



the place  
to live

The cover features a central blue water droplet shape containing the title. Surrounding this are various nature-themed illustrations: a dragonfly in the upper left, an ant in the lower left, a butterfly in the lower right, a black and white bird in the bottom center, and various plants including a fern on the left, a red flower on the right, and a cluster of brown berries at the bottom left. The background is a mix of light brown, green, and blue textures.

**DAREBIN**  
**CLIMATE**  
**EMERGENCY**  
**PLAN**  
**2017-2022**  
**REVIEW**

# Introduction

On 5 December 2016, Darebin Council led the world by unanimously voting to recognise we are in a state of climate emergency that requires urgent action by all levels of government. In August 2017, after extensive community consultation, this was followed by the adoption of Darebin's Climate Emergency Plan 2017-2022 (*The Plan*).

The Darebin Climate Emergency Plan was the first ever attempt at articulating the action necessary to respond to the enormous challenge of the climate emergency. In doing so, The Plan:

- defined new terms and definitions relevant to the climate emergency response;
- established six overarching goals as key indicators of progress and success; and
- prioritised action into nine key directions with 156 accompanying actions to be undertaken to reach these goals.

The Darebin Climate Emergency Plan was ambitious, and it acknowledged that some of the goals and actions were contingent on a fully engaged community, as well as deep collaboration with, and commitment by, all levels of government.

In reviewing Darebin's progress, there is much to celebrate. Darebin's historic climate emergency declaration started a global movement, with 108 Australian councils and 2,082 world-wide jurisdictions so far following suit covering 1 billion+ people<sup>1</sup>.

Council led the largest emissions reduction project ever undertaken by local government in Australia – the Victorian Energy Collaboration (VECO). Council's innovative Solar Saver program helps residents install solar and has led the way for the sector. Council has supported local business through enabling Environment Upgrade Finance mechanisms, and its Light\$mart Program.

By the end of 2022, Darebin will have progressed or achieved five of six of the Plan's goals. Of the 156 actions, 73% of these actions have been delivered, 21% in progress and only 6% have not yet been started.

Despite this success, the need has never been greater to act with even more urgency. The latest IPCC reports have laid bare the fact that the world is heading toward catastrophic warming of over 2°C. Australia is ill-prepared to cope with current climate impacts, let alone more significant ones.

DAREBIN COUNCIL PLAN 2021-2025

## BIG ACTION #3

“Continue to lead with our response to the climate emergency by updating our Climate Emergency Plan to set out how to best achieve zero greenhouse gas emissions for Darebin by 2030, offering solar installations and energy retrofits to pensioners and vulnerable communities, delivering new business and community power purchase partnerships, supporting a shift to a circular economy and massively reducing our waste going to landfill, and delivering projects and programs aimed to improve safety for people cycling, walking and wheeling, increasing active travel which will also reduce transport emissions”

# Highlights

## Advocacy and engagement

### 1 billion+ people

Climate Emergency action gained significant momentum. In 2022, 108 Australian councils (and ACT) have subsequently declared. Worldwide: 2,248 jurisdictions in 39 countries covering 1 billion+ people.



## Leadership

Darebin led the award-winning Victorian Energy Collaboration (VECO): a collaboration of 46 Councils to switch to 100% renewable energy, from two wind farms in regional Victoria. VECO is the largest emissions reduction project ever undertaken by the local government sector in Australia.



VECO launch May 2021



**Darebin became a certified carbon neutral organisation under the Climate Active Standard in 2019-20.**

## Innovation

New Council-constructed community facilities such as the redesign of Northcote Aquatic and Recreation Centre (NARC) and the new Narrandjeri Multi-Sports Stadium are designed to be fully electric as well as achieve the highest Green Star ratings.



The continued roll out of the Darebin Solar Saver program has helped 1,945 homes and businesses install 9,820KW of solar, with 10+ Victorian Councils replicating the model.



