

YCAN Submission on changing the name of the Community Greenhouse Action Plan to Climate Emergency Plan

18 Dec 2018

I'm sure it comes as no surprise to any of you that YCAN members urge you to rename the Community Greenhouse Action Plan and call it the Climate Emergency Plan.

Continuing to request further reports contradicts Council's own resolution stating that "we are in a state of climate emergency that requires urgent action by all levels of government, including by local councils" which was passed in Feb 2017, nearly 2 years ago. While Council has continued to act to reduce greenhouse gas emissions in different ways, it has done so with a "business as usual" approach, without urgency. This resolution to rename the Community Greenhouse Action Plan was put forward in October, and it was deferred until November, and here we are in mid-December with a proposal to defer until next March, a decision, not to begin urgent action, but to rename the plan. "Community Greenhouse Action Plan" does not signal any urgency, neither does the speed at which Council is dealing with this matter.

From our interactions with the Yarra community we know that people are extremely anxious and fearful about climate change, but also ready to take action. They want Council to lead as they are not getting leadership on climate action from federal and state governments.

While the initial reaction to the term Climate Emergency may be fear, or not wanting to listen, when people are given positive options about action, they are more willing to be engaged.

In our view, residents will be less likely to oppose council measures which they see as costly if they know they are integral to the Climate Emergency Plan.

In the tabled report, the section Should Council Adopt a Climate Emergency Plan gives compelling reasons to do so. The implications listed are largely strong reasons to go ahead with a Climate Emergency Plan, including the human rights implications for not taking urgent action, and the likelihood of legal implications if strong action is not taken.

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) has outlined the catastrophic impacts of global warming of 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels. It has estimated that we have 12 years to reign in emissions to avoid those impacts. It has also recognised the critical role of local government in this.

Without leadership from the federal government, we believe people are desperate for someone to take a leadership role. A TV comedian set himself up as an authority and people were eager to listen and change their ways. No disrespect for Craig Reucassel intended. He and the producers of War Against Waste sought information, became informed and proposed immediate action. And Australians were happy to follow.

The banners that will soon be hanging outside our town halls will tell people that Yarra Council knows there is a Climate Emergency, but not what it is doing about it.

Council is already a leader in the field as a result of years of experience at taking climate action. And has been widely acknowledged for that action. Council has staff who are

incredibly knowledgeable in this field and have the ability to develop a Climate Emergency Plan. You have YEF, which in our view is performing better than it ever has. Council has advisory committees that provide valuable community input, and whose members have an enormous amount of knowledge, expertise and commitment in relevant fields.

But this is not the time for Council to rest on its laurels. The report mentions ‘complexity’ of the issue several times. It is complex, but the work has already been started by other councils, and by Yarra’s own work over several years. Council needs to consult with other local governments who are already on the path to emergency action on climate change, such as Darebin, as well as with experts like the Climate Council, and the instigators of the Climate Emergency movement, David Spratt and Phillip Sutton.

Council needs a Climate Emergency Plan and should rename the Community Greenhouse Action Plan as such as soon as possible, so that it can begin the process of emergency climate action without delay.

1. ~~(c) defer the renaming of the proposed Community Greenhouse Action Plan to Climate Emergency Plan until after a facilitated workshop with Councillors and Executive in February 2019; and~~
 - ~~d. a further report from officers be presented to Council in March 2019 regarding further detail on implications of what a Climate Emergency Plan would entail.~~
 - c. determine to rename the Community Greenhouse Action Plan a Climate Emergency Plan in light of scientific advice that we have just 12 years to dramatically reduce greenhouse gas emissions before runaway climate change
 - d. following a facilitated workshop with Councillors and Executives in February 2019 receive a further report from officers in March providing further detail on implications of what a Climate Emergency Plan will entail.