

INVERELL SHIRE COUNCIL



Environmental Sustainability Plan



Adopted 28 July 2009 (Res 133/09)
Reviewed April 2018

ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY PLAN

Introduction

Inverell Shire Council is committed to the protection and enhancement of the environment that sustains our Community. This environment is being impacted by changes in climatic conditions and the need to consider how Council can protect the environment is now more evident.

Council's commitment to protecting the environment extends beyond the environment protection imperative that is contained in the *Local Government Act 1993* (NSW). It is a reflection of this Council's growing sense of responsibility of the environment and the need to display leadership in the stewardship for this precious resource that we all share. Stewardship of the environment can be demonstrated through Council's day to day practices and strategic planning.

Inverell Shire Council believes that for a community to be sustainable requires a healthy community, a healthy economy and a healthy environment. These three notions are inexorably linked – a healthy environment is the cornerstone which underpins a community's ability to develop economically and socially.

This plan outlines Council's environmental sustainability journey. It identifies four (4) focus areas and outlines the actions to be undertaken by Council to enhance these focus areas. While Council cannot legislate to address the root causes of climatic change, it can take steps to protect our environment and address the impacts of a changing climate.

The Action Plan will be reviewed each year and a comprehensive review undertaken every four (4) years. The Plan is proposed as a framework for community involvement in the sustainability journey.

Background

Recently, the Australian Local Government Association adopted the 'Climate Change ALGA Position Paper and Discussion Document', which outlined Local Government's place in addressing Climate Change. The document encourages Council's to prepare for climate change, protect its assets, adapt to localised conditions and protect the environment.

A. Convention on Climate Change

The driver for management of climate change at the global level is the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), an international treaty formulated in 1992. The prime goal of UNFCCC is to manage atmospheric greenhouse gas concentrations at a level that will 'prevent dangerous human interference with the climate system'. Currently 195 countries (referred to as parties) have ratified UNFCCC.

In 1997 the Kyoto Protocol was added to the UNFCCC. The Protocol embeds the principle that countries have 'common but differentiated responsibilities'. The

Protocol recognises developed countries, compared to developing countries, have traditionally been the major source of anthropogenic emissions of greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions to atmosphere.

The major feature of the Kyoto Protocol is that it sets legally binding targets for 37 industrialised countries and the European community for reducing GHG emissions. These amount to an average of 5% against 1990 levels over the five-year period 2008-2012. Australia's target under the Kyoto Protocol is to limit GHG emissions to 8% above the 1990 level.

A key component of the Kyoto Protocol is that countries are able to use 'market based mechanisms' covering mitigation actions in developed and developing countries to meet their emission reduction commitments. Currently 193 countries, including Australia but with notable exception of USA, have ratified the Kyoto Protocol.

The major distinction between the Protocol and the Convention is that while the Convention encouraged industrialised countries to stabilize GHG emissions, the Protocol commits them to do so.

The work of developing, implementing and monitoring the progress on the UNFCCC and the Kyoto Protocol is directed by annual meetings of countries, called Conference of Parties (COPs), who have ratified the Treaties. For example the meeting of countries in Copenhagen in December 2009 will be known as COP 15, the 15th meeting of countries who have ratified the UNFCCC.

Outcomes from recent COPs have focussed on progressing high road climate policy. Outcome of COP 13 (held in Bali, Indonesia in December 2007) saw agreement on a comprehensive process to implement a shared vision for long term cooperation, up to and after 2012, by developed and developing countries to reach an agreed and adopted (binding) decision at COP 15 scheduled for Copenhagen, Denmark, in December 2009. The shared vision was to be constructed consistent with principle of 'common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities, and taking into account social and economic conditions'.

B. Australian Government Response to Climate Change

Australia's climate change policy is evolving, consistent with processes detailed in UNFCCC and the Kyoto Protocol supplemented further by other initiatives such as the Carbon Farming Initiative. Australia's evolving policy for climate change will in all likelihood settle on a mixture of regulatory requirements and incentive programs to offset carbon emissions. For the regulatory component current Australian Government policy calls for the interim carbon price on GHG emissions from nominated industries transferring into a cap and trade system to manage mandated GHG emission target. The Carbon Pollution Reduction Scheme developed by the Australian Government this year continues to provide frameworks for GHG management.

