Dear Sir/Madam,

Thank you for the opportunity to make a submission to the Parliament of Victoria’s Inquiry into Tackling Climate Change in Victorian Communities. The Surf Coast Shire Council has long been committed to action on climate change from both a risk management perspective, as well as a leadership, engagement and advocacy perspective.

In response to two community petitions containing 1,149 signatures, Council will consider at its 27 August 2019 Ordinary Council Meeting whether to declare a Climate Emergency and commit to developing a Climate Emergency Response plan in partnership with the community. Council officers have prepared the attached report and recommendations to assist Council in its consideration of the Climate Emergency declaration. A summary of Council’s broader action on climate change, including mitigation and adaptation actions that are both corporate and community focussed, is provided on pages 5-7 of the attached report. I’d like to draw attention to actions Council has recently undertaken that are of particular relevance to this Inquiry, including:

- Set a community wide target of 25% renewable energy consumption by 2020;
- Established a Renewable Energy Task Force made up of community, industry and Council representatives;
- Developed a comprehensive electricity profile for the municipality; and
- Developed an independent website, Powered by Positive (www.poweredbypositive.com.au), to assist residents and businesses to use less energy and install solar.

The Surf Coast Shire Council is committed to continued action on climate change and welcomes the opportunity to work with the Victorian Government on this important issue.

Sincerely,

Rowan Mackenzie
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5.4 Response to Climate Emergency Petitions

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Department: Environment & Community Safety  File No: F18/2523
Division: Environment & Development  Trim No: IC19/1361

Appendix:
1. Climate Action Tracker Graph (D19/118477)
2. The third degree: Evidence and implications for Australia of existential climate-related security risk (D19/115593)
3. 25% by 2020 Renewable Energy Task Force advice (D19/102276)
4. Darebin Climate Emergency Plan - Summary (D19/118485)

Officer Direct or Indirect Conflict of Interest: Yes ☐  No ☒

Reason: Nil

Status: Information classified confidential in accordance with Local Government Act 1989 – Section 77(2)(c):

Yes ☐  No ☒  Reason: Nil

Purpose
The purpose of this report is to enable council to consider petitions received at its Ordinary Meeting 23 July 2019 and matters associated with climate change and environment leadership.

Summary
Council received petitions in July 2019 asking Council to declare a Climate Emergency and to implement a climate emergency response. Globally and locally there is a realisation that a more significant and urgent climate change response is required. At least 36 Councils throughout Australia and 958 government agencies internationally have declared a Climate Emergency committing them to take stronger action on this issue.

The Victorian Government has prioritised climate change through its Climate Change Framework and, along with our community, see local government as having an important role in responding to climate change.

Current global policies and actions are very unlikely to avert extreme negative consequences, and the policy and actions/changes required are significant and require significant lead times. These circumstances warrant the use of the term ‘emergency’.

Council and the community are already taking action to respond to climate change, however, more can be done. Council has an opportunity to demonstrate commitment to stronger action in this area by committing to corporate targets in key areas related to climate change. Council’s Renewable Energy Taskforce has provided advice to Council at its July 2019 Meeting that can be used to inform setting renewable energy and greenhouse gas targets.

The State Government has advised that in the development of Municipal 2019-23 Public Health and Wellbeing Plans, councils must consider climate change as a complex and emerging threat to health warranting attention at all levels and across sectors. As Council incorporates its Health and Wellbeing Plan into its Council Plan, climate change may need to be specifically considered in future reviews of its Council Plan.

Recommendation
That Council:

1. Declares a Climate Emergency
2. Commits to develop a Climate Emergency Response Plan in partnership with the community
3. Receives a further report on how a Climate Emergency Response Plan will be developed including any resources needed
4. Commits to setting corporate energy, greenhouse gas emissions, water, waste, land use and biodiversity targets informed by the advice of the Renewable Energy Task Force
5. Confirms its commitment to use the One Planet Living Framework and Towards Environmental
5.4 **Response to Climate Emergency Petitions**

- Leadership Program to guide corporate responses to climate change
- Notes the opportunity to consider climate change in future reviews of the Council Plan (incorporating the Health and Wellbeing Plan)
5.4 Response to Climate Emergency Petitions

Report

Background
Council received petitions in July 2019 Seeking Council declare a Climate Emergency and implement a climate emergency response.

