

## Introduction

PECAN is a non-partisan umbrella organisation that includes representatives from Australian Conservation Foundation Macnamara, Australian Youth Climate Coalition, Bayside Climate Crisis Action Group, Community Alliance of Port Phillip, Elsternwick Park Association, Elwood Floods Action Group, Extinction Rebellion Port Phillip, Locals Into Victoria's Environment, Port Phillip Alliance for Sustainability, Port Phillip EcoCentre, Stop Adani Macnamara and unChain St Kilda.

PECAN aims to create and sustain a strong climate action movement in Port Phillip to address the climate crisis.

PECAN priorities for the 2020-21 budget are listed below and follow some preliminary comments relating mainly to Council's role as educator about climate change within the Port Phillip community.

## Summary of submission

PECAN requests that council commits to support its role as an educator and facilitator.

1. Council commits to ongoing funding for the EcoCentre.
2. Council ensures that all climate-related projects display educational information showing the benefits of the project.
3. Council develops and implements an education strategy to inform residents of how the City is tackling the climate emergency.
4. Council commits to achieving measurable targets to tackle the climate emergency, and uses place-based signage to inform residents of the City's progress toward these targets.
5. That Council strengthens its overall response to the climate emergency and works with its community using genuine citizen engagement processes in accordance with the requirements of the new Local Government Act 2020.
6. That Council engages with environment groups to jointly develop detailed reporting commencing with target setting with dates, responsibilities and budgets, and ongoing transparency with project implementation.

PECAN Budget Submission recommendations:

7. That Council facilitates a Power Purchase Agreement directed toward the commercial and industrial sectors.
8. That Council supports the development of Collective Power Purchasing Systems for Port Phillip residents, especially apartment dwellers.
9. In conjunction with other Councils, that Port Phillip should propose that stimulus funds be provided in a retrofitting program directed towards low income/vulnerable households.
10. That Council develops a Green-Blue Infrastructure Action Plan, incorporating a review of Greening Port Phillip together with a catchment-based Integrated Water Management Plan.
11. Council integrates ongoing work through Move Connect Live and related transport policies 2020-2028 with the proposed Green -Blue Infrastructure Action Plan, and in the short term gives priority to temporary bike lanes.
12. That through participation in CASBE, Council's Planning Scheme can be successfully updated to upgrade building performance standards with a target of 2023.
13. That Council reviews Sustainability staffing capability in the context of Project requirements in 2020/21.

## Council as Educator and Facilitator

### EcoCentre

We believe that the EcoCentre has performed a key role in many aspects of environmental sustainability in Port Phillip and indeed across many Melbourne metropolitan boundaries and plays a key role in implementing the City's role to educate and facilitate community engagement in Sustainability.

It has outgrown its existing building and it is now time for the CoPP to support an expanded role for it by both completion of the new building so that it is fit for purpose, and expanding its operational funding. PECAN welcomes Council's funding provision in the 2020/21 and following Budgets to resource the rebuilding of the EcoCentre.

**Recommendation 1: Council commits to ongoing funding for the EcoCentre.**

### Climate change and learning opportunities

While Council has a direct role in community education about climate change, we think that it should be better promoting the sustainability projects it carries out, in a way which assists citizens to better understand and learn about specific measures aimed at mitigating the impacts of climate change.

To take one simple example, the excellent work Council has undertaken in rainwater harvesting at Alma Park is a perfect opportunity to include onsite signage explaining the project as a measure to address the effects of the climate emergency. These signs could be linked to websites drawing citizens attention to the deeper levels of project complexity. Unfortunately, there is only one sign alongside the beautiful reed bed, and it states, 'fluctuating water levels, keep out'.

A similar situation is found at South Melbourne market, where the rooftop solar project provides an excellent opportunity to educate about and promote awareness of the climate emergency through signage around the market.

**Recommendation 2: Council ensures that all climate-related projects display educational information showing the benefits of the project.**

### Making the most of what the council does

We urge Council to develop and implement a sophisticated educational/communication strategy to ensure that the Sustainability projects it undertakes create learning opportunities for Port Phillip citizens into the climate emergency and the ways Council is addressing it. Both traditional and digital media should be developed and elevated in their role to serve this purpose. In this regard, the Port Phillip EcoCentre could serve as an internal consultant to Council in this task.

**Recommendation 3: Council develops and implements an education strategy to inform residents of how the City is tackling the climate emergency.**

### Climate action targets

There is a close link between citizen engagement and the setting of and reporting on Council climate action targets (including in the community codesign, performance assessment and review of targets). Targets to address the Council emergency should be further developed and the places where targets are reported, should be expanded to where citizens are likely to see them. South Melbourne Market, given the rooftop solar project would provide an excellent opportunity for contemporary improvements to such signage.

