

Draft Climate Emergency Plan



Prepared by: Streets Alive Yarra

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Foreword

Streets Alive Yarra is a non-profit, volunteer, resident and ratepayer action group with a [vision](#) for more trees, wider footpaths and vibrant businesses in thriving [neighbourhoods](#). We see our streets being used by people from [8 to 80 years old](#), irrespective of whether they choose to walk, cycle, use public transport or drive. Residents and shoppers are able to move safely, comfortably, and conveniently around Yarra; and can easily find a park near shops.



Image credit: OCULUS Landscape Architecture and Urban Design

Streets Alive Yarra was founded in 2017 and now has over 2,000 likes on Facebook, increasing by 10-20 per week. A network of local champions develops concepts and proposals for how to improve their local street or precinct. Streets Alive Yarra is also Yarra's Walkability Action Group (WAG) representative for Victoria Walks.

Further information is available at www.streets-alive-yarra.org.

Overview

Streets Alive Yarra welcomes the opportunity to offer feedback on the draft Yarra Climate Emergency Plan.

We support:

- Clear language that we face an unprecedented challenge (emergency) that requires transformational (not incremental) change;
- Leading by example with a best-practice response; and
- Revisions & updates every two years.

We recommend the following improvements:

- State clear targets (and timelines) for carbon reduction for Yarra overall (not just for municipal operations) such as achieving carbon neutrality for the whole of Yarra by 2030.
- Include new 'transformational' policies and targets, not just collate and summarise our existing 'business as usual' plans. For example; include a transformational plan to deliver safe travel infrastructure to realise 50% mode share for walking, cycling and public transport; and include a transformational target for our urban forest, such as an order of magnitude increase in the number of trees.
- Include estimates of the tonnes of carbon that each proposed investment will reduce (tonnes per dollar), as well as a confidence level (%). This would assist both ratepayers and Councillors to both rank and support the proposed actions and investments. For example, although the report identifies that the consumption of electricity and gas forms the bulk of Yarra's emissions, Council does not have the power to compel property owners to upgrade their appliances. In contrast, investments in the transport sector (bike and pedestrian infrastructure) and tree planting offer opportunities with higher confidence levels.
- Include a framework for the decision-making process for prioritising actions and investments, so that this is also transparent to Councillors and ratepayers. For example, large 'bang for the buck' actions which have a short payback period should have higher priority than actions with a lower return over a longer time period. Some actions may also have wider benefits, such as supporting low income community members, improving air quality, or increasing community energy security and resilience - these benefits should also be highlighted.
- Identify transport emissions as the area of greatest opportunity, because it is much more under the control of Council than stationary emissions, and because it is also more visible to all ratepayers (people can't see inside other peoples houses) and so can better contribute to cultural change.

Examples of Transformational Change

The following table offers comparisons between the existing draft and how it could be improved to include transformational change.

Strategic Priority	Draft response	Proposed response offering transformational change
Overall emissions thresholds and targets	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - No minimum threshold - No targets 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Net zero carbon emissions by 2030
Accelerate construction of zero carbon buildings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Offer ongoing support - Reduce complexity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Offer a \$5,000 bounty for every meter disconnected from the fossil methane gas network - Require all new construction to be 100% carbon offset (carbon from concrete) or to use cross laminated timber (CLT) instead of concrete - Increase the mandatory energy efficiency requirements for all new construction (eg City of Melbourne has a 6-star Green Star minimum for commercial buildings)
Create a climate adapted city	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Significantly enhance our urban forest 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Increase our urban forest by a factor of 10 by 2030 - Add a row of trees on each side of each VicRoads arterial in Yarra by 2030 (as per the Melbourne Shopping Street reference design)

