

POLICY NAME: CLIMATE CHANGE POLICY

POLICY REF: C11

MEETING ADOPTED: 22 July 2021 | Resolution 220721/11

POLICY HISTORY:



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1 OBJECTIVES

The objectives of this policy are to:

- Identify Council's approach to measurable and achievable organisational greenhouse gas emissions reduction and renewable electricity targets.
- Identify Council's approach to risk assessment and adaptation planning to identify and manage the organisation's risks from climate change, and to support adaptation and resilience strategies for the community.
- Identify Council's approach to working collaboratively with community, agencies, industry, businesses, and all levels of government to seek and advocate for local, regional, state, and national climate change mitigation and adaptation solutions that are informed by the current knowledge and best available science.
- Provide a framework to guide the preparation and implementation of plans to achieve the targets set out in this policy.

2 POLICY

2.1 Council's Role in Climate Change Action

Climate change is a global challenge that requires collaborative action and shared responsibility. All governments, industry, business, communities, and individuals have a role in responding to climate change.

As a key asset owner, service provider, and decision maker, Council has an important role to continually improve its understanding of the risks and impacts from climate change in our region.

Council is one of the largest organisations in the Ballina Shire and operation of Council assets and provision of services generates a significant amount of greenhouse gas emissions per annum. Council has the ability to directly influence and reduce its contribution to climate change with a decisive and well planned focus on operational emissions reduction.

Council also has an important role in protecting and enhancing our natural and community owned assets, and in supporting shire wide climate change strategies. Many of Council's activities assist the community to manage and adapt to climate change. Areas where Council has important climate change influence include:

- Council's organisational greenhouse gas emissions, risks, and adaptation strategies.
- Developing and implementing land use planning policy frameworks and controls for climate mitigation, adaptation, and resilience.
- Providing infrastructure and services that facilitate community climate mitigation, adaptation, and resilience.
- Improving access to climate change research and information for decision making.
- Strengthening local and regional partnerships to take collaborative action on climate change.
- Encouraging community ownership of and participation in climate change action.
- Providing leadership on climate change action.

Australia has committed to climate change action by its pledge to the Paris Agreement and adopted the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDG's). These commitments impart a responsibility on all levels of government to take action on climate change. The NSW Government responded to these commitments with a net zero emissions target that aligns with the international Paris Agreement.

2.2 Guiding Principles

- a) Council declares we are in a state of climate emergency that requires urgent action by all levels of government.
- b) Ballina Shire is likely to be affected by predicted climate impacts, particularly those relating to sea level rise, bushfires, drought and floods.
- c) It is part of Council's role to reduce its organisational contributions to climate change, to identify and manage the impacts and risks to its operations, to facilitate the advancement of community climate change mitigation, adaptation, and resilience, and to support the State and Federal government's climate change commitments.
- d) Council recognises that it alone does not have the resources, influence, or control to address the predicted climate change impacts as they relate to Ballina Shire and that collaboration with all levels of government, industry, and the community is required to deliver long term effective action.
- e) Integration of policy and existing and new climate change related activities into the Integrated Planning and Reporting (IP&R) framework is fundamental to ensure climate change considerations are incorporated into all Council's processes and decision making.

2.3 Policy Statements

Council will aim to achieve the objectives of this policy through the following:

- a) Council will reduce its organisational greenhouse gas emissions to net-zero emissions by 2030.
- b) Council will utilise 100% renewable electricity for its operations by 2030.
- c) Council will meet its targets by developing and implementing detailed emissions action plans and strategies that set out the short, medium, and long term pathway to reach the targets.
- d) Council will undertake a Corporate Climate Change Risk Assessment process to identify, assess, and prioritise climate change risks, and the organisation's ability to manage, mitigate, and adapt to climate change risks.
- e) Climate change related targets and plans will be integrated into the IP&R framework.
- f) Council will progressively develop and implement internal strategies to ensure that the Climate Change Policy and associated plans are required to be considered in corporate processes across various levels of decision making.
- g) Council will base its decision making regarding climate change responses on internationally recognised scientific data and continually review its understanding of the risks and impacts of climate change to Council operations and the community.

- h) Council will be guided by the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) to help improve and facilitate climate change mitigation, adaptation, and preparedness across the community through best practice sustainable development principles.
- i) Council will apply resources to implement the Policy and preparation of associated plans will be progressed through the Delivery Program and Operational Plan processes.
- j) Council will track, monitor, and report on the progress towards the organisational targets and make accessible Council's emissions profiles and progress reports.
- k) Council will collaborate with community, industry, agencies, and all levels of government, to build knowledge, develop partnerships, and advocate to find approaches to a changing climate that are informed by the current knowledge and best available science.