**Recommendation 4: Council commits to achieving measurable targets to tackle the climate emergency, and uses place-based signage to inform residents of the City's progress toward these targets.**

### A cultural shift to community

Finally, such a project of community engagement will not work if the relationship of Council to citizens is framed at the highest level of council descriptors as a contractual relationship between Council as a business and citizens as customers. A deep public engagement strategy requires a basic cultural shift in the way in how the Council understands its relationship to its citizens.

The new Local Government Act 2020 strengthens the responsibility of Councils to follow more sophisticated processes of community engagement and this represents an important and mandated cultural shift.

Such a shift requires not merely a process of consultation prior to undertaking the kind of measures we propose but rather genuine citizen engagement at every stage of Council's response to the climate emergency to reflect and support community participation as being at the heart of the actions taken.

**Recommendation 5: That Council strengthens its overall response to the climate emergency and works with its community using genuine citizen engagement processes in accordance with the requirements of the new Local Government Act 2020.**

### Setting and reporting on climate action targets

Apart from more public visibility and reporting across Council targets, (note that Port Phillip is one of the few Councils to have declared a climate emergency without having developed a target for community emissions, now approximately 2m tCO<sub>2</sub>e annually), much more systematic and consistent reporting on targets and progress to meeting them is necessary. There is a wide transparency gap, with a historic reluctance to work with community, to provide information on key projects, or to release consultants reports even in situations where there is no necessity for confidentiality.

**Recommendation 6: That Council engages with environment groups to jointly develop detailed reporting commencing with target setting with dates, responsibilities and budgets, and ongoing transparency with project implementation.**

## PECAN Budget Proposals

An increasing number of Councils are declaring Climate Emergencies – neighbouring Councils Bayside, Stonnington and Glen Eira have made recent Declarations and Bayside has just published its draft Climate Emergency Plan, as has Yarra. Port Phillip declared a Climate Emergency in September last year, but has yet to produce its own Climate Emergency Plan.

We draw attention to the draft Budget where significant cuts are proposed for a number of programs within Sustainability, as can be seen from the Budget papers for this year and last:

Allocations from the 2019 Budget (p83) and the current draft Budget (p85):

	2019/20	2020/21
Operating:	\$3,979,365	\$3,129,201
Capital:	\$2,618,302	\$355,484
	\$6,597,667	\$3,484,685

That represents a decrease of \$3,112,982 or a 47% reduction; the subsequent increased funding for the EcoCentre brings the year to year reduction to 40%.

Sustainability is now funded at 1.47% of CoPP's total proposed expenditure of \$237,676,000. The Capital allocation has been reduced by nearly \$2,300,000 and Operating by \$850,000.

PECAN has developed this Budget Submission with awareness of the COVID-19 impact on Council's revenues in 2020/21 and the cuts to Sustainability programs. However, the priorities we have nominated here fortuitously have limited capital requirements and for the most part involve accelerated planning, integration and completion of existing projects. They also represent the key components of PECAN'S Climate Emergency Plan which we believe the incoming Council must proceed with and further, they are consistent with existing Actions in Council's Act and Adapt strategy.

The Local Government Act 2020 is now coming into effect and we refer to Part 2, Division 1, Sec 9 (2) (b) and (c) which stipulate important new responsibilities for Local Government, in particular Overarching Governance Principles concerning intergenerational equity and planning for climate change risks:

- b) priority is to be given to achieving the best outcomes for the municipal community, including future generations;
- c) the economic, social and environmental sustainability of the municipal district, including mitigation and planning for climate change risks, is to be promoted

### 1. Community Emissions

Our highest priority is community emissions, which represent over 99% of all Port Phillip emissions and currently generate about 2m tonnes of CO2e annually. Two thirds of emissions (65%) are created through electricity use, and about 16% from gas and transport sectors respectively. Community emissions are made up of residential, commercial and industrial sectors. The industrial and commercial sector are the highest users of electricity. Many factors may militate against Councils being able to reach and communicate effectively with individual operators or households. We believe that the most efficient way for Council to make inroads into community emissions is to focus on large electricity users in the commercial and industrial sectors through facilitating mechanisms like Power Purchase Agreements.

## Power Purchase Agreements

Port Phillip is already a member of such an Agreement, the Melbourne Renewable Energy Project (MREP), involving a mix of Councils, Universities and commercial operators like Australia Post and the National Bank. MREP has been so successful that Melbourne City Council has just completed a second MREP, this one focussed more towards commercial operators like Fulton Hogan, Cbus Property, ISPT Property, Citywide Asphalt and food manufacturer Mondelez International (Cadbury). Yarra Council also proposes PPAs in its CE Plan.

Over 60 PPAs were implemented between 2017 and 2019, mainly involving large corporates. For members there are significant benefits:

- Meeting Sustainability Targets
- Savings in Energy costs
- Budget Certainty through fixed price contracts
- Improved Public Profile
- Supporting Rural jobs, through construction and operation of solar/wind farms.

