



# Liveable Climate Plan 2020 – 2030



## Mayor's Message

The Yarra Ranges are at the forefront of the challenges imposed by climate change.

Extreme weather events, market uncertainty, health implications and social, environmental and economic impacts have already been felt in the region over the last ten years – as the climate continues to change, the impacts will be felt right across our community.

The transition to renewable energy is clear, as are the benefits for Council and the wider community. In 2020, reducing emissions and reducing our running costs go hand-in-hand. These benefits, and our roadmap to achieve them, are outlined in detail in Council's Liveable Climate Plan and accompanying Action Plan.

The plan gives Council an opportunity to deepen and broaden the programs and services we're currently delivering, in terms of sustainability and transitioning towards renewable energy.

By putting together this plan, we're acknowledging that Council will be a leader in this space – leading by example in our actions and assisting our community to make changes in their lives.

The key themes in the plan have been identified through evidence and extensive community consultation, and these will be our priorities over the coming decade.

By taking a thoughtful approach to sustainability and ensuring value-for-money for our community members, we have a clear path towards our goals of net zero emissions and zero operational energy spend by 2040 and clearly documented benefits for the environment, our budget and the wider community.

Cr Richard Higgins,  
Mayor of Yarra Ranges



## Acknowledgements

Yarra Ranges Council respectfully acknowledges the Wurundjeri people as the Traditional Owners of the land. Council would like to acknowledge Wurundjeri elders, past, present and emerging who are an integral part of the history and future of the Yarra Ranges.

Many people have contributed ideas presented within this plan, including within the broader Yarra Ranges Council community and key stakeholders.

# Liveable Climate Plan

## Yarra-me\* – a foreword Womin Je Ka

The Yarra Ranges is home to a wonderfully diverse ecosystem that exemplifies our contemporary world. An amazing array of parks, forests, gardens and natural landscapes that are home to numerous native plants and animals are combined with our ‘human factor’ – industries including manufacturing, agriculture and tourism that help contribute to \$3 billion in regional output. And significantly, the region has a strong and deep Aboriginal culture and history.

Yarra Ranges Council has long recognised the role of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and peoples in our society. Based on the lands of the Wurundjeri people, Council is constantly learning and improving their cultural understanding and knowledge, and how this can play a role in the Yarra Ranges.

This Liveable Climate Plan is a positive step in further engaging with Aboriginal culture, history and people in the Yarra Ranges.

Aboriginal connections to Country and all it contains has never wavered. This includes connections to the land itself, to Spirits and Ancestors, and importantly, to each other. Connection is a vitally important aspect of Aboriginal culture and knowledge.

The ten priority areas in this plan include Living Landscapes, Sustainable Design, and Adapting Together. Although not exclusive, these areas signify an inherent connection with Aboriginal culture and history – working together, and maintaining connections, to ensure a sustainable and successful community. Responding to our environment is a cornerstone of Indigenous cultures the world over. This plan provides a wonderful opportunity to work together to respond to the challenges of our changing climate, while at the same time engaging meaningfully and respectfully with the Aboriginal culture, history, and people of the Yarra Ranges.

Andrew Peters  
YRC Indigenous Advisory Committee

\*‘Yarra-me’ translates as ‘open’ in Woiwurrung language – with thanks and acknowledgement to Mandy Nicholson



Firestick Land Management image: Dr Timothy Neale





## Why does Council have this plan?

Climate change is a global challenge, requiring a unified response.

Many people and businesses are experiencing the effects of our changing climate. Yarra Ranges Council intends to lead the way for community, businesses and industry within the region.

Respecting the position set internationally and nationally, Yarra Ranges has developed an integrated plan identifying program and service delivery goals for collective action.

## What is the purpose of the plan?

Climate change presents a range of significant risks for Council to respond to as it delivers on its vision for the community.

This plan provides a framework to support our local community and economy, along with the unique natural environment that makes Yarra Ranges such a great place to live.

This will be achieved through:

- an integrated, whole-of-Council response to climate change
- clarifying the best role Council can play, in partnership with other tiers of government and all sectors of the community
- defining success, with clear targets we can measure our progress against
- identifying risks that could disrupt Council services in a changing climate, and demonstrating how we will work to minimise their impact
- long-term planning and budgeting for the action we need to take.

## How will the plan work?

The plan provides direction to Council on how the organisation will respond to a changing climate. It is informed by background research and risk assessments, and accompanied by a detailed action plan.

