

6.3 COUNCIL'S RESPONSE TO CLIMATE CHANGE

Submitting Councillor: Cr James

MOTION

That Council:

1. *Resolves to strengthen and further prioritise its response to dealing with environmental and climate concerns.*
2. *Directs the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) to provide a report and recommendations to Council by no later than February 2020 outlining how Council can become carbon neutral and achieve zero-net emission by 2025, 2030, 2040 and any other target the CEO wishes to include as an option (the Report). For each target date, the report should make it clear what the environmental benefits will be for adopting that target and the financial costs to Council to reach each target as compared to the status quo.*
3. *Further, the Report should also provide commentary, advice and recommendations on the following:*
 - *What are the examples of leading response to climate change by other local councils and government entities which might be relevant to Monash;*
 - *Actions which Council could take to reduce greenhouse gas emissions within Council's operation;*
 - *Measures Council can take to enhance local community resilience to the effects and impacts of global warming and to assist the community with their efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions*
 - *Ways in which Council can prioritise the use of recycled materials in its operations:*
 - *Outline a number of budget initiatives to achieve the desired outcomes and refer those to the 2020/2021 Budget, for funding*
 - *Outline potential additions to the Council Plan and LTFP to help prioritise and achieve the desired outcomes.*
4. *Prioritises the delivery of a whole of Council strategy for tackling climate change, as referred to in the Environmental Sustainability Strategy 2016-2026, with an aim to have it presented to Council by September 2020.*
5. *Directs officers to allocate the required funds from the 2019/2020 budget.*

INTRODUCTION

The City of Monash is already a leader in environmental sustainability and climate change. This has been demonstrated through its strategic alignment and actions to which Council has confirmed in its Council Plan and Environmental Sustainability Strategy 2016-2026 (ESS). We are also a member of the national program, Cities Power Partnership (CPP) and Take 2. Whilst Council's record in becoming more environmentally sustainable is impressive, this resolution proposes to set clear, ambitious and achievable targets for emissions reduction with an aim to achieving carbon neutrality in Council's operations

DISCUSSION

In 2016 Council adopted the ESS which outlined an ambitious program of commitments aimed at improving our environmental sustainability, inclusive of priority 3.1.1 to *develop and implement a Climate Change Action Plan which recognises a whole of council approach to mitigation, adaptation, risk management, innovation and alternative energy sources.*

Guided by the Environmental Sustainability Strategy and related documents, Monash Council has:

- 1) Progressively reduced our gas and electricity use over the last 5-10 years.
 - 2) Converted all our public lighting in local streets to energy efficient lighting.
 - 3) Put in place an Environmental Sustainability Design Policy in 2016 relevant to all new builds of 3 or more across Melbourne.
 - 4) Purchases 20% Green Power for large market sites (55% of our energy use)
 - 5) Provides Solar bulk buy and advice for the community to provide more access to renewable energy and reduced GHG emissions.
 - 6) Completed and is implementing a number of strategies to support our local trees, biodiversity and open space, and offset urban heat island effect.
 - 7) Joined City Power Partnership and Take 2 to pledge our key actions and put forward a recognition statement for the IPCC report last year.
 - 8) Improved the fuel efficiency of our Council fleet.
 - 9) Supported four large Environmental Upgrade Agreements, leading to a \$1.6million business investment into solar and energy efficiency.
 - 10) Is implementing our current Integrated Health and Wellbeing Plan which includes references to community resilience to climate change.
- Prioritising Council's Response to Climate Change
- 11) Facilitates Sustainable Building tours and a range of workshops to help the community live more sustainably and value their local environment.
 - 12) As a member of the Eastern Alliance of Greenhouse Action, supported a regional level to advocate for state and federal support, and sharing of resources between Councils for a more effective change.

Monash Council has been firmly focused in the past on real action on climate change rather than tokenistic statements. The community at large has shown that they are sick of talk on climate change and want action. As a significant contributor of emissions in the local area (as with any other local council), there is much direct action which Council can take to mitigate and reduce the impacts of its operations. This is the kind of response that most in the Monash community expect of their council, rather than feel good statements which achieve and propose nothing of substance.

Monash residents have been leaders in recycling rates across Victoria for many years. It is appreciated by Council that most Monash residents also want Council to do its bit, as they have been doing with managing their own household waste collections in recent years, to reduce our impact on the environment.

It is appropriate for Council to adopt and work towards targets and timelines to achieve emissions reductions with a view to becoming carbon neutral. Whilst I would like to implement changes sooner rather than later, I consider it vitally important that any approach

that Council seeks to take is properly costed and fully investigated to ensure that we are not setting ourselves up for failure or raising unrealistic expectations to our Community.

Several concerns have been raised by colleagues in the past about funding initiatives outside of the budget process. I believe that action in this area cannot wait for another year.

Given the motion resolves to strengthen and further prioritise Council's response to dealing with climate change, I believe it is appropriate to direct officers to re-prioritise the existing budget so that this critical work is funded.

I acknowledge that this may mean that other work is pushed back and referred for funding in future years, but I believe that is an acceptable outcome given the urgency of dealing with this issue.

CONCLUSION

The adoption of emission reduction targets which mobilise a whole-of-council approach to mitigation, adaptation, risk management, innovation and alternative energy sources will serve the purpose of focusing future actions by Council and enable the community to hold us to account for these actions. The timetable set by this resolution will enable Council to set suitable targets and adopt funding initiatives in the 2020/2021 budget to accelerate Council's response to climate change.