

Supporting Verbal Submission to Council re Draft 2017-2021 Council Plan

May 17 2017

YCAN members continue to campaign hard for all initiatives and actions to deal with the global climate emergency. We know and appreciate that Yarra shares our concern. We therefore acknowledge the many measures taken in previous Council Plans to successfully reduce greenhouse emissions and make the city more sustainable.

However we read this draft plan as playing lip service to the need to tackle what Council, in February this year, recognised as the climate emergency. This recognition should act as the foundation for all council policies and initiatives. Just yesterday, a Melbourne University research paper was published which graphically illustrated the vastly increased risks of heat extremes, droughts and coral bleaching if the global temperatures increase to 2 degrees. We have already reached 1 degree of warming since pre-industrial times; limiting further warming to 1.5 degrees will still cause huge problems, but may mitigate effects somewhat.

At YCAN we understand that local government can't work miracles, but it can be and has been, more immediately responsive to its residents' concerns, particularly in an era of federal, and to a lesser degree, state government intransigence. Objectives 3, 4 and 6 particularly address climate change, but we would like to see environmental management strategies integrated into every Council Plan Objective.

In particular:

Objective 3 – YCAN supports the carbon neutral position however would like to see more specific strategies as to the carbon initiatives promised; how will the reduction of waste to landfill, and the reduction of the urban heat island effect be achieved. We would also like information on the extent to which Yarra relies on offsets to reach carbon neutrality, and whether this reliance is decreasing.

Objective 4 – encouraging and promoting environmentally sustainable development is laudable, but we are not clear about strategies for reducing carbon footprint.

Objective 6 – YCAN continues to value initiatives to make Yarra a great bike municipality. However, a key strategy to achieve this is the Bicycle Strategy Plan. Unfortunately, after expiring in 2015, the plan was only given a minor 'refresh' in 2016. A new 5 year plan is essential to ensure more than piecemeal delivery of partial separate bike lanes, and parking hoops.

In conclusion, YCAN strongly endorses Yarra's recognition of its vital role in creating a sustainable city, and its commitment to continue advocacy campaigns and collaborations with Vicroads and state government departments. If Council requires assistance to pressure governments when they are not providing the leadership and importantly, the funds, to achieve ambitious goals in the climate emergency battle, YCAN members are ready to do this.

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