Strategic Priority	Draft response	Proposed response offering transformational change
Transition to zero emissions transport	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Develop and implement an Integrated Transport Plan (ITP) and associated Parking Management Plan (PMP) 	<p>Set targets for the ITP and PMP to deliver, such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 50% mode share for walking, cycling and public transport by 2030 - All LAPM areas in Yarra converted to 30 km/h superblocks by 2030 - All tram stops in Yarra converted to level-access (DDA compliant) by 2030 - All VicRoads arterials in Yarra converted to 24 hour 40 km/h by 2030 - All VicRoads arterials in Yarra include protected bicycle lanes by 2030 - 2,000 car sharing vehicles across Yarra by 2030 - No free on-street parking in Yarra by 2030 (i.e. converted to either permit parking or metered parking) - Demand responsive pricing for all parking meters in Yarra by 2030 - Subsidy for parking permits reduced from 98% to 50% by 2030

We need to talk about money

Council should openly discuss the financial consequences of the plan and include the basis for decision-making on which specific actions will be implemented and with what priority. We suggest that most ratepayers will be willing to support a defined expenditure when they can clearly see how many tonnes of carbon will be saved, and that the proposed solution delivers a better outcome than other options.

For example, proposed investments to electrify a service that was previously powered by fossil methane gas will reduce carbon emissions, but should be compared with the option to reduce the same quantity of carbon by purchasing carbon credits. If carbon credits can deliver the same reduction in carbon emissions for less money, but Council prefers to implement a different solution, then Council should justify the extra expenditure (for example, on the basis of energy security or the increased health and safety from electrification).

All potential actions should be ranked on the basis of net emissions reduction, financial payback period, and the degree of control Council (and the community) has over implementing the action - with less weight put on actions which require significant state or federal government support. Wider benefits of any proposed actions should also be listed and taken into account in determining the overall ranking, including increased energy security (particularly for low income residents), community resilience, improved air quality, reduced traffic congestion, health and safety improvements and general liveability.

The Climate Emergency Plan should not seek to include investments that have nothing to do with reducing carbon emissions. If Council is sourcing 100% carbon free electricity for their own operations, then investments in energy efficiency do not reduce any carbon emissions - they are purely economic decisions. For example, if our street lights are already powered from 100% carbon free electricity, then lighting upgrades should not be included in the Climate Emergency Plan, and should instead be included in the Finance Plan.

The “Responding to the Climate Emergency” section has some wonderful strong language on the urgency and seriousness of the climate emergency. However, there is no acknowledgement of the financial cost to some of the mitigation measures, and how spending significant money in the short term is necessary to achieve transformational change. Council should allocate a minimum of 5% of their annual budget to mitigating carbon emissions via the planned measures, and continue to do so until the overall net zero target is achieved. At present it appears that no new funding (or reallocation of funding from other budget items) has been allowed for in this plan, other than the salary of one additional council officer. It is not an efficient use of ratepayers money to pay for a Climate Emergency Officer if the officer is allocated no budget to implement mitigation measures.

Other feedback

Yarra's emission profile

It's great to see data and a simple chart that everyone can understand. Even better would be to clarify if transport emissions include all vehicle kms travelled within the municipality, including commuter through traffic. Also, whilst we acknowledge that estimating embodied emissions is complex, it would be valuable to provide a range, such as "somewhere between transport and electricity".

Yarra Council's role

Even better would be to add a dot point:

- Enabling the community to choose carbon neutral transport without being exposed to hazards that carry the risk of death or serious injury.

Yarra's climate emergency response

In this section and particularly in the action tables, it would be very helpful to clarify which actions are solely or largely the responsibility of Council (e.g. green waste), which rely on state or federal government to implement (e.g. any changes to the planning provisions) and which will require Council encouraging individuals or businesses to change (e.g. community mobilisation programs). For actions which are largely Council responsibility, the language should be stronger, e.g. 'implement X by date Y' rather than 'seek to do X' or 'consider doing X'.

Climate emergency response objectives

This section needs timeframes that reflects our emergency, e.g. net-zero emissions by 2030. For example, the Hepburn Shire website supports of a target of net zero by 2030, and the City of Sydney has adopted a target of net zero by 2040:

<https://www.hepburn.vic.gov.au/waste-environment/sustainable-living/>

<https://www.miragenews.com/city-of-sydney-to-bring-net-zero-emissions-target-forward-to-2040/>

Clarify which of the actions listed in the four year plan are to be implemented in that timeframe, and which may take longer (to maximum 2030, that is 11 years).