# Progress on Darebin's Climate Emergency Plan

## Progress on the six plan goals

The Darebin Climate Emergency Plan includes six goals as indicators of progress for both Council and the community as a whole. At the time the Plan was developed, Darebin Council committed to continue to aim for zero greenhouse gas emissions for both our Council and community by 2020, recognising that we would not achieve this without urgent leadership and action from other levels of government.

Thanks to both the Darebin Solar Saver and the State Government Solar Victoria programs, and the continued popularity of rooftop solar, Darebin businesses and residents exceeded the local renewable energy generation goal by 16MW (an extra 50%).

Meanwhile, Council's leadership in regards to its own performance delivered a number of milestones, including nearly doubling its own onsite generation from solar and reaching its net zero emissions goal, by becoming certified carbon neutral under the Climate Active program. Furthermore, it is projected Darebin will meet its goal of 45% reduction in

overall gross greenhouse gas emissions by December 2022, largely due to making our electricity purchases 100% renewable through VECO.

Reducing community-wide emissions, and drawing down historical emissions from Council operations, remains a huge challenge, with slow progress made.

This lack of progress is particularly impacting Darebin's vulnerable communities, as the renewable energy and electrification gap widens and exacerbates fuel poverty.

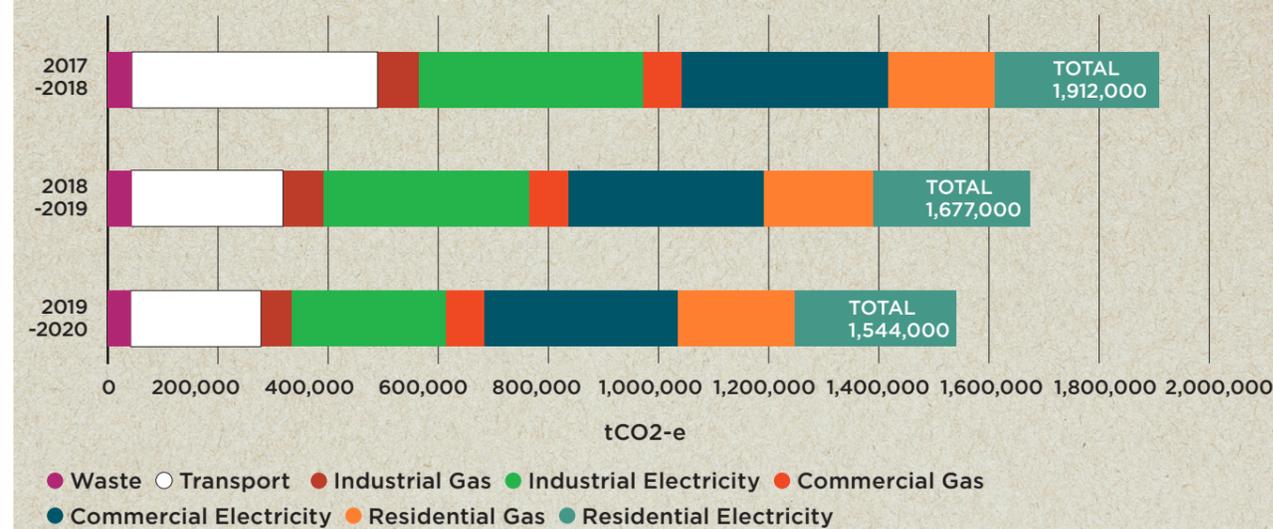
The quickening pace of global climate emergency together with many years of insufficient action by the Federal and at times State Governments are making targets difficult to achieve. We need a new level of collaboration with all levels of Government to urgently make progress. Council has committed to develop a roadmap to zero emissions by 2030 in its new Climate Emergency Plan. Council is calling on the Federal and State Governments to fix the electricity grid and establish an urban renewable energy zone in Darebin.

