

Climate Adaptation

Responsible officer:	Director Infrastructure and Environment
Key Result Area:	Environmental Sustainability
Document type:	Policy
Reference:	10/01/0004
Approved by:	Council
Date approved:	27 September 2023
Date of next review:	27 September 2024

Definitions

Term	Definition
Climate change	Refers to a change in the state of the climate that can be identified by changes in the mean and/or the variability of its properties, and that persists for an extended period, typically decades or longer ¹ .
Adaptation	Process of adjustment to actual or expected climate and its effects which aims to reduce the impact of any given level of climate change.
Mitigation	Refers to efforts to minimise the extent of climate change by reducing or preventing emission of greenhouse gases
Resilience	The capacity of an organisation to absorb disturbance and reorganize while undergoing change to still retain essentially the same function, structure, identity and feedbacks. ²

Scope

The purpose of this policy is to provide a mechanism to guide strategies, evaluate and assess projects and policies, and enable Council to manage its climate change vulnerability thereby increasing the organisation's resilience and preparation for the future.

¹ IPCC (2007) Fourth Assessment Report: Climate Change 2007: Synthesis Report

² [Walker, B. and Salt, D. \(2008\) Resilience Thinking: Sustaining ecosystems and people in a changing world. Island Press. U.S.A.](#)

Background

This policy is underpinned by climate projections in the *Murray Basin Cluster Report* from CSIRO and the Australian Bureau of Meteorology's *Climate Change in Australia Projections* (Timbal et al. 2015).

Expectations are for hotter and generally drier conditions in Towong Shire with increasing frequency and intensity of extreme climatic events. This has implications for the continued management of local government assets and delivery of services into the future. A range of local government functional areas are already faced with the impacts of heatwave, drought, fire and flood. These extremes place pressure on the achievement of strategic objectives, via a range of financial, people and safety, environmental, governance, business continuity and reputational consequences.

This policy aligns with Towong Shire Council's mission statement by proactively planning for a changing climate.

Objectives

Council is committed to responding to the risks of climate change to Council assets and services.

The objectives of this policy are to:

- Reduce greenhouse gas emissions (through appropriate mitigation strategies)
- Conserve natural resources
- Promote a safe and healthy community
- Increase Council's resilience to the impacts of climate change

Approach

We aim to achieve the objectives of this policy by:

1. Implementing Climate Adaptation Action Plans to assess and respond to the impacts of climate change on Council assets and services.
2. Evaluate the climate change implications when making strategic and operational decisions and developing policy positions.

Deployment

Climate change impacts are experienced across the organisation and community, with mitigation and adaptation actions implemented by Councillors, staff and community members.

This policy applies to Council services and assets. It is to be considered when Council and its officers make recommendations and decisions, or design and review programs, processes and projects. This policy also applies to Councillors as the elected representatives of the Towong Shire in their decision making and advocacy; and to all employees, agency employees, sub-contractors and volunteers whilst they are working on Council sites and/or under Council direction.

Human Rights

The policy gives regard to relevant legislation, principles of natural justice and procedural fairness, community values and Council’s resource capacity. It is considered that this policy supports the rights identified in the *Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act (2006)*.

Relevant Legislation

The local policy and planning context relevant to climate change adaptation is tabulated in Table 1 with quotes from key council documents. Some of these guiding documents acknowledge climate change and the increasing nature of extreme events, and others take the additional step in putting forward various adaptation responses.

Resources

The following resources are committed by Council to assist with the implementation of this policy:

- Director Infrastructure and Environment to manage implementation of this Policy
- Managers to implement this Policy
- Other resources as deemed necessary by the Chief Executive Officer.

Table 1. Towong Shire Council local policy and planning context relevant to climate change

TSC document	Relevant content
<p>Council Plan 2011-2025</p> <p>(Towong Shire Council, 2021)</p>	<p>Mission : ‘To provide strong leadership and to work with our communities to enhance their social, economic and environmental wellbeing.’.</p> <p>Items listed as ongoing responsibilities for the Environmental sustainability Key Result Area:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a climate change action plan (including actions to reduce carbon emissions, electric vehicle charging, etc); • Invest in community education programs and a waste services survey to improve waste and recycling separation; • Continue to seek funding for integrated water management projects to maximise the use of recycled and raw water sources for public amenity and climate change mitigation.
<p>Towong Planning Scheme</p> <p>(Towong Shire Council, 2023)</p>	<p>“The Towong Planning Scheme acknowledges climate change as a significant risk for to be considered in planning matters. This is noted most notably in clauses 02.03-3 (Environmental risks and amenity) and 13.01-1S (Natural hazards and climate change).</p>
<p>Municipal Emergency Management Plan</p> <p>(Towong Shire Council, 2018)</p>	<p>Increasing frequency and intensity of extreme events (particularly heatwaves) are acknowledged in the risk assessment that fed into the emergency management planning process.</p>

TSC document	Relevant content
<p>Strategic Plan for Agriculture</p> <p>(Towong Shire Council, 2023)</p>	<p>The strategic plan references various initiatives and recommendations throughout the document to address climate change in the agricultural industry</p>
<p>Municipal Economic Development Strategy</p> <p>(Towong Shire Council, 2022)</p>	<p>Outcome 2.1 “To support agricultural output and grow its value, the industry also needs to adopt future-proofing measures to protect against the increasing threat of climate change and extreme weather events (which creates uncertainty for farmers).”</p>
<p>Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan</p> <p>(Towong Shire Council, 2021)</p>	<p>Action 3.1 “Ensure communities adopt sustainable practices to reduce the impact of climate change”. This includes developing a climate change action plan and integrate climate risk discussion in peak committees.</p>
<p>Heatwave Plan</p> <p>(Towong Shire Council, 2017)</p>	<p>Under ‘Council obligations under Government Legislation and Policy’, the plan refers to the following documents, including linkages between heatwave and climate change: Public Health and Wellbeing Act 2008, Emergency Management Act 1986 and 2013, Climate Change Act 2010, Planning and Environment Act 1987, Our environment, our future sustainability action statement 2006. This statement identifies community and local government as the levels most appropriate for heatwave emergency planning and response.</p>
<p>Municipal Climate Adaptation Action Plan</p> <p>(Towong Shire Council, 2023)</p>	<p>The Climate Adaptation Action Plan is an initiative referenced in numerous strategic documents to map out a practical pathway for Council to further reduce their emissions over the next ten years. It details initiatives addressing topic areas such as waste, fleet transition, stationary fuels, electricity and concrete and asphalt.</p>

Results

The deployment of this policy together with the results achieved will be reviewed at least annually.

References

- Towong Shire Council (2021) *Council Plan 2021-2025*
- Towong Shire Council (2023) *Towong Planning Scheme*
- Towong Shire Council (2023) *Municipal Strategic Plan for Agriculture*
- Towong Shire Council (2022) *Municipal Economic Development Strategy*
- Towong Shire Council (2021) *Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan*
- Towong Shire Council (2023) *Municipal Climate Adaptation Action Plan*
- Towong Shire Council (2017) *Municipal Heatwave Plan*



Authorised by: _____

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