

Climate Change Policy 2024

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Approved By:	Indigo Shire Council
Department:	Infrastructure Services
Service Plan Area:	Environment and Sustainability
Responsible Officer:	Coordinator Environment & Sustainability
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PURPOSE

This policy articulates Indigo Shire Council's position on, and strategic response to, climate change.

SCOPE

This policy applies to Indigo Shire Council's services and assets. The policy is to be considered when Council and its officers:

- make recommendations and decisions, and;
- design and review processes, programs and projects including maintenance and strategic planning.

This policy applies to:

- Councillors as the elected representatives of Council in their decision making and advocacy, and;
- employees, agency employees, contractors and volunteers working on Council sites and/or under Council direction.

BACKGROUND

In 2023, the International Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) reported unequivocal evidence that Earth is warming at an unprecedented rate and that climate change is widespread, rapid and intensifying, with more extremes on the rise, placing human ecosystem health at serious risk¹.

In addition to the need to take urgent action to reduce greenhouse gas emissions in a bid to keep global warming to within 1.5°C, it is now widely accepted that the global community will be required to adapt to the consequences of a changing climate, with impacts varying depending on where you live.

¹ International Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) 6th Assessment Report (2023)

Australia is already experiencing increases in temperature, frequency and intensity of heatwaves, flooding rains, hazardous fire weather and drought conditions². The Hume Regional Climate Change Adaptation Strategy (2021)³ acknowledges the need to ensure our communities are informed, empowered to make transformational change and resilient in the face of climate change. This includes planning for the challenges and opportunities created by a changing climate, as outlined in the North East Regional Catchment Strategy⁴

In 2019, Indigo Shire Council became one of Australia's first councils to declare a Climate Emergency. Council has also committed to a Net Zero by 2035 target for its greenhouse gas emissions, and developed an Emissions Reduction Plan (2021) which provides a roadmap of required actions to reduce our emissions, measured at 6,300 tonnes CO₂-e in 2019/20. A major step was joining the Victorian Electricity Collaboration (VECO) in July 2021, switching Council's buildings to 100% renewable electricity – an action that reduced Council's emissions by 20%.

POLICY

Indigo Shire Council is committed to mitigating and adapting to climate change when delivering local government services and maintaining Council assets into the future. Council recognises its important leadership and advocacy role in empowering staff and our communities to mitigate and adapt to climate change. The policy is guided by the following key principles:

1. Climate change mitigation – Council will reduce our greenhouse gas emissions by:

- 1.1 Transitioning Council services, assets and activities toward achieving Net Zero emissions, demonstrated by setting and striving toward ambitious interim targets.
- 1.2 Making strategic and operational decisions in the context of our declared Climate Emergency.
- 1.3 Increasing sustainable procurement throughout Council's supply chain, recognising that goods and services contribute the majority (94%) of Council's total emissions⁵. Procurement should target reducing the use of virgin materials and preferencing the reuse, repurposing and recycling of materials where possible.
- 1.4 Implementing systems to identify and monitor Council's environmental and climate change impacts, and through its mitigation responses, seek to minimise the negative impacts and maximise the positive opportunities.

2. Climate change adaptation – Council will adapt to climate change by:

- 2.1 Embedding projected climate change impacts (e.g. water scarcity, flood intensity, urban heating and heatwaves) in the design, implementation and maintenance of Council's assets, landscapes and places, and future infrastructure developments, and updating these impacts in light of emerging science.
- 2.2 Applying risk management processes in the development and implementation of climate adaptation strategies and actions

² Dept of Climate change, Energy, the Environment and Water (2023)

³ [Hume Regional Climate Change Adaptation Strategy](#), Victoria Dept of Environment, Land, Water and Planning 2021 (2021)

⁴ North East Catchment Management Authority (2023)

⁵ Contracted goods & services accounted for 8,301 tonnes of CO₂-e in 2022/23 (Source: Trellis)

3. Leadership and Advocacy – Council will lead by example, working with our staff and communities to respond to climate change by:

- 3.1 Influencing Council Staff to raise awareness of climate change and build capability to undertake climate mitigation and climate adaptation measures through the provision of education, training and resources.
- 3.2 Encouraging and supporting our communities to undertake climate mitigation and climate adaptation measures.
- 3.3 Partnering with other Councils and agencies via key regional forums (e.g. Goulburn Murray Climate Alliance) to collaborate on local and regional climate initiatives, leverage funding and combine resources to ensure that a scientifically informed approach is adopted, and to advocate to the Victorian and Australian Government for strong leadership and action on climate change.
- 3.4 Communicating and reporting on progress towards greenhouse gas emission targets, activities and projects to enhance community resilience and efforts to incorporate climate change impacts into planning decisions at corporate and local levels.

RECORD KEEPING PROCEDURES AND CONTROLS

The Environment & Sustainability team manages Council's carbon accounting platform (Trellis) and *Our climate Action* platform (Kausal), and reports progress to Council and the community.

