

Draft Climate Change Policy

Why has the draft Policy been Developed?

The City of Victor Harbor declared a Climate Emergency in 2019 in response to the increasing impacts of climate change on the region. These impacts include rising temperatures, altered rainfall patterns, coastal erosion, and an increased frequency and intensity of extreme weather events such as bushfires, storms and flooding.

Climate change presents significant and evolving risks to the City's environment, infrastructure, economy and community wellbeing. In response, Council has developed a draft Climate Change Policy to provide a clear, consistent and strategic framework to guide how climate change is considered in Council decision-making, planning and service delivery.

The draft Policy focuses on Council's responsibilities in managing risk, planning for the future and delivering services in a changing environment.

What is Council Already Doing?

Council is already taking steps to respond to climate change through a range of existing initiatives and programs. These actions focus on reducing emissions, managing climate risks, and supporting a more resilient community. Current activities include:

- Improving energy efficiency across Council facilities
- Supporting urban greening and tree planting programs
- Managing and protecting coastal environments and dunes
- Rollout of LED lighting across outdoor assets including public toilets and parks
- Incorporating Water Sensitive Urban Design into major design initiatives

- Developing an Environmental Management Plan, including Climate Change Actions
- Supporting community education and emergency preparedness
- Working with regional partners such as Resilient Hills and Coasts to support regional climate initiatives.

The draft Policy builds on the existing work by providing strategic direction and consistency across all Council activities.

What is the Main Policy Statement?

The draft Policy outlines Council's commitment to taking a proactive and balanced approach to addressing climate change. This includes:

- Reducing greenhouse gas emissions in line with net zero targets.
- Strengthening community and infrastructure resilience.
- Promoting sustainable practices across energy, water, waste, and transport.
- Leading by example through Council operations and supporting the community to adapt to climate challenges.

Looking Ahead

Council is committed to ongoing action and continuous improvement in responding to climate change. This includes:

- Working toward net zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050 or earlier.
- Reviewing the Climate Change Policy every three years to ensure it remains current, effective and informed by the latest evidence.
- Aligning actions with key Council strategies, including the Community Plan 2030 and Climate Agenda, to support a coordinated and long-term approach.

Key Commitments

1. Reducing Emissions (Mitigation)

Council is committed to addressing the root causes of climate change by reducing greenhouse gas emissions. Key commitments include:

- Transitioning Council facilities and operations to renewable energy sources where feasible.
- Improving energy efficiency in buildings, lighting and services.
- Reducing emissions from transport, waste, and day-to-day operations.
- Increasing tree canopy and vegetation, which naturally absorbs carbon and provides cooling benefits.
- Tracking and reporting emissions annually to support transparency and continuous improvement.

2. Preparing for Climate Impacts (Adaptation)

Council is focused on helping the community adapt and remain safe in the face of increasing risks. Key commitments include:

- Planning for extreme weather events such as heatwaves, flooding, and bushfires.
- Designing and renewing infrastructure to withstand future climate conditions.
- Improving water-sensitive urban design to better manage stormwater and reduce flood risk.
- Protecting coastal areas from erosion and sea level rise through monitoring and adaptive management.
- Restricting development in high-risk areas to reduce long-term impacts and costs.
- Encouraging climate-smart building design in homes and new developments.

3. Supporting the Community

Council plays an important role in supporting the community to understand and respond to climate change. Key commitments include:

- Providing education and awareness programs about climate risks and actions people can take.
- Supporting emergency preparedness, including early warning systems and response planning.
- Creating cooler, greener public spaces with increased shade and vegetation.
- Encouraging community participation and volunteering to strengthen social connections and resilience.
- Supporting local businesses and landholders to prepare for climate impacts.
- Empowering young people to lead climate action through initiatives like the Fleurieu Youth Climate Change Summit.

4. Working Together and Informed Decision-Making

Addressing climate change requires collaboration and informed decision-making. Key commitments include:

- Working with regional partners such as Resilient Hills and Coasts, as well as other government agencies, industry, and the community.
- Using the best available science, data and research to guide decisions and actions.
- Continuously reviewing and improving approaches as new information and emerging risks are identified.