

## Verbal Submission: City of Yarra Budget 2019-20

### Mayor & Councillors

YCAN's core purpose is to address the CE. We have been pleased by the excellent response from Council in declaring a CE, and so support the funding in Strategic Objective 3 for developing a plan to tackle it. However we continue to be concerned about the green house gases caused in Yarra by vehicle traffic. Transport emissions account for up to 20% of total green house gases and are primarily caused by cars. They are a serious cause of ill health and premature death. With Yarra's increasing population and density, the city will be overtaken by car-choked roads unless Council acts now. Thus, YCAN has previously lobbied for the funding of an Active Transport Strategy.. This would cover pedestrian and cycle improvements, as well as promotion of accessible and available public transport, and urban design and landscaping measures which support these improvements.

Australians love their cars; Australians expect to be able to park easily and cheaply wherever they want; Yarra residents enjoy the convenience of their cars ... BUT they have also demonstrated a high awareness and concern about the dangers of climate change. The big challenge that YCAN sees for Council in this Budget, and the next few, is the weaning of Yarra residents, workers and visitors away from this expectation that cars should be privileged, by coupling these two ideas – sustainability and convenience — with an innovative, equitable transport policy which meets the goals of tackling the climate emergency.

We understand that this is a big ask. We see our neighbouring municipalities of Darebin, Melbourne and Moreland developing solutions, **and** we note the complaints and opposition from some residents! The Draft Budget includes funding 'to develop an Integrated Transport and Parking Management Plan'. After discussions with Mayor, councillors and officers we understand that this Plan will cover some of the issues we have raised and we do support this initiative. What we want to ensure that priority is given to amenity and infrastructure for cyclists, walkers and public transport users rather than motorists.

Unfortunately, there is little detail about the parking, though we understand that there is a strong commitment to reducing space for parked cars, which YCAN supports. Reducing parking is key to reducing emissions. It is also key to providing more space for walking and cycling, greening, and implementing water sensitive urban design supporting the tree planting required to ameliorate the urban heat island effect. However it is imperative that Yarra works with neighbouring Councils to implement cooperative and complementary strategies to deal with possible problems. eg: displaced parkers searching for spots close to rail stations in Yarra.

We noted in our written submission that active transport is clearly key to at least 4 of the 7 Budget Strategic Objectives. These are:

- Strategic Objective 1. A healthy Yarra -
- Strategic Objective 3. A sustainable Yarra
- Strategic Objectives 4 and 6, A Liveable Yarra and A Connected Yarra

Active transport should also inform Strategic Objectives 2 and 5.

- Strategic Objective 2. An Inclusive Yarra – aims to create a ‘safe’ and ‘inclusive’ Yarra. This would be facilitated by having fewer cars, connected walking paths and pocket parks, and seating areas.
- Strategic Objective 5 – A Prosperous Yarra - many studies have demonstrated that removing or restricting cars and parking in retail areas leads to higher retail spending. In Madrid, spending increased by 10% after car bans were implemented. These studies can be used to reassure businesses which fear lost revenue due to reduced parking.

Strategic Objective 6, A Connected Yarra, stresses a commitment “to creating a city that is accessible to all irrespective of levels of personal mobility, to support a fulfilling life without the need for a car”. YCAN applauds this commitment but notes that spending on maintaining roads and parking services is vastly greater than that on enhancing pedestrian and cycling ease and safety. Imagine what could be achieved if the roads budget was allocated to cycling projects! We strongly support funding for Bicycle Infrastructure, including the extension of Wellington St Bike Lane, Pedestrian Provisions, and improved community safety treatment in Gleadell and Highett Sts. But these measures alone are insufficient. In addition, we would add the development of an Active/Integrated Transport Strategy.

YCAN wants to see funding for new Walking and Cycling Strategies. An audit of pedestrian and cycling facilities and identification of problems is necessary, possibly using volunteer walkers and cyclists to help assess safety, accessibility etc. It is difficult otherwise for Council and the community to judge the success or failure of previous initiatives and evaluate the worth of previous budget allocations. A revolutionary approach is needed: extra bike hoops and road paint is appreciated, but this is tinkering around the edges.

YCAN also requests urgent action **within** the term of this budget, as well as longer term plans. Reclaiming streets for pedestrian and cyclist use has been achieved in cities like New York and Barcelona by simply blocking off sections with planters and street furniture, as interim measures on the way to long term solutions. These trials would provide valuable information for future permanent developments.

Looking at other Budget areas, YCAN supports funding of all Initiatives in Strategic Objective 3, with the following additions:

- Urban Forest Strategy – further funds should be allocated for publically accessible monitoring and evaluation of the strategy, with the possibility of GIS mapping.
- Waste Minimisation Strategy – priority areas should be:
  - a) education, which will lead to cost saving through reduction of, and reduced contamination in waste
  - b) action on single use plastics starting with removing them from Yarra facilities.

We stress that we want to see Yarra coordinate with its surrounding municipalities in developing the best solutions to this huge problem of traffic. Yarra has prided itself on being an ‘innovative’ council. Now is the time to demonstrate the truth of this boast.