Figure 1: Progress against the six plan goals

GOAL	RESULT	RATING
<b>COUNCIL</b>		
45% reduction of gross greenhouse gas emissions by 2022 (baseline 16,860tCO2-e) <sup>2</sup>	16% (14,100tCO2-e)	In progress ●
Net greenhouse gas emissions for Council operations by 2020	Zero net emissions	Achieved ●
An additional 440KW of on-site renewable energy generation by 2022 (baseline 377KW)	824KW total capacity	Achieved ●
Negative emissions (drawdown)	N/A	Not yet started ●
<b>COMMUNITY</b>		
Zero net emissions (baseline 1.951 MtCO2-e) by 2020	21% reductions (1,544 MtCO2-e)	In progress ●
Double local renewable energy generation (baseline 19MW) by 2022	54MW	Achieved ●

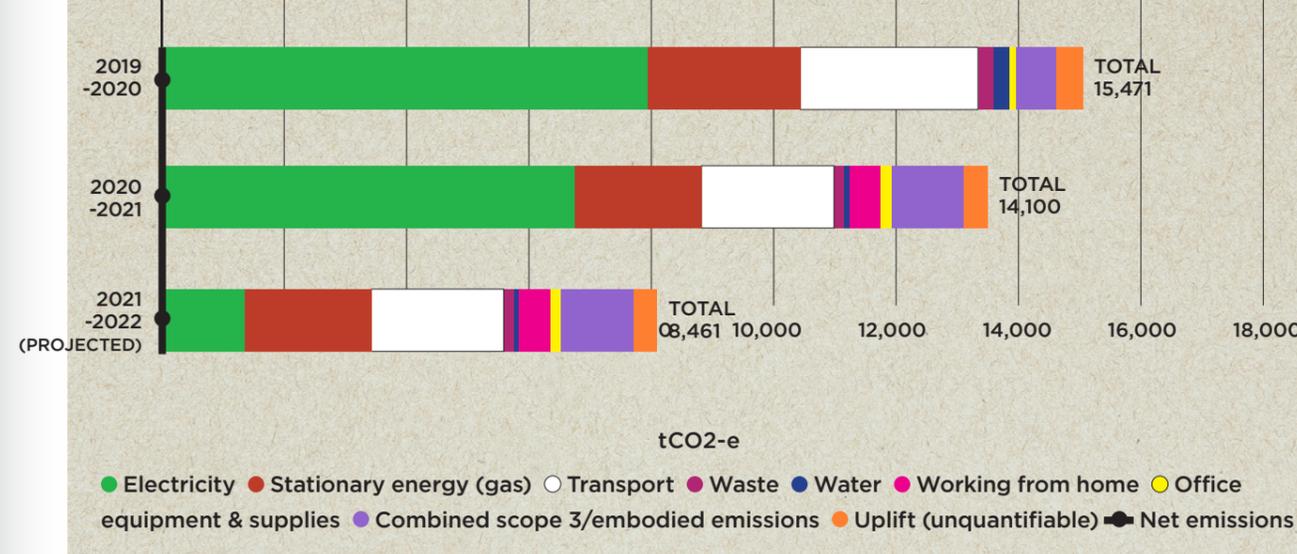
# Council and community emissions over time

Figure 2: Darebin community emissions over time



NB: the significant drop in transport emissions between 2017-18 and 2018-19 are primarily due to improved accounting. 2019-20's figures are impacted by the first quarter impacts of COVID-19, reflected in the rise in residential energy usage and decrease in industrial energy and transport emissions.

Figure 3: Darebin Council operations gross and net emissions (after renewable energy and offset purchases)

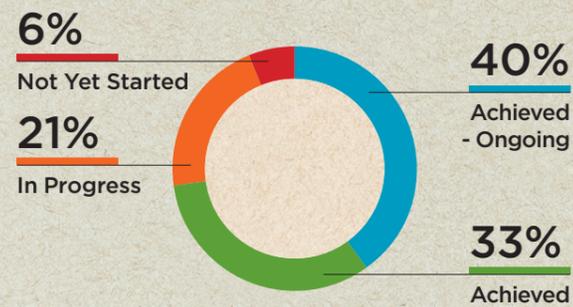


NB: emissions from previous years are not included as Darebin adopted a more comprehensive method of carbon accounting, since becoming carbon neutral (zero net emissions) under the Climate Active program in the 2019-20FY.

