

CACE Submission to: Darebin Budget 2019/20

Community Action in the Climate Emergency version 1.1 Last edited 9 May 2019
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Darebin's current Climate Emergency plan commits us to "maximum protection" of people and other species and to restore "a safe climate at emergency speed". (Darebin Climate Emergency Plan, 5.2 Overarching goals, dot points 1. and 2.) The concept of "maximum protection" implies we must do everything within our power to produce the best result possible from Darebin to affect this, anything less and we fail to meet our plan's goals.

To date the Darebin administration has clearly not produced the best result we can for a range of reasons. Moving forward Darebin could do better and should do, both from the perspective of adhering to our current plan and from a moral and ethical perspective or out of concern for the welfare of its community as it is required to under state legislation.

Under Victorian local government legislation, the primary objective of a Council is "*to endeavour to achieve the best outcomes for the local community having regard to the long term and cumulative effects of decisions*" which must have regard to "*the social, economic and environmental viability and sustainability of the municipal district;*" and include as one of its roles "*advocating the interests of the local community to other communities and governments*". (See the Victorian Local Government Act)

We should aim to produce the best possible response we can achieve. With many more councils declaring a climate emergency, over 400 by March 2019, I would argue that the best way we can do this is for Darebin's Climate Emergency Response (DCER) to be the world's best example of a Climate Emergency response by a local council, particularly a response that seeks to affect a world first climate emergency mobilisation by an elected government.

To achieve this I am proposing the following:

1. Council adopts a commitment to mobilise.
2. Revisit the scope, urgency and priority given to the DCER by:
 - a. Reprioritising a Climate Emergency mobilisation within the Council Plan and that the plan be revised immediately
 - b. DCER be given significant budget priority
 - c. The budget be reviewed for areas of unnecessary or discretionary spending that can be redirected to the DCER response.
 - d. Redrafting the Climate Emergency Plan
 - i. conduct revision of the current Climate Emergency Plan led by CED, in order to strengthen goals and time frames and scope of the plan, including and setting a date and processes to achieve a full Climate Emergency Mobilisation.
3. Set up the structures with adequate funding to enable mobilisation including the following actions:
 - a. CED becomes a strategic level "advisory committee" to Council and the body to whom elements of the DCER initially report to and advice is taken from and acted upon with funding support.
 - b. Establish a funded external organisation to undertake:
 - i. the research needed to respond to the climate emergency effectively
 - ii. support of outside councils to both acknowledge climate emergencies and undertake Climate Emergency responses

- c. Establish a funded external organisation to undertake the community mobilisation element of DCER
- d. Establish a new Climate Emergency Unit within Council Administration to implement the mitigation and resilience building efforts of Darebin Council.
- e. Establish an advocacy working group

I propose that the Darebin council approach their decision from the framework of maximum effort as discussed below.

Goals and Targets for a Climate Emergency Declaration Mobilisation by Darebin

The start point: value based decision making

When I teach kids about global warming at CERES environment park in East Brunswick, Melbourne. I usually in the following questions:

- What are impacts of global warming we are seeing today?
- Are these impacts acceptable or unacceptable?
- Do we want more or less of these impacts?
- If we want less impacts what do we need to do now?

The kids give a range of the negative impacts they have seen on the news or been taught about in class or experienced first hand. They will tell me that these impacts are unacceptable. They will say we want less impacts. They will conclude we need to cool the globe and do it fast.

Here the children are applying a moral and ethical response to global warming based on seeking to maximise the protection of the human and non human life around the world, including their own lives.

For a child who has lived in a world of fast changing technology, including the rise of many of the solutions we need, technical obstacles do not even register as an issue, while any political and economic limitations are considered secondary to the primary goal of doing what we should do for the planet and themselves.

When climate change is seen through a child's ethical and moral lens our path of action becomes clear. Councillors can adopt this approach and simply choose to respond to global warming through the lens of making value based decisions about current or future impacts and could consider this within a number of frameworks, including deciding what they personally want to save, maximum protection, minimum protection or acceptable risk.

Choosing to save something.

One way to approach action on climate change would be to choose something you want to save. It might be the Great Barrier Reef, the Pacific Islands from drowning, North Pole summer ice or polar bears etc. Drawing meaningful goals from this process would require one of two approaches, one simple and one complex.

The complex way would require examination of the scientific literature around each issue and make links to climate science and predictions to enable goals and targets to be set that would prevent damage or restore the thing you wanted to save. Very little of this work has been done to date.

The simple way is to ask is climate change already impacting negatively on the thing I want to protect? If the impacts are already significant and it is in decline, then the only real option you would have would be to seek to reverse global warming and apply "maximum effort" to this task.

