

Climate Emergency Response

File No: X018592

Summary

At its meeting on 24 June 2019, the City of Sydney Council joined a growing number of jurisdictions to declare that climate change poses a serious risk to the people of Sydney, and should be treated as a national emergency.

The Climate Emergency Declaration called on the Australian and NSW Governments to take urgent action to meet the Paris Agreement and to establish a just transition authority.

These are important initiatives, however, more needs to be done. A Climate Emergency Response has been drafted for consideration by Council which details further ways the City can take action in response to this declaration.

The Climate Emergency Response includes principles, goals and priorities to reduce the impacts and increase the resilience of our communities to climate change. It identifies what is already being done and what more could be done under the following headings:

1. Leading by example.
2. Deliver climate emergency priorities through planning.
3. Work with and prepare our communities.
4. Build momentum and advocate.

It is intended that Council endorse the Climate Emergency Response as a public document to help inform and work with our community on key priorities, and to allow business units within Council to determine resource implications and deliver on key new priorities as part of the business planning process.

Recommendation

It is resolved that Council:

- (A) receive and endorse the Climate Emergency Response report; and
- (B) note that Chapter 5 of the July 2019 to December 2019 Environmental Sustainability Progress Report (Green Report) contains updated information about climate related observations and events which supplements the City's 2015 Adapting for Climate Change strategy following a review in 2019.

Attachments

Attachment A. Climate Emergency Response - February 2020

Background

1. At its meeting on 24 June 2019, the City of Sydney Council, joined many other jurisdictions around the world and declared that climate change poses a serious risk to the people of Sydney, and should be treated as a national emergency.
2. In October 2019, the biggest parliamentary e-petition in Australian history (over 400,000 signatures) called for the Australian Government to declare a climate emergency.
3. Reducing emissions and adapting to extreme weather events made worse by long term climate change is more important than ever - many areas in Australia are experiencing long term drought, extreme heat events and unprecedented bushfires.
4. The Australian community needs to unite behind a vision of a zero carbon economy that provides opportunities for all, including workers who currently rely on fossil fuel industries.
5. The City and other leaders in our local community cannot make the required change for Sydney and Australia alone. We need state and national leadership and resources appropriate to the task.
6. Greenhouse gas emissions in the local government area have reduced by 21 per cent between 2006 and 2018, in part due to partnerships and programs run by the City to empower our communities to reduce their carbon impacts. This is a notable result, however, more needs to be done to accelerate the transition to a zero carbon and resilient economy.
7. Under the Paris Agreement, most countries including Australia, have agreed to halt warming at well below 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels. The 2019 Emissions Gap Report by the UNEP shows that at current levels of commitment, temperatures can be expected to rise to 3.2°C above pre-industrial levels.
8. The Australian Department of Environment and Energy report "Australia's emissions projections 2019" estimates that Australia's emissions will be 16 per cent below 2005 levels by 2030 - well short of Australia's 26-28 per cent target Australia's greenhouse gas emissions (excluding land use and forestry) and have increased from 522 Mt in 2005 to 551 Mt in 2019. The largest emissions reductions (3 per cent) occurred from 2012 to 2014 when there was a price on carbon. Since the carbon price was repealed emissions have increased by 5 per cent.
9. Global heating has already caused average global temperatures to be 1°C above pre-industrial levels, with significant impacts. Global emissions need to reduce by 7.6 per cent every year from 2020 to 2030 to limit global warming to 1.5°C. Bureau of Meteorology data shows the year 2019 was the hottest on record for Australia, already reaching 1.52°C above the long term average.