3 BACKGROUND

3.1 History

Council has a long history of taking action on climate change. In 2004 Council joined the Cities for Climate Protection program and commenced its journey in implementing emissions reduction and energy efficiency strategies and programs.

In 2010 Council engaged with the community to develop the 2012-2020 Climate Action Strategy (CAS) and Environmental Action Plan (EAP). The CAS and EAP provided direction for Council to integrate identified organisational and community climate change activities into the Community Strategic Plan.

Activities include floodplain management, coastal zone management, infrastructure management, water cycle management, emergency risk management, biodiversity and environmental management.

A number of successful emissions reduction initiatives were implemented including the organic waste collection service, energy efficient lighting projects, recycled water program, and solar PV installations.

Council resolved at the 23 May 2019 Ordinary meeting to review the 2012-20 Climate Action Strategy. Through this process it was identified that Council's ongoing response to Climate Change should:

- Provide strong action on climate change.
- Be a mix of mitigation and adaptation activities
- Be responsive to changes regarding climate science and government policy.
- Be subject to ongoing and timely review.
- Align with and inform other Council plans and documents.

Council resolved at the 28 November 2019 Ordinary meeting to declare a state of climate emergency, which requires taking urgent climate change action.

This policy responds to Council's climate change resolutions and provides a structured approach of climate change action through setting of measurable targets and policy to develop comprehensive plans with routine monitoring and reporting. This will support Council's ability to achieve practical results in climate change action, and enable review and communication of progress.

3.2 Strategic Alignment

Council’s activities and operations are guided and directed by State and Federal Government policy. The Integrated Planning and Reporting (IP&R) framework provides the broader strategic direction for Council to develop the Community Strategic Plan (CSP) and Local Strategic Planning Statement (LSPS).

These Plans translate the community’s future goals, aspirations, and strategic land use planning priorities into the key outcomes that the Council, other agencies, and the community will be working to achieve.

Through the Integrated Planning and Reporting (IP&R) framework Council works with the community to understand what they value, and to prioritise the issues and actions relevant to them. A strong recurring theme from Council’s community engagement is the health and preservation of our natural environment.

The CSP and LSPS and associated strategies are Council’s commitment to working in partnership with our residents, community groups and Governments to realise our vision: “The Ballina Shire is safe, with a connected community, a healthy environment and a thriving economy”.

The policy has been prepared in line with the Delivery Program and Operational Plan 2020 - 2024 strategies, specifically the following:

Direction three: healthy environment

CSP OUTCOME HE1.1 WE UNDERSTAND THE ENVIRONMENT
<i>HE1.1 Our planning considers past and predicted changes to the environment</i>
<i>HE2.2 Use our scarce resources wisely</i>
<i>HE2.3 Reduce resource use through innovation</i>

The Climate Change policy also relates to implementation of the following Delivery Program and Operational Plan strategies:

Direction one: connected community

CC1. WE FEEL SAFE
<i>CC1.3 Ensure adequate plans are in place for natural disasters and environmental changes</i>

Direction four: engaged leadership

HE1.1 OUR COUNCIL WORKS WITH THE COMMUNITY
<i>EL1.3 Actively advocate community issues to other levels of government.</i>
<i>EL2.1 Proactively pursue revenue opportunities, costs savings and/or efficiencies.</i>

Direction three: healthy environment

HE1.1 WE UNDERSTAND THE ENVIRONMENT
<i>HE3.1 Implement plans that balance the built environment with the natural environment.</i>
<i>HE3.2 Minimise negative impacts on the natural environment.</i>
<i>HE3.3 Match infrastructure with development to mitigate any impacts on the environment.</i>

3.3 International and National Context

The Paris Agreement, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, and the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals have been established to urge collaborative global action on climate change.

3.3.1 *The Paris Agreement*

The Paris Agreement is a global response to climate change with almost 200 government signatories worldwide.

The Agreement aims keep a global temperature rise well below 2 degrees higher than pre-industrial levels, and to pursue limiting this increase even further to only 1.5 degrees.

To achieve this, global carbon emissions should be Net Zero by 2050

3.3.2 *The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change*

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) is the leading world body for assessing the science related to climate change, its impacts and potential future risks, and possible response options.

As part of the decision to adopt the Paris Agreement the IPCC produced a Special Report in 2018 on global warming of 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels and related global greenhouse gas emission pathways.

The IPCC reported that the current global commitments may not be enough to reach the 1.5°C goal.

