



**11.1 PORT PHILLIP EMERGENCY CLIMATE ACTION NETWORK
JOINT LETTER REGARDING COUNCIL'S RESPONSE TO THE
CLIMATE EMERGENCY**

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1. PURPOSE

- 1.1 To provide a response to the joint letter from Port Phillip Emergency Climate Action Network (PECAN) that was presented at the 18 March 2020 Council meeting.

2. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 2.1 Council declared a Climate Emergency on 18 September 2019. The endorsed motion stated that Council:
- Declares that climate change, including sea level rise and mass species extinction, poses serious risks to the people of Port Phillip and Australia, and should be treated as an emergency.
 - Updates all relevant Council strategies and policies to incorporate and embed this declaration.
 - Requests that the CEO takes into account the impact of the climate emergency as part of organisational decision-making and planning.
 - Notes the City of Port Phillip's commitment to the following strategies: Move, Connect Live (Integrated Transport) Strategy 2018-28, Don't Waste It (Waste) Strategy 2018-28 and Act and Adapt (Environmental Sustainability) Strategy 2018-28.
 - Notes that the City of Port Phillip, through its Act and Adapt Strategy, has a focus on reducing emissions, reducing contamination of land and water, restoring biodiversity, and adaptation to Climate Change including reduction of heat island effect and other health issues related to a warming climate.
 - Notes the City of Port Phillip's membership of the Melbourne Renewable Energy Project, as well as its commitment to generation of renewable energy through solar on council assets.
 - Requests that regular reporting on organisation-wide response to the climate emergency be included as a permanent item in the CEO report.
 - Advocates to the State and Federal Government and Parliaments to declare a climate emergency and take action to drastically reduce warming emissions in Australia and across the world.
- 2.2 Council identified the importance of taking action on climate change well before the climate emergency was declared. This includes embedding sustainability as one of the six strategic pillars in the Council Plan (2017-27), establishing several key strategies and increasing the average annual expenditure on sustainability by 153% from the previous Council Plan (2013-17).



- 2.3 The Climate Emergency Declaration noted these existing strategies as well as the significant projects that provide a comprehensive response to the Climate Emergency. The strategies include the Act and Adapt (Environmental Sustainability) Strategy 2018-28, Don't Waste It Strategy (Waste Strategy) 2018-28; Move, Live Connect (Integrated Transport) Strategy 2018-28.
- 2.4 The existing funded strategies were previously developed in consultation with the community with transparent reporting provided in the monthly CEO Report and the Annual Report
- 2.5 The Port Phillip Emergency Climate Action Network (PECAN) is an alliance of not for profit organisations and community groups that aims to create and sustain a strong climate action movement in Port Phillip to address the climate crisis. PECAN submitted a joint letter to Council on 18 March 2020 following their community forum on 29 February 2020 to request that Council hold a public community meeting at St Kilda Town Hall as soon as possible to:
- inform the citizens of Port Phillip of the actions being taken and planned by Council as a consequence of declaring the climate emergency; and
 - begin a constructive dialogue with the citizens of Port Phillip about ideas for action by Council, community groups and the community.
- 2.6 Nine PECAN members also provided written submissions in support of the joint letter along with additional specific questions or requests for Council's climate emergency response.
- 2.7 It is not possible to run a community meeting in the St Kilda Town Hall during the current COVID-19 State of Emergency,
- 2.8 Council is also currently reviewing its strategic priorities to ensure business continuity and resource allocation to respond to the immediate needs of community related to safety, health and wellbeing during Covid-19 state of emergency. This includes reprioritising delivery of actions in the *Act and Adapt: Sustainable Environment Strategy (2018-28)* and *Don't Waste It: Waste Management Strategy (2018-28)*.
- 2.9 There is an opportunity to offer online forums to engage with the community on a range of climate emergency topics.
- 2.10 Residents and businesses play a critical role in responding to climate change. The provision of online forums along with the Council's existing community sustainability programs will support the community to identify and implement their own actions to respond to the climate emergency.
- 2.11 PECAN have also requested that Council establish an Advisory Group that has a focus on Climate Change.
- 2.12 Officers from Council's Environmental Sustainability Department will schedule regular meetings with PECAN representatives as key community stakeholders. However, a community advisory group to guide/inform future Council decision making and budgets is not currently feasible. This could be considered by the incoming Council as part of development of the new Council Plan and Budget following Council elections in October 2020.
- 2.13 Climate Change continues to pose a serious risk to the City of Port Phillip and Australia more broadly. Council remains committed to addressing the climate emergency within the constraints of the immediate challenges of the COVID -19 outbreak.



