



Transition Hobsons Bay

Creating a stronger, healthier future for our neighbourhoods

TRANSITION HOBSONS BAY COMMENT ON THE HOBSONS BAY CITY COUNCIL COMMUNITY GREENHOUSE STRATEGY

In 2011 the council asked the community what they thought about climate change and found that the community thought that the Council should lead by example on climate change.

Transition Hobsons Bay doesn't believe that this Community Greenhouse Strategy shows leadership on climate change and that doesn't contain the actions that will enable, engage and encourage the local community to move to a low carbon community.

This strategy does not offer a solution that is equal to the seriousness of the problem of climate change that is needed in a strategy that is forecast to deliver actions for seventeen years.

Transition Hobsons Bay would like to see a revised action based plan that is strong and equal to the task and that really motivates and catalyzes the community towards the Council's ambitious goal for carbon neutrality by 2030.

This plan should be developed with strong engagement and consultation within the community and should include mechanisms for accountability and review before 2017.

Measurement of emissions

Big business measures and reports its energy use and greenhouse gas emissions in a particular way to meet their obligations under federal and state legislation. The council and the Hobsons Bay community are not required to measure and report under this legislation and there is no benefit in attempting to replicate emissions reductions that will be claimed by other entities under federal and state legislation or business programs.

Many of the actions in this strategy seem to replicate savings that would be made by others. The action "Promotion of energy efficiency resources", for example, promises a 4.73% reduction of the total 10% reduction of greenhouse gas that the strategy plans for. Promoting others programs is fine but it is not clear what the council is going to do that will increase the uptake of these resources above what would have happened anyway through existing promotions.

Where this strategy can most benefit is by finding opportunities to reduce emissions in those areas that are not already covered by other levels of government's policy and legislation and programs. Hobsons Bay City Council should find its own niche for reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

Some of these opportunities might not be able to be accounted for and measured, for example it may not be possible to accurately measure the greenhouse pollution of household consumption in Hobsons Bay but this shouldn't stop the council running activities to reduce it.

Scope of responsibility

THB doesn't believe that the council is able to take responsibility for the whole of the Hobsons Bay community emissions.

THB suggests that the scope of the emission that this strategy is covering and focusing on is changed. We suggest that (unlike the HBCC corporate greenhouse emissions), the council cannot be held to account for all of the greenhouse emissions in the municipality and that emissions of big industry should not be the focus of the actions of this strategy. We also don't think that it is reasonable to expect ratepayers to pay the cost of offsetting greenhouse pollution of industry.

This strategy seems to suggest that the Council will offset the greenhouse gas emissions that have been generated in the municipality. While this might not occur until 2030, using the strategy's own figures this would cost ratepayers between almost \$10 million and \$100 million every year.

That this is included makes it very difficult to take this strategy seriously.

Focus

The strategy has a lot of focus on areas of the community where local government may not be most effective in influencing change and reductions in greenhouse gas emissions. A large number of actions in this strategy focus on developing greenhouse gas reduction projects for big industry.

Emissions from this sector are large but this sector also has strong incentives and assistance to reduce their greenhouse pollution. For example, a number of these companies are currently liable to pay a carbon price and many of them are required to meet requirements of NGER, EEO and other federal and state greenhouse and energy legislation. They will also often have their own specialist staff with expertise in these areas. Many of the actions related to big industry appear to be to develop research, briefing papers and consultants' reports over a long time frame. A lot of resources, staff and budget have been allocated to scoping and developing big industry related projects. There is a risk that these resources will be spent and wasted on a number of reports that will find that council isn't able to influence this area.

The strategy should consider where local government resources, expertise and influence is best able to achieve reductions in greenhouse gas, and direct resources there.

Lack of action

This strategy again removes itself from completing any actual action. Most of the 'actions' seem to be vague undeveloped ideas, that often forecast a timeframe of a couple of years "from the initiation of the project" to even develop a project brief.

Accountability and transparency of these ideas is lacking with no review of this strategy planned until 2017.

Six years after the Council committed to assisting the community to reach carbon neutrality a detailed plan should be implemented but this plan indicated that action is many years away if it will happen at all.

THB would like to see a real plan of action.

