

Local Government Climate Emergency Toolkit Summary

About

The community group Melville City CAN (Climate Action Network) has compiled this summary of the Local Government Climate Emergency Toolkit which was originally developed in consultation with industry experts, council employees, community groups, campaigners and both current and former councillors.

It was developed by Dale Martin after serving four years as councillor in the City of Moreland, Victoria, Australia and after successful efforts advocating and campaigning on a range of issues, including co-founding and campaigning on the 'Plastic Bag Free Victoria' campaign.

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What is this toolkit?

This toolkit offers practical recommendations for how local governments (also known as city councils and local councils) can take immediate action to address the climate emergency. It is written for local government councillors, officers and community members who want to take climate action. The recommendations outlined in this guide are specific and measurable, with suggested time frames.

This toolkit features information on:

- A. Who the decision makers are in local government
- B. Key documents that can influence change, and
- C. Recommendations to take action.

Why local government?

Local governments have significant opportunities and the power to invest in services and infrastructure to combat the climate emergency. In Victoria, local governments manage over \$90 billion of community assets and infrastructure and spend over \$8 billion on services each year.

Local Governments play a critical role to:

- communicate the current and future impacts of our climate emergency
- demonstrate climate adaptation and mitigation strategies
- pilot and promote new technologies
- lobby other levels of government and neighbouring local councils to act
- work with residents and businesses to lower greenhouse gas emissions, save money and improve the community's health.

Areas where local government can effectively contribute to climate emergency action include:

1. Energy
2. Transport
3. Communication
4. Procurement and Waste
5. Industry and built environment
6. Open space and agriculture
7. Transparency and accountability
8. Advocacy

Recommendations for action to address the climate emergency

This toolkit contains areas where local governments can affect climate emergency action. It is important that suggestions and actions including a climate emergency declaration match the level of urgency and ambition that comes with that declaration. Therefore, each of the recommendations below are within the power of local government and are specific and measurable and include timeframes. The recommendations provide who should enact the change within council, via what method and the key document for embedding the change. Where applicable, each recommendation will also establish three levels of ambition (one, two and three stars). One star being the recommended minimum level of ambition through to three stars being best-practice.

Legend

- * Recommended minimum
- ** Moderate
- *** Best Practice

1. Energy Actions

Over half of Australia's greenhouse gas emissions are attributable to stationary energy consumption. Local governments have the opportunity to work with communities to take steps to reduce emissions from energy consumption through council's procurement of energy, supporting the community to generate renewable energy, fuel switch and reduce demand from fossil fuel sources, as well as advocate for sustainable energy options more broadly.

Recommended Energy actions

*	**	***	Who	Key Document	Method
Set a combined 2030 target for operations and community emissions.	2030 net zero target	2030 net negative target	Councillors	Council Plan or monthly report	Seek inclusion via Council Plan adoption or monthly report
Ensure council operates on 100% green electricity through the direct purchase of green electricity and/or a power purchase arrangement. Carbon neutral certification must be provided while fossil fuels, including gas connections, are phased out by 2025.	Domestic offsets purchased	No offsets required	Councillors	Council Plan or monthly report or annual budget	Seek inclusion via plan adoption or monthly report. Funding to be sought from the budget.
Commit to lead and facilitate a 100% renewable energy power purchase, microgrid, virtual power plant or similar agreement for at least 0.5% of residents within the council area.	>1% / dedicated resource	>5% / dedicated resource	Councillors	Council Plan or monthly report or annual budget	Seek inclusion via plan adoption or monthly report. Funding sought from budget.
Commit at least 2% of the council budget or \$10 per capita (whichever is higher) to energy efficiency or renewable energy grants, programs and upgrades for sporting clubs and residential and commercial properties. Low-income residents could be targeted in the first instance.	3% / \$10 per capita	5% / \$20 per capita	Councillors	Council Plan or monthly report or annual budget	Seek inclusion via plan adoption or monthly report. Funding to be sought from the budget

Example of Energy Action

A councillor adds an amendment to the Council Plan to include a 2030 net negative operations and community target. When moving the draft or final Council Plan, councillors can insert actions for inclusion. This will have financial and operational implications and is most likely to succeed when drafted in conjunction with CEO, executive team and CFO feedback. For best outcomes, councillors should seek to include these in the draft Council Plan and have measures supported by community submissions as part of a robust consultation process.

The text below is suggested text:

Add the additional point to the 20xx draft Council Plan.

That Council:

1. Notes the climate emergency and the urgent need for Council to implement a range of measures to mitigate the worst of impacts from occurring.
2. Sets a combined 2030 target for operations and community emissions with associated actions for community consultation.