3. RECOMMENDATION

That Council:

- 3.1 Notes the Port Phillip Emergency Climate Action Network's (PECAN) members' valuable contribution to raising awareness of the urgency of climate change and supporting local action.
- 3.2 Notes that Council has embedded environmental sustainability as one of the six strategic pillars in the Council Plan (2017-27) and established several key strategies to address climate change, such as the Act and Adapt (Environmental Sustainability) Strategy 2018-28, Don't Waste It Strategy 2018-28 and Move, Live Connect (Integrated Transport) Strategy 2018-28. Notes that Council's resources are focused on responding to the immediate impacts of COVID-19 and that any new initiatives or projects will need to be considered as part of its 2020-21 annual budget and the next Council term.
- 3.3 Notes that the average annual expenditure on sustainability has increase by approximately 153% from the previous Council Plan (2013-17).
- 3.4 Notes that Council will continue to advocate to other levels of government to reduce carbon emissions and mitigate the impacts of climate change.
- 3.5 Notes that Council officers will conduct community engagement via online forums, including sharing information on actions taken by Council to address the Climate Emergency and identifying opportunities for community action.
- 3.6 Writes to PECAN outlining these recommendations and advising that their request for a community decision making forum should be submitted for consideration after the next Council Election.

4. KEY POINTS/ISSUES

Background

- 4.1 Council declared a Climate Emergency (the Declaration) on 18 September 2019. The endorsed motion stated that Council:
 - Declares that climate change, including sea level rise and mass species extinction, poses serious risks to the people of Port Phillip and Australia, and should be treated as an emergency.
 - Updates all relevant Council strategies and policies to incorporate and embed this declaration.
 - Requests that the CEO takes into account the impact of the climate emergency as part of organisational decision-making and planning.
 - Notes the City of Port Phillip's commitment to the following strategies: Move, Connect Live (Integrated Transport) Strategy 2018-28, Don't Waste It (Waste) Strategy 2018-28 and Act and Adapt (Environmental Sustainability) Strategy 2018-28.
 - Notes that the City of Port Phillip, through its Act and Adapt Strategy, has a focus on reducing emissions, reducing contamination of land and water, restoring biodiversity, and adaptation to Climate Change including reduction of heat island effect and other health issues related to a warming climate.



- Notes the City of Port Phillip's membership of the Melbourne Renewable Energy Project, as well as its commitment to generation of renewable energy through solar on council assets.
 - Requests that regular reporting on organisation-wide response to the climate emergency be included as a permanent item in the CEO report.
 - Advocates to the State and Federal Government and Parliaments to declare a climate emergency and take action to drastically reduce warming emissions in Australia and across the world.
- 4.2 Council identified the importance of taking action on climate change well before the climate emergency was declared. This includes embedding sustainability as one of the six strategic pillars in the Council Plan (2017-27), establishing several key strategies and increasing the average annual expenditure on sustainability. These strategies include the Act and Adapt (Environmental Sustainability) Strategy 2018-28, Don't Waste It Strategy 2018-28 and Move, Live Connect (Integrated Transport) Strategy 2018-28.
- 4.3 Average annual allocation to sustainability in the last Council Plan (2013-17) was \$1.74 per \$100 of spend. This has increased by \$2.65 to \$4.39 per \$100 of spend. An increase of 153%.
- 4.4 The Declaration noted the existing strategies and significant projects that provide a comprehensive response to the Climate Emergency.
- 4.5 Council's current suite of climate actions and targets within the noted strategies and projects include:
- A zero-net emissions target for the organisation in the 2020-21 financial year which is on track to be achieved.
 - All of Council's electricity comes from renewable sources including 559kW of rooftop solar and a power purchase agreement with the Crownlands wind farm.
 - Council's investments consistently remain within the target range of the 60-80% for fossil free.
 - An extensive planting program to achieve ten percent increase in street by 2027-28. In 2018-19 Council planted 1,325 trees in streets and parks.
 - An alternative water use program to reduce reliance on potable water while keeping parks green. In October 2019, the Alma Park Stormwater Harvesting project was completed. It has the capacity to capture and reuse up to 18 million litres of stormwater annually.
 - Delivering a suite of community sustainability programs to support residents and businesses to address climate change.
- 4.6 Further details of Council's climate response for both the organisation and the community can be found in Attachment 1.
- 4.7 The Climate Emergency Declaration did not include a requirement to develop a new Climate Emergency Plan in consultation with the community.
- 4.8 Council's existing climate related Strategies and Plans remain current and were already informed by extensive community consultation. This includes the extensive Council Plan community consultation program of deliberative workshops and surveys,