Maximum Protection*

The concept of maximum protection is about maximising the survival of human and non human life and represents the broadest and strongest response to making a value based decision around global warming.

To implement a maximum protection approach it would require the largest possible contribution from a council to reverse global warming it could possibly make.

From a practical point of view a council would allocate the largest possible amount of its resources to reversing global warming and local resilience. This would include activities to directly reduce a council's own emissions and undertake greenhouse gas drawdown, supporting and encouraging community members to reduce their own emissions, and to put pressure on higher levels of government and other councils to do the same.

This response is what we call a mobilisation* response and is discussed in more depth on the CACE website.

Maximum protection if applied on a global scale would also require use of geoengineering to prevent many ecosystems from suffering a catastrophic collapse and allowing others that have already suffered a collapse a chance to recover. Options for geoengineering by local councils are very limited but include increasing the reflectivity of hard surfaces such as road and roofs.

**The concept of maximum protection and mobilisation were first developed by Philip Sutton from RSTI.*

Minimum Protection

The opposite approach to maximum protection would be to provide minimum protection your community. This might assume that a significant proportion your community could be protected from climate related extreme weather events such as floods, fires, storms etc AND be provided with adequate nutrition AND be protected safe from social unrest triggered by global warming at a local (looting, food riots), regional (internal migration, state collapse) or global (war, mass migration) levels.

In order for a council to achieve these goals the global temperature would certainly need to be limited to 2 degrees and most likely to 1.5 degrees. Unfortunately global agreements are setting us on track to 3-4 degrees of warming and 3-4 degrees of warming will lead to catastrophic consequences around the global. Thus to achieve minimum protection a local council would need to do all it could to support mitigation of global warming and provide resilience for its community and do it now.

Acceptable Risk

All councils should have a risk register to identify and assess risk to their residents. If risks exceeds the risk tolerance or the risk acceptance criteria, measures should be put in place in order to reduce the likelihood or the consequence of this risk on the council community.

Failure to properly assess the near and long term risk arising from global warming and respond in a meaningful manner will likely expose councillors and council to future litigation and they could become personally liable in both civil and criminal proceedings.

		Potential Severity Rating			
		Minor	Moderate	Significant	Catastrophic
Likelihood severity occurs	Very Likely	Moderate	High	Extreme	Extreme
	Likely	Low	Moderate	High	Extreme
	Unlikely	Very Low	Low	Moderate	High
	Rare	Very Low	Very Low	Low	Moderate

Risk is a combination of likelihood and degree of impact. Due to extremely catastrophic impacts of future global warming events, currently likelihoods of reaching 2, 3, or 4 degrees presents an unacceptable risk when using any current risk assessment practice. For example see the diagram above, noting that catastrophic in this context means death of an individual rather than a collapse of civilisation.

Given that councils can take meaningful action towards both mitigation and resilience, it would suggest that to avoid potential future litigation and achieve an acceptable risk profile, maximum effort would need to be applied. Image sourced from <https://www.arriscar.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/4x4-Matrix-2-660x440.gif>

Choosing a temperature target to achieve.

You might like to approach your goal setting from a viewpoint of hitting a temperature target, such as 1.5 or 2 degrees celsius. When you consider the work from the Breakthrough institute that the IPCC is underestimating the science and risk around these targets, then achieving these targets most likely would require maximum effort. (see: www.breakthroughonline.org.au)

Taking Action: Choosing to apply maximum effort

Whether we chose to approach global warming from the point of view from *maximum protection*, *minimum protection*, trying to achieve a level of *acceptable risk*, or an ambitious goal such as even saving one of the many species or ecosystems already impacted or stopping the Pacific Islands drowning, a response by council will require maximum effort from a council if these objectives have any chance of being achieved.

A maximum effort is about mobilising all available council and community resources in an attempt to mitigate future climate and provide community resilience to global warming while encouraging higher levels of government to do the same.

A council needs to ask how much of a council's resources can be free up to do this task. What are discretionary spends? What are essential services that must continue to be provided? What are positive actions such as installing solar panel or energy efficiency measures in council buildings that ultimately save money and allow this money to be spent on further mitigation or resilience measures.

This exercise should be undertaken by Darebin under direction of the CEO and lead by senior management in all areas of Darebin's operations.

Actions that councils can take are described more fully on the CACE website on the council guide pages (<http://www.caceonline.org/a-guide-for-councils.html>) and in the tool box section (<http://www.caceonline.org/nuts-and-bolts-toolbox.html>).

When do we stop maximum effort?

Until governments and communities around the world successfully reverse global warming and get close to returning to pre industrial temperatures and ocean acidity levels, councils would continue a maximum effort to reverse global warming. As we approach these targets the global efforts would be slowed in a coordinated manner to avoid any significant overshoot.