2. Transport Actions

Around a fifth of Australia's greenhouse gas emissions are attributable to transport. Local governments influence the safety and design of our roads, footpaths and bike infrastructure to incentivise zero emissions and sustainable transport. The way we move has a critical impact not just on reducing our emissions but the health of our communities.

Recommended Transport Actions

*	**	***	Who	Key Document	Method
Commit at least 2% of the Council budget or \$10 per capita (whichever is higher) towards new pedestrian and cycling infrastructure in the city.	3% / \$10 per capita	5% / \$20 per capita	Councillors	Council Plan or monthly report or annual budget	Seek inclusion via Council Plan adoption or monthly report. Funding to be sort from the budget
Reallocate road space to active and public transport users on all local roads within 2km of all activity and neighbourhood centres. This will include speed limit reductions, separated cycling lanes, traffic calming measures and road space reallocation.	5km and max 40km/h on all local roads in that area	5km and max 30km/h on all local roads in that area	Councillors	Council Plan or monthly report or annual budget	Seek inclusion via plan adoption or monthly report. Funding to be sought from the budget.
Develop an advocacy plan that prioritises consistent and strong advocacy to the State and Federal Government to improve cycling connections, public transport infrastructure and roll out of a public electric vehicle (EV) charging network across city boundaries and the broader region.	dedicated resource		Councillors	Council Plan or monthly report or annual budget	Seek inclusion via Council Plan adoption or monthly report. Funding sought from the budget.
Introduce a fleet policy that targets a maximum 100g/C02-e average emissions across all fleet vehicles purchased, with an immediate phase out of diesel engines where 'Euro 6 standards' cannot be achieved. Zero emissions and electric vehicles (EV) should make up at least 25% of all new vehicles purchased.	80g/C02-e		Councillors	Council Plan or monthly report	Seek inclusion via plan adoption or monthly report.

Example of Transport Action

A councillor adds an amendment to the annual budget to commit to per capita expenditure targets for new transport infrastructure. When moving the draft or final annual budgets Councillors can insert actions for inclusion. This will have financial and operational implications and is most likely to succeed when drafted in conjunction with CEO, executive team and CFO feedback. For best outcomes, councillors should seek to include these in the draft annual budget and have measures supported by community submissions as part of a robust consultation process.

The text below is suggested text.

Add the additional point to the 20xx annual budget.

That Council:

1. Notes the climate emergency and the urgent need for Council to implement a range of measures to mitigate the worst of impacts from occurring.
2. Include funding for at least 2% of the Council budget or \$10 per capita (whichever is higher) towards new pedestrian and cycling infrastructure in the city as part of the final adoption of the 20xx Annual Council Budget.
3. Notes that the capital works program will be updated to reflect changes in expenditure.

3. Communication Actions

Communicating with the community is vital to building trust, public support, and community awareness of local issues. As councillors and council officers work together in the community's interest, councils should provide information about the climate emergency and what action the council is taking and what change they are trying to influence.

Recommended Communication Actions

*	**	***	Who	Key Document	Method
Publicly declare a climate emergency	N/A	N/A	Councillors, CEO, executive team	Council Plan or monthly report	Seek inclusion in Council Plan or monthly report
Use climate emergency language and concepts to inform council communications by articulating the level of urgency and mobilisation required in the communications plan, social media posts, quarterly newsletters, planning applications and on the council website.	N/A	N/A	Councillors, CEO, executive team	Council Plan or monthly report, communication plans	Seek inclusion via plan adoption or monthly report
Create actions under each area for community participation and leadership. Including the establishment of community climate emergency advisory groups or climate-focused business networking.	dedicated resource	≥ 3 dedicated resources	Councillors, CEO, executive team	Council Plan or monthly Report, Annual budget, Departmental strategies	Seek inclusion via Council Plan adoption or monthly report. Funding sought from the budget

Example of Communication Action

Using a notice of motion, a councillor calls for the council to declare a climate emergency and asks for a report with recommendations to return to a future meeting. Any councillor can move a notice of motion or general business item to and seek a report back with options for implementation.

The text below is suggested text.

That Council:

1. Acknowledges we are in a state of climate emergency that requires urgent action by all levels of government, including local government.
2. Embeds this climate emergency acknowledgement and declaration and required actions into all future strategies, the next Council Plan and budgetary processes.
3. Seeks a report back to the next meeting investigating how recommendations as listed in the Local Government Climate Emergency Toolkit can be implemented within council operations.

4. Procurement and Waste Actions

Through procurement, local governments can support businesses who are supplying zero or low carbon and recycled alternatives, as well as supporting the community with the right tools and services to consume less and recycle more.

