



Climate Change Balmain-Rozelle

PO Box 890

Rozelle NSW 2039

w: climatechangebr.org

e: ccbalroz@gmail.com

ABN: 31 258 840 648

Response to Leichhardt Municipal Council's Draft Climate Change Plan, by Climate Change Balmain-Rozelle.

Introduction

Climate Change Balmain-Rozelle, formed in 2006, is a group of local parents and residents who have joined forces to create change to address Australia's excessive greenhouse gas emissions.

Our mission is to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, locally and nationally, by providing governments and the public with the means and the motive to take the necessary action. We aim to inform people about the dangers of climate change, to speak out against the ongoing use of fossil fuels, and to champion the growth and development of renewable energy sources.

Climate Change Balmain-Rozelle is a totally independent volunteer group. We are not funded or directed by any private or government body or political party.

Climate Change Balmain-Rozelle congratulates Leichhardt Municipal Council on the scope and the detail of its Draft Climate Change Plan. We provide the following comments on each section of the plan.

Strategic Framework

Types of response:

Action on Climate Change can be divided into two main types: Mitigation, and Adaptation.

1. Mitigation

Scientific evidence is that the increased level of emissions of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases into the atmosphere is contributing to global warming and climate change. Mitigation addresses the root causes of climate change by reducing these emissions.

2. Adaptation

Because of inadequate action on climate change around the globe, and because carbon dioxide remains in the atmosphere for many years, we must anticipate a certain level of climate change in the years to come. Adaptation to climate change recognises this fact, and seek to lower the risks posed by, and results of, the consequences of climate change

Accordingly we support Leichhardt Council's first two objectives:

to address the cause of climate change by cutting corporate emissions.

to manage the risks, adapt, and build resilience to climate change.

Scope of implementation:

Action on Climate Change can take place both internally, in the activities of the Council itself, and externally, in its provision of services and resources to the community in the area.

3. Internal capacity (Governance)

No organisation can implement change without providing appropriate information, technology, resources, management, motivation and governance. Council must thoroughly integrate its awareness and actions on climate change into every aspect of its operations.

4. External capacity (Engagement)

Individual and community actions are as important in mitigating and adapting to climate change as corporate and government actions. Leichhardt Council can affect the community's ability to act through community programs and resources, and implementation of local government regulations.

We therefore note and support Leichhardt Council's third and fourth objectives:

to develop organisational capacity to understand and address climate change via corporate systems, training and engagement.

to build community capacity and connections to tackle climate change.

General comments:

The strategic objectives listed in the report do not typically belong in a single category, but in a matrix structure. They address either mitigation or adaptation, and function either through internal governance/implementation or external engagement. As a result some objectives seem misplaced.

To clarify the document's scope, we believe the plan would benefit from a clear summary, early in the document. This should emphasise that the strategic actions laid out do indeed cover all of:

- o council's own (internal) operations,
- o council-owned public resources,
- o individual and business operations within the local government area,

and that they deal with

- o actual steps that produce measurable results
- o educational and motivational measures to improve capacity to act.

The Context for Action

Southern Sydney Region of Councils' Renewable Energy Targets

The report states that SSROC resolved in 2011 to adopt regional Renewal Energy Targets of 20% in the region, and 30% by member councils by 2030.

The National RET is subject to periodic review, and indeed has undergone a review in 2012, in the context of changing energy consumption as well as increased urgency for action and the need for long-term as well as shorter-term, measurable and attainable goals.

CCBR recommends that Leichhardt Council's Climate Change Plan should include a statement about its ongoing participation in developing, reviewing and attaining SSROC's Renewable Energy Targets, and that these targets should be as ambitious as possible.

Strategic Objective 1 - Mitigation

Mitigation Strategy 3: Generate Renewable Energy Onsite

Installation of PV solar arrays at appropriate Council facilities is commended. However in the interests of cost effectiveness it would seem appropriate to match the capacity of these systems with the size and time-of-day demand at each site. As such, the proposal for a 22.4kW system at Leichhardt Oval may need further examination. What is the power usage during daylight hours at this site? (We note that Council purchases 25% green electricity at this site, and presume that exterior night lighting uses a significant proportion of its electricity.) By contrast, 1.0kW at Leichhardt Childrens' Centre seems inadequate for a facility used mostly during the day. Is there possibly roof space for more here?

Mitigation Strategy 4: Cogeneration system at Leichhardt Park Aquatic Centre

CCBR has previously endorsed Council's plans for this system. Despite some reservations about the use of gas (which emits CO₂) not being a clean or a renewable energy source, we recognise that alternative solutions for this application would at present be unaffordable or unfeasible. An estimate of the annual savings in carbon dioxide emissions would be a useful statistic to add to this paragraph.

Strategic Objective 2 - Adaptation

Manage the risks, adapt, and build resilience to climate change.

Some of the strategies listed in this section appear to be more to do with mitigation than adaptation. In particular, Strategy 2 (Adopt Climate-smart Design) covers both Mitigation and Adaptation, and Strategy 4 (Local Energy Solutions) is mostly concerned with efficiencies of energy usage.

