

Climate Change Policy 2019

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INTRODUCTION

Climate change is a real and urgent threat to our environment, economy, health and lifestyle. The latest Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) report issued in October 2018 indicated that under current policies, the earth is heading towards a catastrophic 3-4°C rise in average temperature. The report highlighted the need for urgent action to mitigate human emissions of greenhouse gases, as well as the crucial need to improve our adaptive planning. The average global temperature has already increased by 1.1°C since the industrial revolution, and the window of opportunity to restrict the increase to the more manageable 1.5°C, instead of the forecast catastrophic 3-4°C is rapidly closing, indicating that incremental change is unlikely to deliver this objective.

Transformational change to policies and approaches, including the way local governments conduct business, will be required to avoid the most severe consequences of climate change.

Expectations for hotter and generally drier conditions in Indigo Shire, with increasing frequency and intensity of extreme climatic events, have implications for the continued delivery of local government services and maintenance of assets into the future. A range of local government functional areas are already faced with the impacts of heatwave, drought, fire and flood. These extremes place pressure on the achievement of Council's strategic objectives.

Climate change also impacts our community's health and wellbeing, safety and economic prosperity. This Policy aligns with Indigo Shire's vision of "Heritage Shire, Bold Future" by looking ahead, preparing and ensuring that the prosperity and liveability of the Shire is resilient to a changing climate.

SCOPE

Climate change impacts are experienced across the organisation and community, and mitigation and adaptation actions are implemented by Councillors, staff and community members.

This policy applies to Council services and assets. It is to be considered when Council and its officers make recommendations and decisions, or design and review programs, processes and projects.

This policy also applies to Councillors as the elected representatives of the Indigo Shire in their decision making and advocacy; and to all employees, agency employees, sub-contractors and volunteers whilst they are working on Indigo Shire Council sites and/or under Indigo Shire Council direction.

PURPOSE

This policy has been developed to articulate and standardise Indigo Shire Council's position and response to climate change. Indigo Shire Council is committed to both mitigating and adapting to climate change when delivering local government services and maintaining assets into the future.

POLICY DETAILS

Indigo Shire Council acknowledges:

- That the global climate is changing as a consequence of increased concentrations of greenhouse gas emissions in the atmosphere, and that these increased concentrations are largely the result of human activities.
- That all of our functions and operations have an impact on the environment.
- That climate change has already, and will continue to, have impacts to the Indigo Shire community, economy and our natural and built environment.
- That climate change is a common concern and responding to climate change is a responsibility shared by all levels of government, industry, communities and the people of Indigo Shire.
- The importance of reducing greenhouse gas emissions, conserving natural resources and promoting a safe and healthy community.
- Our leadership role in preparing our staff and community to face the impacts of a changed climate.
- The urgency of the issue of climate change, and the need to take decisive action to reduce greenhouse gas emissions towards carbon neutrality, and to plan adaptation responses for a future changed climate.

We commit to addressing the climate change challenge by a combination of mitigation, adaptation, advocacy and community engagement actions.

We will conduct regular monitoring and review of climate science and national and state policy, to identify ongoing or emerging mitigation, storage and adaptation opportunities, to ensure guiding principles evolve to remain relevant, responsive and informed.

Mitigation – we will reduce our emissions, by:

- Reducing Council's contribution to climate change, and progress transition towards carbon neutrality by implementing and reviewing corporate emissions reduction targets and strategies.
- Supporting the community to reduce their contribution to climate change, through leadership, partnership, education and action.
- Viewing all strategic and operational decisions, and policy positions in the context of climate change, by verifying emissions reduction opportunities have been considered for all applicable decisions.
- Develop and implement systems that identify and manage the Council's environmental and climate change impacts.

- Promoting sustainable procurement throughout the supply chain, including consideration of environment/climate change criteria when evaluating quotations for applicable goods.
- Actively promoting and participating in the circular economy, to reduce the contribution to climate change from Indigo Shire's waste generation.

Adaptation – we will be prepared for the changing climate, by:

- Working with the community to help build the resilience of our communities to adapt to the effects of climate change.
- Including potential failure to adapt to climate change on the corporate risk register, with regular review to be conducted by the audit and risk committee on the treatment of this risk.
- Applying risk management processes to develop, implement and monitor adaptation strategies and actions.
- Ensuring other applicable Council policies and plans take account of climate change and its implications for Council operations.
- Viewing all strategic and operational decisions, and policy positions in the context of climate change, by ensuring activities contribute to resilience and adaptation in the face of climate change.
- Building resilience to climate change through improved processes and allocation of resources that minimise financial, social and environmental impact on Council's infrastructure and services.
- Considering projected climate change impacts in the design of assets and infrastructure work (both capital and maintenance).

Advocacy and Partnerships – we will tackle this challenge together, by:

- Promoting and working towards cooperative, coordinated regional climate change management.
- Identifying opportunities to innovate and be proactive in our response to the challenges of climate change.
- Partnering with other council's and agencies via the Goulburn-Broken Greenhouse Alliance (and other collaborative forums), to leverage grant funding and collaboration for local action on climate change, as well as undertake advocacy to the State and Federal governments.
- Support community groups to engage their communities and take action on climate change.
- Lead by example and use our influence to raise awareness and understanding of environmental and climate change issues and actively encourage responsible practices and behaviours.

DEFINITIONS

Climate change: Changes in the state of the climate, including an increase in extreme weather events, long-term changes in weather patterns and sea level rise, attributed directly or indirectly to human activity.

Adaptation: Changes in natural or human systems to prepare for actual or expected changes in the climate in order to minimise harm, act on opportunities or cope with the consequences.

- Mitigation:** Refers to efforts to minimise the extent of climate change by reducing or preventing emission of greenhouse gases.
- Resilience:** The capacity of an organisation to absorb disturbance and reorganize while undergoing change so as to still retain essentially the same function, structure, identity and feedbacks.

REFERENCES (Applicable legislation, standards and related council documents)

Climate-ready Victoria - Hume

https://www.climatechange.vic.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0022/60745/Hume.pdf

Indigo Shire Environment Strategy

IPCC (2014) Fifth Assessment Report: Climate Change 2014: Synthesis Report

<http://www.ipcc.ch/report/ar5/syr/>

IPCC (2018) Special Report: Global Warming of 1.5°C. <https://www.ipcc.ch/sr15/>

Victorian Climate Change Act 2017

Victoria's Climate Change Adaptation Plan 2017-2020