Recommended Procurement and Waste Actions

*	**	***	Who	Key Document	Method
Develop a plan for council to divest from institutions that operate or invest in fossil fuel companies and projects. The plan should seek to address both investments and banking with authorised deposit taking institutions.	Divestment of all investments within 12 months	Divestment of all Investments/authorised deposit institutions within 12 months	Councillors	Council Plan or monthly report	Seek inclusion via Council Plan or monthly report
Set a 100% recycling target for 2030 and ensure there is a ban on the incineration of all mixed waste collected. While giving access to at least 3 streams for waste separated recycling in both public and private areas and residences. Bin colours must be compliant with AS4123.	≥3 waste separation options for residents/ reusable cloth nappy and sanitary product program.	≥5 waste separation options for residents/ reusable cloth nappy and sanitary product program	Councillors	Council Plan or monthly report or annual budget	Seek inclusion via Council plan adoption or monthly report. Funding from the budget.
Promote the sharing and repair economy by providing community grants and assistance to develop and promote toy, tool, seed and traditional libraries, as well as repair cafes and facilities.	1 of each available in the city	3 of each available in the city and ongoing grants program established	Councillors	Council Plan or monthly report or annual budget	Seek inclusion via Council Plan adoption or monthly report. Funding to be sought from the budget
Amend the procurement policy and council technotes to individually weigh and evaluate environmental and social benefits. While also mandating a minimum of 10% recycled content in all new capital works projects increasing to 20% as a minimum over the term.	15% / 25%	25% / 35%	Councillors	Council Plan or monthly report	Seek inclusion via Council Plan adoption or monthly report
All tenders are reported to council and/or notified on the council website publicly declaring the recycled content or other environmental benefits of these projects. Feedback is to be provided to unsuccessful tenderers where their application lacks environmental benefits.	Section of all reports contain 'Climate Emergency section	Section of all reports contain 'Climate Emergency section' and there is dedicated resource	Councillors	Council Plan or monthly report	Seek inclusion via Council Plan adoption or monthly report
Promote and transition council operations to using low carbon / zero emissions concrete and steel.	Demonstrate zero emissions materials in >5% of projects	Demonstrate zero emissions materials in >20% of projects	Councillors	Council Plan or monthly report	Inclusion via plan adoption or monthly report

Example of Procurement and Waste Action

Using a notice of motion, a councillor calls to update the procurement policy and mandate a recycled content percentage target in new capital works projects.

The text below is suggested text.

That Council calls for a report that seeks to:

1. Amend the procurement policy and Council technotes to individually weigh and evaluate environmental and social benefits at 10% in all future tenders.
2. Mandates a minimum of 15% recycled content in all new capital works projects increasing to 25% as a minimum over the term.

5. Industry and Built Environment Actions

Local governments can make decisions in the built environment that reduce emissions and the need to extract finite resources. The way the built environment operates is a vital contributor to reducing emissions and saving resources within an economy.

Recommended Industry and Built Environment Actions

*	**	***	Who	Key Document	Method
<p>Ensure that the council implements a local Environmentally Sustainable Design (ESD) planning policy and/or participation in an ambitious state-wide ESD policy. As a minimum this must include;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • an all-electric home that is at least one NatHERS star higher than minimum standards • onsite renewable energy generation • ≥3 streams of waste separation for recycling • water harvesting • green infrastructure and permeable surfaces. <p>This work can be further supported by the introduction of voluntary scorecards or best practice guidelines.</p>	Mandatory ESD provisions within scheme	Mandatory ESD provisions within scheme / lead with additional voluntary tools and excellence scorecards / all new Council-led developments are passive house or equivalent excellence standard	Councillors	Council Plan or monthly report	Seek inclusion in Council Plan adoption or monthly report
Develop a water sensitive urban design (WSUD) policy including inclusion of rain gardens and water harvesting in all new community and public infrastructure projects.	N/A	N/A	Councillors	Council Plan or monthly report or annual budget	Seek inclusion via plan adoption or monthly report. Funding from budget
Each community centre, club, park and playground must provide easy access to free drinking water. This may be combined with reusable cutlery and crockery, washing facilities and plastic wise strategies to reduce dependence on consumption of fossil fuel products.	All facilities have accessible and free drinking water	All facilities have accessible and free drinking water and washing facilities	Councillors	Council Plan or monthly Report or Annual budget	Seek inclusion via Council Plan adoption or monthly report. Funding to be sought from the budget
Support commercial businesses to retrofit operations to align with climate emergency actions.	Commercial grants program	Commercial grants program / dedicated resource	Councillors	Council Plan or monthly report	Seek inclusion via Council Plan adoption or monthly report

Example of Industry and Built Environment Action

A councillor chooses to amend the recommendations of a report already on the agenda by moving an amendment to seek inclusion of water sensitive urban design. The text below is suggested text. Add the additional point to the report.

That Council:

1. Develops a water sensitive urban design (WSUD) policy including inclusion of rain gardens and water harvesting in all new community and public infrastructure projects.

