



City of Darebin Submission to “A Climate of Opportunity” Summit Paper

The City of Darebin welcomes the opportunity to provide a submission to the Victorian Government’s Climate Change Summit Discussion Paper. The City of Darebin supports the submission from the Municipal Association of Victoria (MAV) regarding this issue and would like to highlight the following points.

Climate Change is a critical issue and requires urgent attention from all levels of government, industry, business, organisations and individuals.

The Darebin community is very concerned about Climate Change as demonstrated in a recent survey of Darebin residents with more than 550 responses. The survey indicated that knowledge and financial costs were key barriers to households taking further action to reduce greenhouse emissions. The most popular actions requested from Council to support community greenhouse reductions include further provision of education, incentives for taking action and advocacy and action on transport issues. In addition to mitigation, the impacts and adaptation to Climate Change will be a key issue for Darebin’s diverse community.

Darebin City Council was one of the first Councils in Australia to join the Cities for Climate Protection (CCP) Program in 1998. Through this program Council committed to greenhouse reduction targets for corporate and community emissions of twenty per cent of 1995 levels by 2010.

Last year Council adopted *Darebin’s Climate Change Action Plan 2007 - 2009* which was recently awarded the LG Pro Sustainability Initiative Award for Excellence. The plan outlines how Darebin will achieve its 2010 corporate target one year early through the expansion of our energy efficiency program (which is on track to save 1,000 tonnes of emissions this year) and the purchase of 100% GreenPower for all Council facilities.

The plan also sets a target of Carbon Neutrality for Council operations by 2020 and identifies key opportunities for achieving this target including:

- upgrading of street-lighting to energy efficient T5s
- investigation of cogeneration opportunities at Leisure Centres and Preston Civic Precinct
- Designing all new facilities for carbon neutrality.

The Plan identifies the energy hierarchy as a guiding principle. The energy hierarchy identifies a priority order for taking action: energy conservation; energy efficiency; investment in renewables via GreenPower (or microgeneration where applicable); and offsetting residual emissions only.

We believe that it is important for governments of all levels to demonstrate leadership by making significant greenhouse reductions in their own operations.

- *We congratulate the Victorian Government in their target to purchase 25% GreenPower for government operations by 2010 and encourage an even larger commitment to GreenPower and the setting of a Carbon Neutral target for State Government operations to demonstrate leadership.*

We also believe in the urgency of taking wide ranging action through regulation, pricing mechanisms including the Emissions Trading Scheme, programs and incentives to reduce greenhouse emissions across all sectors. Support for effective research and development for early transition to a low carbon economy is also critical.

Local Government has a unique opportunity to deliver programs and incentives to engage our communities in sustainable behaviours.

Darebin City Council is leading the way in community emissions reduction programs including Green Travel programs including Going Places and Love Living Local, Community Power, Sustainable Homes and Spring into Compost (see www.darebin.vic.gov.au/environment for more information).

We are developing an extensive Community Climate Change Action Plan with our community in 2008-9, including detailed consultation, community engagement, a community leader's forum, consideration of best international practice and a full review of existing programs.

In addition to the community Climate Change Action Plan an Adaptation Strategy will be developed in 2008/09 that will seek to assess the risks and prepare Council and our community for adapting and responding to the impacts of both Climate Change and Peak Oil.

Strategic Issues

Due to the critical and urgent nature of Climate Change Darebin recommends the following strategic issues be pursued by the Victorian Government in the development of their Climate Change response via the Green and White papers:

- *In addition to the adopted target of 60% greenhouse reductions by 2050 compared to 2000 levels; interim greenhouse reduction targets also be established.*
- *Regular and high profile reporting to all key sectors across the state be undertaken and that this reporting include expenditure on Climate Change mitigation and adaptation. Will Victoria be spending the 1% of GDP advocated by the Stern report?*
- *Given the quickly evolving nature of the science and as more evidence suggests that Climate Change Impacts are already tracking on the worst case scenario there should be regular reviews of the interim and 2050 targets to ensure that action taken is at the appropriate level to avoid the worst impacts of Climate Change.*
- *In terms of the 10 directions identified in the summit paper, our understanding is that while Victoria's energy source is relatively cheap by international standards, it is not currently efficient. Many would also argue that our highly centralised generation system does not provide the same level of security as a more decentralised generation system.*
- *Greenhouse emissions from food production and transport are often a significant but hidden component of emissions breakdowns. Climate Change impacts and the impacts of Peak Oil will make significant changes in the types of food and the way we process, transport and consume food necessary.*

Joined up Government

There is an urgent need for enhanced leadership and action from all levels of government to mitigate the effects of climate change and to adapt to its impacts.

