

Title:	Draft Climate Change Policy
Type of policy:	Council
Adopted:	TBD
File No:	TRIM 22/50590
Attachments:	Nil

Acknowledgement of Country

Council acknowledges the traditional custodians of the land comprising the Murrindindi Shire Council area, and those of our neighbouring municipalities. We pay respect to Elders past and present, and celebrate and respect their continuing culture and connection to the land.

1. Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to set the strategic objectives for Council to achieve net zero emissions by 2035. It further guides how Council can work in partnership with the community so that the Shire may also endeavour to reach net zero by 2035.

2. Rationale

Climate change is a global challenge that requires collaborative action and shared responsibility. We must urgently reduce greenhouse gas emissions to avoid warming of the atmosphere beyond 2 degrees, a state of warming that scientists describe as catastrophic and likely incompatible with human life.

Fortunately, we have a wide range of solutions at hand to address the climate crisis, and local government has a significant role to play. Council is one of the largest organisations in Murrindindi Shire. As a regulator, asset owner, decision maker, and service provider, Council has the capacity to reduce its contribution to climate change and facilitate action across the broader municipality, with a clear and effective mitigation and adaptation response.

Timely and effective action on climate change will help reduce the devastating impact of future natural disasters and save significant costs and resources. Renewable energy and energy efficiency upgrades, in particular, make good business sense and can pay for themselves a few years after the initial investment is made.

As such, Council has adopted a Climate Change Pledge to publicly acknowledge the urgent need to take action on climate change by dramatically reducing the organisation's greenhouse gas emissions to net zero by 2035, and supporting the municipal community to achieve the same target. To implement the Pledge, Council has developed this Climate Change Policy.

3. Scope

This policy applies to all employees, volunteers and contractors of Council and elected councillors, and is focused on two distinct areas of Council's responsibility:

1. Council, as an organisation, in its responsibility to effectively manage staff, financial resources and maintain the principles of good regulatory practices; specifically, Council's role in occupational health and safety, business continuity, land use and development approvals, public asset management and essential service delivery.

2. Council, in its electoral mandate to support and manage local issues and plan for the community's present and future needs; specifically, Council's role in advocacy, engagement, education and information provision.

4. Definitions

Reference Term	Definition
Adaptation	The process of adjustment to actual or expected climate and its effects (IPCC)
Mitigation	Human intervention to reduce the sources or enhance the sinks of greenhouse gases (IPCC)
Net Zero Emissions	When anthropogenic (human-caused) CO ₂ emissions are balanced by anthropogenic CO ₂ removals (offsets). Also referred to as carbon neutrality (IPCC).
Carbon Offsetting	A reduction or removal of emissions of carbon dioxide or other greenhouse gases made in order to compensate for emissions made elsewhere.
Greenhouse Gases	Gases such as carbon dioxide, methane, and nitrous oxide, that absorb the sun's heat and trap it in the atmosphere, causing the 'greenhouse effect'
Resilience	The capacity to withstand and recover from disruptive events
Climate Change Pledge (Take2)	A voluntary Pledge to take action on climate change, as requested by the State Government under a provisions of the <i>Climate Change Act 2017</i>
Energy Hierarchy	A tiered approach to energy transitions that prioritises actions from most sustainable to least sustainable, being: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Reduce energy demand 2. Improve energy efficiency 3. Utilise renewable and sustainable resources 4. Utilise other, low emitting resource 5. Continue to utilise conventional resources where no alternatives are available
IPCC	Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. The IPCC's prime responsibility is to provide impartial scientific evidence on climate change to policymakers.
Renewable energy	Energy from a sources that are constantly replenished, such as wind or solar energy
Mobilisation	Working collaboratively to facilitate and inspire climate action among the community and the broader institutional/business environment.
Corporate Emissions Sources	All greenhouse gases emitted through Council operations. These can be divided into three scopes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Scope 1: Direct emissions from owned and controlled sources, such as transport, plant, landfill and gas use - Scope 2: Indirect emissions from purchased electricity for Council facilities and streetlights - Scope 3: All other indirect emissions in Council's supply chain, including contractor energy use, purchased goods and services, and investments

Reference Term	Definition
Municipal Emissions	All greenhouse gases emitted across the Shire of Murrindindi. This includes Council's corporate emissions, and all emissions from domestic, commercial and agricultural activities in the Shire.

5. Policy

The aims of the policy are to:

- Guide the organisation's transition to net zero emissions by 2035, with commitment to a short term reduction target of 20% by 2025 and a medium term target of 75% by 2030, based on 2016/17 levels.
- Clarify Council's roles and responsibilities in climate change and ensure climate related decision making within Council is integrated and evidence based, as well as responsive to and aligned with the regulatory and policy frameworks at the state and federal levels.
- Articulate Council's role in supporting Murrindindi Shire's communities and businesses to transition towards zero net emissions by 2035.
- Enable climate risks and opportunities in Council operations and services to be managed using a combination of climate change mitigation, climate change adaptation and community engagement and education strategies.

The following policy statements are designed to help achieve the policy's aims. They are intended to provide clear guidance to employees, volunteers and contractors of Council and elected representatives in the preparation and implementation of decisions, policies, plans, strategies, projects, processes, or programs. They are also intended to clarify Council's role with the community and businesses.