6. Open Space and Agriculture Actions

Green, open space and connection to our natural environment not only helps protect biodiversity but is vital for our physical and mental health. Local governments can ensure we not only have access to open space but have a greater awareness and understanding of the entire system in which it operates.

Recommended Open Space and Agriculture Actions

*	**	***	Who	Key Document	Method
Ensure the council has developed and provides ongoing funded positions to maintain and harmonise a food systems strategy, biodiversity strategy, urban forest and urban heat island mitigation strategies.	OPEX / CAPEX for each ≥\$80k	OPEX / CAPEX for each ≥\$200k	Councillors	Council Plan or monthly report or annual budget.	Seek inclusion via Council Plan adoption or monthly report. Funding to be sought from budget.
Commit to promoting and engaging only vegetarian catering at meetings and events. All produce and catering should be as locally sourced as possible.	≥1 day per week	All events	Councillors	Council Plan or monthly report.	Seek inclusion via Council Plan adoption or monthly report.
Ensure local laws are updated with provisions to protect significant or mature trees.	Protections also built within the planning scheme	Protections also built within planning scheme/develop significant tree register	Councillors	Council Plan or monthly report.	Seek inclusion via Council Plan adoption or monthly report.
In urban areas, ensure all residents have access to green open space within 500m of their property. In rural areas implement best practice land management including where relevant, initiating a drawdown project to support the zero-carbon target objective and enhance agricultural practices, regenerative agriculture and Traditional Owner practices.	400m	400m and net gain of open space each year	Councillors	Council Plan or monthly report.	Seek inclusion via Council Plan adoption or monthly report.
Increase engagement and employment of local First Nations people in management/improvement of open space, parkland (including cool burn cultural practices for managing fire risk) and employment in council.	Management plan	Management plan / dedicated resource	Councillors	Council Plan or monthly report or annual budget.	Seek inclusion via Council Plan adoption or monthly report. Funding to be sought from budget.

Example of Open Space and Agriculture Action

Using a notice of motion, a councillor calls to set a program of works to develop and provide ongoing resources to food systems, biodiversity, urban forest and urban heat island mitigation strategies. The text below is suggested text.

That Council calls for a report that seeks to:

1. Ensure that Council has developed and provides ongoing funded positions to maintain and harmonise a food systems strategy, biodiversity strategy, urban forest and urban heat island mitigation strategies
2. Provides options to ensure each program has funding in excess of \$80,000 per annum.

7. Transparent & Accountable Actions

Council operations and actions should be transparent to ensure accountability to the public. Without clear roles and responsibilities, a clear strategy or realistic goals, climate emergency action may be undermined.

Recommended Transparent & Accountable Actions

*	**	***	Who	Key Document	Method
Embed measurable climate emergency key performance indicators (KPIs) into the Chief Executive Officer's (CEO) contract.	N/A	N/A	Councillors	CEO contract.	Seek inclusion via confidential report.
Ensure councillor attendance registers, expense policies, agendas and minutes for the previous 5 years are made publicly available on the council website.	N/A	N/A	Councillors, supported by CEO, governance and communications staff	Council Plan or monthly report and ultimately council website.	Seek inclusion via Council Plan adoption or monthly report.
Digitise processes to promote reduction in paper consumption across council operations. This should include on demand video recording of all council meetings to reduce the need for residents to commute and to improve transparency of decision making.	>50% internal processes digitised	>90% internal processes digitised	Councillors, CEO, executive team	Council Plan or monthly report.	Seek inclusion via Council Plan adoption or monthly report.
Ensure the organisation's risk management framework is aligned with Environmental Management System ISO 14001. This would seek to ensure broad understanding of environmental aspects and impacts and, Environmental Strategy and Management Plan established. Importantly involving senior management through responsibility and decision making.	14001 certified	31000 aligned, 14001/ 9001 certified	Councillors, CEO, executive team	Council Plan or monthly report.	Seek inclusion via Council Plan adoption or monthly report.

Example of Transparent & Accountable Action

The CEO's key performance indicators (KPIs) are set at the beginning of a new CEO contract and are reviewed annually. Every councillor will have an opportunity to amend the CEO's KPIs at least once in their council term.

In a confidential report on the CEO contract a councillor could add the following wording:

That Council:

Insert the following wording into the Chief Executive Officer key performance indicators within the CEO contract:

- Ensures effective advocacy on the climate emergency on behalf of the local community and Council to other levels of government, peak bodies and industry.
- Ensures the executive and management group have strong alignment in contributing and delivering measurable actions that mitigate the effects of the climate emergency.
- Delivers on key outcomes as highlighted in the Council Plan including prioritising actions related to mitigating the effects of the climate emergency.
- Demonstrates a high level of financial acumen including innovative approaches that contribute to delivering on actions that mitigate the climate emergency.

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