Waste to energy and compost

Transition Hobson Bay has initiated some programs around food waste and composting and so will comment in more detail on the waste initiatives in this strategy.

Around seven per cent of our rates are used for waste disposal and the costs of waste disposal are increasing each, These rising costs of waste disposal are increasing across Victoria in part because of the increasing environmental costs of landfill and it should be expected that these costs will continue to rise as new landfill technology is developed.

As is part of the intention of the landfill levy, many other councils are responding to these rising waste costs by finding ways to reduce resident's waste to landfill and thus reducing the exposure that their residents have to the continually increasing costs of waste to landfill.

Relying on a waste to energy facility to process the organic waste of Hobsons Bay's will see costs for waste collection continue to increase in this municipality and it is not an environmentally preferred solution.

Also, Hobsons Bay City Council doesn't operate a landfill facility and so it's assumed that they can't manage a waste to energy facility and claim the savings in the Hobsons Bay municipality. Waste to energy would be claimed as a scope one emission at the waste facility and in the municipality in which it occurs.

If the objective of this strategy is to consider the development of small scale waste to energy facilities in the Hobsons Bay municipality then this should be made clear.

Hobsons Bay City Council does manage and have control over the collection of waste from households and some businesses in Hobsons Bay and has a great influence over how this happens.

More than half of household waste is made up of food and garden scraps (mainly food). This is the component of our waste that creates methane when it breaks down anaerobically in landfill. Methane – a powerful greenhouse gas- is the reason landfill operators feature so prominently in the top 500 polluters who are currently liable to pay the carbon tax. Composting this organic aerobically with oxygen as is home composting significantly reduces the methane and other greenhouse gas pollution created by the waste.

The action: “To further encourage home composting” and the associated saving of 1,180 tonnes, (to 2030) is not strong enough.

In 2010-11, 25,000 tonnes of greenhouse gases were generated from waste to landfill in Hobsons Bay as a scope three emission to the Council. A 100% diversion of organic waste from the garbage stream into household and community composting facility would remove these greenhouse gases from the council’s scope. It would also reduce these greenhouse gases by around 10% and would utilize this waste as a valuable resource for Hobsons Bay’s soils and gardens.

Transition Hobsons Bay asks why Hobsons Bay City Council can’t adopt the goal of diverting all food and garden waste from landfill and from the garbage service by 2030?

By composting all this organic waste the direct greenhouse gas emissions from this waste would be reduced by around 10%, and further greenhouse savings would be made through increasing carbon sequestration of our soils.

Such initiative could also significantly reduce the cost to ratepayers over time as less garbage pickups would be needed and we could move to fortnightly garbage pickups.

Such an initiative is currently being trialed by Frankston City Council. One thousand households are being provided with compost bins, worm farms and assistance from staff to compost their organic waste as part of the Halve Our Waste program. Their bins are being collected fortnightly and they are receiving a rebate on their rates for this reduced garbage service.

Locally Transition Hobsons Bay has initiated a Compost Mate program where residents can collect compost from cafes, and a Ground to Ground program for collection of used coffee grounds from cafes. Darebin City Council is currently employing a Sustainable Food Officer who would assist the community with such initiatives.

There are many more examples of great sustainability initiatives that other councils are implementing with their communities, and Transition Hobsons Bay would be happy to collect some of these examples and discuss them further with the council.

WE WOULD LIKE A COMMITMENT TO ACTION WITH THE COMMUNITY

We would like to see a commitment to engage with people in the community to identify projects and actions that the council can develop, that will lead to a reduction in greenhouse gas and a sustainable Hobsons Bay.

We feel that this is where the Council's efforts can be most effective and lead to the most action. We would like the council to develop and support projects on the ground that will motivate, encourage and enable Hobsons Bay's communities and neighbourhoods to work together to create a low carbon and sustainable 2030.

Transition Hobsons Bay have a number of projects and are aware of many other projects throughout the community that would reduce greenhouse gas emissions and be worthy of support from Council.

We hope that we will soon see a strong and active presence from the Council working with people in the community, and for a plan of concrete action that will catalyse the community towards sustainability.

THB encourage the council to spend more time engaging with the community to identify projects to develop with a revised community greenhouse strategy.