



Yarra Climate Action Now
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Submission to City of Yarra re:

1. Draft Annual Budget 2017-18

- Proposed Strategic Objective 3: Council leads on sustainability and enhances its natural environment.
- Proposed Strategic Objective 6: Connectivity and travel options are environmentally sustainable, integrated and well-designed.

2. Proposed Waste Service Charge

1. Proposed Strategic Objective 3

YCAN has been pleased to support and commend Council over many years for its commitment to sustainability. Council unanimously voted to recognise that there is a climate emergency, and the CEO has stated that Council ‘takes great pride as one of the leading councils in responding to climate change through our Council operations’. However a crucial missing element in this draft budget is the absence of any mention of the urgency of responding to the emergency.

This said, we are very supportive of the Major Initiative to trial a food recycling solution, and the Initiative for an Urban Forest Strategy. We look forward to further information about the progress of these initiatives.

We note the commitment to reducing greenhouse gas emissions, energy consumption and waste to landfill, and to water management. However, the Service Performance Outcome Indicators need clarification. It is not clear what sort of reduction in garbage, recyclables and organics collected from kerbside bins would be considered a good result and whether there is a target for the reduction in energy consumption and greenhouse gas emissions that Council is aiming to achieve? Furthermore, there are no performance indicators for water management? It would seem to be impossible to continue to claim best practice in sustainability and reduced carbon footprint in Yarra without rigorous requirements for performance in all of these areas.

Proposed Strategic Objective 6

While YCAN is pleased to see the Major Initiative of the Wellington St Copenhagen bicycle lane stage 2, we are concerned about the length of time it is taking to finish the project. Until this is completed as planned, it cannot be considered a safe or reliable option, particularly for less confident cyclists.

Great bicycle infrastructure is one of Yarra's favourite boasts, but over the last few years the budget has barely allowed for line painting upkeep. Bicycle network figures show a fall in bike funding in Yarra of over 40% from 2012 to 2016*. Although it is difficult to compare previous budget allocations due to the changing descriptions of funding categories we are led to believe that the proposed 2017/18 bicycle infrastructure budget has shown another decline, with a total of \$1,678,000.

**Melbourne's cycling – friendly reputation on the line as bike budgets for flat*, The Age, 29/06/2016, < <http://www.theage.com.au/victoria/melbournes-cyclingfriendly-reputation-on-the-line-as-bike-budgets-go-flat-20160629-gpuahk.html>>.

However even this is a misleading figure as several of the listed items cannot be strictly considered as bike projects. Rushall Reserve and Coulson Reserve are essential upgrades to Shared Paths and are partly funded by developer contributions for green spaces. Projects such as Wellington St have always been listed separately, and not all of the \$500,00 listed is new money, as some is carried over from 2016/17.

Thus, proposed Council funding for tangible bike improvements is \$118,000:

- Bicycle Network \$60k
- Bicycle Parking \$28k
- Pavement Bicycle Lanes \$30k

In 2016/17 there was \$0.9 million for bike/shared paths alone, within a budget of around \$1.7 million. This year we'll be lucky to see another couple of parking corrals installed.

Of course YCAN strongly supports all sustainable transport options, and therefore commends the Rushall and Coulson Shared Path improvements, the Rose precinct 30 km/h trial, the Spot Safety program and the Upgrade of signalised crossings to comply with Disability Discrimination guidelines. Encouraging and facilitating more people to walk, cycle and use disability vehicles is an enormous step towards reducing emissions in Yarra. We are disappointed that the Roadworks budget continues to dominate Council spending. While cyclists and pedestrians use roads, their wear and tear on the roads is far less than that of four-wheeled vehicles.

It seems to us that the benefits which would arise from reducing vehicular traffic would not just be in reduced road spending – getting down that \$8.4 million – but in better community health, more productive and profitable communities and more funds for better bike infrastructure!

We would like to see greater encouragement of car-sharing initiatives, both the commercial and not-for-profit enterprises. More designated car parking spaces and Council advertising of these options could help. Perhaps Council could consider a scheme to reward residents who relinquish their second parking permit as they no longer need a second car. Possibly, they could receive a free Visitor parking permit, or a free trial membership at the Yarra leisure facilities, which could also be an incentive to get fit and walk and cycle more.

Regarding Strategic Objective 3, we find the Service Performance Indicators unclear. In fact, there is only one Indicator (regarding satisfaction about sealed roads). How will the Rose precinct 30km/h trial be evaluated for example? And what are the desire criteria for improved bicycle structure, increased numbers of cyclists or greater pedestrian safety?

2. Proposed Waste Service Charge

YCAN is cognisant of budget constraints, and we do not object to this proposal. Best practice waste collection and disposal is costly and the fee does not seem excessive. An essential component will be continuing assistance to low-income residents. We note that the proposal includes rebates for pensioners and health care cardholders.

So while generally supportive of this proposal, YCAN is mystified by the ‘sales pitch’ which Council has used, particularly the summary on the Yarra website which emphasises the necessity of the charge to “improve Council’s financial sustainability”. Of course we understand the financial stability challenges, but part of the community already complains about excessive rates, Council money grabbing etc. Thus YCAN sees this issue as a perfect opportunity to help explain the Council’s commitment to tackling the Climate Emergency.

Waste collection, transport and disposal are huge contributors to greenhouse gases in Yarra, as everywhere. It is evident from casual observation around the municipality that there is a lack of understanding about waste management issues. Recyclables can be seen in waste bins, and a variety of non-recyclables are in the recycle bins. Undoubtedly, some residents pride themselves on recycling cans and bottles, but do not realise that tying them up neatly into plastic bags destroys the whole purpose. And, as everywhere, food waste is an enormous problem with the resultant methane emissions being potentially 28 times those of Co2. Overfull bins also lead to rubbish being blown on to streets, with plastic waste being deposited in stormwater.

We understand that, due to OHS regulations, bins smaller than 80 litres are not an option. However we wonder whether:

- fortnightly collections have been considered?
- collection of waste and recycling on alternative weeks is possible?
- neighbours can be encouraged to share bins?
- residents and businesses with larger bins could be encouraged to swap for a free smaller one?
- weighing of waste has been considered?
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While there may be good reasons for not introducing any of these measures, YCAN believes Council should emphasise the **Refuse, Reduce, Re-use, Recycle** message, and clearly elaborate that reducing waste is another arm in the fight to reduce Yarra’s carbon footprint, and help keep the world on track to limiting global warming to below two degrees. Council can emphasise that the charge can help fund education and trial programs to assist the whole community to reduce waste and improve sustainability so helping Yarra continue to “lead on sustainability”.

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