- Petition 1 with 1000 signatures requests Council declare a Climate Emergency and to act
- Petition 2 with 149 signatures requests Council implement a climate emergency response which involves to: publicly acknowledge the climate emergency; review Council’s Strategic Plan; create a foundation for climate emergency action; and implement a climate emergency plan.

Globally and locally there is a growing acknowledgment that a more significant and urgent climate change response is required. The Victorian Government has accepted the priority for climate change through its Climate Change Framework (2016). The State Government and our community see local government as having an important role in responding to climate change.

Council and the community are already taking action to respond to climate change, however, the petitions are seeking a greater effort and focus from Council beyond business as usual on this issue.

Discussion

Victorian Government climate change agenda
The Victorian Government’s Climate Change Framework (2016) states that urgent and decisive global action to reduce emissions is needed if the increase in global average temperature is to be held to 1.5 degrees Celsius (°C) and that current policy commitments by the international community are inadequate to keep global warming below 2°C.

“Climate change poses one of the biggest threats to our future. How we respond will determine the future wellbeing and prosperity of Victoria. We cannot wait for others to take action on climate change; the science is very clear that we must start to reduce our emissions and prepare for the future now.” The Hon. Daniel Andrews, Premier, 2016.

“There is overwhelming scientific consensus that human activity is causing climate change and that global emissions will need to decline to net zero levels by the second half of the century if this global goal (global average temperature increase held below 2°C) is to be met.” Preamble, Climate Change Act 2017 (Vic)

Climate Emergency campaign
The International Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) has concluded that human activities have caused much of the observed global temperature increases over the past 70 years. The international Paris Agreement aims to limit global warming to well below 2 °C and as close as possible to 1.5 °C. Australia is a signatory to the Paris Agreement and has committed to reduce emissions to 26-28% on 2005 levels by 2030.

Current global commitments are insufficient to meet the aims of the Paris Agreement. The United Nations Annual Climate Change Annual Report (2018) states that delivering on existing commitments would put us “on track to reach a temperature rise of at least 3°C above pre-industrial temperatures by 2100 – a recipe for catastrophe.”

“The IPCC special report on the impacts of global warming of 1.5°C warned that failing to meet the more ambitious 1.5°C target would bring far higher risks to health, livelihoods, food security, water supply, human security and economic growth.” (UN Climate Change Annual Report, 2018)

Warming projections based on current policies and pledges are illustrated in the December 2018 Climate Action Tracker graph (Appendix 1). The graph represents independent scientific analysis produced by non-profit scientific institutes Climate Analytics, New Climate and the Potsdam Institute for Climate Impact Research. Current policies, as the graph indicates, will likely result in 3.1 – 3.5°C of global warming by 2100. The consequences to human civilisation of this increase would be catastrophic (discussed below).

Recognising the trends outlined above, the Climate Emergency campaign is asking governments to declare a Climate Emergency and respond with the urgency and scale associated with an emergency. At the time of writing this report, officers were aware of 958 government declarations internationally, 36 government
5.4  Response to Climate Emergency Petitions

declarations in Australia and nine government declarations in Victoria. Victorian government declarations include City of Ballarat Council, Brimbank City Council, City of Darebin Council, Indigo Shire Council, Maribyrnong City Council, City of Melbourne Council, Moreland City Council, Mornington Peninsula Shire and City of Yarra Council. The City of Greater Geelong will also soon be considering a declaration of a Climate Emergency.

Is the term ‘emergency’ appropriate?
In considering whether the term ‘emergency’ should be used in relation to the current climate change challenge, officers have referred to a number of science and risk papers including, the IPCC Special Report on Global Warming of 1.5°C and The third degree: Evidence and implications for Australia of existential climate-related security risk. By David Spratt & Ian Dunlop. July 2019.

The IPCC Special Report on Global Warming of 1.5°C notes that 1.5°C of warming is not a safe level, but the risks will be substantially lower than 2°C of warming. Limiting global warming to 1.5°C will require rapid, far-reaching and unprecedented changes in all aspects of society.

The Third Degree report (Appendix 2), describes an existential risk to civilisation as: ‘one posing permanent large negative consequences to humanity which may never be undone, either annihilating intelligent life or permanently and drastically curtailing its potential’ (p7). According to this report (p8), accounting for the commitments by nations to the 2015 Paris Agreement, the current path of warming is more than 3°C by 2100, however, if long-term carbon-cycle feedbacks are also taken into account, the Paris path may lead to around 5°C of warming by 2100. Also, according to the report (p8), ‘scientists warn that warming of 4°C is incompatible with an organised global community, is devastating to the majority of ecosystems, and has a high probability of not being stable. The World Bank says it may be “beyond adaptation”’ (p8).