## Progress on nine key directions

In early 2022, each of the 156 actions across the nine key directions of the Darebin Climate Emergency Plan were assessed in terms of its completion status and given a rating: *Achieved - Ongoing*, *Achieved*, *In Progress*, or *Not Yet Started*.

**Figure 4: Status of actions across the plan's nine key directions**



**Food waste recycling introduced 2019**

### Key directions

- #1 Climate Emergency Mobilisation
- #8 Engaging the Community
- #9 Climate Emergency Darebin



These directions acknowledge that the scale and speed of transformation needed requires building a broad consensus across society on the need to adopt an emergency response to climate change. From our local community in Darebin, to other Councils around Australia, to other levels of government, industry, organisations and communities around the world.

Overall, 94% of all actions were deemed achieved or in progress, with only 6% not yet started.

They also recognise local government can play a role in being a trusted organisation to support the community to take action on the Climate Emergency.

Council has successfully delivered the vast majority of actions under these directions; from establishing Climate Emergency Australia to joining international efforts like the Global Covenant of Mayors, to providing grants and support to empower on-the-ground local climate organisations and increasing climate awareness and commitment to effective emergency action.

A continued focus on supporting and working with the community in the future will be required to ensure the delivery on municipal goals and protection of all.

### Key directions

- #2 Energy Efficiency
- #3 Renewable Energy and Fuel Switching
- #6 Fossil Fuel Divestment



Recognising the role of climate change mitigation, a significant portion of the Plan was apportioned to actions aimed at reducing energy use and transitioning to 100% renewable energy. Investing in energy efficiency and renewable energy in the community helps families and businesses adapt to a changing climate and can help alleviate fuel poverty among our vulnerable community members.

Darebin led several innovative projects, such as VECO, a divestment initiative that saw Council move away from it banking activities being associated with fossil fuel investments, new facilities are being designed and built to be fully electric and the expansion of the Darebin Solar Saver program.

Whilst significant progress was made, including nearly tripling the solar PV capacity within the municipality, sustained efforts at the local, state and national levels will be required in the coming decade, to make the substantial shift needed to avoid the catastrophic impacts of climate change.

### Key directions

- #4 Zero Emissions Transport
- #5 Consumption and Waste Minimisation
- #7 Adaptation and Resilience



By including a climate emergency perspective to themes such as transport, waste and consumption-new ways of thinking and increased outcomes were able to be realised. Many adaptation initiatives were also implemented to prepare the community against warmer, more intense climate conditions in future years. However, we recognise that more work is needed.

Many longer-term actions were initiated by Council during the term of the Plan, including significant stormwater harvesting, wetland projects and increasing tree-canopy. Policy adoptions that support actions in the future, such as improvements in Environmentally Sensitive Design in Darebin led-projects such as the 6 star Green Star redevelopment of Northcote Aquatic and Recreation Centre, as well as requirements in private developments and in council capital projects.

During the term of the Plan, Council adopted a new Waste and Recycling Strategy and introduced of kerbside food waste recycling as part of the existing green waste service.

Council commenced its transition away from internal combustion engines to electric vehicles.

# Challenges

Despite the considerable progress made since Council's initial climate emergency declaration in 2016, significant obstacles to addressing this issue remain.

## Post-COVID environment

The environment that Darebin and its community will experience in the future as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic remains unclear.

## A collaborative approach to climate emergency action

As was recognised in the Darebin Climate Emergency Plan, a truly united approach is needed across our society and economy, which requires large-scale, sustained action across all levels of government, businesses and the community to both cut carbon emissions and adapt to living in more extreme weather conditions. Without this, responses will continue to be disjointed, and risk further isolating already vulnerable cohorts of our community.

