



Recognising and upholding excellence in local government

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9 November 2021

Dear Mayor Jamieson,

RE: Notice of Motion – Cr D Law re Climate emergency and Attachment - Wednesday 10 November 2021 Agenda

On 25 May 2021 OSCAR wrote to you, all Councillors and the CEO strongly encouraging Council to make a climate emergency declaration as proposed by community groups, adopt the proposed 2030 net zero emissions target, and develop and implement an action plan as soon as possible to achieve that target.

For the following reasons OSCAR now strongly encourages you and Council to support Cr Law's Notice of Motion.

OSCAR continues to believe that a 2030 net zero emissions Council target is the most appropriate and feasible goal for responding to the climate emergency we are facing.

However, part (ii) of the Motion proposes that the CEO prepare a climate change emergency governance/framework report for Council consideration by 31 March 2022. OSCAR considers that this investigation by the CEO will permit Council to review the adequacy and effectiveness of current Council emissions reduction strategies and actions and consider recommendations by the CEO about a comprehensive set of whole of Council actions to deliver net zero emissions in the shortest possible timeframe.

Council held workshops in May and July to assist Councillors to have a better appreciation of Climate Change science, impacts and possible response strategies.

The U.N. IPCC Sixth Assessment Report was released in August to assist participants in the recent Glasgow COP26 conference to discuss and formulate national and global responses to Climate Change.

The Sixth Report identified the clear consensus scientific conclusion that there had been a dramatic deterioration in the global climate since the Paris conference 6 years ago. The Report pointed to the need to deal with this situation as a global emergency and to go beyond a net zero emissions target by 2050 by adopting ambitious targets to reduce emissions by as much as possible in the next decade in order to have any reasonable chance of keeping global temperature increases to 1.5C. On present trajectories and with current levels of emission reduction commitments we are on track for increases well in excess of 1.5C – with the resultant climate impacts creating heightened threats to human life, health, property, biodiversity, and economic and political stability etc.

Globally and in Australia and our Pacific neighbour countries the devastating impacts of climate change are already being experienced. The unprecedented Australian droughts, mega bushfires, coral reef bleaching and extreme storm events of recent years are but a few examples of what awaits us more devastatingly in the future if we do not take early and decisive action to reduce emissions and adopt effective adaptation and resilience strategies.

We know from a diversity of sources that the Sunshine Coast region is highly vulnerable to a wide range of climate change impacts, and this creates a strong obligation for Councillors and Council to act responsibly to protect our communities, businesses and environment.

Council knows that Queensland's planning legislation references the IPCC reports as the "best available science" for climate change planning purposes, and that inter-generational equity is an important element of the ecological sustainability Object of the Planning Act. The Local Government and Disaster Management Acts require Council to consider and respond to climate change risks. The Sixth IPCC report clear advice is that we are now in a climate emergency and that emergency action is required.

OSCAR therefore believes Councillors and Council as a whole must act on that basis across the entire range of Council jurisdictional functions, as well as exercising leadership for our regional communities and businesses about how to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and pursue a range of adaptation and resilience strategies.

OSCAR readily acknowledges the steps SCRC has already taken to seek to reduce its emissions and pursue adaptation and resilience strategies. The CHAS and the decisions to proceed with the “opt out” organic waste bin initiative and participate in the joint Noosa/SCRC pilot project for a Local Government climate risk management framework indicate Council’s intention to continue to pursue its stated goal of net zero emissions by 2041.

However, as Cr Law points out, the unfortunate reality is that, despite Council’s emission reduction efforts, Council’s GHG emissions have **risen rather than declined** in 19/20 and 20/21 compared with the 2017/18 baseline year set in the Environment and Liveability Strategy Transformational Action No 22 (i.e. Council’s goal to achieve net zero emissions by 2041). Council is therefore challenged with firstly reversing this emissions increase situation before it can proceed with actions that achieve progress towards its stated net zero GHG emissions goal.

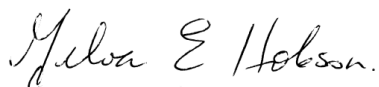
This unfortunate situation lends support to point (ii) of Council Law’s Motion. Council needs to review its current actions and redouble its efforts to get back on track with emissions reduction. It will need to review performance in its current actions, strengthen current actions, and pursue new initiatives as soon as possible. It will also need to establish effective governance and accountability mechanisms across Council, including periodic reporting on the implementation and effectiveness of strategies and actions in achieving specific performance target outcomes.

Finally, you responded to OSCAR’s questionnaire for candidates standing in the 2020 SCRC Elections. You responded to Q.15 Do you support the SCRC in joining other councils in signing a Declaration of Climate Emergency? Your response was: **No. I much prefer to be taking real action – which is what our Council has done and will continue to do under my leadership.**

In the light of the information now before you about the deteriorating climate change situation and the need for ambitious early actions to reduce GHG emissions as soon as possible, OSCAR encourages you to reconsider your previous opposition to declaring a climate emergency.

We strongly encourage you to support Cr Law’s Notice of Motion, as evidence that under your leadership SCRC is indeed determined to take decisive action across its jurisdictional responsibilities to achieve net zero Council emissions as soon as possible and to guide our regional communities and businesses on a similar path to net zero and the sustainable, prosperous future that we aspire to.

Yours sincerely



Melva Hobson PSM,
President, Organisation Sunshine Coast Association of Residents (OSCAR)