

CITY OF LAUNCESTON SUSTAINABILITY STRATEGY

For now, and for the future



City of
LAUNCESTON

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Acknowledgement

The City of Launceston acknowledges the traditional custodians of the land on which the city and its surrounds are located, and pays respect to their Elders - past, present and emerging. Their legacy is evident in the natural and cultural values of this special place, and it speaks to us of the duty we have to preserve these values for future generations.



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Building a Positive Outlook for Launceston

Launceston has a well-earned reputation as one of Australia's most liveable and family-friendly cities, rich in cultural and natural heritage, and supported by productive landscapes.

However, it is also vulnerable to changing conditions, as hotter dry spells accelerate the impacts of drought and bushfire seasons, and more intense rain events increase the risk of damaging flooding.

However, these impacts are not restricted to major weather events, but influence all areas of our lives, from which agricultural products can be grown locally, to keeping cool over summer, from escalating allergy incidents and algal blooms, to the availability of iconic Tasmanian products like leatherwood honey and how much watering the vegie patch will need this season.

All of this means that we can't take our enviable lifestyle for granted. There are steps we need to take to prepare for changes on the way, and to buffer against the most severe predictions. Business as usual will simply not leave us in a position to deal with the challenges we are already experiencing, as individuals, organisations or a community. Although some change is inevitable, we have the chance now to construct the best

future that we can foresee. It will take innovation and leadership, effort, strong prioritisation and a collective willingness to create our own future. We can be change-makers and actively build a positive outlook for Launceston in spite of the hurdles ahead.

This strategy outlines the City of Launceston's approach to creating a more sustainable city, for now, and for the future.

The strategy consists of the following sections:

- Our position statement for climate change and sustainability;
- Our direction forward - outlines how the City of Launceston is setting about curating ideas and implementing actions;
- The implementation action plan - a live document, to be updated on a rolling basis, which collates input and directs key actions to be implemented.



Our position statement for climate change and sustainability

Council's response to our changing climate

On 8 August 2019, the City of Launceston Council recognised the climate emergency, the need for carbon reduction and action to be taken, resolving to:

'Acknowledge the urgency created by climate change that requires immediate and collaborative action across all tiers of government'

The resolution also instructed the completion of this Sustainability Strategy by the end of 2019, to commence action implementation in 2020, and includes the following objectives for climate action:

1. The development of an implementation action plan for the City of Launceston to strive towards achieving 100% neutrality of carbon emissions by 2025;
2. A renewable energy action plan for the City of Launceston to move towards 100% renewables as sources of energy by 2025;
3. A plan for engaging and working with the community, business and not-for-profit sectors to reduce community emissions and move towards renewables.

The science of climate change makes it clear that action is necessary at all levels of government, including Council.

The role of local government in climate change action

A core function of councils in Tasmania is to provide for the health, safety and welfare of the community. The changes we are beginning to see in our environment (e.g. increasing flood and bushfire severity, drought conditions in parts of Tasmania and interstate) will affect the more vulnerable members of our community the most. This highlights the importance of local government action to address climate change mitigation and adaptation.

Why take this action now?

"If we don't, we are the problem."

Councillor N Daking, 2019

"We owe it to our community, to future communities and to ourselves to put our name on the list of councils who have so far signed up to doing more on climate change..."

Councillor A Dawkins, 2019



Loss of natural capital and community resilience

A sustainable approach extends beyond climate change action, while acknowledging the inter-relationship between the impacts of climate disruption and other forms of environmental harm. Threats to our environment erode natural capital - the natural values that support the way we live - as well as the ecosystems that surround us. We are dependent upon clean air and water, the health of our soils and the ecosystem interactions that provide these to us, to support the social, economic and cultural benefits that we enjoy in Launceston.

The loss of natural capital reduces the ability of our environment to support us, especially in times of environmental stress, which in turn reduces the resilience of our community to respond and recover from these stresses. While climate change acts as both a threat to natural capital and a stressor for communities, environmental degradation occurs in other forms in our municipality.

At the same time, actions taken to address climate change often have co-benefits for biodiversity, human health outcomes and disadvantaged groups.

What you told us...

In May 2019, the City of Launceston launched the first of six consultation themes as part of 'Tomorrow Together', our Council strategic community engagement program (www.yourvoicemyourlaunceston.com.au). The resilient City theme sought to engage across the Launceston community to help ensure that our City continues to thrive regardless of the stresses or challenges we experience. Feedback from participants will be incorporated into the implementation action planning process under the Sustainability Strategy. Although Tomorrow Together is ongoing, here's a snapshot so far of why our changing climate is important to some of our residents:

“Because I want my children and grandchildren to grow up in a world of beauty and opportunities”

“Because it sustains life... We are causing it so we should stop. No more extinctions on our watch.”

“I’m young, so it affects my future.”

“Because I want future generations to enjoy what we have”

“For the future of our planet and the future of life on Earth”



The City of Launceston aspires to greater sustainability, acknowledging the reality of our changing climate and other forms of environmental degradation as urgent matters to be addressed. Council commits to seeking positive solutions for climate change mitigation and adaptation under the implementation action plan, to work towards improved community resilience and natural capital, and to create a more sustainable future for our people and our environment.