A clear standout issue where this approach is needed is transitioning to a 100% renewable grid, along with localised initiatives to maximise local renewable generation and deliver on zero net emissions communities. These will be core drivers of our advocacy to the State and Federal Government.

## Economic opportunities of transition

Our experience in delivering projects such as VECO and the work of others such as the Clean Energy Council and Beyond Zero Emissions show us that transitioning to a clean energy future also has significant economic benefits.

For example, several vital industries such as food and beverage production are well placed to benefit from the adoption on electrified hot water sources (e.g. heat pumps) powered by renewable energy, rather than from natural gas supplies. By adopting these approaches now, businesses can cut

operating costs and future proof themselves against price rises, whilst reducing emissions.

There are considerable opportunities for Darebin to partner with federal and state government to address local energy grid challenges and to continue leading local and regional transformation efforts.

## A rapid transformation

The way in which Australians use energy and where it will be sourced from is rapidly changing. The Draft 2022 Integrated System Plan published by The Australian Energy Market Operator (AEMO) identifies this once-in-a-century transformation that includes, consumers embracing electrification, a continued uptake in rooftop solar, and a rapid transition away from fossil fuel energy sources and significant uptake of renewables and much more.

Identifying this enormous opportunity, a unified commitment with long term funding from federal and state governments is required to make this a successful and equitable change.



Murra Warra Wind Farm powering VECO

# Moving forward

In 2022 and 2023 Council will work on updating its response to the climate emergency with a new Climate Emergency Strategy and Action Plan that aligns with Darebin's 2041 Community Vision:

- Darebin is an equitable, vibrant and connected community.
- Darebin respects and supports First Nations People, values country, our diverse communities and places.
- Darebin commits to mitigating the climate emergency, creating prosperity for current and future generations.

## Advocacy

Darebin City Council is calling on the Federal and State Governments to deliver on their respective net zero targets as soon as possible, for our community to transition and thrive in a zero-carbon economy, whilst giving us all the best chance of avoiding the catastrophic impacts of climate change.

Darebin is also calling for an Urban Renewable Energy and Circular Economy precinct to be established in the North East of Melbourne, where it would help power the La Trobe National Employment and Innovation Cluster. This ensure the NEIC can access competitive and secure renewable energy close to where it is needed.

## Engagement and Community Consultation

It is vital that Council, the Darebin community and other levels of government all work together to deliver on zero emissions for Darebin by 2030, assess current and future climate risks facing our community and identify initiatives that can provide maximum protection for people, property and the natural environment.

At the core of Council's next update to the climate emergency will be an in-depth engagement across our community. This will include the diverse voices of Darebin to ensure our ambitions coincide with the needs of the community.

These voices will be reflected in our new Climate Emergency Strategy and Action Plan. This engagement will reflect our values to create an equitable, vibrant and connected community and will include a deep and ongoing engagement with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.



<sup>1</sup> <https://climateemergencydeclaration.org/climate-emergency-declarations-cover-15-million-citizens>  
<sup>2</sup> Darebin adopted a more comprehensive method of carbon accounting in the 2019-20FY. This reduction is calculated against this adjusted baseline from 2019-20FY using projected emissions from 2021-22FY.



## ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER PEOPLE AND THE CLIMATE EMERGENCY

Darebin City Council acknowledges the Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung people as the Traditional Owners and custodians of the land and waters we now call Darebin, and that sovereignty has never been ceded.

This acknowledgement and meaningful engagement with Traditional Owners and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in our community was a significant gap in the first Climate Emergency Plan. We recognise that climate change has impacted and continues to threaten country and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. There is important indigenous knowledge and experience that needs to be considered to heal country and protect community as we approach the challenge of the climate emergency together.

Council wishes to reaffirm its commitment to working closely with and alongside the Traditional Owners, the Darebin Aboriginal Advisory Committee and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities in Darebin on the new Climate Emergency Strategy and Action Plan.

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