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# Cessnock City Council Climate Change Policy

Date Adopted **01/03/2024** Revision: **2**

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## 1. POLICY OBJECTIVES

The objectives of this policy are to:

- 1.1. enable Council to align its operational and strategic planning with the policy of the NSW Government;
- 1.2. provide a whole of Council commitment to managing climate change risks within the Cessnock Local Government Area (**LGA**);
- 1.3. support community initiatives to deal with climate change;
- 1.4. empower Council as a leader for action on climate change;
- 1.5. ensure that the risks to the environment and community associated with climate change are understood and managed by Council and communicated to the community;
- 1.6. inform core functions and operations of Council – climate change must be considered in strategic decision making, planning processes and day to day operations;
- 1.7. provide direction on climate change for Council and the Cessnock community; and
- 1.8. commit Council to the Policy Commitments outlined in clause 6.

## 2. POLICY SCOPE

- 2.1. This policy applies to all Council functions and operations, and Council Officials.

## 3. POLICY STATEMENT

- 3.1. This policy sets out Council's position and response on climate change.

## 4. LEGISLATIVE CONTEXT

- 4.1. The NSW and Australian Governments have made commitments regarding Greenhouse Gas Emission reduction targets. In 2015, 195 countries signed on to the United Nations Paris Agreement (**Paris Agreement**) on climate change. The main objective of this agreement was to reaffirm the goal of limiting global temperature increase to well below 2 degrees, while actively pursuing efforts to limit the rise to 1.5 degrees. By limiting the rise to 1.5 degrees, the global community could avoid some of the most damaging impacts of climate change. The Paris Agreement aims to achieve net zero emissions globally by the second half of the century.
- 4.2. The Australian Government ratified the Paris Agreement in 2016. In 2022 the Australian Government announced new targets to reduce national greenhouse gas emissions by 43% compared to 2005 levels. The national target is net zero emissions by 2050.

- 4.3. The NSW Government endorsed the Paris Agreement in 2016. The NSW Government, through the *Climate Change Policy Framework*, set NSW the target of achieving zero net emissions by 2050. In 2022 the NSW Government strengthened its short-term emissions target to a 70% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions compared to 2005 levels through the Net Zero Plan.
- 4.4. The target of net zero emissions is a guiding principle for decision-making in the *Hunter Regional Plan 2041* and is reflected as a key objective of the Plan. This target is reiterated in the *Greater Newcastle Metropolitan Plan 2036 (Metro Plan)*.
- 4.5. All NSW councils are required to prepare local plans that are consistent with NSW State policies. This policy demonstrates that Council is meeting its State legislative obligations in regards to climate change, by adopting and actively working towards achieving the NSW Government's target of achieving zero net emissions by 2050.

## 5. GUIDING PRINCIPLES

- 5.1. Council shall integrate the following principles into its day to day operations and decision making processes:
  - 5.1.1. **Principle 1:** Council endorse the principles of *Ecologically Sustainable Development (ESD)* by integrating social, economic and environmental considerations in decision making through the implementation of the four ESD principles:
    - a) *The precautionary principle* - If there are threats of serious or irreversible environmental damage, lack of full scientific certainty should not be used as a reason for postponing measures to prevent environmental degradation;
    - b) *The principle of inter-generational equity* – the present generation should ensure that the health, diversity and productivity of the environment is maintained or enhanced for the benefit of future generations;
    - c) *The conservation of biological diversity and ecological integrity* should be a fundamental consideration in decision making; and
    - d) *Improved valuation, pricing and incentive mechanisms* should be promoted. Specifically, that environmental factors should be included in the valuation of assets and services.
  - 5.1.2. **Principle 2:** Council adopt a '*Collaborative Decision Making*' approach, partnering with the community, business and other stakeholders in planning and implementing climate change actions by acknowledging our shared responsibility.
  - 5.1.3. **Principle 3:** Council implement a program of '*Continuous Improvement*' in relation to improving energy efficiency and reducing greenhouse gas emissions of Council buildings, operations and assets.
  - 5.1.4. **Principle 4:** Council implement a decision-making approach that is based on the best '*Scientific Evidence*' available for reducing greenhouse gas emissions, adapting and building resilience to climate change.
  - 5.1.5. **Principle 5:** Council implement a '*Flexible and Proactive*' approach to managing the complex and evolving challenges posed by climate change.

## 6. POLICY COMMITMENTS

Council supports the people of the Cessnock LGA and will work with State and Federal Governments to ensure the sustainable, fair and equitable transition to a net zero emissions region. Following the adoption of this policy, Council's decision making shall be guided by the following policy commitments:

### **Governance**

- 6.1. Council implements actions to meet the adopted Greenhouse Gas Emissions reduction target of net zero emissions by 2050, in line with the NSW Government's target.
- 6.2. Implement the Climate Change Resilience Plan, which identifies actions for reducing greenhouse gas emissions, mitigating the impacts of climate change and building climate resilience.
- 6.3. Recognise the importance of shared responsibility across all levels of government, Council, community and businesses in addressing climate change and transitioning towards a net zero emissions region.
- 6.4. Identify and develop systems and relevant planning mechanisms to consider Council's corporate climate change risks, ongoing disaster response and recovery activities. Integrate climate change planning within Council's Integrated Management System.

### **Collaboration**

- 6.5. Engage with the community and other stakeholders in implementing the actions of the *Climate Change Resilience Plan*.
- 6.6. Establish partnerships between Council and the community with the goal of identifying investment opportunities for economic stability and sustainable growth.
- 6.7. Support initiatives and education programs to enhance the community's understanding and resilience to climate change risks.
- 6.8. Council will provide support and advice to residents on ways to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and build resilience to climate change (i.e. people wanting to reduce their emissions and build resilience on their own property).