Darebin Council also acknowledges and stresses the importance of government planning and action on the issue of Peak Oil. We believe there could be potential synergies and cost saving opportunities by planning for adaptation to Climate Change in parallel with adaptation for Peak Oil. This is the approach that Council is planning to take.

- *We encourage the Victorian Government to scope the potential benefits and cost saving opportunities for developing adaptation strategies for the impacts of Climate Change in conjunction with adaptation strategies for the impacts of Peak Oil.*

We support the set of principles for climate change action suggested by the MAV. Current and future government policy and practice must be analysed for climate change impacts as part of decision making and review. Without such a step we risk the 'Business As Usual' undertakings of government and our society to continue to swamp the positive endeavours undertaken to reduce emissions.

- *We support the implementation of a policy review similar to the National Competition Policy Review where current government legislation and practice is reviewed for its impact on climate change and greenhouse gas emissions.*

The change in political landscape and development of new programs at the State and Federal level including:

- Victorian Energy Efficiency Target,
- Low Emissions Plan for Renters
- Solar, Green Energy and Water Renovations Plans for Australian Households
- Emissions Trading Scheme

will present opportunities for Council to further support our community to reduce emissions. The State Government can enable local governments and communities to participate more fully in Federal programs by providing timely information and support in regard to these.

Consultation with local government and careful consideration of our role and capacity to add value and engage in emission reduction and adaptation programs needs to be carefully considered.

Regional alliances of local governments and communities have proved efficient and effective at engaging community, undertaking joint research and obtaining results in sustainability projects. The Sustainability Accord and funding for Regional Greenhouse Alliances has fostered and enabled this further over the recent period. We recommend:

- *Funding for the Sustainability Accord and Regional Greenhouse Alliances should be continued and expanded upon.*

Access to data to enable good decision making

Communities and governments need to be aware of and easily able to access up to date data to enable them to make decisions and design strategies, programs and practice in relation to climate change mitigation and adaptation. This covers everything from consistent energy efficiency labelling to being able to track state wide and community emissions. Victorian Councils have been unable to report on and monitor community emissions due to the absence of a regulatory structure that requires provision of this information and a reluctance from distribution businesses to provide this information on a voluntary basis.

- *We continue to request State Government support to require community greenhouse emissions data from distribution businesses (or energy retailers).*

Street lighting

We support the MAV's recommendation that:

- *The State Government work with local government and energy distributors to develop a plan to switch the state's public lighting to more energy efficient technology, including an agreement to share the cost of this upgrade between distributors, local and State Government.*
- *The Victorian Government establish an agreed framework that allows rapid testing, approvals and adoption of more efficient technologies as they are developed*

We commend the Sustainability Accord, and acknowledge the leadership role of the Northern Alliance for Greenhouse Action (of which Darebin is a member), on the progress made to date. We wait in anticipation for the outcomes of the DSE taskforce that we hope will enable local governments across Victoria to upgrade to this technology as soon as possible.

- *In addition to new technologies Darebin also recommends that the Victorian Government establish an agreed framework that allows rapid approvals and adoption of energy conservation measures within street-lighting including restricted time of use.*

Environmentally Sustainable Design (ESD)

Addressing Environmentally Sustainable Design (ESD) in buildings (both our own and our communities) is another priority. Darebin is making a positive contribution to the challenges of climate change by promoting Ecologically Sustainable Design (ESD). Council has employed an ESD Officer to assist developers and applicants achieve an outcome superior to the minimal requirements of the building regulations.

Darebin has endorsed the use of the ESD assessment tools STEPS and SDS developed by the Cities of Moreland and Port Phillip. These are our preferred means of assessing and achieving improved ESD outcomes in new developments. There is a high level of Local Government interest in achieving improved ESD outcomes and interest in the use of the STEPS and SDS assessment tools is high.

Darebin, Moreland and Port Phillip received funding through the Sustainability Accord to assess STEPS and SDS and identify opportunities for achieving ESD outcomes. This report was launched by the Minister for Planning late last year. However, the grant does not support the ongoing education, dissemination of information or training in ESD, STEPS and SDS these Councils are undertaking.