Our actions will be driven through Council and department business planning and guided by our principles for sustainability and resilience. Every department in Council will:

- plan actions annually in accordance with Council's organisational planning framework
- report quarterly on progress through Council's performance reporting system.





## Yarra Ranges community and business achievements

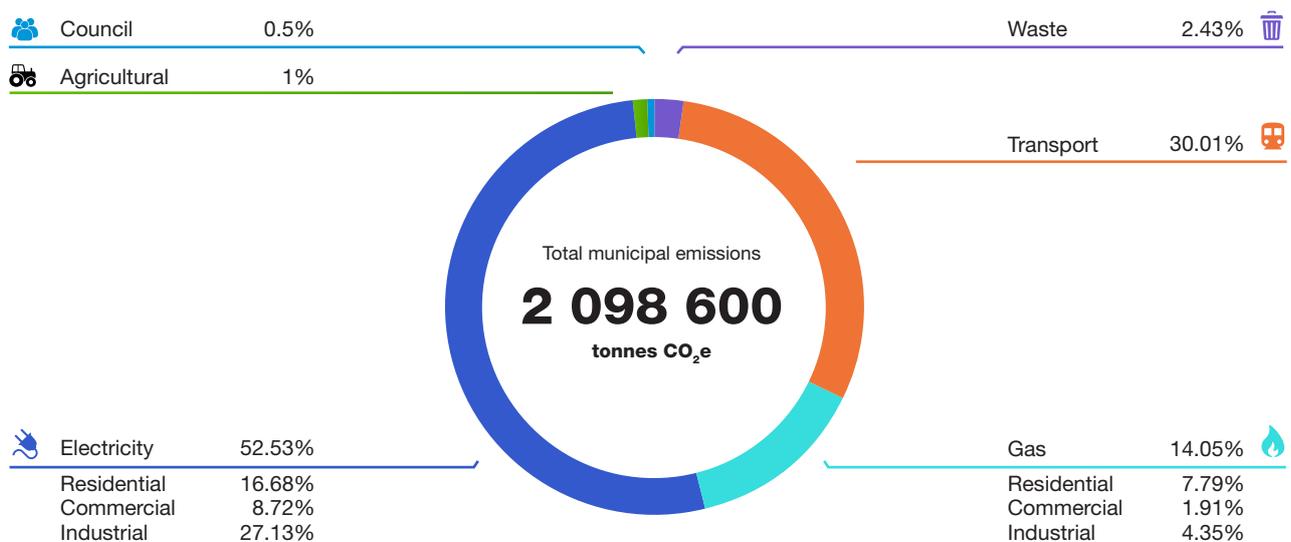
Yarra Ranges is home to an impressive range of local businesses and community-led grassroots action. Businesses and community groups alike are resilient, organised and self-driven.

Many businesses within Yarra Ranges have installed solar power and implemented energy efficiency programs, leading the way in their own sectors. These businesses have realised many added benefits, including a reduction in operating costs while building a sustainable brand.

Community groups all over Yarra Ranges create and deliver targeted programs and offer support in areas such as food security, community gardens, and waste minimisation.

Local conservation organisations are delivering on sustainability outcomes through land management and biodiversity improvements.

Across Yarra Ranges, 1 in 6 households have invested in rooftop solar generating their own affordable, renewable power.



2017 emissions – Yarra Ranges municipality

# Liveable Climate Plan

## Council achievements to date

For more than 10 years, the organisation has taken a strategic approach to reducing emissions.

Council's Resource Management Strategy (2007) established the guiding principles for reducing our carbon footprint and cost: Avoid, Reduce, Replace and Offset.

In 2012 Council endorsed its Adapting to a Changing Climate and Energy Future plan, including a commitment to reduce emissions from Council activities by 30% on 2000 levels by 2020.

Projects delivered to date include:



Energy efficiency projects that have reduced demand for electricity by

**40%**

across Council's largest facilities.

Streetlight upgrades that have reduced electricity use by

**40%**

across Council's street lighting.



Over **4000**

rooftop solar panels installed since **2016**, meaning



**25%**

of all electricity used in Council facilities is now supplied by renewables.

Council is now saving

**\$1 Million**

each year in operational costs from solar and energy efficiency projects.