Policy Objective Statement 1 – Climate Focused Governance:

Council acknowledges that without the 'foundations' of a climate-focused governance structure, Council will struggle to make climate informed strategic decisions, achieve climate targets and manage climate risks. Council commits to achieving a Climate Focused Governance through the following policy statements:

- Climate change related targets, risks and plans will be integrated in the Council Plan Framework, including Council's policy and strategy reviews, business and service planning, long term financial modelling, asset planning, and risk management processes.
- Council will progressively develop, review and implement internal strategies, policies, guides, templates and forms to ensure climate targets, risks and associated plans are considered in corporate processes across all levels of decision making.
- Council will track, monitor and report on progress towards organisational targets and make Corporate and municipal emissions profile reports accessible to the public.
- Council will provide employees access to current and best practicable information and resources on climate science, scenario modelling, impacts and solutions so they are able to comply with the objectives of this policy.
- Council will undertake regular training and education of staff and elected councillors in climate governance.

Policy Objective Statement 2 – Climate Change Mitigation:

Council will ensure all decision making has regard to 'the contribution' the decision has on the Shire's greenhouse gas emissions in the short, medium and long term, and that any measures or solutions adopted are cost effective and proportionate to the problem. Council commits to climate change mitigation through the following policy statements:

- Council will meet its short, medium and long-term emission reduction targets through compliance with the Energy Hierarchy, to enable a cost-effective approach to carbon neutrality.
- Council will continue to purchase 100% renewable electricity for its operations by 2035, acknowledging this is the fastest way to offset all its emissions associated with electricity use.
- When pursuing carbon offsets for other emission sources, Council will prioritise offsetting strategies that improve local carbon sequestration and biodiversity outcomes.

Policy Objective Statement 3 – Climate Change Adaptation:

Council has a duty of care in exercising its functions to manage foreseeable risks and consider climate risks in its decision making, particularly in the areas of development approvals, provision of community infrastructure, and provision of information and statements that are released to the public. Council will base its climate risk mitigation and adaptation decision making on internationally recognised scientific data and consultation with experts in the field where necessary. Council commits to climate change adaptation through the following policy statements:

- Strategic and operational climate change risks, as identified through the 2021 Climate Change Risk Assessment, will be managed and monitored through Council's Risk Management Register and Respective Climate Change Action Plans, and the risk allocated to the relevant manager's business plan to actively mitigate/manage/control.
- This risk assessment process will be repeated every 4 years to take into account any new knowledge, changes in the status of risks, and the success of risk mitigation measures. The next review date is scheduled for 2025/26.

Policy Objective Statement 4 – Cultural Recognition:

Council recognises the importance of Indigenous and Torres Strait Islander perspectives, culture and knowledge for the development of climate change policy. Council acknowledges the various solutions local traditional knowledge may present to our current crisis. Council commits to delivering this objective through leveraging Council's Reconciliation Action Plan and Climate Change Response Plan, we will make every effort to ensure we incorporate Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander priorities, knowledge and cultural considerations through meaningful consultation.

Policy Objective Statement 5 – Community Support:

Council recognises the broad-scale nature of climate change requires collaborative action and shared responsibility. Council also recognises the importance of involving the community in decisions relating to managing the risks and opportunities of climate change in Murrindindi Shire, as any decisions or choices we make today will affect the present and future generations of the community to come. Vulnerable and marginalised groups in Murrindindi Shire are particularly affected by the impacts of climate change.

Council will, through its role as information provider, facilitator and advocate, collaborate with individuals, households, community groups, business stakeholders, incorporated bodies, industry, agencies and all levels of government to build knowledge and develop partnerships to develop and implement climate mitigation and adaptation activities.

Council commits to working with its regional partners, its local community and its local businesses to develop a sense of shared responsibility and cohesion in responding to the climate emergency. Council will consider innovative models of collaboration, such as community and business led climate planning and funding development, forums and advocacy campaigns aimed at empowering individuals, community groups and local business to take action.

6. Related Policies, Strategies and Legislation

This policy provides a clear framework for Council to implement its Climate Change Pledge and Climate Change Action Plan. Council has considered the Policy Objective and Guiding Principles in accordance with Section 47(2) of the *Climate Change Act 2017*, as well as:

International: The Paris Agreement United Nations Sustainable Development Goals Federal Government: Australia's Renewable Energy Target Policy Australia's Technology Investment Roadmap Australia's National Hydrogen Strategy State Government: Local Government Act 2020 Planning and Environment Act 1987 Victoria's Climate Change Strategy	Regional: The Goulburn Broken Regional Catchment Management Strategy The Goulburn Murray Climate Alliance Strategic Plan Hume Regional Climate Change Adaptation Strategy Hume Regional Growth Plan Council: Murrindindi Shire Council's Take2 Pledge Asset Plan and associated Asset Management Policies Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan Waste & Resource Recovery Strategy Environment Policy Roadside Management Plan Roadside Weed and Pest Animal Control Plan
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7. Consultation

A number of internal and external consultation activities have occurred in the development of this policy. The input provided from stakeholders has informed its content. It is intended to put this draft policy out for further community consultation prior to finalising and formally adopting the policy.

8. Council Plan

This document delivers against the 2021/2022 Council Plan Action 4.3.7 ‘Develop a Climate Change Policy’. It sits within the organisation’s governance hierarchy as follows:

Figure 1: Governance Hierarchy



9. Management and Review

This policy will be reviewed by the Environment & Sustainability Unit four (4) years after its adopted date. The implementation of this policy is a ‘whole of council’ responsibility, which will be delivered through Council’s Climate Change Action Plan 2035.

Figure 2: The framework to plan for climate change