Because our current global policies and actions are very unlikely to avert such extreme negative consequences, and because a change in those policies and actions are very significant and require significant lead times, the argument is made that these circumstances warrant the use of the term ‘emergency’.

The role of local government
Under Victoria’s Climate Change Adaptation Plan 2017 – 2020, local government is identified as having the following roles and responsibilities:
- Provide leadership and good governance, represent the needs and values of local communities, and foster community cohesion:
- Manage climate change risks to council community services and assets, with support from the State Government.
- Identify the needs and priorities of the municipality, and communicate these to State Government where needed.
- Develop and deliver locally-appropriate adaptation responses.
- Build the resilience of local assets and services.
- Plan for emergency management at the municipal level, provide relief and recovery services, and support emergency response operations.
- Help the State Government understand localised impacts and responses.
- Work with the community to help people understand and get involved in climate change adaptation.
- Help connect the State Government with the community.

Mandatory overarching governance principles listed in the Local Government Bill 2019, includes:
- The economic, social and environmental sustainability of the municipal district, including mitigation and planning for climate change risks, is to be promoted.

Barwon region local attitudes to climate change
In September 2017, Sustainability Victoria released a report on Victorian residents’ attitudes, beliefs and behaviours in relation to climate change. The report was based on a survey of 3,333 Victorians. This was followed by a report in November 2017 outlining results for the Barwon Region, including Colac Otway Shire, City of Greater Geelong, Borough of Queenscliff and Surf Coast Shire.

The Barwon Region report highlighted the following key findings:
- 94% said climate change exists and humans are contributing to it.
5.4 Response to Climate Emergency Petitions

- 77% agreed that climate change is an issue that requires urgent action now.
- 84% believed local government should be acting on climate change – either in a leadership role or as a contributor.
- There was a higher level of concern about climate change in the Barwon Region than other areas of regional Victoria.

Regional Climate Change Impacts

Barwon South West climate change projections, developed by the CSIRO for the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning in 2015, confirm that for the past decade, the regional climate is responding consistent with a high emissions climate change pathway (Climate-Ready Victoria, Barwon South West, Climate Projections Data Sheet, www.climatechange.gov.au)

The Barwon South West Region has already become warmer and drier. Key future climate change impacts include:
- Temperatures to continue to increase year round
- Less rainfall in winter and spring
- Harsher fire weather and longer fire seasons
- Increased frequency and height of extreme sea level events
- More hot days and warm spells, and fewer frosts
- More frequent and more intense downpours
- Rising sea level

(Climate Ready Barwon South West, DELWP 2015)

Local progress on climate change - current council and community actions

The Surf Coast Shire Council has long been committed to action on climate change from both a risk management perspective, as well as a leadership, engagement and advocacy perspective. Since 2016, Council’s environmental actions and response to climate change have been framed under the Towards Environmental Leadership (TEL) Program. Prior to the TEL Program, this work was captured through Council’s 2011-16 Climate Change Strategy.

The TEL Program is guided by the internationally recognised One Planet Living (OPL) framework. The OPL framework uses a set of 10 principles, based on ecological and carbon foot printing, to guide living within the limits of the planet. In this way, the OPL framework is aligned with the responses called for by climate emergency advocates, who seek for acknowledgement that urgent action is required to stop living beyond the climate’s limit. The key difference is the extent and urgency of action. The alignment means that declaring a climate emergency would be consistent with the current TEL Program’s OPL framework. Acknowledging a climate emergency would necessitate an escalation and organisation wide response. The TEL Program and OPL framework provide an existing foundation to guide and enable further climate action.

