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# fitzroy residents' association

Established in 1969 to promote, protect and enhance residential amenity

## **Draft Yarra Climate Emergency Plan**

The Fitzroy Residents' Association welcomes the opportunity to respond to the Yarra City Council's initiative to declare a climate emergency and propose a set of policies to drive the City toward achievable and necessary outcomes to meet that emergency.

The FRA is supportive of the five strategic priorities that provide a framework for key actions. There is a need however to provide a more detailed analysis of the emission's profile of the City to ensure that the strategic priorities and actions can be targeted. The residential, commercial and industrial component of emissions for electricity (approx. 70%) needs a further breakdown to ensure the effectiveness of targeted actions.

The timeframe and review of the proposed actions over the next 4 years need to be specific for each action with monitoring on a 6 monthly basis. Whilst 'flexibility' and 'responsiveness' are admirable they do not negate the need for targets and timelines that are monitored on a regular basis.

### **Strategic Priority 1. Mobilise and engage the community to respond to the climate emergency.**

#### **Key actions:**

- Expand our community mobilisation and engagement programs to enable community action
- Enable and support key sectors, including businesses, households, community groups and young people to step up their climate action
- Dedicate a substantial pool of community grant funds to support community-led climate action
- Provide additional support to the most vulnerable in our community to prepare them for climate related impacts
- Work with others in the climate emergency movement to advocate for urgent climate action at other levels of government

#### **Response:**

The FRA views the need to engage and collaborate with residents and the wider community as critical to meeting the challenge of transformational change to reduce the City's carbon emissions and build resilience to the shocks and stresses of climate change. The FRA supports the intent of the actions proposed but would strongly recommend a climate emergency community grants program with an increase in funding from \$150,000 to \$500,000.

## **Strategic priority 2: Accelerate renewable energy, zero carbon buildings and efficient operations.**

### **Key actions:**

- Assist Yarra residents, businesses and community organisations to transition to renewable energy, moving the municipality towards 100% renewable electricity by 2030
- Use planning processes to transition towards zero-carbon buildings
- Facilitate energy efficient home upgrades for vulnerable community members
- Transition all council buildings away from gas
- Convert public lighting to the most energy efficient options

### **Response:**

There is a need to have timelines and targets for achieving 100% renewable electricity by 2030. Only then will we as a community be able to assess the effectiveness of actions and be able to respond in a timely manner. The Yarra Energy Foundation should play an important role by providing support and expertise for the actions needed by residents and businesses. An 'emergency' requires an emergency response, not a ten-year goal that, based on the science, will clearly be too late.

Guidelines aimed at supporting the installation of solar panels on heritage buildings should address safety and maintenance and thereby encourage their use. We would recommend an increase in the fund available to the most vulnerable households from \$30,000 to \$100,000 to better reflect the emergency and the need.

There is a need for the planning process to provide mandatory building efficiency standards for solar energy, rainwater storage and reuse, waste minimisation and recycling, public and active transport and contribute to the transition towards zero emissions. The transitioning of Council buildings to zero emissions by accelerating renewable energy and efficient operations should include a call on State and Commonwealth governments to pursue a similar aim in buildings they own or occupy. This should also be extended to the offices occupied by Members of Parliament.

It is evident from recent planning applications for new apartment buildings in Fitzroy that there is not a lack of understanding of Environmental Sustainable Development (ESD) practices and passive design but a lack of commitment by developers to those practices and outcomes. The Council should identify incentives that would encourage developers to raise the bar in relation to investing in sustainable and passive housing developments. This would be an opportunity for the Council to provide exemplar housing developments and set a benchmark for the City and metro Melbourne.

The Council currently has influence over their own buildings and new buildings proposed in the municipality. It is currently possible for all new development to be carbon neutral, in both operation and embodied carbon through construction.

The climate science clearly shows this is necessary for all new developments immediately. Technology, tools and infrastructure already exist to enable this, and Council needs to make this a requirement, in the same way that building permits wouldn't be lax on health and safety.

Council's own existing buildings need to meet zero carbon standards in operation immediately, instantly possible through carbon offsets which in the short and medium term can be reduced through capital upgrades, and in the long term, supported by

decarbonisation of the grid. Council should be a leader in this space and adopt this standard without delay if it is to impress any standards upon the broader Yarra community.

Given the need for joined up Council policies and departments to respond to the climate emergency the FRA recommend that an overarching Climate Emergency Unit headed up by a Director be established. This will ensure the effective implementation and monitoring of the Climate Emergency Action Plan at an administrative level.

We also recommend that all reports to Council should be required to include the 'Climate Emergency Implications' of their recommendations.

### **Strategic priority 3: Create a climate adapted city**

#### **Key actions:**

- Plant more street trees to increase canopy cover and climate resilience
- Consider climate vulnerability when planning and designing streetscapes, open spaces and precincts
- Ensure our parks and reserves are climate resilient and ecologically healthy, and provide food growing spaces
- Improve the climate resilience of Council's assets, such as buildings, roads and drainage
- Develop an Integrated Water Management Plan to manage water as a valuable resource and mitigate drought, heat and flooding
- Embed climate resilience into Council's strategies, policies and decision-making

#### **Response:**

The Draft Open Space Strategy offers opportunities to assess the provision of open space across the City's suburbs and respond to current and future needs. Open space provision provides opportunities for greening, carbon sequestration, the changing climate and the heat island impact on residents. This will require creativity in suburbs that currently lack sufficient open space. The closure or partial closure of streets and the targeting of laneways will need to be part of the solution. The Cool Streets program offers an opportunity to build on existing street tree coverage and educate residents in the need to nurture trees.

### **Strategic priority 4: Transition to zero emissions transport**

#### **Key actions:**

- Develop an Integrated Transport Plan to strategically prioritise greater sustainable transport use and reduce car use
- Build more sustainable transport infrastructure, including safe cycling infrastructure, reduced speed zones and additional green spaces
- Trial infrastructure improvements, including reallocation of car spaces, car free zones and curfews
- Develop a Parking Management Plan to reduce parking to improve sustainable transport infrastructure and public spaces
- Transition council's fleet pool and non-commuter vehicles to zero emissions by 2030
- Facilitate and support electric vehicle charge points in new developments and across the municipality

#### **Response:**

The FRA supports the development of an Integrated Transport Plan and actions that will transition to zero emissions transport in consultation with residents. Such actions should be

extended beyond council's fleet pool and non-commuter vehicles to contactors' vehicles and included in contract specifications. Developers of new apartment buildings in Melbourne's second most walkable suburb and endowed with public transport options should be encouraged and supported in seeking parking dispensation.

### **Strategic priority 5: Move towards zero waste and conscious consumption**

#### **Key actions:**

- Promote and support conscious consumption through high profile, engaging campaigns
- Seek to implement a municipal-wide food and organic waste collection service
- Work with other councils and the state government to enhance waste management systems and infrastructure

#### **Response:**

The FRA supports the move to zero waste and recommends a business and resident grants program to encourage innovative and creative ways to inform and engage the wider community in the circular economy. The City's current organic waste initiative could be enhanced by providing support in the interim to 'Share Waste' which connects people who wish to recycle their organics with those who are already composting.

There is a need to engage apartment dwellers through Owners Corporations to ensure that improved waste and recycling measures are introduced into their buildings and require the participation of both council and private contractors.

Martin Brennan  
Chair