

### 5.3. CLIMATE CHANGE (COUNCIL OPERATIONS) GENERAL POLICY

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#### RECOMMENDATION

**That Council adopts the Climate Change (Council Operations) General Policy.**

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#### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Climate Change (Council Operations) General Policy provides the strategic framework for Council to manage its climate change responsibilities and commits Council to eight (8) objectives.

#### BACKGROUND

The Douglas Shire has a unique natural environment, it is the only place in the world with two adjoining World Heritage listed areas: the Great Barrier Reef and the Wet Tropics. Climate change presents a significant threat to the Douglas Shire, threatening both the natural and built environments. Whilst climate change is a global problem requiring global solutions, the Policy recognises the important role that local governments play in driving effective mitigation and adaptation initiatives within their control.

#### Climate Change Mitigation

Climate change mitigation is defined as actions taken to reduce greenhouse gas emissions in order to minimise their effects on global climate change. Under the Paris Agreement and the Doha Amendment to the Kyoto Protocol, Australia has committed to reduce national emissions by 26 to 28 per cent below 2005 levels by 2030. Mitigation initiatives include: renewable energy, planting trees and protecting important carbon sinks such as rainforests and mangroves.

#### Climate Change Adaptation

Climate change adaptation is defined as any action, initiative or strategy taken to reduce the vulnerability of the natural and/or human environment from climate change impacts. For example, constructing a rock wall to protect the coastline from accelerating erosion and sea level rise.

#### COMMENT

The Policy commits Council, operating within its local government functions and responsibilities, to eight (8) objectives. The policy aligns with Council's existing commitments under:

- The Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority's (GBRMPA) Reef Guardian Councils stewardship program.
- Community advocacy group, Plastic Free Douglas.
- The QCoast2100 Coastal Hazard Adaptation Strategy (CHAS) program.
- Wet Tropics Healthy Waterways Partnership
- Local Government Association Queensland's (LGAQ) Queensland Climate Resilient Councils (Q CRC) program.
- The Climate Council's City Power Partnership.

## PROPOSAL

That Council adopts the Climate Change (Council Operations) General Policy.

## FINANCIAL/RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

Council climate change adaptation and mitigation strategies that align with this policy will be detailed within the Corporate Sustainability Strategy and appropriately resourced in the Operational Plan.

## RISK MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS

International and Australian research indicates that advanced effective preparation and planning in response to climate change will reduce the severity of its impacts.

## SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS

- Economic:** Climate change has the potential to threaten Council assets (e.g. buildings, and water and waste infrastructure), particularly those located in coastal areas, storm tide areas and riverine flood areas.
- Environmental:** The interaction of climate change with existing stresses, such as disease, invasive pest plants/ animal species, habitat fragmentation, marine debris and water quality; places additional strain on our natural environment.
- Social:** Climate changes places additional challenges on public health, particularly with regards to vector (mosquito) control and water borne diseases.

## CORPORATE/OPERATIONAL PLAN, POLICY REFERENCE

This report has been prepared in accordance with the following:

### Corporate Plan 2014-2019 Initiatives:

#### Theme 4 - Engage, Plan, Partner

*4.2.2 - Provide leadership to secure beneficial social, environmental and economic outcomes for the Shire.*

*4.2.3 - Work with regional, state, national and international stakeholders to promote beneficial partnerships to support strong, resilient and sustainable communities.*

### Operational Plan 2017-2018 Actions:

**3.1.6** - Complete phases 3-4 of the Coastal Hazard Adaptation Strategy under the QCoast 2100 program. Subject to timely provision of grant funds

**3.2.3** - Establish the baseline for Council's carbon footprint for 2015/16 and 2016/17

## COUNCIL'S ROLE

Council can play a number of different roles in certain circumstances and it is important to be clear about which role is appropriate for a specific purpose or circumstance. The implementation of actions will be a collective effort and Council's involvement will vary from information only through to full responsibility for delivery.

The following areas outline where Council has a clear responsibility to act:

<b>Advocate</b>	Supporting communities and groups by advocating for certain actions from other organisations (usually other levels of government)
<b>Fully-Responsible</b>	Funding the full cost of a program or activity

## CONSULTATION

**Internal:** Cross-departmental consultation has taken place in the development of the Policy.

**External:** Nil

## ATTACHMENTS

1. Climate Change ( Council Operations) General Policy **[5.3.1]**



## CLIMATE CHANGE (COUNCIL OPERATIONS) GENERAL POLICY

**Intent** The intent of this policy is to provide the strategic framework for Council to manage its climate change responsibilities by using a combination of climate change mitigation and adaptation strategies.

**Scope** This policy is applicable to all of Council and its employees in all decisions and activities, relating to Council operations.