Australia will release official projections of its GHG emissions annually.

C. Likely Impacts

Little information is available on the likely specific impacts of a changing climate on the New England North West, however the State Government indicates that Inland NSW could experience:

- More 'hot' days per year
- Less 'cooler days per year
- Less rainfall per annum, and
- A higher fire danger

These likely impacts were used to inform this Environmental Sustainability Plan.

Table 1: Some possible impacts of climate change

Area of concern	Aspect of climate change	
	Temperature and evaporation	Rainfall and storms
Environment and public infrastructure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » increased risk of fires leading to severe damage to vegetation and wildlife and quality of water supplies » increased evaporation reducing water supplies and water quality through, for example, blooms of blue-green algae from increased nutrient concentrations » drier soil leading to less vegetation and an increase in turbid runoff following rainfall events » changes in distribution of plant and animal species resulting in less biodiversity » putrescible waste rotting more rapidly and requiring more servicing » outdoor venues requiring more shade 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » increased erosion leading to pest and weed invasion » increased change of contaminants and pollutants being carried by stormwater » erosion of watercourses leading to poor water quality for aquatic species and drinking water supplies » increased flooding of roads leading to washouts » increased damage to utilities including water supply, sewers and communications
Society	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » heat waves resulting in dehydration and heat stress among vulnerable sections of the community, such as the elderly » outdoor sporting events needing to be rescheduled 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » increased erosion leading to poor aesthetics and recreational amenity » increased overflow of stormwater channels leading to flooding of private property » increased safety risks from flash flooding and flying debris » storm damage leading to problems and delays in the supply of goods
Economy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » more expense involved in keeping buildings cool 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » increased maintenance costs from damage to public buildings from wind, hail etc » damage to vineyards, crops and other aspects of the landscape leading to less tourism and significant impacts on agriculture
Council governance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Changes to working hours and provision of heat-protective clothing for outdoor staff » More strain on emergency services such as fire fighting » A need to reassess risks to council 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » need for buildings designed and built to appropriate standards to reduce liability » provision of increased resources for emergency response » a need to reassess risks to council

Source: NSW Department of Environment and Climate Change

ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY PLAN

'Inverell Shire Council is committed to the challenge of sustaining our local environment. Council will continue to seek partnerships in this endeavour and request support for our mitigation and adaptation actions'

Cr B Johnston OAM
Mayor

1. IMPLEMENTATION

Council has identified four (4) key policy areas that impact on its commitment to sustaining our environment. These are:

- i) Water Management
- ii) Biodiversity
- iii) Waste Management
- iv) Energy Management

This plan proposes activities that either mitigate the impacts of changing climatic conditions or changes/adapts Council activities to respond to the changed circumstances.

1.1 Water Management

The possible impacts of climate change and the increased demand for a quality water supply by the community requires that water management be a key issue for Council.

Predicted reduced rainfall and higher evaporation rates will place pressure upon our water resources. Stormwater and sewerage treatment have an impact on local waterways and rivers and require action to protect the quality of these assets.

Considering these factors, the following management principles will be utilised by Council:

- consider water usage as a key indicator of land use management in both rural and urban settings,
- seek long term positive outcomes from water management activities in a changing climate,
- implement programs that seek behavioural change in water use that results in a reduced demand for water.

1.2 Biodiversity

Biodiversity is the systematic interaction of all life forms (plants, animals and micro organisms) and it is this interaction that is essential to sustain our communities. Our involvement with this ecosystem should be conducted in a manner that ensures the long term health of the ecosystem.

A healthy, biodiverse environment is necessary to maintaining water quality, air quality, soil formation and plant regeneration. Human activities that seek to facilitate the operation of this biodiverse environment will result in a more comfortable place to work, live and visit.