a specific sustainability survey (400+ responses) and the Toward Zero Community Forum.

- 4.9 The Declaration did not allocate additional budget for the climate emergency response given that Council's strategies included an existing funding commitment.

Delivering the Declaration of a Climate Emergency motion

4.10 The Council motion is being delivered as follows:

- Reviewing Council policies and strategies as they are developed or renewed to embed the declaration. Recent examples include the Fleet Policy and Investment Policy.
- Including Climate Emergency reporting in the CEO report, building on existing reporting of actions Council has taken each month to deliver Council's Act and Adapt and Don't Waste It Strategies.
- Building on existing processes to further embed the climate emergency in decision making, including, reviewing the draft Council budget and running a climate risk workshop with Council's entire leadership team, facilitated by Sarah Barker - Head of Climate Risk Governance at Minter Ellison.
- Advocating to Victorian and Australian governments to take urgent action on climate change, including writing to the Premier and Prime Minister, joining the Environment Victoria public letter calling for strong Victorian emissions targets, joining the Climate Emergency Summit as a partner organisation and making submissions to government policies relating to water, coastal management and waste.

Port Phillip Emergency Climate Action Network (PECAN) Joint letter

4.11 The Port Phillip Emergency Climate Action Network (PECAN) is an alliance of not for profit organisations and community groups that aims to create and sustain a strong climate action movement in Port Phillip to address the climate crisis.

4.12 Following a PECAN community forum on 29 February 2020, PECAN submitted a joint letter to Council requesting that Council hold a public community meeting at St Kilda Town Hall as soon as possible to:

- inform the citizens of Port Phillip of the actions being taken and planned by Council as a consequence of declaring the climate emergency
- begin a constructive dialogue with the citizens of Port Phillip about ideas for action by Council, community groups and the community.

4.13 Nine PECAN members also provided written submissions in support of the joint letter along with additional specific questions or requests for Council's climate emergency response. The questions and responses are included in attachment 2.

4.14 It should be noted that Council's existing climate change response already addresses some of these questions. For example, the organisation's net zero target and commitment to the Ethical Paper Pledge are being delivered within the current response.

4.15 Council officers met with representatives of PECAN on 31 March 2020 via an online platform. In the meeting PECAN representatives clarified that their request for community engagement would be met through



- a regular meeting between officers and PECAN representatives
 - an additional mechanism for ongoing contributions by the community to future Council decision-making on climate change action and sustainability.
- 4.16 Officers from Council's Environmental Sustainability Department will establish a quarterly meeting with PECAN representatives as key stakeholders.
- 4.17 A community advisory group as an additional mechanism to guide/inform future Council decision making and budgets is not currently recommended. This could be considered by the incoming Council as part of development of the new Council Plan and Budget following Council elections in October 2020.

Community Awareness of Council's Climate Emergency Response

- 4.18 Members of PECAN are keenly interested in Council's response to the Climate Emergency and are seeking an increase in communications. The specific questions asked at the Council meeting have demonstrated that not all of Council's current climate response actions are well understood.
- 4.19 To address this, within the constraints of the current COVID-19 outbreak, Council Officers will develop and run an online forum to explore climate change action and related issues and challenges in more detail. This will include:
- **Scene Setting Session**
Information session that combines a summary of Council's sustainability actions with suggested actions for the community and how Council can currently support them through existing sustainability programs.
 - **Interactive session**
Seek suggestions about actions the community can take and the information and support that Council could provide to facilitate this action within the existing endorsed strategy framework. This could include identifying options for deep dive webinars on specific topics.
 - **Report back and tools for community champions**
Advise participants of planned future workshops and information provision that has reflected their suggestions. Provide tools and guidance to support community led action.

