



Yarra Climate Action Now
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Submission to City of Yarra re:

Draft Council Plan 2017 -2021

Thank you for the opportunity to provide feedback on the Yarra City Draft Council Plan. YCAN appreciates the opportunity to comment on the aspects of the proposed plan that affect climate change reduction and sustainability. While this submission focuses primarily on Objectives 3,4 and 6 of the draft plan, YCAN, believes that there is a glaring omission in the total draft plan. It is this:

Council has recognised “that we are living in a state of Climate Emergency that requires urgent action by all levels of government, including by local councils”.

(Ordinary Meeting of Council Minutes – Tuesday 7 February 2017)

But there is no mention of Climate Emergency in the Draft Plan.

With the Australian Government showing no leadership in the vital task of tackling the climate emergency, and the Victorian Government only slowly developing effective policies, YCAN is not alone in seeing that local government is in the vanguard of tackling climate change:

“...there is an ample menu of sustainable options available to cities wishing to address climate change aggressively – and they can amplify their impact by coordinating their policies. The list includes divestment of public funds; investment (in) renewable energy and green infrastructure.... new waste incineration technologies; regulation of use of plastic bottles and bags; policies to improve public transport and reduce car use; and recycling.” (Barber B. Cool Cities: Urban Sovereignty and the Fix for Global Warming.)

<https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2017/may/07/fix-climate-change-put-cities-not-countries-in-charge>)

YCAN congratulates the City of Yarra for already having made great advances to make our city sustainable. The recent decision to join the Global Covenant of Mayors for Climate & Energy will aid Yarra by working with cities globally on achieving best practice. While we endorse this and several items on the Council Plan, we want to see a statement that the recognition of Climate Emergency underpins all Council policy and action.

What we endorse

- The general recognition of environmental concerns and the critical need to address these issues
- The mention and recognition of climate change under Council’s approach towards Emergency Management
- The Council’s dedication to reducing their environmental footprint evidenced by their commitment to being carbon neutral

- The aim of minimising the environmental impact of development
- The commitment to encouraging and facilitating walking, cycling and public transport use
- Commitment to continue advocacy campaigns aimed at the state government and Vicroads level.

General comments

- Overall, Objectives 3,4 and 6 should be made stronger by being more specific. This includes setting out potential actions the Council will take to deliver on its commitment to improving the environment.
- Environmental management strategies should be integrated throughout the other relevant objectives. For instance sustainable solutions should be mentioned, and are directly relevant to, objective four on managing growth and development.

Specific Concerns

Objective 3 Under the heading ‘environment’, the Council should make reference to the specific legislation it advocates. This would inform the residents of Yarra what legislation is in place and how the Council believes it could be made stronger.

YCAN strongly supports the Council’s carbon neutral position. The Council should also take additional steps to encourage other Victorian Councils to follow suit. YCAN recommends the Council to include further information on how much the Council relies on offsets to achieve neutrality, whether this reliance is decreasing, and if so, by how much. Lastly, YCAN suggests the Council set a target for reducing this reliance over the next four years. We would certainly like to see more specific targets to ascertain the success of the following strategies.

Section	Strategy/strategic indicator	YCAN recommendation
3.1	Adopt Biodiversity Strategy	
3.2	Lead in sustainable energy policy and deliver programs to promote carbon neutral initiatives for the municipality and maintain Council as a carbon neutral organisation	What programs would this include?
3.3	“Reduce the amount of waste-to-landfill with a focus on improved recycling and organic waste disposal”	By how much – an objective criteria could be proposed here.
3.4	“Review the Environmental Strategy to include responsible water using practices”	YCAN suggests adopted specific water management indicators.
3.6	“Reduce the urban heat island effect and promote the further greening of the city”	How would this be done?

We also note that The Urban Agriculture Strategy Plan expires in 2018, and there is no mention of a new Strategy Plan for the following four years. Urban Agriculture Guidelines are not a Strategy Plan.

Objective 4 While Strategy 4.5 “encourages and promotes good environmentally sustainable building, urban design...”, there is no mention of Carbon Footprint as a criteria in assessing new development. YCAN would like to see strategies developed that will ensure the lowest possible carbon footprint.

Objective 6 Strategy 6.5 aims to develop pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure, with a strategic indicator being the percentage of Bicycle works completed. However the associated initiatives, other than Wellington St bike lane, are very vague. What percentage of bike works will be completed, how much bike parking, signage will be added, which streetscapes will be improved?

One of the Key Strategies supporting the objective of encouraging more cycling is the Bicycle Strategy Plan. However there has been only a minor “Refresh’ in 2016 of the 2010-15 Bicycle Strategy Plan. Without a new, thorough 5 year Strategy Plan, it is difficult to see a substantial increase in the number of cyclists who feel that Yarra provides safe, integrated and reliable facilities in which to cycle.

To conclude

YCAN supports the initiatives that Yarra has implemented in the past to create a sustainable city. We now want to see Yarra become the exemplar for all Australian cities in tackling the Climate Emergency with dedication, determination and success.

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