While Council promotes improved ESD responses in the built form, the use of the tools and the take up is entirely voluntary, which severely limits the effectiveness of this approach. The Darebin community continues to place a high emphasis on the need for development to be ecologically sustainable. Local Government's capacity to require improved ESD outcomes is limited and a state-wide approach that is more demanding is urgently needed.

- *State Government support for a comprehensive and effective ESD assessment tool that addresses both planning and building requirements is necessary*
- *Until such a state-wide approach is undertaken, local Councils have the ability to require the use of preferred sustainability assessment tools or sustainability outcomes through the planning scheme and particularly via Structure Plans in Activity Centres.*
- *Research into greenhouse outcomes of Activity Centres is also required. We are currently basing our urban development objectives on assumptions that have not been*

well demonstrated. Are transport emissions reduced due to improved access to public transport? How do household emissions from new multiunit developments compare to traditional older housing stock?

Water

Darebin has developed a Sustainable Water Use Plan to reduce water use by 25%, based on 1999 levels by 2010 and achieved our target. Initiatives to achieve this include water conservation plans for parks, installing water tanks at new buildings and redevelopments and installing water efficient fittings, such as AAA taps and showers, waterless urinals and dual flush toilets, at key sites in the city

We have carried out a proactive community education campaign. Actions include tours of water efficient features in the Reservoir Civic Centre (Winner of the 2004 Banksia Awards for Sustainable Building), community forums, audits, providing water efficient products through our Sustainable Homes Program and providing information on grey water and rain water tanks

To date the State Government has partnered us in key projects: installing water tanks and water efficiency measures at DISC; extending the dam and installing drought resistant grasses at Bundoora Golf Course; and installing a pool cover at Reservoir Leisure Centre. State Government also provided \$90,000 in addition to \$200,000 from Council for warm season turf and water tanks at four sporting grounds in 2007-08

To continue a sustainable program of drought/climate change proofing four sportsgrounds a year will require substantial funding over 10 years. A funding review is required to enable Darebin and all other Local Governments certainty and consistency around this important community issue

We strongly support the MAV recommendations that:

- *As water prices rise and Victoria becomes drier, State Government should provide assistance to councils to enable them to implement water saving technology and keep their community infrastructure working for their residents.*
- *Funding for recycling fit-for-purpose water needs to be increased, and this water made available to local government.*

Waste

The waste sector typically contributes around 3.3% of municipal greenhouse emissions. Ensuring that our waste reduction, education, collection and processing systems into the future not only achieve zero waste but also contribute to zero greenhouse emissions will be a necessary component of greenhouse reduction targets. Darebin supports the strategic driver of the draft Metropolitan Waste Strategy:

A need to manage and reduce greenhouse gas emissions as well as energy and water consumption in response to climate change.

Darebin strongly supports the MAV recommendations:

- *The Victorian Government must contribute directly to the establishment of new technology to process wastes to minimise emissions and extract energy.*
- *The Australian and Victorian Government should move quickly to support and establish product stewardship schemes, to ensure the embodied energy in these products is not lost in landfill.*

We also recommend:

- *Management and reduction of greenhouse emissions in the waste sector need to be of the magnitude required to avoid the worst impacts of climate change. This should be made explicit through greenhouse reduction targets in the plan;*
- *State funding and incentives should adequately support and enable local government to make waste management choices that meet significant greenhouse reduction targets and return the best overall environmental outcome (eg higher grade products from treatment of organic waste);*
- *Waste reduction and education needs a high emphasis and priority - while difficult to tackle and achieve, this is clearly the outcome we need for sustainability;*

Transport

Transport is one of the fastest growing sectors in relation to greenhouse gas emissions. The City of Darebin has recognised this in the development of the Darebin Transport Strategy, adopted in October 2007. This Strategy builds on principles identified in Council's 2000 Integrated Transport Plan and clearly sets a framework for increased public transport service provision, expanding cycling and pedestrian networks and facilities, marketing alternative forms of transport and encouraging the principles of local living. Each of these objectives leads to decreased reliance on the private motor vehicle and thus decreased greenhouse gas emissions

We strongly support the MAV recommendations:

- *That the State Government develop a metropolitan-wide transport and land use plan that includes a reduction of Victoria's greenhouse gas emissions as a key aim.*
- *All State transport management and transport infrastructure decisions should incorporate greenhouse gas emission reduction goals as part of their evaluation process before they are made.*