Council’s climate actions completed to date are summarised below under the two key mechanisms for responding to climate change:
- **Mitigation** – reducing future impact through greenhouse gas emissions reduction (avoiding the unmanageable)
- **Adaptation** – managing the risks and impacts of a changing climate (managing the unavoidable)

Table 1. Summary of Council’s climate action activities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mitigation (Council operations focus)</th>
<th>Energy efficiency and transition to renewable electricity:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Updating Council’s greenhouse gas emissions profile in line with the Greenhouse Gas Protocol.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Transitioned all pedestrian streetlights to LED.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Undertaken energy audits of 13 Council facilities.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Working with Deakin Engineering students to undertake further energy audits across Council’s smaller facilities and implement proposed actions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Installed 230kW of solar PV, 1.5kW of wind and a 6.5kWh battery storage across Council facilities</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Secured funding to install an additional 150kW of solar across Council facilities in 2019-20 and upgrade the lighting in Council’s Civic Office.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Participating in the renewable energy buyers group (of almost 40 Victorian councils) to</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## 5.4 Response to Climate Emergency Petitions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mitigation (community focus)</th>
<th>Adaptation (Council operations focus)</th>
<th>Adaptation (community focus)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Energy efficiency and transition to renewable electricity:  
  - Developed a comprehensive electricity profile for the municipality.  
  - Set a community wide target of 25% renewable energy consumption by 2020.  
  - Established a Renewable Energy Task Force made up of community, industry and Council representatives.  
  - Developed an independent website, Powered by Positive, to assist residents and businesses use less energy and install solar.  
  - Developing a program designed to support solar on commercial facilities.  
  - Delivered a solar bulk buy program in the community.  
  - Support sustainable living (all of these actions also deliver adaptation outcomes):  
    - Delivering a Local Food Program, including workshops to enhance community capacity for growing their own food, strengthening community gardens, supporting agribusiness and connecting local growers with local consumers.  
    - Hosted sustainability festivals and information talks throughout the municipality. | Risk Management:  
  - Identified climate risks incorporated into Council’s PAN Risk Register, including make consistent with, and refer to, risk section and/or appendices.  
  - Regular cycle of condition audits to proactively identify & program asset renewal.  
  - Use of drought tolerant species and mulching.  
  - Use of recycled water. | Community Strengthening  
  - Community development and health promotion to build resilience to stresses and shocks  
  - Place based community planning to respond to community needs and strengths  
  - Supporting vulnerable clients to manage heatwave events, including emergency planning, heatwave preparedness | Asset Management:  
  - Regular cycle of condition audits to proactively identify & program asset renewal.  
  - Use of drought tolerant species and mulching.  
  - Use of recycled water. | Emergency Management  
  - Emergency management planning together with emergency services agencies  
  - Active engagement with the community to build resilience to extreme weather events, particularly bushfire, through the ongoing Fire Up! program and award winning Fire Game education tool  
  - Strategic fuel reduction programs | Regional Collaboration  
  - Participated in the Barwon South West Climate Resilient Communities Project, which included regional and municipal climate risk assessments, adaptation planning and initial local coastal hazard assessment |
5.4 Response to Climate Emergency Petitions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Land management:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Biodiversity resilience – native vegetation management, pest plant and animal control</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Consideration of climate change in Hinterland Futures strategy</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Current action - Strategy refinement

Officers are currently refining the strategy that guides the TEL Program to include improved analysis of current sustainability challenges and how that links with priority actions, investigating corporate sustainability targets and strengthening reporting mechanisms.

### Additional action – Corporate sustainability targets

Council has an opportunity to demonstrate commitment to stronger climate change action by establishing and reporting on corporate targets in key areas relating to climate emergency.

In the first instance, strong corporate targets for emissions reduction (carbon neutrality) and renewable energy would signal a clear commitment to climate action and drive change across the organisation. Council's Renewable Energy Taskforce provided advice to Council at the July 2019 Council Meeting which should inform the development of these targets (Appendix 3).

Responding to a climate emergency requires a broader suite of actions beyond transitioning to renewable energy and becoming carbon neutral. The development of corporate targets for waste, water, land use and biodiversity would drive broader action to address the climate emergency. Further work would need to occur in the coming months on specifically what the targets should be and how they can be realistically achieved.

### Additional action – Climate Emergency Response Plan

Council can enhance its current climate response with a Council and community plan similar to what other Councils that have declared a Climate Emergency are, or will be, developing. Victorian councils that have declared a Climate Emergency include Melbourne, Darebin, Moreland, Maribyrnong, Yarra, Ballarat, Indigo and Mornington Peninsula. The City of Great Geelong has advised it will be considering declaring a Climate Emergency at their September 2019 meeting. Darebin and Moreland City Councils’ climate emergency responses are relatively well developed. A summary of Darebin’s plan is attached (Appendix 4). Typically, an urban climate emergency response plan would consider actions under the following areas:

- Leadership and advocacy
- Energy efficiency
- Renewable energy transition
- Zero emission transport
- Waste minimisation
- Adaptation and resilience
- Community engagement
- Divestment

In addition, the Surf Coast Shire has rural, natural, coastal, tourism and other dimensions including a large landfill, which present risks and opportunities that should also be considered.

