

Introduction

The Shire of Augusta Margaret River is a local government area situated in the South West of Western Australia. It occupies 2,240 square kilometres and has an extensive coastline with 120 kilometres of beaches, bays and rocky points. The Shire comprises rural countryside, sandy beaches, native forests and National Parks. The Margaret River flows to the ocean at Prevelly while the Blackwood River flows to Augusta in the south. The Shire is part of the traditional lands of the Wadandi and Pibelmen people, who have lived in the region for at least 50,000 years. Today, the Shire has a population of some 15,700 residents. Its major industries are agriculture and tourism.

The Shire is a member of the Cities Power Partnership which consists of over 100 local government Australia wide committed to acting on climate change. This commitment is embedded in the statutory framework which guides the Shire operations. The Shire has in place a number of plans and programs aimed at climate change mitigation and adaptation. For example

Community Strategic Plan 2036, which can be found [here](#)

Environmental Sustainability Strategy which can be found [here](#);

The Shire recently held a Climate Action Summit, details of which can be viewed [here](#)

It is recognised that the Climate Change Authority's previous advice to government has taken a sectoral approach. Local Government, and specifically the Shire of Augusta Margaret River play a key role in many of the sectors for example:

Electricity generation – assisting communities to take responsibility for their own energy needs through community owned power generation, micro grids and solar pv.

Transport – regulating the roll out of the electrical charging infrastructure which will be required to service the transition to electric vehicles which appears imminent.

Waste – Local Governments are responsible for municipal waste collection and disposal.

Agriculture and land – Local Government planning controls regulate the use of land and clearing of native vegetation.

Energy Efficiency – Local Government administers state and federal planning and building controls through local planning schemes and the Building Code of Australia.

Key Areas of Investigation

The Shire provides the following advice in response to the key areas of investigation identified by the Climate Change Authority (CCA):

Previous recommendations

What has changed since this advice was given (2016) and how should the advice be updated to account for those changes?

The CCA has identified Western Australia as the 4th highest emitter of CO² emissions in the country and the only state or territory to significantly increase emission over the 10 year period to 2016. Notably, WA is the only State without an emissions reduction target.

Whilst it is understood that the current WA government has committed to preparing a climate change policy, there is still disagreement amongst the government and opposition parties regarding the role of local government in addressing climate change.

Over the last three years there has been a growing unease amongst the international community that not enough is being done to tackle climate change. This has been evidenced locally by participation of students in the 'climate school strike'.

The Shire of Augusta Margaret River requests that the CCA's advice to government recognise the high degree of strong local support for climate change action and the key role that Local Government plays in taking legitimate, practical and proactive action on climate change.

Achieving a net zero emissions economy in the long-term

- *Goal for net zero emissions*
- *How can the Government assist the positioning of the Australian economy to best take advantage of opportunities associated with the global transition to net zero emissions, while managing any risks?*
- *And what are these opportunities and risks?*

The advice of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) is that Australia's emission reduction commitments under the Paris Agreement are not sufficient to avoid significant climate change impacts. As such, policy settings are not aspirational enough to motivate the necessary shift in the economy. Western Australia is further disadvantaged by the lack of a state target.

In May 2019, representatives from the Shire of Augusta Margaret River together with 20 other Western Australian Local Governments joined with the Cities Power Partnership to call on the State and Federal governments to commit to the following targets:

- 50% state-wide renewable energy target by 2030
- 65% state-wide emissions reduction target by 2030
- 100% emissions reduction target by 2050

The Shire of Augusta Margaret River requests that the CCA's advice to Government recognise the high degree of strong local support for stronger CO² emissions targets which respond to the scientific advice of the IPCC.

Specific actions which could be taken are:

- Consider retaining Small-Scale Technology Certificates rather than phasing them out by 2030 as proposed. Dwellings are a major source of emissions yet are also major sources of power generation. Every effort should be provided to incentivise landowners to install renewable energy systems on new homes.
- Increase climate change related learning in all levels of school curriculum. The next generation will be responsible for achieving emission targets that are set now, and should be provided the tools and awareness to create change.

Sectoral and economy-wide policies

- *What are the current and projected costs of, and potential for, abatement across different sectors and how does that influence the choice and timing of policy across sectors?*
- *What are the barriers (regulatory and non-regulatory) to realising emissions reductions and are there any additional supporting policies, regulations or government actions that could drive emissions reductions in cost effective ways?*
- *How should sectoral policies be linked to ensure efficient economic outcomes and to minimise the cost of abatement across the economy?*
- *Should changes be made to the Emissions Reduction Fund to explicitly target multiple benefits (such as environmental outcomes) as well as abatement outcomes?*
- *How should the Government ensure that major infrastructure investments remain resilient to future climate change impacts and policies?*

Local Government in Western Australia oversees the implementation of the National Construction Code (NCC formerly BCA) through its statutory responsibilities in determining building permits. A 6 star energy efficiency rating is required to be achieved for all new residential dwellings. This requirement can be achieved via a Performance Solution or Deemed To Satisfy (DTS) solution.

