



Moreland City Council

Parliamentary Inquiry into Tackling Climate Change in Victorian Communities

Submission by Moreland City Council

The Committee Manager
Legislative Assembly, Environment and Planning Committee
Parliament House, Spring Street
EAST MELBOURNE VIC 3002

By email climatechangeinquiry@parliament.vic.gov.au

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- This submission is prepared by officers based on positions and activities aligned with Council's strategic objectives and adopted strategies / plans.

Introduction

Moreland Council welcomes the opportunity to provide input to the Environment and Planning Standing Committee's inquiry into Tackling Climate Change in Victorian Communities. We acknowledge that the Terms of Reference seek feedback on 'what urban, rural and regional communities in Victoria are doing to tackle climate change and how the Victorian Government could support these communities'.

Climate change is already impacting Victorian communities and the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) has reported to the world community that average global temperatures have already increased by 1°C (IPCC, 2018). Some of the most concerning impacts of climate change that need to be urgently addressed include:

- the health, resilience and social disruption of our communities
- economic impacts of disruption on households, businesses and public assets
- water and food supply, water catchments and coastlines
- energy, transport, and building infrastructure
- transition risks in the insurance, finance, primary production, energy, transport and property sectors
- impacts on urban forests, parks, gardens and biodiversity loss.

Moreland City Council context

Moreland is a municipality in the inner north of Melbourne with a diverse and rapidly growing population. Council has a long and proud history as a local government leadership on social justice and environmental issues, including establishment of the Moreland Energy Foundation Limited in 2000 and Council being certified 'Carbon Neutral' for Operations since 2012.

In September 2018 Moreland City Council adopted the Zero Carbon Moreland (ZCM) 2040 Framework which included acknowledgement that we are in a state of climate emergency that requires urgent action by all levels of government.

The ZCM 2040 Framework re-affirmed Council's goal to see a zero carbon Moreland by 2040 with a vision of:

- Efficient and 100% renewably powered energy
- Active or zero emissions transport
- Circular economy with zero waste.

Associated strategies/ plans include Moreland's Waste and Litter Strategy (2018) which set the goal of zero waste to landfill by 2030, the ground-breaking Moreland Integrated Transport Strategy (2019) which aims to enable substantial transport mode shift, and our Urban Heat Island Effect Action Plan (2016) seeking to green and cool the city.

Earlier in 2019 Council endorsed a draft 5-year Action Plan for implementing the Zero Carbon 2040 Framework for community and stakeholder consultation (open until 27 September 2019). It proposes priority programs and initiatives across Energy, Transport and Waste, as well as proposed 'community mobilisation for climate emergency response' in three cross-cutting focus areas:

- Zero carbon advocacy campaigning (to state and federal government)
- Zero carbon behaviour change programs
- Integrating climate emergency response across Council policies and services.

Key Council and community actions to tackle climate change

Like an increasing number of local council areas, Council and the Moreland community are implementing a broad range of actions in response to climate and ecological threats and risks. A sample of the leadership actions recently implemented or in planning by Moreland Council include:

- Implementation of a stringent Sustainable Buildings Policy to guide ESD in construction of new and upgraded Council buildings and facilities, including 'no new fossil gas' (e.g. targeting Passive House certification for the planned Wheatsheaf Hub in Glenroy).

- Council now purchases 100% of its operational electricity demand through a 10-year contract as part of the Melbourne Renewable Energy Project (Crowlands Windfarm near Ararat)
- Through Council's award winning 'Solar on Leased Facilities' program, community groups leasing Council facilities are supported to install solar PV at no upfront cost.
- Leading a collaboration with the Council Alliance for the Sustainable Built Environment (CASBE) and interested member councils to progress a pathway towards Zero Emissions in the Planning Scheme through development of a new ESD Policy (v2) Planning Scheme Amendment.
- Accelerating transition to a zero-emissions vehicle fleet through a stringent new Light Vehicle Policy (14 Battery EVs in Council fleet to date, with 10 private charging stations for use by Council).
- Facilitating mode shift through best-practice evidence-based changes to the way parking is managed in activity centres, including introducing new parking restrictions and parking requirements within new developments (via a Planning Scheme Amendment).
- Partnering with the Australian Energy Foundation (formerly Moreland Energy Foundation) to develop and deliver innovative project pilots to overcome barriers to energy transition (such as Solar for Renters, Solar for Apartments and the Cooling Communities project to improve thermal comfort and energy efficiency for vulnerable residents in social housing).
- Introducing a Food and Garden Organics (green bin) kerbside waste collection service from 1 July 2019, with engagement and planning underway for a transition to a universal service in 2021 designed to maximise organic waste diversion from landfill.
- Constructing stormwater harvesting and treatment systems to provide alternative water for open space irrigation as well as cooler and greener parks.

