

CLIMATE CHANGE

Previous policy number: 4.3.1

Policy Statement

To ensure that the Town of Mosman Park understands and addresses climate change impacts in a local, regional and international context, evaluates the climate change implications of operational decisions and policy positions, and is committed to greenhouse emissions reductions and risk management through appropriate mitigation and adaptation strategies.

Policy Details

Background

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC)'s Fourth Assessment Report (2007) asserts that "Global atmospheric concentrations of carbon dioxide, methane and nitrous oxide have increased markedly as a result of human activities since 1750 and now far exceed pre-industrial values", and "Warming of the climate system is unequivocal, as is now evident from observations of increases in global average air and ocean temperatures, widespread melting of snow and ice, and rising global average sea level."1.

In the Fourth Assessment Report, the IPCC identified emissions pathways for wealthy and developed Annex I countries to limit global warming between 2.0° and 2.4°C. These pathways require emissions to be limited to 25 to 40 percent below 1990 levels and global concentrations of carbon dioxide equivalent ('CO₂-e') in the atmosphere to be maintained at no more than 400 parts per million in order to ensure a temperature increase below 2°C.

Local Government support for Climate Change Management

Climate change is an issue that Local Governments in Western Australia consistently express concern about. In 2007 the Western Australian Local Government Association conducted a survey of Local Governments to ascertain their knowledge of, and concern about climate change impacts. Of over 80 responses, 100% of Councils expressed concern about climate change impacts and implications.

Local and Regional Action Plans

Local and regional climate change strategies have been developed, including the Town of Mosman Park Climate Change Local Adaptation Action Plan and WESROC Climate Change Risk Assessment and Adaptation Plan.

Acknowledging climate change impacts

The Town recognises that the global climate is changing as a consequence of increased concentrations of greenhouse gas emissions in the atmosphere, and that these increased concentrations are largely the result of human activities.

The Town considers climate change to be a serious current threat to our current way of life and the Earth's ecosystems.

The Town acknowledges that some human-induced climate change is already having an impact on human and natural communities and that further climate change will occur as a result of past, present and future emissions.

Costs of Delayed Action

The Town acknowledges that while uncertainty is present in the existing climate science, this does not present a reason for inaction or delay of action and that the „Precautionary Principle“ should be applied to the use of climate science.

The Town acknowledges that delayed action on climate change mitigation and adaptation strategies will increase costs and potential liabilities to The Town in a range of areas, in particular planning and infrastructure management and risk management.

Australia's Obligation to Act

The Town acknowledges that the Australian community has historically contributed, and continues to contribute, disproportionately to global greenhouse gas emissions. Australia has achieved considerable economic wealth in the process. It therefore has a responsibility for current climate change and an ethical obligation and opportunity to play a leadership role, commensurate with its capabilities, in contributing to the national and global greenhouse gas reductions necessary to avoid dangerous climate change.

Mitigation – Emission Reductions

The Town recognises that Australia has the capacity to contribute to global climate change mitigation, by reducing emissions now, in a way that creates positive opportunities for communities, industries and our economic sustainability.

The Town acknowledges that the magnitude of the mitigation task ahead is substantial, and that planning, investment and infrastructure decisions made today will shape the carbon intensity of our future. It therefore considers that a successful response to the challenge of meeting appropriate emission reduction targets should begin immediately and will require cross-sectoral action by government, business and broader community at all levels. The Town supports the establishment of institutions and regulations that ensure effective, integrated action by these stakeholders.

Adaptation – Collaborative Action

The Town acknowledges that the magnitude of the adaptation task ahead is substantial, and that planning, investment and infrastructure decisions made today will determine how successfully the community is able to adapt to the impacts of climate change, reduce its risks and vulnerabilities to these and take advantage of any opportunities. It therefore considers that a successful response to the challenge of adapting to climate change impacts should also begin immediately and will require cross-sectoral action. The Town supports the establishment of institutions and regulations that ensure effective, integrated action by these stakeholders as being crucial to cohesive and effective climate change management.

Equity and Social Justice

The Town acknowledges that both the impacts of climate change and the policy responses required to contribute to the avoidance of climate change have significant equity implications. These equity considerations have domestic and international dimensions, and implications for both present and future human generations, and for the survival of other species.

The Town considers it essential that strategies are developed that identify the climate change risks and vulnerabilities of disadvantaged communities, measures are developed to reduce these and resources are allocated to enable adaptation and resilience building in these communities.

Reflecting appropriate priorities

The management of climate change impacts must reflect the priorities of the Town and the community. These will be determined by The Town with regard to its environmental, social and economic opportunities and risks.

The Town acknowledge the need to identify regionally specific priorities and impacts, and the associated need to coordinate cooperative regional climate change management across the political and operational areas under their jurisdiction.

Setting clear objectives and targets

In order to achieve outcomes and engage in „best practice“ climate change management processes it is essential for the Town to set and work towards a set of internal targets for greenhouse gas emissions reduction. It is necessary to adopt these targets at Council and publicise the targets in order to achieve stakeholder and community support.

Establishing clear roles and responsibilities

It is recognised that climate change management is the responsibility of all of the Town’s Officers and Elected Members. Climate change outcomes should be met within a reasonable timeframe. As a significant global concern, climate change must be addressed at all levels of Government. The Town, in its turn, must address climate change at all levels of its own operations, with support from Executive Management.

Acknowledging resourcing barriers and constraints

Climate change management costs, while representing a relatively small financial commitment on a global scale, are likely to represent a larger proportion of the Town’s spending. Local Government already has a wide range of responsibilities in the community and climate change is a new and additional aspect of environmental management that Local Governments will have to broaden their suite of services to include.

Apportioning costs appropriately

The Town, in acknowledging the immediacy and importance of climate change management, must ensure that high priority climate change risks are directly resourced or externally funded so that impacts can be ameliorated and/or adapted to. This should decrease legal liability issues for Local Government in the long term.

Definitions

Nil.

Governance References

Statutory Compliance	<p>Section 1.3 (3) of the Local Government Act 1995 states “In carrying out its functions a local government is to use its best endeavours to meet the needs of current and future generations through integration of environmental protection, social advancement and economic prosperity”.</p> <p>In order to „meet the needs of current and future generations“, the Town must address climate change impacts on its community. Climate change poses a growing threat to the community and the Town, environmentally, socially and financially, and a range of mitigation and adaptation strategies must be applied to ensure that both social and legal obligations are met and risks and future costs are reduced.</p>
Organisational Compliance	Nil.

Policy Administration

Directorate:		Officer title:
Executive Services		Chief Executive Officer
Next Review		Review Cycle
Version	Date	Ref
1	27 September 2011	OCM-301-2011
2		
3		
4		