The report indicates that prospects of succeeding will require emissions to reduce rapidly in the short term, and adaptation measures at all levels including resilience through technology, as well as changing behaviour and policy.

3.3.3 *The United Nations Sustainable Development Goals*

In 2015 all United Nations (UN) Member States including Australia adopted The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDG's).

The SDG's are an urgent call for action for peace and prosperity for people and the planet, now and into the future.

The SDG's are a globally accepted framework for sustainable development that recognise the co-dependence of society, the economy and the environment.

The goals include strategies that improve health and education, reduce inequality, promote economic growth while developing ways to manage climate change.

The link between sustainable development and limiting global warming to the 1.5°C goal by 2050 is recognised by the goal 13 for climate action (SDG 13).

3.3.4 Australian and State Government Commitments

In 2015 Australia pledged to the Paris Agreement and adopted the UN Sustainable Development Goals.

The Australian government has committed to a staged emissions reduction approach with a target of 26–28% reduction of emissions below 2005 levels by 2030. This target will be reviewed within the first period of the policy. Australia has yet to set a 2050 target.

All of Australian States and territories have now emissions reduction targets. Most remain aspirational and are in line with the Paris Agreement, but some are even more ambitious in line with the IPCC recommendation of rapidly reducing emissions to aim to reduce warming to only 1.5°C.

The NSW Government Climate Change Policy Framework commits the State to the objective of achieving net zero emissions by 2050 which is more ambitious than the Federal Government's target.

The NSW Stage 1 Plan sets out a staged approach of a 35% reduction in emissions compared to 2005 levels by 2030. The Stage 1 Plan supports a fast-track of action and seeks to establish NSW as a renewable energy superpower. This will strengthen investment certainty in renewable technologies and give confidence to organisations and communities to commit to renewable energy goals.

NSW Governments Sustainability Advantage program drives the support for NSW organisations to integrate the SDG's into corporate strategies.

A growing number of councils across Australia are incorporating the SDG's into their strategies and plans as a common language and guide to sustainable development practices.

3.3.5 Local Government Commitments

Local Governments across Australia are leading the way in acting on climate change. There are a wide range of commitments from targets that align State and Territory Government commitments, to more ambitious targets which align with the lower Paris Agreement aim of limiting warming to only 1.5°C.

3.4 Climate Emergency Declaration

Council has declared that we are in a state of climate emergency and that urgent action is required by all levels of government.

Council has acknowledged that Ballina Shire is likely to be substantially affected by climate impacts, particularly those relating to sea level rise, bushfires, drought and floods. A changing climate will have impacts on Council's delivery of services and management of natural and built assets.

In the declaration Council called upon the State and Federal Governments to drive emergency action to meet the lower of the Paris Agreement aims, of maximum 1.5 degree warming.

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) reports that achieving this target is unlikely without a rapid reduction in emissions in the short term.

The targets set within the policy align with Council's climate change declaration.

3.5 Climate Change Predictions for the North Coast

The NSW Government's Integrated Regional Vulnerability Assessment: North Coast of New South Wales reports that the North Coast region is projected to continue to warm compared to recent years (1990–2009).

Maximum temperatures are projected to increase in the near future (2020–39) by 0.4-1.0°C, and up to 2.4°C in the far future (2060–79).

This will increase the number of hot days and decrease the cold nights. Rainfall patterns will change with less rain in winter and more rain in autumn and spring.

Average and severe fire weather is projected to increase in summer and spring.

The changes in climate will pose risks and vulnerabilities to all local systems (social, natural, and economic).

Sea level rise is expected to have impacts on estuarine and foreshore ecosystems, and will pose an increased risk of flooding and inundation of coastal plains threatening property and infrastructure. Increased chances of fire, heavy rainfall, and drought will impact land and freshwater ecosystems.

The projected warming trend in the North Coast is of a similar scale to the rate of warming projected for other regions of NSW, although it is considered large compared to the natural variability in temperature in the region.

3.6 Ballina Shire Council Climate Change Framework

The policy framework enables Council to fulfil its role in responding to climate change through targets that will reduce Council's operational contributions to climate change, and strategies to ensure that climate change considerations are part of all Council's activities and decision making.

The framework enables planning for adaptation and resilience of Council's assets and service delivery, and improving the community's preparedness for a changing climate.

The targets are considered reasonable and achievable, relative to available resources, and are in line with many other local government climate change commitments.