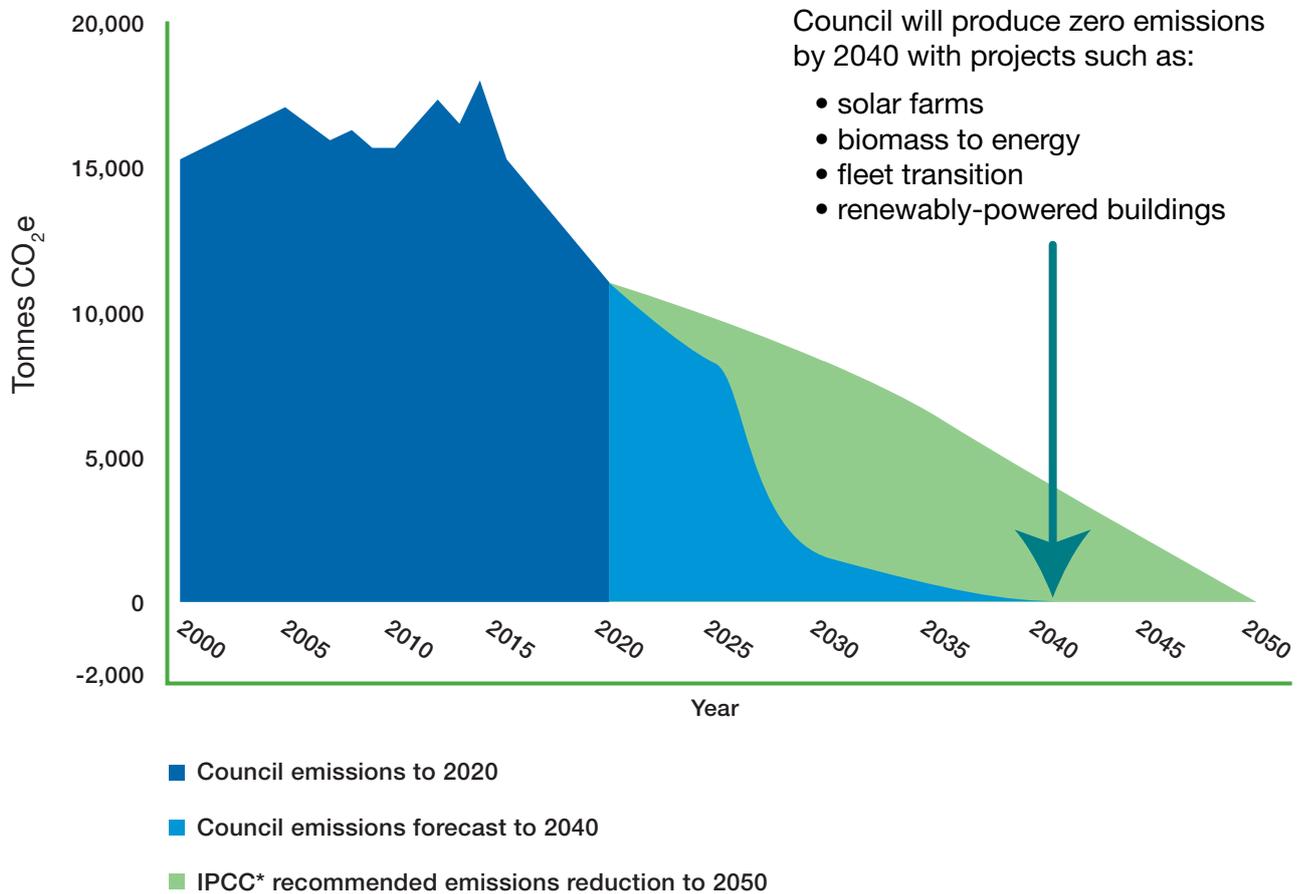


Council has reduced its greenhouse gas emissions every year since 2014. By 2020, emissions had dropped from that peak by more than

**6,000 tonnes CO<sub>2</sub>e**



## Expected emission reduction to 2040



\*IPCC = United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change

# Liveable Climate Plan

## What are our guiding principles?

Our guiding principles help us prioritise our activities, while ensuring our climate actions respond to the vision and strategic objectives outlined in the Council Plan.

As new opportunities and challenges emerge, applying these principles will help to make sure our responses are considered, effective, and genuinely sustainable.



**Reduce emissions with as many co-benefits as possible** using an evidence based approach in line with international efforts to limit global warming to 1.5°C.



**Prepare for a changing climate** by recognising the risks, planning ahead and working with others to achieve more together.