10. Noting the trends and opportunities available, the City has prepared a draft Climate Emergency Response to the June 2019 Climate Emergency Declaration. Key elements are listed below.
- (a) Climate Emergency Response principles:
 - (i) City actions are at a pace and magnitude commensurate with science-based climate observations and models to limit global heating to less than 1.5°C above pre industrial levels.
 - (ii) Actions are inclusive and acknowledge the First Peoples of Australia and the need for a just transition The City can positively influence others through its networks.
 - (iii) All City functions, activities and decision-making will address the climate emergency.
 - (iv) The City can influence others through its networks, functions and activities.
 - (v) Staff across the organisation are champions of change
 - (vi) Pro-active, timely communication and reporting are essential to influence and mobilise action.
 - (vii) An empowered community will take positive climate actions and be more resilient to future challenges.
 - (b) Part 1 - Leading by example:
 - (i) Goal 1: Address climate emergency priorities in our major strategies, projects, and service delivery.
 - (ii) Goal 2: Decarbonise the City's procurement of products, services and assets.
 - (iii) Goal 3: Empower staff to act more sustainability and become more resilient.
 - (iv) Goal 4: Streamline governance processes to facilitate the delivery of significant climate action.
 - (c) Part 2 - Support climate emergency priorities through planning:
 - (i) Goal 5: Use the planning system to deliver on climate emergency priorities.
 - (d) Part 3 - Work with and prepare our communities.
 - (i) Goal 6: Develop, prioritise and embed our communication of the climate emergency.
 - (ii) Goal 7: Support the community to take further action to address the climate emergency.
 - (iii) Goal 8: Help the community access onsite and offsite renewables, including 100% Green Power.

- (iv) Goal 9: Substantially increase the number of existing buildings that achieve net zero energy use and switch to recycled within ten years.
- (e) Part 4 - Build momentum and advocate.
 - (i) Goal 10: Share resources and work collaboratively with other councils.
 - (ii) Goal 11: Collaborate with allies to drive change to state and federal policies and regulations to transition to a zero-carbon economy, and ensure sustainable waste and water policies

Key Implications

Strategic Alignment - Sustainable Sydney 2030

11. Sustainable Sydney 2030 is a vision for the sustainable development of the City to 2030 and beyond. It includes 10 strategic directions to guide the future of the City, as well as 10 targets against which to measure progress. This report is aligned with the following strategic directions and objectives:
 - (a) Direction 1 - A Globally Competitive and Innovative City - The City's future economy and competitiveness depends on reducing the direct and indirect impacts of climate change to human health, businesses and infrastructure. There are significant opportunities to grow the economy and improve competitiveness through clean business sectors.
 - (b) Direction 2 provides a road map for the City to become A Leading Environmental Performer - The Climate Emergency Response includes goals to improve energy and water efficiency and to reduce carbon emissions.
 - (c) Direction 5 - A Lively and Engaging City Centre - The Climate Emergency Response includes a priority to increase greenery and reduce urban heat, improving amenity which is conducive to street activation and active transport.
 - (d) Direction 9 - Sustainable Development, Renewal and Design - Improving the environmental performance of buildings through the planning system is a key aim of the Climate Emergency Response to reduce energy, emissions and running costs; and to improve the thermal comfort to occupants and resilience of buildings during extreme weather and related events such as power outages.
 - (e) Direction 10 - Implementation through Effective Governance and Partnerships - The Climate Emergency Response includes chapters on working with our community and advocacy. It also aims to embed climate priorities within City business units.

Organisational Impact

12. This Climate Emergency Response has been developed with the requirement of no new staff, and has instead focussed on where existing resources can be diverted to address this priority. Business units will consider organisational impacts of the Climate Emergency Response, along with other organisational priorities, during the 2020/21 budgeting and approval processes.

Environmental

13. The Climate Emergency Response includes goals and priorities that, when implemented, would make a significant contribution to the City's energy and emissions targets.

Economic

14. An economic assessment of the Climate Emergency Response has not been undertaken, however, multiple reports and organisations (World Economic Forum, Report University of Melbourne, Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, Stern Review, Garnaut Review) show that the costs and opportunities of transitioning to a zero carbon economy are orders of magnitude lower than dealing with the unabated impacts of climate change.

Budget Implications

15. Business units will consider budget impacts of the Climate Emergency Response, along with other organisational priorities, during the 2020/21 budgeting and approval processes.

Critical Dates / Time Frames

16. A timely response to the Council Climate Emergency declaration in June 2019 is required and implications considered as part of business planning and budget processes for 2020/21.

Options

17. Council may choose not to endorse the Climate Emergency Response. However this will mean City staff and external stakeholders will not be aware of key actions and priorities following the City's declaration of climate emergency in June 2019 and these actions and priorities will not be incorporated into business planning for 2020/21.

Public Consultation

18. The Climate Emergency Response incorporates community feedback received during Sustainable Sydney 2050 engagement.

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