### **Background**

The Douglas Shire is exposed to a number of natural hazards, all of which are likely to be exacerbated by anthropogenic climate change. Direct hazards include: extreme storms, heatwaves, riverine flooding, sea level rise and tropical cyclones; whilst indirect hazards as a result of climate change include increased coastal erosion and landslides.

Climate change is expected to affect a number of areas which Council is responsible/ partly responsible for or has an active interest in, these areas include: development, emergency management, infrastructure, public health, water and waste management, and the Douglas Shire natural environment.

Responding effectively to climate change involves a combination of reducing greenhouse gas emissions, whilst protecting important carbon sinks such as rainforests and mangroves (mitigation); and building resiliency to prepare and adapt to climate change impacts (adaptation).

### **Objectives**

Council, operating within its local government functions and responsibilities, is committed to the following eight (8) objectives:

1. To recognise and understand Council's vulnerabilities associated with climate change based on the best available climate science at the time of this policy's adoption.
2. To develop and implement climate change mitigation actions which aim to reduce the impact of Council's operations on climate change.
3. To develop and implement climate change adaptation actions to strengthen Council's resilience to climate change impacts.
4. To protect existing carbon sinks located within the Douglas Shire.
5. To consider the use of carbon offsets where appropriate.
6. To demonstrate climate change leadership to the Douglas Communities.
7. To participate in appropriate national, state and regional groups, which aim to share climate change knowledge, build capability and/or improve resiliency.
8. To comply with applicable legal requirements and implement any relevant State government policies, guidelines and/or directives related to climate change.

Council climate change adaptation and mitigation strategies that align with this policy will be detailed within the Corporate Sustainability Strategy and appropriately resourced in the Operational Plan.

## References

Federal and State Governments have a number of climate change legal obligations, strategies and frameworks, these include:

- *Paris Agreement and the Kyoto Protocol*  
On 10 November 2016 Australia ratified the Paris Agreement and the Doha Amendment to the Kyoto Protocol. Australia has committed to reduce emissions by 26 to 28 per cent below 2005 levels by 2030.
- *Australian Climate Change Science: A National Framework 2009*  
Identifies national climate change science priorities and sets out ways to harness Australia's full science capacity to address them.
- *Queensland Climate Adaptation Strategy 2017-2030*  
Provides a framework for ensuring an innovative and resilient Queensland that manages the risks and harnesses the opportunities of a changing climate.
- *Queensland Climate Transition Strategy 2017*  
Sets a vision of a zero net emissions future for Queensland that supports jobs, industries, communities and the environment.

## Definitions

*Adaptation* - Any action, initiative or strategy taken to reduce the vulnerability of the natural and/or human environment from climate change impacts. E.g. constructing a rock wall to protect the coastline from accelerating erosion and sea level rise.

*Anthropogenic Climate Change* – Climate change caused by human activities which lead to the release of greenhouse gases which accelerate climate change. For example the burning of fossil fuels, deforestation and other land use changes.

*Climate Change* – The statistically significant variation in the average state of climate over a minimum 30 year period for an extended period.

*Carbon Offsets* - Reducing or capturing greenhouse gas emissions to counterbalance greenhouse gas emissions released by another source or activity. E.g. planting trees to offset the greenhouse gas emissions created by flying in an aeroplane.

*Carbon Footprint* – The amount of carbon dioxide released into the atmosphere as a result of the activities of a particular individual, organisation or community.

*Carbon Sink (Carbon Store)* – Ecosystems, notably rainforests, mangroves and oceans, which remove greenhouse gas emissions from the atmosphere by absorbing and storing it.

*Greenhouse Gas Emissions* – A gas which traps heat in the atmosphere, accelerating climate change. The main greenhouse gases contributing to climate change are: Carbon Dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>), Methane (CH<sub>4</sub>), Nitrous Oxide (N<sub>2</sub>O) and Fluorinated gases (e.g. hydrofluorocarbons and

perfluorocarbons). Activities such as the burning of fossil fuels for energy and transportation are a significant source of greenhouse gas emissions.

*Mitigation* – Actions taken to reduce greenhouse gas emissions in order to minimise their effects on global climate change. Instead of initiatives aimed at adapting to climate change, mitigation refers to the prevention and control of the sources of greenhouse gas emissions.

*Zero Net Emissions (Carbon Neutral)* – Having a net zero carbon footprint by balancing a measured amount of carbon released with an equivalent amount sequestered, offset or by purchasing carbon credits.

**This Policy is to be reviewed on a three (3) yearly basis to reconsider up to date climate science.**

**Manager Responsible for Review:**

**Manager Sustainable Communities**

**ORIGINALLY ADOPTED:  
DUE FOR REVISION: 2020  
REVOKED/SUPERSEDED:**