A thorough engagement process of Council and community stakeholders would be required to develop a Surf Coast climate emergency response. The following list includes ideas or actions Council could consider.

- Create a community wide GHG emissions profile
- Use gas from the landfill flare to generate electricity or heat
- Offset residual emissions (e.g. landfill) through investments in local environmental improvement or restoration programs
- Make bio-char and energy from the organic waste at our landfill – drawdown carbon into the soil
- Raise the minimum ESD requirements through our local planning scheme and advocate for higher standards in the building code
- Use the rates mechanism to support low income households to improve their home energy efficiency or install solar
- Transition Council’s fleet to lower emission vehicles
- Introduce Environmental Upgrade Finance for commercial businesses
- Provide an organic waste collection service for commercial businesses
- Improve the walkability and bicycle networks within our townships
5.4 Response to Climate Emergency Petitions

- Increase the uptake of electric and hydrogen vehicles and charging infrastructure in Surf Coast
- Roll out FOGO (organic waste) Shire wide
- Divest in fossil fuels
- Support our local community energy groups
- Advocate to the State and Federal Government to do more to combat the effects of climate change
- Enhance engagement with our community on the threat from climate change
- Purchase low productivity cleared land within the shire to plant it out with trees to capture carbon or encourage other organisations and land owners to do the same

Financial Implications
There are no direct costs to Council for declaring a Climate Emergency. Developing a climate response plan would build on actions that Council and the community are already taking. Further commitments may in part be met within Council’s existing environmental leadership budget and/or reprioritisation or refocusing of other programs and resources. Further discussion will be required on resource allocations as part of the climate response plan development.

Council Plan
Theme 1 Community Wellbeing
Objective 1.2 Support people to be healthy and active
Strategy 1.3.1 Understand community safety issues and needs, and design an appropriate local response

Theme 2 Environmental Leadership
Objective 2.1 Drive the use of renewable energy
Strategy 2.1.1 Implement the Renewable Energy Roadmap

The Council Plan does not mention climate change, however, objectives within the Council Plan are considered responses to climate change, in particular the objective to drive the use of renewable energy

Policy/Legal Implications
Policy and legal implications include the roles of local government listed in Victoria’s Climate Change Adaptation Plan 2017 – 2020 and the Local Government Bill 2019, once passed through parliament will include an overarching governance principle to consider the economic, social and environmental sustainability of the municipal district, including mitigation and planning for climate change risks.

The State Government has advised that in the development of the Victorian and Municipal 2019-23 Public Health and Wellbeing Plans, two additional complex and emerging threats to health warrant attention at all levels and across sectors: climate change and antimicrobial resistance. How we respond through the design and use of our buildings, neighbourhoods, infrastructure and services will play a significant role in the health of current and future generations. As Council incorporates its Health and Wellbeing Plan into its Council Plan, climate change will need to be specifically considered in future reviews of its Council Plan.

Officer Direct or Indirect Interest
No officer involved in the preparation of this report has any conflicts of interest.
5.4 Response to Climate Emergency Petitions

Risk Assessment
An extensive climate change risk assessment was undertaken as part of Council's Draft Adaptation Plan 2017-20. The assessment identified risks to our community, environment and economy. Increased mitigation and adaptation actions will assist in managing these risks. The risks within Council’s control have been incorporated into Council’s Risk Register. The six highest priority risks are outlined below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Risk #</th>
<th>Priority Risk</th>
<th>Asset</th>
<th>Rating (0-5 yrs)</th>
<th>Rating (5-60 yrs)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Increase in heat stress and solar exposure to the community leading to increased heat-related illness.</td>
<td>Community Wellbeing</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Extreme</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Increase in heat stress and solar exposure to the community leading to increased pressure on emergency management and health services.</td>
<td>Community Wellbeing</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Extreme</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Less tourists visiting due to bushfires/bushfire risk and loss of tourist demand for region.</td>
<td>Industry</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Increased bushfire risk to community homes.</td>
<td>Community Wellbeing</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Damage to tourism attractions such as national parks and the Great Ocean Road.</td>
<td>Industry</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>A decline in water availability for agricultural operations.</td>
<td>Industry</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>Extreme</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Social Considerations
The Australian Psychological Society recognise climate change as ‘the greatest health threat of the 21st century and has significant impacts on physical and mental health and psychosocial wellbeing’. Their website includes the advice that ‘there are likely to be some (modest) positive health consequences from climate change (for example, reduced extreme cold weather events in some locations),…..however, climate change is already and will predominantly have mostly negative, and in some circumstances devastating, impacts on human physical health and mental health, particularly on those with low adaptive capacity. Thus, climate change is as much a psychological and social problem, as it is an environmental or ecological catastrophe’.