**Demonstrate responsible climate leadership** by doing our fair share, and inspiring others to play their own part to restore a safe climate.



**Integrate broader principles of sustainability**, especially drawing on the knowledge of Indigenous Australians and their deep connection with country.

## What are our targets?

**Reduce** greenhouse gas emissions by 60% on 2005 levels by 2025



**Transition** all council services and infrastructure to 100% renewable energy by 2030.



**Net zero** emissions by 2040



**Zero** operational energy expenditure by 2040





## Our policy position

Yarra Ranges Council has long accepted the scientific evidence for climate change caused by human activity.

Council recognises that global efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions have so far been inadequate, and that we are now in a state of climate change that requires urgent action by all levels of government and all sectors of the community.

Yarra Ranges Council is well placed to be the interface between community and government to influence change, build community capacity, and demonstrate leadership. Council provides more than 120 services to the community, from mental health to aged care, cultural programs and bushland maintenance.

Council will work to protect the health and wellbeing our community from the risks of climate change by carefully planning its services and programs with those risks in mind. We will invest in solutions to reduce the potential impacts of climate change locally, while playing our part in the global effort to secure a liveable climate.



# Liveable Climate Plan

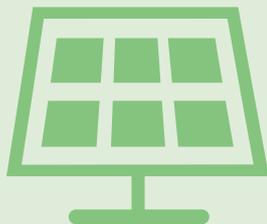
## What Council will do

Within our organisation, every team will have a role to play to ensure Council continues to deliver on climate action. The actions Council will embed across all aspects of its business are detailed in the accompanying Action Plan.

Council will deliver on 5 priority themes.

### Renewable Energy

All our energy is sourced from renewables. From solar panels on our rooftops, to larger projects within and beyond the municipality.



### Resilient Buildings

Our buildings are energy efficient and climate ready. Our key facilities make best use of local resources, and provide robust support to our community through challenging times.



### Zero Emission Fleet

Our vehicles and equipment are zero-emission. From mowers to peplemovers, we've made the switch to clean, renewable fuels.



### Sustainable Design

All our assets are designed, built and managed using a sustainable lifecycle approach. We think long term, globally and locally to make sure our assets have a positive impact before, during and after their useful life.



### Climate Thinking

We consider climate in all our strategies, policies, programs and services. We look for climate risk, and make sure we're part of the solution, in every aspect of our business.





# Liveable Climate Plan

## How we will work with our communities

Council aims to empower our communities to be liveable and connected. Through deliberate climate responsible services and programs a thriving economy and climate-resilient landscape will be realised. The accompanying Action Plan sets out the specific actions Council will pursue, in partnership with local communities.

Together, we will focus on 5 priority themes.

### Thriving Yarra Ranges

Local community, business and industry are climate-ready and energised. Access to secure water supplies, affordable renewable energy and the benefits of a circular economy.



### Living Landscapes

Our townships and suburbs are leafy green oases. Providing summer shade, year-round beauty and walkable neighbourhoods.



### Food Security

Local food initiatives take root and flourish. Improving food security and nutrition, through grass roots action, resilient agriculture and a flourishing local food economy.



### Adapting Together

No one in Yarra Ranges is left behind in the shift to our low carbon future. Everyone has access to practical support—meaning we can all play a role, reap the benefits, and move forward together.



### Sustainable Transport

Low-carbon options are integrated throughout the region, to keep everyone active and moving. Improving health and reducing emissions by making sure walking, cycling, public transport and electric vehicles are fully supported throughout Yarra Ranges while ensuring equitable access is the norm.







## What risks are we trying to manage?

Our changing climate is not just about warmer weather and fiercer storms, but the knock-on effects that wilder weather can have throughout society. Key risks needing our sustained focus include:

- increasing energy costs and an unpredictable energy market
- compounding health impacts, for example from heat related exposure and lack of food security
- climate policy and legislation in constant flux
- changes in community and customer needs, including growth in demand for services
- disruptions in delivery of Council services due to the impacts of extreme events locally and beyond our region
- budget pressure, especially from unforeseen risks, such as expanded service delivery in response to climate change and costs of failing infrastructure.

## How will we monitor our performance?

This plan will be assessed annually through Council's reporting framework. We will see:

- specific climate resilience actions, tailored to each area of Council, documented and delivered throughout Council strategies, policies and business plans
- the actions outlined in our accompanying Climate Action Plan achieved
- steady, measurable progress towards our targets.



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