RELATED LEGISLATION

- Climate Change Act 2022 (Australia)
<https://www.legislation.gov.au/C2022A00037/latest/text>
- Climate Change Act 2017 (Victoria)
<https://www.climatechange.vic.gov.au/legislation/climate-change-act-2017>

RELATED COUNCIL AND EXTERNAL DOCUMENTS

- Indigo Shire Council's Environment Strategy (2019)
- Indigo Shire Council's Climate Emergency Strategic Action Plan (2020)
- Indigo Shire Council's Emissions Reduction Plan (2021)
- Indigo Shire Council's '*Our Climate Action*' (Kausal) platform (established 2023) -
<https://climateaction.indigoshire.vic.gov.au>
- International Panel on Climate Change (2019), Summary for Policymakers. In: IPCC Special Report on the Ocean and Cryosphere in a Changing Climate.
- Dept Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water (2024), Climate Change: Driving climate action, science and innovation so we are ready for the future.
<https://www.dcceew.gov.au/climatechange/policy>
- North East Regional Catchment Strategy (2023), What is changing? North East Catchment Management Authority. <https://northeast.rcs.vic.gov.au/our-region/what-is-changing/>

Climate Change Policy 2024

- Victoria's Climate Science Report (2019)
https://www.climatechange.vic.gov.au/data/assets/pdf_file/0029/442964/Victorias-Climate-Science-Report-2019.pdf
- Australian standard AS5334-2013 - Climate Adaptation for Settlements and infrastructure - a risk-based approach. <https://www.standards.org.au/standards-catalogue/standard-details?designation=as-5334-2013>
- Hansen Partnership (2021), Climate Change and Planning in Victoria
https://www.gmca.org.au/uploads/8/4/3/6/84367754/hansen_report_-_climate_change_and_planning_in_victoria_clean.pdf
- Engineers Australia, Australian Rainfall and Runoff Guidelines - Climate Change. Update to the Climate Change considerations in the Australian Rainfall and Runoff Guidelines – Climate. <https://consult.dccew.gov.au/update-to-the-cc-considerations-in-the-arrg>

DEFINITIONS

Carbon accounting	The measurement and reporting of greenhouse gas emissions. ⁶
Carbon offsets (Carbon credits)	Projects that permanently remove/reduce greenhouse gas emissions from the atmosphere. One carbon credit is equivalent to one tonne of greenhouse gases permanently captured.
Climate change	Long-term change in average weather patterns caused by burning of fossil fuels, forest clearing and other practices that increase the concentration of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere. ⁷
Climate change adaptation	Actions that adapt natural/human systems to cope with consequences of climate change.
Climate change mitigation	Actions to reduce/remove/ prevent greenhouse gases in the atmosphere. The process of decarbonisation and reducing reliance on fossil fuels.
Greenhouse gas emissions (GHG)	The atmospheric gases responsible for causing global warming and climate change, including carbon dioxide (CO ₂), methane (CH ₄), nitrous oxide (N ₂ O), hydrofluorocarbons (HFCs), perfluorocarbons (PFCs) and sulphur -hexafluoride (SF ₆), nitrogen trifluoride (NF ₃). ⁸
Net Zero emissions	The difference between greenhouse gas emissions produced and greenhouse gas emissions taken out of the atmosphere ⁹ .
Scope 1,2 & 3 emissions	Scope 1 – direct emissions from sources owned or controlled by an organisation (e.g. fuel, energy from natural and liquefied petroleum gas and landfill emissions). Scope 2 - indirect emissions from an organisation's electricity consumption. Scope 3 - all other indirect emissions produced throughout the value chain (e.g. contracted Goods and Services, electricity consumption in leased buildings). ¹⁰
Sustainable procurement	Integration of environmental, social and governance (ESG) criteria into procurement processes ¹¹

⁶ <https://www.bpm.com/insights/carbon-accounting/>

⁷ <https://www.climatecouncil.org.au/>

⁸ Indigo Shire Council's Emissions Reduction Plan (2021)

⁹ <https://www.climatecouncil.org.au/resources/what-does-net-zero-emissions-mean/>

¹⁰ Indigo Shire Council's Emissions Reduction Plan (2021)

¹¹ <https://www.ibm.com/topics/sustainable-procurement>

Climate Change Policy 2024

VERSION CONTROL

Date	Review Details	Action
13 March 2024	Internal staff survey – Policy review	Reworded draft Policy in line with staff survey findings.
27 May 2024	Presented to EMT	Further clarity of Policy guidelines to better reflect the work of Council.
4 June 2024	Present Draft Policy to Council Briefing	Questions and answers.
25 June 2024	Present Draft Policy to Council meeting	Draft Policy put on Public Exhibition for 21 days, commencing 26 June 2024.
7 August 2024	Recommendations/feedback from the Indigo Environment Advisory Committee (IEAC)	The Indigo Environment Advisory Committee (IEAC) recommends that the Climate Change Policy 2024 be adopted by Council, as amended.
27 August 2024	Climate Change Policy endorsed by Council	