The social impacts of infrastructure damage from climate related extreme events in our cities, towns and built environment are, and will be, very significant. Disaster management and national security threats are also significant social (and economic) issues.

People of all ages, but particularly younger people, are feeling strong anxiety about climate change impacts and the lack of an adequate response. It is important that Council considers the significant impacts on physical and mental health and psychosocial wellbeing and other social dimensions of climate change, in its response to this issue.

Community Engagement
This Council Report is written in response to two community petitions requesting Council to declare a Climate Emergency; 1149 people from the Surf Coast shire community signed the petitions. As referenced earlier in this report, Sustainability Victoria data from 2017 indicated that 77% of research respondents in the Barwon South West indicated that climate change is an issue that requires urgent action now, and 84% believe local government should be acting on climate change. Council officers have not undertaken specific community consultation to inform this report, however, community engagement will need to occur should Council adopt the recommendations in this report.

Environmental Implications
Climate change has extreme implications for all aspects of our Shire environment including: our coast, agriculture, forests, fisheries, water resources and all natural ecosystems.

Communication
There is likely to be significant community and media interest in Council’s resolution on this issue. Officers will have relevant media information and social media resources available.
5.4 Response to Climate Emergency Petitions

Options

Option 1 – Declare a Climate Emergency and commit to developing an enhanced climate change response that includes developing an action plan with the community, and setting corporate energy, greenhouse gas emissions, water, waste, land use and biodiversity targets.

This option is recommended by officers as it responds appropriately to more recent evidence that current policies will result in the climate continuing to track on a change path risking catastrophic consequences for our community. It builds on and enhances Council’s current environmental leadership agenda and achievements. It supports community aspirations for greater action in our Shire.

Option 2 – Business as usual. Council acknowledges concerns raised in the petitions and continues with its current commitments.

This option is not recommended by officers as it does not respond properly to more recent evidence that current policies will result in the climate continuing to track on a change path risking catastrophic consequences for our community. It undermined community aspirations for greater action in our Shire. It undermines Council’s building reputation as an environmental leader.

Conclusion

Globally and locally there is a realisation that a more significant and urgent climate change response is required. Council has received petitions in July 2019 to declare a Climate Emergency and to implement a climate emergency response. Multiple Councils throughout Australia and internationally have already declared a Climate Emergency and have committed to take stronger action on this issue.

The Victorian Government has accepted the priority for climate change through its Climate Change Framework and, along with our community, see local government as having an important role in responding to climate change.

Because current global policies and actions are very unlikely to avert extreme negative consequences, and because a change in those policies and actions are very significant and require significant lead times, the argument is made that these circumstances warrant the use of the term ‘emergency’.

Council and the community are already taking action to respond to climate change, however, more can be done. Council has an opportunity to demonstrate commitment to stronger action in this area by committing to corporate targets in key environmental areas that have a connection with climate emergency. Council’s Renewable Energy Taskforce has provided advice to Council at its July 2019 Meeting that can guide setting renewable energy and greenhouse gas targets.

Council should acknowledge that a climate emergency exists and declare a Climate Emergency. To enhance and build on its and the community’s existing achievements, Council should develop a climate response plan in partnership with the community.

Council already has in place a Towards Environmental Leadership program and use the One Planet Living Framework. There is an opportunity to use this to guide responses, including to set corporate energy, emissions, water, waste, land use and biodiversity targets. Council should use advice from the Renewable Energy Task Force, received at Council’s July meeting, to inform corporate and aspirational community renewable energy and emission targets.

Finally, The State Government has advised that in the development of Municipal 2019-23 Public Health and Wellbeing Plans, Council’s must consider climate change as a complex and emerging threat to health warranting attention at all levels and across sectors. As Council incorporates its Health and Wellbeing Plan into its Council Plan, climate change will need to be specifically considered in future reviews of its Council Plan.