



16 May 2013

YCAN would like to comment on the aspects of the proposed 2013–14 City of Yarra Budget that effect climate change and sustainability.

What we endorse

YCAN would like to take this opportunity to strongly endorse the following items in the budget:

- continued funding of Yarra Energy Foundation;
- continued funding of the Urban Agriculture Facilitator;
- strong public transport advocacy, in particular the Trains not Tollways campaign;
- funding for \$270,000 worth of PV panel installation at Victoria Park;
- continued spending on bicycle infrastructure, especially funding for the Wellington St Copenhagen lanes.

All these items show that the City of Yarra continues to strive to be a leader in sustainability and to reach its goal of carbon neutrality.

What we don't endorse

Gas Cogeneration

YCAN does not support spending more than \$825,000 on gas cogeneration at Richmond Recreational Centre and Fitzroy Pool. While acknowledging the difficulties in sourcing energy from renewable sources in the inner suburbs, the introduction of gas-fired electricity generation is fraught with problems. Council is trying hard to meet the challenging and commendable targets it has set itself, and YCAN applauds this, but gas cogen is costly and unsustainable.

To reduce the reliance on gas co-generation at the recreational centres, Council should consider diverting some of the funding allocated to gas cogen to:

- installing PV panels to reduce the cogen component
- energy efficiencies at these locations eg reducing heat loss with improved insulation etc
- investigating all alternative energy sources
- investing in community solar projects as an offset.

Fossil gas is not part of a low carbon future. It is not a renewable resource and, as gas companies rush to source coal seam gas from Australia's farming land, gas becomes a more contentious and unattractive fuel source.

Omissions

YCAN believes the following important items have been omitted from the draft budget and would like Council to consider finding funds for them.

- ***Bicycle Infrastructure***

There is no funding for the Clifton Hill/Abbotsford bicycle route as per the Yarra Bicycle Strategy. According to the Bicycle Strategy, \$600,000 should have been spent on this bicycle route in the current financial year, and \$500,000 in 2013–14, but to our knowledge, no funds have been allocated. This route is currently neither safe nor separated. It needs careful and innovative planning to enable cyclists to pass under the freeway and cross over Johnston St efficiently and safely. These difficult issues are currently being ignored and the route remains the most dangerous and cyclist-unfriendly (and, we suspect, least used) route in the municipality.
- ***Organic Waste***

There are no initiatives whatsoever to decrease the % of organic waste that goes to landfill, and thereby reduce the more than \$1 million spent on landfill levies (not to mention decrease methane emissions). Council cannot continue to ignore this issue and assume that the state government will build a facility for the processing of organic waste. Such a facility may or may not ever become a reality. Even if it does eventuate, we assume that fees will still be high and that reduction of organic material in the waste stream will still be most advantageous.

At the least, Council should be studying successful initiatives in other states and overseas, while at the same time conducting a strong education campaign to make residents and businesses (particularly those in the food industry) aware of the issue and give them strategies to reduce their contribution to the problem.
- ***Sustainable Features in Capital Works***

There should be assurance that all capital works will be constructed with the highest possible sustainable features. Also it is important that these features are part of the core budget for the projects, not something that can be lopped off later as has been the case in the past.
- ***Urban Agriculture***

We could find no mention of funds for the use of the Urban Agriculture Facilitator. This officer should have funding so that he can facilitate the creation of community pop-up gardens on vacant land in Yarra, both Council owned and privately owned.

We hope that Council will carefully consider the above matters and we thank you for the opportunity to comment.

YCAN