Strategic Priority 2: Accelerate renewable energy, zero carbon buildings and efficient operations

As well as the need for higher energy performance standards for new buildings in Yarra, there is a need for other changes to the planning provisions regarding protection of neighbouring buildings (solar access for passive solar buildings as well as solar panels, preventing overshadowing of all garden areas and particularly productive gardens, etc).

Strategic Priority 3: Create a climate adapted city

We suggest that the plan could set more ambitious targets for our urban forest, such as increasing the number of trees in Yarra by an order of magnitude by 2030.

Even better would be to state that trees are prioritised higher than on-street parking, in the competition for public space.

Design of resilient cities to reduce flooding is dependent on use of private as well as public space, which is particularly important in the more densely developed parts of Yarra.

Although there are currently guidelines in the planning scheme on maximum site coverage with impermeable surfaces, these may be waived for individual developments - the planning scheme should only allow a waiver where rainwater collection systems are installed.

Strategic Priority 4: Transition to zero emissions transport

We support the Climate Emergency Plan placing a higher priority on mode shift to active transport, compared with transitioning the vehicle fleet to electric. Active transport offers a better business case than electrification, owing to reductions in population health (and trauma) costs. Active transport also offers freedom to children, young adults, people who can't afford a car, and people who are unable to drive.

We're disappointed to see the suggestion that Yarra's bicycle network is at all "comprehensive". This is false. A comprehensive network would at minimum be cohesive and interconnected, comprising best practice protected lanes and protected intersections. In Yarra we only have short, disparate sections.

In addition, if we are aiming at 'transformational change' then we should not be comparing ourselves to other municipalities in Melbourne, but rather to cities with best practice networks such as Copenhagen and Amsterdam.

Great to see the statement "Improvements to Yarra's bicycle network is needed to provide a safe and connected network that will encourage people of all ages and abilities to start riding and increase the mode share of active transport."

We suggest that the plan should set more ambitious targets for transport, such as:

- Targeting 50% of trips (within, to and from Yarra) by walking, cycling or public transport, by 2030.
- Committing to safe routes to school for every residence in Yarra (i.e. either 30 km/h streets with low traffic volumes or 40 km/h streets with protected bicycle lanes, between each residence and the closest primary and secondary school).
- Upgrading all LAPM precincts to 30 km/h superblocks (with filtering to block through traffic) by 2030.
- Relocating metered parking for shoppers from each shopping street to the first 5-10 bays on each side street, which would 'clear the way' for the State Government to build an integrated network of protected bicycle lanes on the entire grid of VicRoads arterials in Yarra.

- Calming all VicRoads arterials in Yarra to 40 km/h.
- Strengthening the car sharing policy to have a target of 2,000 vehicles by 2030 (which is still well behind the City of Melbourne's target of 2,000 by 2021).
- Improving the car sharing policy to allow siting on residential streets, which is where people live, to improve the amenity of the service.
- Investing \$10m in LAPMs, including walking, cycling, place making and trees, each year to 2030.
- Raising \$10m each year for LAPMs by increasing the number of parking meters in Yarra, applying demand responsive pricing for meters, and by increasing the price for parking permits to \$1 per day.
- Converting all free (e.g. time limited) parking bays in Yarra to paid (e.g. permitted or metered) by 2030.
- Removing parking minimums for new developments (planning scheme requirement), particularly in more congested areas which are already well served by public transport.

Strategic Priority 5: Move towards zero waste and conscious consumption

Suggest stronger wording on the organic waste collection service - 'if the trial results are successful, then implement municipal-wide service'.

Monitoring and Review

Reviews should include quantification of progress in terms of reduction in carbon emissions per action, as suggested earlier. Part of the review would then also include reprioritisation of remaining actions and addition of new actions, based on success to date.

Concluding Remarks

Streets Alive Yarra applauds the City of Yarra's focus on our climate emergency. We would be delighted to provide further detail or explanation of the themes raised in this document.

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