

POSITION STATEMENT - CLIMATE CHANGE

1. Introduction

The Committee for Ballarat is a visionary membership body that provides progressive and innovative leadership, enabling long-term social and economic benefits for an improved quality of life throughout Ballarat and the greater region. It is committed to providing thought leadership and advocacy for initiatives that connect us with our environment and inspire us to live sustainably.

Given Committee's role, it is important to take a position on climate change, especially given it impacts on other aspects of our Action Plan and Strategy

With scientific research indicating that climate change will impact significantly on the way we live our lives, it is one of the defining issues of our generation

While understanding the significant impact that climate change may have on social and economic conditions, Committee for Ballarat also recognises the opportunities it will provide for innovation and new ways of working. It is committed to working with all tiers of government and major stakeholders to develop policies, programs and products that will drive innovation in our region. It will work to deliver a cleaner, safer environment, more resource efficient economy and assist the community to adapt to a changing climate.

2. Scientific Research

Increasing carbon emissions are considered a major factor in climate change.

Scientific Research conducted by the CSIRO¹ in Australia concludes that the global increase in carbon dioxide (CO₂) concentrations is primarily due to fossil fuel use and land use change.

Greater and more widespread impacts are expected when global warming passes 2°C above pre-Industrial levels. Understanding how the risk changes at that point can help inform negotiations on emission reduction targets.

The key conclusions reached in the February 2007 report produced by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC)², stated:

- Global Warming is "unequivocal" with average temperatures rising by 0.74°C in the last century with the probability of this being caused by natural processes being < 5%.
- World temperatures will rise by 1.1°C to 6.4°C and sea levels will probably rise by 18cm to 59cm over the 21st century.

The IPCC concluded that, for Australia, "Ecosystems, water security and coastal communities ... have a narrow coping range. Even if adaptive capacity³ is realised, vulnerability becomes significant for 1.5 to 2.0°C of global warming. Energy security, health (heat-related deaths), agriculture and tourism have larger coping ranges and adaptive capacity, but they may become vulnerable if global warming exceeds 3.0°C."

Change in weather patterns and severe weather events, ie: increases in temperatures and sea levels, drought, heatwaves and surges in rainfall, will impact significantly on society - economically, socially and environmentally.

The scientific consensus on human-induced climate change is that all businesses should adopt a precautionary approach to climate change and manage it as a potential risk.

This is a view supported and endorsed by Committee.

1. ¹ Commonwealth Scientific & Industrial Research Organisation (CSIRO)

<http://www.csiro.au>

2. ² Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC)

<http://www.ipcc.ch/>

3. ³ The IPCC defines adaptive capacity as "the ability of a system to adjust to climate change (including climate variability and extremes) to moderate potential damages, to take advantages of opportunities, or to cope with the consequences.

3. Climate Change Policy

At an international level, the 1992 UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and its accompanying Kyoto Protocol is the only formally recognised process for governments to negotiate and agree on greenhouse gas reductions.

The Kyoto Protocol sets out specific and legally binding targets to limit or reduce emissions over an initial compliance period from 2008-2012. Australia negotiated an allowed increase of 8% above its 1990 levels. The Protocol also created three market mechanisms to facilitate net emissions reductions, ie: the Clean Development Mechanism, Joint Implementation projects and government to government emissions trading.⁴

In Australia, ratification of the Kyoto Protocol in December 2007 prompted the development of policy and regulations covering emission reduction targets, emissions reporting, an emissions trading scheme and investment in clean technology and renewable energy. The Australian Government has committed to a 60% reduction in emissions compared with 2000 by 2050.

The Australian Government's position on Climate Change is further outlined in its paper "Adapting to Climate Change in Australia" (released 19 Feb 2010).⁵

The report states, "*Adapting to the impacts of climate change will be a substantial ongoing challenge for all Australians well into the future. Meeting this challenge will require contributions from governments at all levels, businesses, communities and individuals. Individuals and businesses will adapt to developments as they unfold. However, governments have an important role to play in creating the right framework and in providing appropriate information to allow the private sector to make well-informed decisions*".

Committee supports an Adaptive Climate Change Strategy that works collaboratively with all stakeholder groups, Government (Federal, State and Local) industry, business, farming and agricultural groups and individual community members; that will be affected by climate change.

Any regulatory framework being considered for introduction must be commercially viable, minimise business complexity and stimulate further investment and innovation on sustainable initiatives that reduce carbon emissions from current operations.

4. Economic & Social Impact

Climate change poses serious threats to Australia's economy. Uncertainty about future climate change policy heightens risk associated with investment.

The Australian Business Roundtable on Climate Change⁶ was formed to advance the understanding of business risks and opportunities associated with climate change and help develop effective policy frameworks and market conditions for a low carbon future.

The Roundtable commissioned the CSIRO to determine climate impacts on Australia, and the Allen Consulting Group to model economic effects of producing a 60% reduction on year 2000 emissions by 2050. The report, *The Business Case for Early Action*, showed that delaying action will increase the impact climate change has on the community and the likelihood of a disruptive shock to the Australian economy. The report also indicated that it is possible for Australia to deliver significant reductions in greenhouse gas emissions at an affordable cost, whilst maintaining strong economic growth.

These findings are supported by Committee.

Climate change also has several unique social and human rights implications. Of particular concern to Committee, are the social justice implications climate change may have on disadvantaged and low income groups.

Committee does not endorse or support any legislation or regulation that will adversely impact on social and human rights, or marginalise regional communities and minority groups.

⁴ Kyoto Protocol

http://unfccc.int/kyoto_protocol/mechanisms/items/1673.php

⁵ Adapting to Climate Change

<http://www.climatechange.gov.au/publications/adaptation/position-paper.aspx>

5. Committee for Ballarat Role and Purpose

Committee for Ballarat's 2012/13 Action Plan⁶ identifies the six strategic drivers for the long term economic and social development of Ballarat and the region.

One of these strategic drivers is Sustainability. ⁶ Specifically, we seek to **“Promote sustainable living initiatives that meets the needs of the present without compromising future generations to meet their own needs”**.

This includes advocacy for a secure and sustainable water supply solution for Ballarat and the greater region and driving innovation around alternative sources of sustainable energy. A sustained, ongoing supply of water for domestic, industrial and environmental purposes is fundamental if Ballarat and the region is to continue to grow and prosper.

As the introduction of a carbon tax as a precursor to a carbon trading scheme will inevitably drive the cost of fossil fuel- derived energy up, we will work with the City of Ballarat and surrounding shires in their efforts to introduce bio-energy as a complementary source of energy for both industrial and residential consumption.

In addition, Committee will work with all stakeholder groups on identifying emerging risks and opportunities associated with sustainable environmental management, living with a changing climate and actively contribute to any proposed changes in regulatory frameworks.

While climate change will present some challenges, it will also provide opportunities to innovate and to lead the way. This will result in new industries, new jobs and new ways of living.

Committee for Ballarat will communicate and strongly advocate on climate change initiatives that support sustainable environmental, social and economic growth in Ballarat and the greater regional community.

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⁶ Committee for Ballarat 2012/13 Action Plan http://www.committeeforballarat.com/media_centre/publications