COVID-19 impacts

- 4.20 The current COVID-19 State of Emergency has severely impacted all parts of the Australian economy and will necessitate a review of the Council budget.
- 4.21 Council remains committed to addressing the Climate Emergency but is also currently reviewing its strategic priorities to ensure business continuity and resource allocation to respond to the immediate needs of community related to safety, health and wellbeing.
- 4.22 This may necessitate reprioritising delivery of actions in the Act and Adapt: Sustainable Environment Strategy (2018-28) and Don't Waste It: Waste Management Strategy (2018-28).

5. CONSULTATION AND STAKEHOLDERS

- 5.1 Council officers met with representatives of PECAN on 31 March 2020 via an online platform. In the meeting PECAN representatives clarified their request for community



engagement as a regular meeting between officers and PECAN representatives, and for Council to consider a mechanism for ongoing contributions by the community such as workshops and an Advisory Group.

- 5.2 It is not possible to run a community town hall meeting during the current COVID-19 State of Emergency; however, community engagement could be conducted via online forums on a range of topics related to climate change.
- 5.3 Officers from Council's Environmental Sustainability Department will establish a quarterly meeting with PECAN representatives as key stakeholders.
- 5.4 The request for community advisory group to guide/inform future Council decision making and budgets is not feasible during the current COVID-19 State of Emergency when Council resources are focused on responding to the immediate needs of community safety, health and wellbeing. This would be better suited for the incoming Council to consider as part of development of the new Council Plan and Budget following Council elections in October 2020.

6. LEGAL AND RISK IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 Climate Change poses serious risks to Council's operations and the community. As such climate change is listed as Council's number one risk on the corporate risk register.
- 6.2 The COVID-19 State of Emergency as at 1 April 2020 bans physical meetings or public gatherings of more than two people. As such Council is not currently able to agree to community requests for a town hall meeting.

7. FINANCIAL IMPACT

- 7.1 Council's average annual allocation to sustainability in the last Council Plan (2013-17) was \$1.74 per \$100 of spend. This has increased by 153%, to an average of \$4.39 per \$100 of spend.
- 7.2 Council's waste services budget is expected to increase by approximately \$2.01m based on current draft of budget 2020/21 (which is subject to change due to covid19) compared to budget 2019/20. The main reasons can be contributed to recycling crisis (SKM), landfill levy increase, new service contract for kerbside collection, and inflation.
- 7.3 The Declaration did not allocate budget towards developing a new Climate Emergency Plan
- 7.4 The proposed online community forums and information sessions can be delivered within existing budgets and resources
- 7.5 The COVID -19 State of Emergency has severely impacted the local and global economy and will necessitate a review of all Council budgets. Council's future Climate Emergency response will need to evolve over the coming months in response to this crisis.

8. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT

- 8.1 Climate Change continues to pose a serious and urgent risk to the City of Port Phillip and Australia more broadly. Therefore, Council remains committed to mitigating the impact of climate change and the climate emergency response, despite the immediate challenges of the COVID -19 outbreak.



9. COMMUNITY IMPACT

9.1 This report and associated recommendations have been prepared in response to community requests for:

- Increased information on what Council is doing to respond to the Climate Emergency
- Support in taking community led action to respond to the Climate Emergency

9.2 Over 50% of the municipality is private land and our residents play a critical role in the municipal response to climate change. Council's existing community sustainability programs can be used to support the community in identifying and implementing actions they would like to take to respond to the climate emergency

10. ALIGNMENT TO COUNCIL PLAN AND COUNCIL POLICY

10.1 The proposal to increase community information provision and engagement on climate change aligns with Council's 2019 Declaration of a Climate Emergency and the objectives of the *Act and Adapt* Sustainable Environment Strategy 2018-2028. Noting the timing of the delivery of the engagement opportunities are currently dependent upon the resources available to Council, particularly as significant resources are currently required to support the community during Covid-19.

11. OFFICER DIRECT OR INDIRECT INTEREST

11.1 No officers involved in the preparation of this report have any direct or indirect interest in the matter.

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ATTACHMENTS

1. Attachment 1 - Council's Response to Climate Change
2. Attachment 2 - Response to Specific Questions