A commitment to sustainability

In taking this position, Council acknowledges the following:

- The concept of sustainability is a broad one, and incorporates both the need to take what is important to us now into the future, and the need to carefully conserve the natural capital that underpins and sustains the lifestyle we enjoy, for our own future benefit, and that of generations to follow. Natural resources are finite and require strategic management to avoid over-exploitation and irreversible loss, and, wherever possible, to re-instate lost value.
- Sustainability therefore encompasses the core principles of contributing to natural capital, including water, soil and air quality, biodiversity conservation, and waste minimisation, as well as climate change responses such as energy saving, provision of clean and renewable energy, carbon emission reduction and net carbon sequestration.
- Council accepts the scientific consensus on anthropogenic climate change and its global impacts, including warmer atmospheric, land and sea temperatures, sea level rise and ocean acidification. Council also accepts the position that the consequences of climate change and other environmental harm include deleterious impacts on human health and wellbeing, resource management and economic outcomes.
- Launceston is already experiencing the impacts of our changing climate, which pose a risk to the health, income, environment and well-being of Launceston residents. Actions that seek to reduce the causes of climate change and mitigate against its effects also have co-benefits for other aspects of sustainability and restoration of natural capital, and for the health and well-being of community members.
- Council cannot undertake action towards building a more sustainable Launceston without the input and contribution of residents and stakeholders. Dealing with issues like climate change requires a collective response in order to achieve real change.



Our direction forward

Having made a commitment to a more sustainable Launceston, Council is building on its investment in organisational energy efficiency and solar power, by broadening its approach to sustainability. The goal is to achieve the aspirations outlined in Council's position statement:

1. Seek positive solutions for climate change mitigation and adaption
2. Work towards greater community resilience in the face of local environmental threats
3. Create a more sustainable future for our people and our environment

Guiding principles

This approach is based on the principles of:

- **Leadership** - The City of Launceston acknowledges its role in demonstrating leadership on behalf of the community, for community outcomes. Leadership requires stepping into new dimensions of decision-making, with integrity and accountability, and using this position to assist others in our community to participate with us.
- **Accountability** - As a local government entity, the City of Launceston remains accountable to its community and to the processes that underpin its role.
- **Organisational values** - The values that the City of Launceston holds are foundational to all of its enterprises, and describe Council's environmental, social and governance (ESG) framework complementary to its regulated responsibilities. Our organisational values, which state that 'We care about our community', 'We bring an open mind', 'Our people matter', and 'We go home safe and well', translate into an inclusive and creative approach to improving environmental

and social sustainability for positive outcomes, recognising that we are each part of the community we live and work in. However, they also acknowledge that this requires respectful exploration of different ideas and perspectives to change, and taking responsibility for enabling this change for the better.

- **Whole-of-Council application** - It is critical that actions apply across Council and are embedded within relevant activities, rather than held in a single role or location.
- **Investing in Natural Capital** - Natural capital comprises the living and non-living natural values of our world (e.g. air, water, soil, biota, landforms etc.), which provide the resources and conditions for humans and other species to survive. In many situations, these values can be quantified as ecosystem services, such as the energy saving, carbon sequestration, storm water management and house value-adding effects of urban trees. Investing in actions that conserve or restore local natural capital will not only provide for a better quality of life for Launceston residents and visitors, but will contribute to broader positive impacts.



How we will go about it

Capturing our organisational and community voice

Underpinning this strategy is the concept of a living action plan - one that collects input and is reviewed on an ongoing basis. In order to populate the plan with ideas that may then be undertaken as actions by either Council or the community, the action planning process includes methods of input capture that allow for continual updating, such as:

- Internal staff surveys and consultation
- Community engagement that sources input through a range of formats, including but not restricted to Council's Tomorrow Together community engagement project
- Provision of public updates and feedback

Underlying data

In order to evaluate what level of impact that action implementation has on factors such as Council greenhouse gas emissions, Council will undertake a baseline carbon footprint audit for follow up comparison and reporting.

Council will consolidate information for environmental indicators (e.g.

air quality, water quality, native vegetation mapping and urban canopy cover) to track the impact of Council decisions and actions.

There is also a need to develop and utilise indicators of community resilience, to monitor the impact of actions on community health and well-being, and identify areas of need.

Data collection, review and reporting are therefore to be included as actions for implementation.

Action development and implementation

Following the collation of ideas and innovations from across Council and the community, this input will be processed for implementation. How this review and development process progresses will depend upon the nature of the actions proposed, supported by appropriate criteria developed as part of the action planning process. In order to provide a stable framework for criteria, this strategy accepts the recognised universality of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDG's) (see Appendix 1), as the established objectives for sustainability-oriented actions. Therefore, as a minimum basis to assess and prioritise projects under this strategy, actions must

identify at least one of the UN SDG's as a primary objective, supported by additional objectives as appropriate, and not in any way propose negative impacts to any SDG.

