



Climate Mitigation & Adaptation Policy

Responsible Officer	Adoption Date	March 2022
Manager Strategy Growth and Environment	Approved By	Council
	Review Date	March 2025
Authorising Officer	Policy Type	Council Policy
Director Development Services		

Statement and Purpose

Climate change is an urgent global issue that creates local impacts on almost all aspects of our operations, our economy, the environment, and our community. This policy:

- Acknowledges there is a legislative requirement, moral obligation, and community expectation for Council to manage its climate change responsibilities through mitigation and adaptation actions.
- Confirms that a response to climate change is a whole of Council commitment that will guide ongoing planning and actions in the municipality.
- Reflects Council's commitment to provide leadership on climate change action to our community.

Scope

This policy applies to all Councillors, Council employees and agents of Council in all decisions and activities relating to Council operations.

Background

The Rural City of Wangaratta acknowledges the latest scientific assessment by the United Nation's Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) that provides overwhelming scientific consensus that human activities are the dominant cause for rising temperatures. It highlights there

is a narrow path to avoiding climate catastrophe, but only through immediate and sustained emissions reductions.

The municipality is already experiencing the impacts of climate change with increased incidence and severity of drought, bushfire, flood, and extreme natural events and climate change will further increase our vulnerability. As highlighted in the Environmental Sustainability Strategy 2021-2026, Council recognises the impact climate change has on our valuable ecosystem services and natural habitat for local wildlife, for the health and wellbeing of our community and aging population, and the impacts upon infrastructure, businesses, and livelihoods. Work is continuing to mitigate and adapt to these impacts and to further understand the nature and extent of future impacts on our community. A failure to adequately address this, places an unacceptable burden on current and future generations.

Context

In 2016, the Australian Government confirmed it would commit to the Paris Agreement. Australia has committed to reduce national emissions by 26 to 28 per cent below 2005 levels by 2030 and in October 2021 has committed to reaching net zero emissions by 2050.

The Victorian Government is committed to net-zero emissions by 2050. The Victorian Government's interim target, for the period 2021–2025, is for emissions to reduce 28–33% below 2005 levels by the end of 2025 and for the period 2026–2030, is for emissions to reduce 45–50% below 2005 levels by the end of 2030.

The Local Government Act 2020 became law in Victoria on 24 March 2020, amending the previous 1989 Act in numerous ways including strengthening the mandate for considerations of climate change risk in Council decision-making processes.

This Policy aligns with Council's Community Vision and Council Plan.

The Environmental Sustainability Strategy 2021-2026 endorsed in June 2021 outlines proposed actions in tackling climate change for both council operations and the community.

Policy

Council recognises that climate change requires leadership from Council and collaboration and the importance of shared responsibility across all levels of government and sectors of the municipality.

Council is committed to:

- 1) Taking a precautionary approach to planning for and mitigating climate change by managing climate change-related risks and opportunities.
- 2) Ensuring Council's climate change actions reflect Council's operational & financial capacity, community expectations and that it remains current as the science of climate change develops.

- 3) Leading the response to reducing emissions as per the Environmental Sustainability Strategy 2021-2025,
 - a) Reducing Council's greenhouse gas emissions (excluding landfill emissions) by at least 50% lower than 2015/16 levels by 2025;
 - b) sourcing at least 50% of Council's electricity demand from renewable energy sources by 2025;
 - c) and developing an Emission Reduction Plan for council operations.
- 4) Assisting the Rural City of Wangaratta community to mitigate and adapt to climate change as outlined in the actions of the Environmental Sustainability Strategy 2021-2026 and to develop local responses to climate change.
- 5) Provide appropriate support systems for emergency preparedness, response and recovery activities following natural disasters and continue to be a member of the Municipal Emergency Management Plan Committee.
- 6) Addressing outcomes raised by the internal 2021 Environmental Management and Sustainability audit.
- 7) Partnering with other government agencies, community and stakeholders to meet the challenges of climate change.

Roles and responsibilities

- The CEO & Directors are responsible in promoting awareness of the policy and ensuring it is integrated into the corporate governance framework. (as in assets mgmt. policy)
- This Policy should be read in conjunction with the Rural City of Wangaratta Code of Conduct.
- This Policy does not confer any delegated authority upon any person. All delegations to staff are issued by the Chief Executive Officer.
- It is the personal responsibility of all Councillors, Council employees and agents thereof to have knowledge of, and to ensure compliance with this Policy.
- The implementation of this Policy will be driven through the Environmental Sustainability Strategy & Emissions Reduction Plan.

Definitions

Climate adaptation	Efforts to prepare for the actual or expected changes in the climate in order to minimise harm, act on opportunities or cope with the consequences of climate change
Climate mitigation	Efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions that contribute to climate change.
Climate change	Changes in the world's weather as a result of human activity increasing the level of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere.
Greenhouse gas emissions	Gases, such as carbon dioxide, methane and nitrous oxide that trap heat in the atmosphere and are resulting in changes to the planet's climate systems.
Net zero emissions	Efforts which reduce Council's greenhouse gas emissions and contribute to a reduction in the rate of long-term climate change.
Precautionary Approach	The precautionary approach for the purpose of this document refers to when there is uncertainty surrounding future climate impacts, this should not stand in the way of taking actions or decisions in response to climate change.

References

Legislation & Related Documents

- Victorian Local Government Act 2020
- Victoria's Climate Change Act 2017
- Victorian Government's Climate Change Strategy (May 2021)
- Renewable Energy (Jobs and Investment) Act 2017
- Planning and Environment Act 1987
- Emergency Management Act 2013
- Hume Regional Climate Change Adaptation Strategy 2021

Internal policies

- Councillor Code of Conduct
- Staff Code of Conduct
- Risk Management Policy
- Asset Management Policy
- Tree Management Plan
- Wangaratta Planning Scheme
- Wangaratta Children's Services Centre Environmental Sustainability Policy
- Environmental Sustainability Strategy 2021-2026

Review

Any change or update which materially impacts and/or alters this policy must be approved by the Director Corporate Services. Otherwise the policy will be reviewed by the Sustainability Officer every three years.