### **Managing Risks & Building Resilience**

- 6.9. Consider climate risks in Council's strategic planning process - including land use planning, the development of planning controls and the development of guidelines to facilitate local investments.
- 6.10. Capture climate change planning within Council's IP&R framework.
- 6.11. Establish a holistic and systematic approach to monitor and understand climate change risks and their impact on ecological, social, economic and physical built forms.
- 6.12. Actively pursue funding opportunities for projects within the Cessnock LGA that build resilience to climate change.
- 6.13. Identify and pursue climate resilience opportunities through advancing technology, innovation and continuous improvement in the planning and management of existing built and natural assets, infrastructure projects and renewable resources.

## **Energy Efficiency & Emissions Reductions**

- 6.14. Develop a Cessnock Greenhouse Gas Emissions inventory using regional data and establish baseline emissions for the region. Undertake regular monitoring so that Council knows if the actions being employed to reduce emissions are succeeding and can amend actions if required.
- 6.15. Undertake an annual corporate Greenhouse Gas Emissions inventory including Scope 1 (direct) and Scope 2 (indirect) emissions utilising the *National Greenhouses and Energy Reporting Act 2007* (Cth).
- 6.16. Implement the actions of the *Climate Change Resilience Plan* to encourage government and private sector investment in renewable energy generation and energy storage projects (in suitable locations) and encourage the renewal of Council's energy using assets.
- 6.17. Commit to continually improving energy efficiency, reducing Greenhouse Gas Emissions and improving climate change resilience at all Council sites/assets. When replacing assets, more efficient and low greenhouse gas emitting assets shall be selected.
- 6.18. Review Council's procurement processes with the aim of reducing Greenhouse Gas Emissions in the production, use and disposal of goods.

## **7. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

### ***All Council Officials***

- 7.1. All Council Officials are responsible for:
  - 7.1.1. familiarising themselves with this policy;
  - 7.1.2. considering climate change in the IP&R framework, decision making, and day to day operations; and
  - 7.1.3. Integrating the five principles and policy commitments into day to day operations and decision making processes.

### ***The General Manager***

- 7.2. The General Manager is responsible for the implementation of this policy and ensuring regular reports are provided to the elected Council.

### ***Directors and Managers***

- 7.3. All Directors and Managers are responsible for supporting Council Officials to apply the strategies in this policy and for ensuring compliance with this policy.

### ***Reporting***

- 7.4. No additional reporting is required.

### ***Records management***

- 7.5. Staff must maintain all records relevant to administering this policy in accordance with Council's Records Management Policy.

## 8. POLICY DEFINITIONS

<b>Council</b>	means Cessnock City Council.
<b>Council Officials</b>	includes Councillors, members of staff of a council whether be employees or contractor, administrators, Council committee members, delegates of Council, Council advisors and volunteers.
<b>Climate Adaptation</b>	means consideration of the actions on an on-going basis for preparation in dealing with the impacts of climate change.
<b>Climate Mitigation</b>	means consideration of the actions to reduce the impacts of climate change.
<b>Climate Resilience</b>	means building capacity to cope with climate change, to recover from the impacts of climatic changes and to adapt using a combination of sustainable adaptation and mitigation measures.
<b>Greenhouse Gas Emissions</b>	means emissions of carbon dioxide, methane, nitrous oxide, sulphur hexafluoride, a hydrofluorocarbon gas, a perfluorocarbon gas or any other gas prescribed by the legislation for the purposes of this definition.
<b>IP&amp;R Framework</b>	Council's Integrated Planning and Reporting Framework

## 9. POLICY ADMINISTRATION

<b>Business Group</b>	Planning and Environment
<b>Responsible Officer</b>	Manager Strategic Planning
<b>Policy Review Date</b>	Three years from date of adoption unless legislated otherwise
<b>File Number / Document Number</b>	DOC2019/067227
<b>Relevant Legislation</b>	This policy supports Council's compliance with the following legislation: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <i>Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979 (NSW)</i></li> <li>▪ <i>Local Government Act 1993 (NSW)</i></li> <li>▪ <i>National Greenhouse and Energy Reporting Act 2007 (Cth)</i></li> </ul>
<b>Relevant desired outcome or objectives</b>	A sustainable and healthy environment Objective 3.1: Protecting & enhancing the natural environment & the rural character of the area.
<b>Related Policies / Protocols / Procedures / Documents</b>	The following policies, protocols and procedures are related to this policy: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Records Management Policy (DOC2019/038769)</li> <li>▪ Climate Change Resilience Plan (DOC2023/143327)</li> <li>▪ Cessnock Development Control Plan 2010</li> <li>▪ Cessnock Local Environmental Plan 2011</li> <li>▪ Greater Newcastle Metropolitan Plan 2036</li> <li>▪ NSW Government Climate Change Policy Framework</li> <li>▪ Net Zero Plan Stage 1:2020-2030</li> </ul>

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## 10. POLICY AUTHORISATIONS

No.	Authorised Function	Authorised Business Unit / Role(s)
1	NIL	NIL

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## 11. POLICY HISTORY

Revision	Date Approved / Authority	Description Of Changes
2	1 March 2024 PE42/2023	Inclusion of Climate Change Resilience Plan Minor wording amendments and updating of actions
1	20 May 2020 PE17/2020	New Policy Adopted