Council staff working group

Actions that can be implemented within the scope of general Council operations, but that require development beyond the role or scope of an individual will be considered by an internal staff working group.

Community consideration

In order to consider and guide actions that reach beyond operational Council processes and that likely require key stakeholder or community partnerships, representative community members and relevant stakeholders will review submitted input through a collaborative process. Actions developed through this process will be included in the action plan, noting the nature of Council's proposed role in implementation.

Consideration by Council

Where actions require progression at a strategic or policy level of Council, they will be recommended for the consideration of Council through officer updates.



Resourcing

In order to fulfil Council's commitment to the implementation of strategic sustainability actions, resourcing will be provided. While this will include annual budget consideration to support funding and staff allocation towards projects identified in the implementation action plan, Council provisioning can also include less tangible resources, such as championing of actions by elected representatives, empowerment of staff to undertake improvements they identify within their own workplaces and messaging to the community that positive change is within our scope.

Taking what we can't do to those who can

Despite meeting the criteria for sought outcomes, some proposed actions will not be able to be progressed by Council, even with community support or partnerships. Where an action has merit for Launceston but requires external support, (e.g. from state or federal level government), the action for Council will be to advocate for this external support. Advocacy is an action that local government is well-placed to implement, on behalf of their constituents.

Communication: Publicly celebrating achievements, great and small

An important part of the process is providing feedback on progress and an on-going dialogue with the broader community. Appropriate communication activities will be included in actions to be undertaken.

The Action Plan

An implementation action plan will be developed through an internal and external consultative process to determine key actions to progress under the Sustainability Strategy. This will be presented in a separate document. This will detail the steps Council will undertake to achieve the goals of the Sustainability Strategy, with timeframes for implementation.

However, Council has endorsed the following actions to be undertaken ahead of the action plan:

- Council to write to all State and Federal parliamentarians whose offices lie within the City of Launceston boundaries, and to the Prime Minister, the federal Opposition Leaders and the Tasmanian Premier, expressing its position on the climate emergency we are facing, and
- Council to conduct an audit of all City of Launceston operations to obtain a current baseline for greenhouse gas emission levels (immediate timeframe).

*For now,
and for the future*



Appendix 1

Further Information

The following are useful sources of information about climate change and other sustainability issues:

Tasmanian climate information

Climate Futures for Tasmania. (2019) Antarctic Climate & Ecosystems Cooperative Research [online] Available at: <http://acecrc.org.au/climate-futures-for-tasmania/> [Accessed 15 Aug. 2019].

Tasmanian Climate Change Office. (2019) Department of Premier and Cabinet [online] Available at: <http://www.dpac.tas.gov.au/divisions/climatechange> [Accessed 15 Aug. 2019]

Climate change in Australia

Climate Council. (2019) Climate Council [online] Available at: <https://www.climatecouncil.org.au/resource/reports/> [Accessed 15 Aug. 2019]

Climate Change in Australia. (2015) CSIRO and Bureau of Meteorology [online] Available at: <https://www.climatechangeinaustralia.gov.au/en/climate-projections/about/citation/> [Accessed 15 Aug. 2019]

Climate Change Information for Australia. (2017) CSIRO [online] Available at: <https://www.csiro.au/en/Research/OandA/Areas/Oceans-and-climate/Climate-change-information> [Accessed 15 Aug. 2019]

Climate Science and Data. (2019) The Department of the Environment and Energy, Australian Government [online] Available at: <http://www.environment.gov.au/climate-change/climate-science-data> [Accessed 15 Aug. 2019]

Climate Science and Data. (2019) The Department of the Environment and Energy, Australian Government [online] Available at: <http://www.environment.gov.au/climate-change/climate-science-data> [Accessed 15 Aug. 2019]

Climate change, environment and health

Doctors for the Environment Australia. (2019) Doctors for the Environment Australia [online] Available at: <https://www.dea.org.au/> [Accessed 15 Aug. 2019]

Environment, Climate Change and Psychology. (2019) The Australian Psychological Society [online] Available at: <https://www.psychology.org.au/About-Us/What-we-do/advocacy/Advocacy-social-issues/Environment-climate-change-psychology> [Accessed 15 Aug 2019]

Appendix 2

UN Sustainable Development Goals for action criteria goal-setting¹

Goal 1: End poverty in all its forms everywhere

Goal 2: End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture

Goal 3: Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages

Goal 4: Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all

Goal 5: Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls

Goal 6: Ensure availability and sustainable management of water sanitation for all

Goal 7: Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all

Goal 8: Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all

Goal 9: Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialisation and foster innovation

Goal 10: Reduce inequality within and among countries

Goal 11: Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable

Goal 12: Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns

Goal 13: Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts

Goal 14: Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development

Goal 15: Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss

Goal 16: Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels

Goal 17: Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalise the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development

¹ UN General Assembly, Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, 21 October 2015, A/RES/70/1, available at: <https://www.refworld.org/docid/57b6e3e44.html> [accessed 18 July 2019]



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