

Dec 2019

My name is Tarin Dempers and I am speaking on behalf of Yarra Climate Action Now.

Yarra Climate Action Now would like to congratulate Council on the preparation of the Climate Emergency Plan. It is a very thorough plan, and there is only one issue we would like to raise.

YCAN presented to Council on the issue of getting off gas in a verbal submission when Motion No 6: Phasing Out Of Gas Use at Council Venues and Operations was moved in April 2019 by Councillor McEvoy. This motion was passed unanimously and we are pleased to see aspects of it addressed in the Draft Climate Emergency Plan.

This previous motion referred to Yarra's carbon neutral status since 2012, Council's commitment to achieving zero emissions in its own operations as soon as possible; and its recent commitment to supporting the community to achieve zero net emissions as quickly as possible through the development of a Climate Emergency Plan, which is being presented(?) tonight. The motion requested that Officers report in 2019 on a program to enable the phase out the use of gas in Council venues and operations by a specified date between 2024 and 2029, and there is an item in the Climate Emergency Plan that aligns with this. However the plan does not have an action that reflects the final statement of the motion, which was to "include measures to ensure renovations and new developments do not install gas appliances".

YCAN acknowledges that Yarra has taken great steps in becoming carbon neutral, (wind farm, solar installation, waste minimisation initiatives etc) but emissions from gas are now rising. The gas industry has long claimed that gas expansion is good for the climate, but neglects to mention that all fossil fuels, including gas, emit far more carbon than solar, wind and other renewable energy sources. Climate Analytics found that, between 2015 and 2020, the emissions growth from LNG (liquefied natural gas) will effectively wipe out the carbon emissions saved by the 23% renewable energy target.

While Strategic Policy 2 of the Climate Emergency Plan addresses the issue of phasing out gas and appears proactive with regard to council buildings, YCAN has concerns as to whether there are strong goals for new developments. Surely the goal should be to mandate against the provision of gas connections in new developments, and possibly even renovations, both domestic and commercial.

YCAN commends the Climate Emergency Plan. And we would like to express thanks to Councillors and Council officers for their hard work in bringing it to fruition.