

Your Say Yarra Submission



Yarra Climate Action Now
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Dear Mayor and Councillors

As our name implies, YCAN is focused on a strong campaign aimed at reducing the emissions that are responsible for causing devastating climate change. Even after the 2016 Paris Climate Agreement emissions are increasing and global temperatures are increasing. We thus maintain that any Council Plan adopted by Yarra must have as its bedrock the recognition that the world is in a state of Climate Emergency.

Members of YCAN are proud to be residents and workers in Yarra, and appreciate that this city has demonstrated a strong commitment to environmental sustainability. We use and enjoy the cycle and pedestrian paths, the parks, and the recycling services, and are pleased to see the increasing use of renewable energy in the city. We love its multicultural and socially diverse nature. And we are appreciative of the efforts of Council to seek and value the views of its residents and workers.

However, we think that Council can do better. As an urgent request YCAN wants to see a new commitment from Yarra on the issue of **Climate Neutrality and Sustainability**. We note that The Carbon Neutral Action Plan expired in 2015, and the Yarra Environment Strategy is due to expire this year. Council must produce new plans if it is to maintain its status as a local government leader in tackling climate change. We would like to see Yarra formally recognise that we are in an age of Climate Emergency which requires it to do everything possible to combat this, and to demand action from state, federal and other local governments.

Specific actions we are requesting from Council over the next 4 years are:

- 1. Sustainable Waste Collection**
- 2. Developments in Active Transport**
- 3. Lobbying State Government for better Public Transport**
- 4. Carbon Footprint guidelines for new developments**

1. Sustainable Waste Collection

While acknowledging that Yarra has a commitment to “Best Practice Waste Management” (Yarra Environment Strategy 2013-17), YCAN continues to be extremely concerned about the high amount of organic, particularly food, waste going to landfill. The city’s Waste Strategy has the aim of eliminating food waste from garbage stream. This objective is a long way from being achieved, and is a substantial contributor to greenhouse gas emissions in Yarra. We want to see a municipality wide organic waste collection service to divert food waste from landfill and dispose of it in a way that does not accelerate climate change. We were delighted that at its December 20th meeting, Council adopted the Resolution moved by Cr Coleman, seconded by Cr Fristacky on establishing a Waste and Recycling Advisory Committee and to prepare options for innovative organic waste management. We await these developments with anticipation.

We are also concerned about the on-going problem of incorrect recycling practices. Although Yarra provides recycling bins for residents and excellent information on its website, it is blatantly obvious that the guidelines are ignored throughout the city. Recycling bins are overflowing with plastic bags full of cans and bottles, while waste bins contain recyclable waste. Council’s target of a 70% reduction in waste going to landfill seems a long way off. YCAN would like to see a stronger program of communication, education and perhaps harder sticks and tastier carrots to better encourage residents to follow the guidelines.

2. Developments in Active Transport

Yarra has long prided itself on being one of Australia’s premier bicycling cities and bike/shared paths are widely valued throughout the community. However with population growth and a rapid increase in cycling numbers, the provisions are obviously inadequate. Pedestrian amenity is also highly valued in Yarra and this is being compromised by both the growing numbers of cycles and vehicles. We believe cyclists and walkers need to be catered for with safe, integrated routes.

YCAN is concerned that the Yarra Bicycle Strategy 2010-15 did not achieve many of its objectives, and a new Strategy Plan has not been developed; we do not consider a “Refresh” to provide adequate directions for future development, particularly at a time that they are most needed. We are hearing reports that both pedestrians and cyclists are feeling unsafe on shared paths; an unfortunate corollary of this may be a decrease in active transport use in Yarra, with more people getting back into their cars. We strongly recommend that a new five year strategy plan be developed.

3. Lobbying State Government for better Public Transport

While we acknowledge that public transport matters are primarily the domain of the state government, YCAN would like to see Yarra demanding increased and more reliable services through the city, particularly on the east-west routes where people find it easier to drive than coordinate different means of PT. Increased population will lead to increased demand, and demands are not being met now.

4. Carbon Footprint Guidelines for New Developments

YCAN favours increasing the population density in the City of Yarra. Higher density cities are able to provide a greater range of services to their residents, and can help curtail the urban sprawl with which Melbourne is blighted. As the city sprawls

emissions, particularly vehicular ones, increase. Increased density also creates a livelier city with a greater cultural and social mix.

We understand the complexity of this issue for Council, but think it important that a prime requirement for giving planning approval is to consider the carbon footprint of new developments. It is possible that some areas lend themselves to bigger developments; if they are planned with full attention to siting, materials, open space provision, passive solar performance, bicycle storage, shared community facilities etc, such developments can be a visual and environmental asset.

In addition, we think it imperative that low-income householders should have access to council supported renewable energy and be helped to improve the general sustainability of their homes.

One of the questions asked in the consultation refers to improving “community health and well-being”. YCAN is strongly of the opinion that this goal can be achieved by creating the most sustainable city possible. Health and well-being will be improved by reducing carbon emissions, by facilitating safe and pleasant cycling, walking and public transport use, by providing options for community gardens with composting facilities, and by providing housing that can be warmed and cooled cheaply and without relying on fossil fuels.

Yours faithfully
Kerry Echberg
Convenor, YCAN

Examples of Kerry's letters to the editor published in *the Age*

25 Jan 2016

Potent climate policies urgently needed

The Age is absolutely correct in calling for stronger policies on climate change. Mr Turnbull and Ms Bishop were very happy to proclaim their commitment to action on the world stage in Paris, while Mr Shorten and the ALP reiterate their concerns about the necessity of tougher action, but none of them have given a water tight, absolute "NO" to the Adani Abbot Point, Carmichael Coal Mine proposals which will be the biggest source of greenhouse emissions in Australia. Environment Minister Hunt promises tight environmental controls, while Federal Labor pretends the whole disaster does not exist because their Queensland colleagues are desperately pushing the project! There are no environmental controls which can prevent this port and mine being a disaster. The Age seems to suggest that a strong carbon emissions scheme will deal with the greenhouse effects of Australia's coal industry, but the only answer is the immediate closure of Hazelwood in Victoria and the rescinding of all permits to Mr Adani for his destructive plans in Queensland.

As stated in The Age Businessday (Jan 21), the costs of large-scale solar power are plummeting, and their capacity to generate large amounts of power is growing rapidly. If the federal and state governments stopped subsidising coal plants and removing environmental conditions for filthy coal mines, they would soon become absolutely uncompetitive. Wind power is already providing a large proportion of South Australia's energy needs cleanly and efficiently. Rhetoric is not enough. The time for action is now if we are to really be the example that Australian political leaders, both Labor and Liberal like to claim.

Tackling the climate change threat is the key challenge for the world, and must become the focus of federal and state politics in Australia.

10 Oct 2016

'Pay as you throw' rubbish scheme

Australia is a rich, wasteful, disposable nation. Layers of packaging engulf purchases; even if recyclable, energy is required for processing. If not recyclable, packaging goes to landfill where it only slowly breaks down. Food waste is even more pernicious. It gives off methane, a highly toxic greenhouse gas which adds to climate change. In many areas, food waste comprises 50% of household collections. Inner city councils in particular find it difficult to deal with this waste in an environmentally acceptable fashion because of lack of space to develop composting facilities, and budget constraints. The federal and state governments must act quickly to develop comprehensive waste management programs. My household never fills either waste or recycling bins above halfway; perhaps smaller bins together with community recycling and education programs might be a better option than charging for waste. Urgent action is needed.