Performance solutions are unique for each individual situation. These solutions are often flexible in achieving the outcomes and encouraging innovative design and technology use. A Performance Solution directly addresses the performance requirements by using one or more of the assessment methods available in the NCC.

A DTS Solution follows a set recipe of what, when and how to do something. It uses the DTS Solutions from the NCC, which include materials, components, design factors, and construction methods that, if used, are deemed to meet the Performance Requirements. A DTS solution does not confirm that a dwellings achieves a 6 star rating. It indicates that it 'should' meet that standard.

The Shire's experience in administering the NCS is that most houses are lodged as DTS. Whilst this method is efficient in ensuring that new dwellings are well built and well insulated it ignores the most cost effective method of achieving new dwellings which are cheap to heat and cool and hence avoid the creation of carbon emissions, this being solar passive design through correct housing/glazing orientation.

The Shire of Augusta Margaret River requests that the CCA include in its advice to Government, options for improving Planning and Building requirements to deliver low cost carbon abatement and improved liveability of Australian Housing which is climate responsive, sustainable and affordable.

Supporting innovation, finance and new industries

- *What role should the Government play in enabling the development and uptake of low-emissions technologies and development of associated industries?*
- *What role is there for Government in developing an enabling environment to support increased flows of green finance?*

Presently, the Shire has a policy in place to direct no less than 3% of rate revenue to environmental initiatives including those which mitigate or adapt to Climate Change. Shire and community partnerships in this space would be greatly enhanced via financial or other incentives for incorporated community organisations, business sector or local government (with a focus on environment/climate change) to apply for funding for renewables, emission reduction plans etc. Providing local/regional access to funding has the potential to significantly reduce emissions, and is capacity building.

The Shire of Augusta Margaret River is home to a strong agricultural sector and it is acknowledged that some forms of farming are a major source of emissions. Support is needed for a transition to regenerative low carbon farming practices.

Continue to support transition to electric vehicles, supporting generation through renewables rather than fossil fuels. The shire requires support and direction in this regard in order to future proof developments such as carparks, where charging stations might logically be located.

International context

- *What role should international units have in Australia's response to climate change, and how should risks around availability, cost and quality be managed?*
- *What role should carryover from earlier commitment periods play?*
- *Should the Government facilitate the import of international units or export of Australian Carbon Credit Units?*

These matters fall outside of the role of local government however the notion of trading carbon credits internationally is fundamentally at odds with the focus of local government in taking responsibility for its own emissions for the benefit of the local community.

Additional comments

Individual Shire Councillors make the following additional comments:

Goal for net zero emissions? - 100% by 2030.

How can the Government assist the positioning of the Australian economy to best take advantage of opportunities associated with the global transition to net zero emissions, while managing any risks? Australia is very well placed to generate renewable energy (solar, wind, water). As a lot of reluctance to transition to net zero emissions is based around predominantly jobs, the Australia Government must strongly support the transition of jobs from fossil fuel production to renewable energy production. Incentives must be in place to encourage this transition to occur, and cost/tax implications for the big polluters.

Transport – Unless EVs are charged by carbon free generated electricity, there is no advantage, and arguably a distinct disadvantage in using an EV. Until they are carbon free charged, promoting smaller, fuel effective cars would result in lower carbon emissions.

Agriculture - There are many ways to reduce GHG emissions from agriculture (fertilizers, regenerative farming etc). In our rural shire, farming, specifically poor farming practices, are a major contributor to our GHG emissions.

WA's emissions have increased since 2016 mainly because of the Gorgon LNG project, which over that time had vented CO₂ to the atmosphere (it is now being stripped from the gas and injected into depleted reservoirs and this will reduce emissions), however this gas is replacing coal in Japan and in doing so reducing emissions. So despite WA's emissions increasing, it is very likely this project has substantially reduced global emissions.

Role of state government - A major role of state government should be to keep ahead of and advise LGs of the science and implications of Climate Change, eg. in respect of sea level rise, state government has not revised predictions since 2008, this despite many scientific papers showing how dated this prediction is. State should have a dedicated portfolio of CC and work to understand what it can do in respect of mitigation (both sides are still wedded to Collie coal – jobs/votes being seen as the important issues) and adaptation, especially coastal and rural sectors. This should include being water-wise.