

# Indigo Shire Council

## Leading the way in Council Climate Change Policy



Indigo Shire Council is one of the few local governments in Victoria to have a climate change policy. DELWP's Climate Change Policy evaluation rates the Indigo Shire Council policy as "intermediate" — having detailed but limited inclusion of climate change issues regarding environment and sustainability policy.

## Climate Change and Indigo Shire

Indigo Shire is located in North East Victoria, bounded by the Murray River and the Australian Alps. It is home to more than 15,000 people with an economic base founded on agriculture, manufacturing and tourism — in particular food and wine, and cycling tourism. People are attracted to the area for its rich cultural heritage and picturesque natural resources.

The changing climate means Indigo Shire is expected to become warmer and drier, and face

increasingly variable weather. Bushfires and storms will be more intense and occur more frequently.

Challenges and opportunities include supporting a healthy, connected and inclusive community and growing the tourism industry. Many adaptation actions address Council's capacity for emergency response and recovery, and refocus the tourism industry towards activities which are less reliant on favourable weather conditions.

## How Indigo Shire developed a Climate Change Policy

Midway through the Climate Change Adaptation Action Plan project it became clear that the Adaptation Plan was a dynamic, operational document — another vehicle was required to engage with council's decision-makers on climate change.

The Climate Change Policy was developed to ensure the Climate Change Adaptation Action Plan project had a strategic legacy.

### Mechanism

- Established the context to ensure a policy was strategically justified
- Reviewed climate change policies from other local government areas across Australia
- Presented to the Executive on the value of a policy
- Support from Project Control Group
- Developed draft for discussions with the Executive and councillors
- Several iterations allowed further engagement as the policy was refined and finally adopted.

### Challenges and opportunities

- Reframe climate change as a risk to Council's "business as usual" structures
- Embed climate change considerations into key Council documents
- Manage a range of councillor positions on climate change.

### Lessons learned

- Facilitated greater engagement from senior council officers, councillors and interested external stakeholders
- Provided an opportunity to engage more frequently with senior staff which assisted their understanding of the breadth of climate change impacts across Council.

## Why is a Climate Change Policy Important?

Climate change is the lens through which Council decisions are viewed.

The policy commits Council to addressing climate change impacts within the scope of Council activities. It provides a mechanism to guide strategies, evaluate and assess projects, and prioritise resource allocation.

The policy underpins the most recent Council Plan's strategic actions in planning, health and wellbeing, and infrastructure. It contributes to increasing Council's resilience and preparation for the future.

## Where next for Indigo Shire?

- Implementation of the Adaptation Plan is under way throughout the organisation
- Indigo Shire Council is engaging with RMIT on a project proposal to develop adaptation indicators, and with the Goulburn-Broken Greenhouse Alliance to participate in the Job Blueprint for a Changing Climate in the Hume Region
- Indigo Shire Council is actively supporting Totally Renewable Yackandandah to achieve their goal of using 100% renewable energy by 2022 and expanding the program to other townships in the Shire.