Council and its delivery partners Australian Energy Foundation and CERES Environment Park are directly fostering and promoting community direct action, including:

- Household and business installation of rooftop solar PV and energy efficiency (with AEF directly facilitating close to 2MW of new solar PV capacity over the past two years through their supplier panel)
- Provision of 11 public EV charging stations (to date) across the municipality including two Fast Charge stations, enabling free renewably powered vehicle charging.
- Fostering awareness of and networking between grassroots climate action and advocacy groups such as Climate Action Moreland (CAM), Neighbours United for Climate Action (NUCA) and Upfield Urban Forest group.
- Development and expansion of sustainable local food systems and a 'circular economy' through grassroots initiatives such as community gardens, food swaps, Toy Libraries, the Brunswick Tool Library and repair cafes.

- Schools and early learning centres (and their communities) seeking to embed environmental education, skills and connection to nature through the ResourceSmart Schools framework, educational incursions and excursions, nature play and citizen science opportunities.
- Community groups working on restoration of local ecosystems including Merri Creek Management Committee and many Friends of groups caring for bushland and waterway corridors.
- Community groups and social enterprises operating out of neighbourhood houses and CERES to foster environmental and social justice, skills sharing and neighbourhood connection.

Victorian Government support required by Victorian communities

Council urges the Victorian Government to increase its ambition to address the climate emergency in partnership with local governments and communities.

Local governments can be key partners in the just transition from fossil fuel powered cities to renewable and climate resilient communities, but we need supporting policy changes and action by the Victorian and Australian Governments.

To meet the accelerated challenges posed by climate change, the following are high priority actions to be undertaken by the Victorian government to better support local governments and their communities:

1. Declare a Climate and Biodiversity Emergency.
2. Set science-based emissions reduction targets for Victoria to achieve a 40–45 per cent reduction on 2005 emissions levels by 2025, and 65–75 per cent reduction on 2005 levels by 2030.
3. Increase the state renewable energy target to 80 - 100% by 2030.
4. Support changes to energy market regulations to support peer-to-peer trading and distributed generation and storage (eg. differential feed in-tariffs for community owned energy resources and solar gardens, enabling virtual-net-metering and enabling community-owned retailers etc).
5. Require timely disclosure of aggregated real time data from electricity distribution businesses.
6. Support community energy projects through either grants or a specific allocation of the Victorian Renewable Energy Target.
7. Work with Resource Smart and local communities to invest in solar PV and battery installations on schools to the benefit of local schools and educational outcomes.
8. Rule out new fossil fuel developments and extend the ban on unconventional onshore gas development to a complete ban of onshore and offshore gas.

9. Develop timely and well thought out plans for the closure of coal fire plans which ensure the closure date is appropriate and well communicated.
10. Support communities to prepare for the next closure of a coal-fired power station in the Latrobe Valley as early as 2023 with industry and place-based (urban and regional) transition plans.
11. Introduce a robust ESD Policy for developments into the State Planning Policy Framework including a minimum energy performance standard of at least 7-star NATHERS equivalent for new dwellings
12. Ensure all new state infrastructure and public housing is designed and built to minimise emissions and withstand climate change impacts, and existing infrastructure is retrofitted.
13. Introduce mandatory disclosure of energy performance for all buildings at sale or lease and mandate minimum energy efficiency performance standards for rental properties.
14. Provide additional funding to ensure all new social housing complies with minimum energy performance standards and address climate vulnerability among existing social/ public housing tenants.
15. Provide resources for Councils and the Victorian Building Authority to proactively enforce building compliance and address non-compliance.
16. Fund programs to foster climate resilience of communities, especially vulnerable and low-income members of the community.
17. Invest in extensive and connected walking and cycling paths and (renewably powered) public transport to support mode shift and reduce dependency on privately owned vehicles.
18. Support communities to prepare for the rapid transition from petrol and diesel vehicles towards accessible 'mobility as a service' by developing an electric and autonomous vehicle strategy (and associate planning policy) to embed positive social and environmental outcomes.
19. Acknowledge waste services as an 'essential service' and urgently invest landfill levy funds to develop financially and environmentally sustainable waste management in Victoria, including a Container Deposit Scheme, consistent with development of a circular economy.
20. Urgently invest in regional facilities and processes for high-capacity recycling and advanced organics processing, and integrate use of recycled content in government purchasing policies and specifications, & support councils / businesses to do likewise.
21. Collaborate with councils and local communities in strong advocacy to Federal Government on the many policy levers available at the national level to rapidly decarbonise the economy and become a clean, green country providing leadership on global efforts towards a safe climate and ecological regeneration.