



Recognising and upholding excellence in local government

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25 May 2021

Sunshine Coast Regional Council (SCRC)

Mayor Cr. Mark Jamieson and all Councillors

CEO Ms Emma Thomas

Email: mail@sunshinecoast.qld.gov.au

Dear Councillors and CEO at SCRC

RE: OSCAR supports request that SCRC declare a Climate Emergency and take action to reduce its emissions to net zero by 2030 or sooner.

OSCAR represents 35 community based resident associations on the Sunshine Coast. These organisations have a total membership of about 10,000 Coast residents.

OSCAR considered and supported the proposed Climate Emergency declaration and emissions reduction target at its last General Meeting.

We strongly encourage Council to make the declaration, adopt the proposed target, and develop and implement an action plan as soon as possible.

The Sunshine Coast region is known to be vulnerable to many of the consequences of climate change and temperature rises – especially natural hazard risks to life and property arising from extreme weather events such as bushfires, floods, landslide, storm surge, coastal erosion, hail, and damaging extreme wind speeds. It is also vulnerable to longer term impacts such as sea level rise and to a variety of heat-related public health issues.

In the last few months the Australian Academy of Science (AAS) and the Climate Council have released reports based on the data of the interim reports of the UN Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC). These reports point to the growing urgency to take early and strong action to reduce emissions this decade in order to achieve global net zero emissions by 2050 and to seek to contain temperature increases at 1.5 degrees above pre-industrial levels. The AAS and Climate Council reports set out the dire consequences of temperature rises above 1.5 degrees for Australia and elsewhere and the significant risk we will substantially overshoot 1.5 degrees on current trajectories.

The interim IPCC reports will inform discussion at the UN climate change conference in Glasgow in November and the final synthesis IPCC report will be available by mid-2022.

The State Planning Policy adopts the IPCC reports as the "best available science" on Climate Change and its impacts. It is essential that in performing all of Council's operational and jurisdictional functions that there is full recognition of the best available scientific data on climate change and its impacts, and appropriate response strategies for all its functions.

Addressing climate change has been flagged by Council as a major planning principle for the new planning scheme to be prepared by mid-2024. Land use planning and development assessment processes must address the full range of the risks to lives, property, infrastructure, biodiversity and public health arising from the various impacts of climate change. It will be necessary to review the appropriateness of some land use designations and development requirements in the current planning scheme in the light of contemporary climate change science, including the application of the Planning Act's precautionary principle where necessary.

The recent national leaders' climate change summit organised by President Biden also indicated that the majority of those participating recognised that we are facing a climate emergency, and that urgent action needs to be taken this decade to make significant progress in reducing emissions if we are to have any chance of achieving the Paris agreement targets.

At the 2020 Local Government election, 6 of the 7 successful candidates/councillors who responded to the OSCAR election questionnaire supported Council declaring a Climate Emergency and taking urgent action on climate change and emissions reduction.

As the fourth largest regional Council in Queensland and one of the largest in Australia in terms of budget, resident population and area, SCRC is well placed to make a meaningful contribution to reining in Australia's emissions and to demonstrate leadership in what can be achieved at local government level in Queensland and nationally.

The 2021 Corporate Plan continues to advance Council's vision to be Australia's most sustainable region – Healthy, Smart and Creative. There can be no better way of demonstrating commitment to that sustainability vision than declaring a Climate Emergency and developing and implementing an effective plan to reduce Council emissions to net zero by 2030 or sooner.

As a key element of the Environment and Liveability strategy, SCRC has included a net zero emissions target by 2041. Part B of the Environment and Liveability Strategy, *Strategic Pathway 5. A reputation for innovation and sustainability, Action 22- Zero emissions organisation* lists eight tasks to be undertaken and their associated annual cost estimates. Five of the eight tasks are costed as low, two as medium and one as high cost.

OSCAR calls on SCRC to bring forward Tasks 22.3, 22.4, 22.7 and 22.8 and to amend:

Outcome 2041: A low carbon, energy and resource efficient community making sustainable choices.

Target: Sunshine Coast Council is a zero-net emissions organisation and the community is low carbon by 2041. (Amend to 2030)

OSCAR congratulates SCRC on the planned actions for Strategic Pathway 4 - *Transitioning to a sustainable and affordable way of living.*

Action 19 (p22) *Changing our ways Transitioning the Sunshine Coast to a more sustainable, resilient and low carbon way of living* and accompanying include actions that will assist the community to move to a low carbon footprint. We encourage SCRC to maintain the timing and if possible bring forward the actions and particularly 19.3, 19.4 and 19.5.

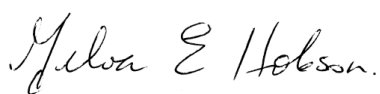
To its credit, Council has already taken decisive action to address its emissions, especially: establishing its solar farm to offset its electricity-related emissions; the acquisition of the Yandina Wetlands by, Unity Water, SCRC and the State Department of Environment and Science (DES), with Blue Carbon sequestration possibilities; the work undertaken under the Climate Hazard Adaptation Strategy (CHAS) and working on a new waste strategy.

However, there remains great scope for further offsetting and reducing emissions from each of Council's operational functions. A few examples are:

- The proposal to introduce organic waste bins and to divert these wastes from landfill disposal, which has the potential to rein in emissions from Council's single largest emission source – waste management.
- Progressively transitioning Council's vehicle fleet to electric and hybrid vehicles and its parks, gardens and roadside vegetation management machinery to non-fossil fuel or low emission energy types.
- Offsetting unavoidable emissions by further investment in energy efficiency actions and renewable energy generation capacity in the region.
- Offsetting emissions by sequestering carbon in appropriate vegetation plantings on unused and degraded farmland, on cleared and degraded sections of Council's considerable conservation estate, and in its parks, gardens and the road verges for which it has responsibility.

OSCAR looks forward to Council supporting the climate emergency declaration request and adopting the net zero 2030 target. The science and the need for urgent action on the climate crisis are abundantly clear.

Yours sincerely



Melva Hobson PSM

President OSCAR