Considering these factors, the following management principles will be utilised by Council:

- consider vegetation as a key indicator of catchment health and land use

management

- protection of remnant vegetation, retention and improvement of wildlife corridors and protection of wetlands and key focus areas.
- Foster behavioural change in vegetation and biodiversity management across the community.
- Include fire management and weed control as part of vegetation and biodiversity management planning.

1.3 Waste Management

All human activities generate waste. Appropriate management of this waste stream is necessary to ensure air and water quality; and non-degradation of habitat for flora and fauna.

These imperatives suggest that a philosophy of 'avoidance, re-use and recycling' should characterise our approach to waste management.

Considering this philosophy, the following management principles will be utilised by Council:

- foster behavioural changes in generating solid waste,
- encourage reuse and recycling to reduce consumption of resources and minimise transport costs,
- Promote accounting for environmental costs in Council activities.

1.4 Energy Management

Human activity affects the amount of greenhouse emissions entering the atmosphere. The level of these emissions is a source of concern due to the impact on weather patterns and our biodiversity.

Council is a major consumer of energy. The practices adopted by Council can reduce energy usage, reduce costs and promote alternative energy sources.

In consideration of the impact greenhouse emissions have on the environment, the following energy management principles are to be utilised:

- Foster behavioural change in energy use across the community
- Maximise use of energy efficient products and processes in Council activities.

2. ACTION PLAN

2.1 WATER MANAGEMENT

	Action	Outcome	Timeframe
2.1.1	Mitigation		
	Develop strategies to implement 'best practice' for management of Council's water schemes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strategies are adopted and met 	Ongoing
	Monitor and report on water usage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Potable water use is monitored and can meet demands 	Ongoing
2.1.2	Adaptation		
	Implement the Floodplain Risk Management Strategies and Plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The community is educated on the objectives of the plan Regular reviews are conducted to ensure Council's response to emergency events will be effective 	Ongoing Ongoing
	Incorporate principles of sensible water use designs in development guidelines	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Developers and builders incorporate water sensitive urban designs in developments 	Ongoing
	Incorporate water conservation and appropriate plant species in public open spaces	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Potable water use in open spaces assets is minimised 	Ongoing

2.2 BIODIVERSITY

	Action	Outcome	Timeframe
2.2.1	Mitigation		
	Increase native vegetation cover on Council reserves	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conduct tree planting day events • Native habitats are conserved and maintained • Number of conservation reserves are increased 	Annually Ongoing Ongoing
	Enhance ecological quality of rivers and waterways	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduce waste in stormwater • Observe sediment control measures on Council worksites 	Ongoing Ongoing
	Enhance Terrestrial and aquatic ecosystems	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Partnerships are established with organisations seeking to improve ecosystems • Projects to enhance ecosystems are funded annually • Weed Management Plan is prepared annually and implemented 	Ongoing Ongoing Ongoing
2.2.1	Adaptation		
	Continue to advocate for additional funding for control of weeds of national importance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Existing allocations are maintained and increased 	Ongoing

2.3 WASTE MANAGEMENT

Action		Outcome	Timeframe
2.3.1 Mitigation			
	Review Council's kerbside waste collection strategy and implement enhancements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A waste strategy is implemented • Volume of waste to landfill is reduced • Recycling rates are increased 	2010/11 Ongoing Ongoing
	Advocate to have a greater range of products recycled to stop going to landfill	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase range of material that can be placed in recycle crate • Chemical/Paint Clean Up held annually 	Ongoing
	Promote the need for container deposit legislation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The State Government implements a CDS program 	Ongoing
2.3.2 Adaptation			
	Promote the minimisation of plastic bag use and packing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Volume of plastic bags in landfill is reduced 	Ongoing

2.4 ENERGY MANAGEMENT

Action		Outcome	Timeframe
2.4.1		Mitigation	
	Reduce Carbon Footprint	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conduct energy audits of Council's major energy consuming facilities – one per year 	2010/11 and ongoing
	Apply ecologically sustainable development design principles in new or refurbished Council facilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ESD design principles incorporated in building codes 	Ongoing
2.4.2		Adaptation	
	Promote energy conservation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Council's energy consumption is reduced 	Ongoing