One of the risk areas mentioned is Food Security. However, no Adaptation Strategies are proposed to deal with this very real risk.

While the large-scale issues associated with climate-induced crop failure are beyond the scope of an urban council, food shortages caused by freezer failure during prolonged power cuts may be worth consideration. Council may consider ways in which supermarkets in the council area could minimise this risk. There may also be scope for supporting elderly or handicapped residents who are at risk of losing their own frozen food supplies.

Adaptation Strategy 2: Adopt Climate Smart Design

- “Incorporate Climate Smart Design information into information for developers within Leichhardt Council’s Development Control Plan”.

As noted above, this strategy seems to belong to Objective 1 (Mitigation).

This recommendation should go further. Council should ensure that the DCP does not contain any requirements or guidelines that would inhibit implementation of energy-saving buildings or alterations. For example where Heritage requirements may prevent installation of solar PV arrays, Council should be required to actively find solutions, and these should favour the climate change considerations. (Conservation of Heritage is important, but ultimately pointless in the face of the greater changes that unabated climate change will bring).

An additional point about the DCP is mentioned at the end of Objective 4 (Engagement).

Adaptation Strategy 5: Address Flooding and Inundation

- “Council will need to consider not intensifying development in areas affected by inundation . . .”

This sentence seems unnecessarily weak. We suggest:

Council will not intensify development in areas affected by inundation . . .

Strategic Objective 3 - Governance

Develop organisational capacity to understand and address climate change via corporate systems, training and engagement.

Climate Change requirements should be as deeply integrated into the system as other systemic requirements such as Equal Employment Opportunity, Workplace Health and Safety, etc. They should, at the very least, be included in any list of criteria to assess any action by Council and Council officers.

Governance Strategy 2: Climate Change Strategy objectives are clearly articulated within organisation-wide corporate planning and reporting documents.

Further than this, we suggest that Climate Change must be addressed in all work plans and performance reviews, and should be part of the measurable outcomes of every project planned by Council.

Governance Strategy 4: Integrate the Climate Change Strategy with organisational management systems.

- “Integrate energy efficiency within the council Asset Management System”

Energy efficiency is a major criterion but not the only one to be included in a Climate Change program. We suggest that carbon footprint, emission control or a similar phrase should be included in the system to ensure that purchasing and maintenance schedules take this wider scope into account.

Strategic Objective 4 - Engagement

Engagement Strategy Strategy 4: Environment Events.

- “Support the Annual International Earth Hour”

Council does well to support International Earth Hour as a symbol of its awareness of the wastefulness of over-lighting. However, CCBR is concerned that this event is in danger of becoming a simple ritual rather than a thoughtful and productive activity.

Council should augment its support by

- Providing a report on the effectiveness of this support
- Engaging in follow-up activities such as a survey among participating businesses, posing the questions like
 - If you could manage without lights for one hour, what about longer?
 - How dependent is your business on continuous lighting?
 - Are you resilient to power cuts/shortages?

Engagement Strategy 5: Build the capacity of local businesses to improve sustainability performance . . .

A Sustainable Business Engagement Officer has been employed on a short term funding program to conduct assessments of local businesses and to assist them in seeking sustainability improvements.

We feel that this is an important initiative. Many small businesses lack the resources to research or implement sustainability strategies, or are unconvinced of any business advantage. A local officer is likely to be able to recommend many easily-implemented efficiencies in this situation. Funding should be assured for this operation on a long-term basis.

Council might consider a local Sustainable Business Rating to recognise businesses that have worked with the Engagement Officer or taken measurable steps to reduce emissions. Especially in the case of retail businesses this might include a certificate to be displayed at the point of sale.

Additional Engagement Strategy

Council has most direct control over its own premises. However, the ability of residents and businesses to reduce emissions is directly affected by Council's Development Control Plan (DCP).

We note that the DCP currently includes a recommendation that new hot water systems should be either solar-powered with a gas or electric booster, or entirely gas-powered.

Gas is a non-renewable greenhouse gas producer. Although published estimates suggest that it produces 50% less CO₂ than coal, estimates of the amount of methane leaked directly to the atmosphere during the extraction process could add significantly to that figure. CCBR cannot support this recommendation to instal new gas-fired systems.

Users of electrical hot water systems have the capability of offsetting carbon emissions by using Green Power, and we expect that the proportion of coal-powered electricity will reduce over time. However, a gas system will continue to produce CO₂ at the same rate throughout its life (and probably increase as it ages and loses efficiency).

Conclusion

Climate Change Balmain-Rozelle commends Leichhardt Council on this plan, and in general supports its proposals.

In taking steps to reduce carbon emissions, Council should wherever possible avoid the temptation to switch from electricity to gas, which is still a non-renewable greenhouse gas emitter.

In modifying its internal and management procedures, Council should aim for Climate Change outcomes to be as familiar, deeply ingrained and ubiquitous as the requirements for (e.g.) Workplace Health and Safety, and Equal Employment Opportunity.