3.6.1 Mitigation - Organisational Emissions Reduction Targets

To align with Council's climate emergency declaration, and to support the NSW Government targets, it is considered reasonable that Council's targets are in support of the lower of the Paris Agreements aims of limiting warming to only 1.5°C, and the IPCC's recommendation to achieve this with rapid short-term emissions reduction as well as a range of adaptation strategies.

The targets will be achieved through developing and implementing a comprehensive plan which sets out the detailed short, medium, and long term pathway to reach the targets.

The focus will be on energy efficiencies to reduce electricity and fuel consumption, generation of renewable energy on council sites, low emission fleet options, sourcing of renewable energy from mid-scale plants, Power Purchase Agreements (PPA), sustainable procurement, and accredited carbon offsetting for remaining emissions.

3.6.2 Climate Change Risk Assessment, Adaptation, and Resilience

Climate change adaptation and resilience is fundamental to managing the impacts of climate change. It can help to identify and manage risks, adjust economic activity, and reduce vulnerability, and can also improve long term business certainty.

Council completed a Climate Change Risk Assessment in 2009. The key risks identified were extreme heat, drought and water scarcity, sea level rise, and extreme storm and flash flood. Climate change projections show that the occurrence of these events will increase, as well as the intensity.

A changing climate has the potential to increase Council's maintenance costs for infrastructure, cause inundation of Council-owned assets due to sea level rise, lead to more frequent disruption of transport and communication services due to more frequent extreme storm events, and increase risk of coastal erosion.

Council's existing strategic plans list a range of strategies relevant to climate change risks and adaption. For example, ensuring plans are in place for natural disasters and environmental changes, increasing resilience of our economy, ensuring planning considers changes to the environment, wise use of resources, and risk management.

This policy provides the framework for Council to review its climate change risks and integrate risk assessment, adaptation, and resilience planning into all Council's strategic plans.

4 DEFINITIONS

Adaptation: The process of adjustments and actions in ecological, social, or economic systems to actual or expected climate and its effects.

Carbon offsetting: An activity or process which reduces carbon from the atmosphere, typically by putting funds towards organisations that support emissions reduction projects such as renewable energy and forestry projects.

Greenhouse gas emissions: a gas that contributes to the greenhouse effect by trapping heat in the atmosphere. The four main gases are Carbon dioxide (CO₂), methane (CH₄), nitrous oxide (N₂O), fluorinated gases. Typically reported as equivalent CO₂ emissions (CO₂e).

Net zero emissions: Achieving a balance between emissions produced, and emissions taken out of the atmosphere ie by sequestration (tree planting).

Mitigation: Actions to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and limit global warming and related effects.

Power Purchase Agreement: An agreement to purchase electricity from a renewable energy project at a fixed price and term.

Resilience: The capacity for a socio-ecological system to recover and maintain function.

Sequestration: A process of capturing and storing atmospheric carbon dioxide directly or indirectly with the goal of reducing global climate change.

5 SCOPE OF POLICY

This policy applies to all sections of Council.

6 RELATED DOCUMENTATION

Legislation, policy, and plans that relate to Council's climate change responses include:

International

The Paris Agreement
United Nations Sustainable Development Goals

Federal Government

Australia's Renewable Energy Target (RET) Policy
Australia's Technology Investment Roadmap
Australia's National Hydrogen Strategy

NSW State Government

Adapt NSW North Coast Enabling Regional Adaptation North Coast region report
Biodiversity Conservation Act 2016
Coastal Management Act 2016
Energy and Utilities Administration Act 1987
Environmental Planning and Assessment Regulation 2000
Climate Change Policy Framework
State Government Net Zero Plan Stage 1:2020-2030 and associated frameworks
Integrated Planning and Reporting Framework
Integrated Regional Vulnerability Assessments: North Coast of New South Wales
Local Government Act 1993
Water Management Act 2000

Regional

North Coast Regional Plan 2036
Northern Rivers Joint Organisation of Councils – Regional Priorities 2020- 2022

Council

Community Strategic Plan 2017 – 2027 Our Community Our Future
Ballina Local Strategic Planning Statement 2020
Ballina Shire Council Development Control Plan
Ballina Local Environmental Plan 2012
Ballina Shire Local Emergency Management Plan – 2019
Ballina Shire Council Delivery Program (4 year) and Operational Plan (1 Year)
Coastal Zone Management Plans and Related Documents
Delivery Program an Operational Plan (4 year)
Economic Development Plan
Environmental Strategies
Land Use Controls
Place-Based Strategic Plans
Plans of Management and Master Plans
Structure and Master Plans
Tourism and other Strategies

7 REVIEW

The Climate Change Policy is to be reviewed every four years.