In addition Darebin recommends:

- *Any investment in new road infrastructure should not be provided for the single occupant vehicle, but for the movement of people (where road based public transport is prioritised and cyclists and pedestrians are given space and facilities) and goods.*
- *Enhanced public transport services and creation of an integrated system is required. Melbourne 2030 growth corridors need to be prioritised.*
- *The composition of the State Government fleet be overhauled to focus on small, fuel efficient cars. A large percentage of cars on our roads driven by the community are ex-fleet vehicles where they continue to create emissions for ten years or more.*
- *Strong advocacy from the Victorian Government for the need to revise the Fringe Benefits Tax and review other perverse incentives that encourage excessive car use or advantage inefficient vehicles.*

Community Education

Darebin is a very diverse community with one in three residents born in a non-English speaking country; one in seven of our residents are earning less than \$15,000; one in five is aged over 60; and one in five has a disability of some kind. Darebin delivers a range of

effective programs to engage our community on environmental issues and assist them to reduce greenhouse emissions. As indicated above, engagement on reducing community emissions and adapting to climate change impacts will be undertaken this financial year. Some of our key challenges will be providing accessible information, effectively engaging with our diverse community and reaching those that are not yet engaged on the issue and encouraging them to take action

We support the MAV recommendation:

- *That local government and State Government seize the opportunity for working more closely together in providing information to communities on climate change initiatives and impacts. Initiatives that align with both state and local government priorities could be promoted jointly with each level of government playing to its strengths and community contacts.*

We also recommend:

- *Enhanced State Government support for translation of material into languages other than English and effective programs and promotions to engage Culturally and Linguistically Diverse communities*
- *Sound integration of environmental issues and Climate Change into all levels of the school curriculum; supported by action based learning programs for schools and students*
- *Communication and awareness raising of Peak Oil and the need for reduced reliance on petrol*
- *Continuation and extension of the successful 'Black Balloon' campaign that promotes actions for people to take and links people into existing programs and rebates. These commercials should also be translated and screened on community television.*

Equity

As indicated above, the Darebin community has a significant number of residents living in poverty. These people must be protected from the financial impacts of the National Emissions Trading Scheme through financial safety nets and access to effective programs to assist in creating energy efficient homes and viable low emission and convenient transport options. There is also awareness and concern within the Darebin community around the issue of Climate Refugees and the impacts of climate change on poor nations less able to respond. Many of our residents are impacted personally or through their families, friends and home countries by these issues. We recommend the following:

- *Consideration of an effective safety net and energy efficiency support schemes for disadvantaged community members in the design of a comprehensive National Emissions Trading Scheme.*
- *Consideration and support for Climate refugees - particularly from our near neighbours in the South Pacific. Creation of a new immigration category for Climate Refugees is required and we recommend State advocacy on this issue.*
- *Advocacy for and increased aid and technology and knowledge exchange for poor nations ill equipped to reduce emissions and deal with the impacts of Climate Change.*

Technology/Economic development

Darebin supports the research and development of technologies with a strong potential to reduce greenhouse emissions, especially those that are already well proven such as renewable energy generation. Our recent 'Get Connected Solar Forum' attended by almost 200 people identified that the current net level solar feed in tariffs and means testing of the Federal Government rebate are barriers to the installation of solar panels in Darebin. While we acknowledge that solar panels are not currently the most efficient way to produce renewable energy, the industry and potentially future development of the industry may be jeopardised in the current policy context.

There is significant interest and opportunity for reducing emissions within local government via the installation of cogeneration. The procedures for scoping, installing and commissioning cogeneration are difficult however with a significant range of technical issues that need addressing. Support to local government from Sustainability Victoria (SV) is currently on an ad hoc basis with preference for large 'leadership' installations. This does not appear to be effectively progressing the roll-out of the technology as new leadership programs stall due to difficulties and local governments pursuing more modest installations are left to stumble upon and attempt to address the barriers on their own. We understand that some time ago SV identified the need to develop templates and processes for scoping and installation of cogeneration. We strongly concur with this need and recommend the following:

- *State Government support for the development of effective templates and processes for scoping and installation of cogeneration so the potential of this technology is effectively harnessed.*
- *State Government review and removal of barriers for grid interactive cogeneration systems*
- *State Government revision and adoption of “Feed In” tariffs that promote the uptake of small scale solar and wind electricity generators.*

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