88-880d-9cf8aaf6d15c_2020_EN_Climate_toolkit_01-56_updated.pdf

United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change – Conference of Parties. 2015. *Paris Agreement*.

https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Paris_Agreement

(Statements on PSA Strategic Goals made by Eco Network so far are here, for reference)

Eco Network feedback on board papers 23-02-21

Paper 6: (is this paper 7a?)

Timeline for the strategic goals refresh noted.

Environment Scan Presentation:

Some sobering statistics in this presentation, both on a global and national level, with poor housing, low wages and precarious work featuring highly.

We note the global Gender Pay Gap of 20% and are mindful that 70% of the world's most poor are women and children. As outlined by Project Drawdown, one of the most effective tools for addressing climate change is the empowerment of women. Thus, we support a continued focus on equal pay for the PSA. Eliminating the financial vulnerability of women members and their children lessens their vulnerability to being impacted by climate change events and improves their ability to make safe and environmentally responsible choices in their daily lives.

Focus of Unions in NZ:

The Eco Network agrees with the significance of the priorities listed as the focus of unions in New Zealand currently.

In contrast to NZ unions, we note the ITUC has put the creation of climate-friendly jobs with Just Transition as its first priority and that the NZ government priorities also feature climate change. We hope the strategic plan refresh enables the PSA to boost climate change as a priority for our union and, as the largest union in the country, subsequently boost the profile of climate change across the union network.

Opportunities for the PSA:

The Eco Network are pleased to see “a zero carbon commitment by government for the Public Service” on the PSA's list and “a human-centred economy and society which is aware of the importance of a healthy planet to fully thrive”. We note that an aware society is one important goal to achieve but, equally, a society which takes mindful action to protect the environment for all life on the planet is equally important. In terms of opportunity, we also reiterate that the PSA has an opportunity to be an innovative union in this space and use the considerable relevant experience of our members to boost the profile of climate change in the union network in Aotearoa.

Paper 7: Refresh of the Strategic Goals

Given that the process for the refresh of PSA Strategic Goals which was agreed by the Board in December states that the review will reflect significant changes to our operating context since 2018, the Eco

Network believes that climate change must be added to the PSA Strategic Goals as a fifth goal. The passage of the Zero Carbon Act in 2019, the Declaration of Climate Change Emergency in 2020 and the inaugural report of the Climate Change Commission He Pou a Rangī in 2021 represent large shifts for the PSA. In particular, the Carbon Neutral Government Programme which requires Government organisations to be carbon neutral by 2025 heralds' major new challenges for PSA members and our communities.

“Climate action failure” sits at the centre of the Global Environment scan presented to the 24 February Executive Board meeting. Reproduced from the World Economic Forum’s Global Risks Report 2020, the Board’s scan shows that Climate action failure has the greatest equal number and strength of connections to other risk factors. Of the 30 risks considered in the report, Climate action failure is rated number one by impact, and number two by likelihood.

For these reasons, it is the view of the PSA Eco Network that climate action warrants timely inclusion as a fifth top-level goal for our union. This is the approach taken by the International Trade Union Confederation, which in 2021 issued five key demands for a New Social Contract in a post-pandemic world, including:

“1. Creation of climate-friendly jobs with Just Transition. Job-creating industrial transformation to achieve net-zero carbon emissions, along with jobs in health, education and other quality public services.”

We are rapidly developing capacity to support the PSA in pursuit of a top-level climate change goal, should it be adopted.

We look forward to the opportunity to provide more detailed feedback to the board, backed by Eco Network member input which is currently being sought.

Eco Network Zoom meeting notes 12-03-21

Strategic Goals Refresh

- Introduction from Benedict about general process and purpose of the refresh
- Current Eco Network preferred proposal is to add a 5th goal relating to climate change
- Also noted opportunity to add goals into the other 4 strategic goals
- Benedict – always limits to budget and resources, so consideration is what else could/would be dropped, and whether to concentrate on a few goals or spread around more thinly across goals – neither necessarily better than the other, but something for members to consider in their feedback to the Board.
- Could add climate lens to policy and other work as Auckland Council currently do (Climate Impact Statements required for all reports)
- If gov't goes carbon-neutral in first 5 years as in the gov't goals, would that type of work come under one goal, or into a current goal like transforming the workplace
- Support for also weaving climate-related goals into current goals
- A separate 5th goal gives visibility and mana to the goal over what weaving it into current goals would provide. Could also add a goal under the overarching goal for climate impact statements on board papers.
- Eco Network can also look at working with sector committees and other networks as well as the goals e.g. bargaining strategies, strategic planning etc.