The Business Renewable Centre Australia, funded through DELWP and ARENA, in its State of the Market Report 2019, reports a large pipeline of projects seeking off-takes. PECAN believes that the timing is opportune for Council to facilitate a PPA between large commercial and industrial users and an appropriate developer, with the involvement and support of residents and community groups - a Port Phillip Renewable Energy Project.

Such a project can be supported on a number of grounds:

First, there is no capital outlay involved – development of the project would require the involvement of staff with expertise and capability, and obviously some administrative support, but these expenditures would be minimal against the benefits of completion of a successful project.

Second, a PPA aligns with Council's Strategic Direction 3: We have smart solutions for a sustainable future - A CITY WITH LOWER CARBON EMISSIONS 3.2 *Facilitating a reduction in community greenhouse gas emissions by partnering with the community and private sector.*

Third, Port Phillip brings a significant level of experience and familiarity to this project through its involvement with the MREP.

Fourth, the project has the potential to achieve significant reductions in community emissions. A project of the scale of the existing MREP involves the purchase of 88 GWh annually, equivalent to over 8% of Port Phillip's residential, commercial and industrial electricity usage each year. It would be possible to aim at a PPA for large commercial and industrial users to provide between 5 and 10% of existing Port Phillip electricity consumption from renewable energy sources. The completion of such a project would encourage further PPAs and bring significant change to Port Phillip's emissions profile.

**Recommendation 7: That Council facilitates a Power Purchase Agreement directed toward the commercial and industrial sectors.**

## A collective purchasing arrangement directed toward Residential Emissions

Port Phillip's take up of solar PV is one of the lowest in Melbourne, due in large part to the number of residents living in apartments and without access to roof space for solar installation. As the majority of Port Phillip residents are apartment dwellers there is significant demand for low cost renewable energy which cannot currently be met.

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Council has recognized this problem and In Act and Adapt it proposed the development of a program to enable apartment dwellers to access renewable energy:

A CITY WITH LOWER CARBON EMISSIONS - Action 18: (P37) Work with the community to determine the viability of a collective purchase of offsite renewable energy for a consortium of apartment buildings.

At the moment apartment dwellers may not have roof space and people living in free standing houses may not be able to afford solar. By aggregating them, it is likely that there are several thousand households who would be attracted to a Council facilitated PPA or other form of collective purchasing system providing lower cost power from renewable sources.

The PECAN forum in February and the webinars currently being held in conjunction with Council suggest residents see the availability of PPAs as very high priority. At the most recent webinar PPAs were ranked the highest priority in terms of Council action. We believe that a project directed towards residents would attract a level of community support comparable with the PPA proposed for commercial and industrial users, ie being able to supply between 5% and 10% of existing Port Phillip residential electrical usage through renewable sources.

There are technical legislative and commercial issues which may militate against a PPA in its current form for the residential sector. However other models are emerging elsewhere; for example London Council has contracted a specific retailer who is Green branded and is able to reach residential users with the endorsement of the Council. DELWP is currently investigating options in this area. We believe this is an area needing Council input and support.

There are other approaches to reducing residential emissions such as solar farms, Virtual Power Plants, community microgrids and within-apartment block systems like that developed by ALLUME Energy. Some of them may have specific value in particular situations, but none of these options is scalable in the same way as a large scale residential purchasing system.

The principles supporting the PPA for commercial and industrial users can equally apply to a residential collective purchasing system – no capital outlay, alignment with Act and Adapt, Council experience and capacity, and potential to make significant reductions in community emissions.

**Recommendation 8: That Council supports the development of Collective Power Purchasing Systems for Port Phillip residents, especially apartment dwellers.**

### Community environmental retrofits

In the context of new stimulus funding becoming available from State or Commonwealth governments, Council could propose widescale retrofitting of residential and commercial properties leading to significant improvements in energy efficiency and performance. A program of this kind could be directed towards low income and vulnerable households, especially those affected through the COVID-19 pandemic. Such a program has been advocated from many quarters, and would bring much needed employment opportunities, given that Macnamara is one of the worst hit electorates in Australia, with 45,000 individuals and 11,843 businesses being supported by JobKeeper payments.

**Recommendation 9: In conjunction with other Councils, that Port Phillip should propose that stimulus funds be provided in a retrofitting program directed towards low income/vulnerable households.**

## 2. Green-Blue Infrastructure

We draw attention to the draft Budget where significant cuts are proposed for a number of programs within this area:

- Water Sensitive Urban Design           \$600,000 to \$50,000
- Greening Port Phillip                   \$640,000 to \$440,000
- Foreshore Vegetation                 \$150,000 to \$0
- Open Space Irrigation                 \$415,000 to \$50,000

As stated earlier, we consider that the deferral of funding this year may provide an opportunity for Council to review a number of programs in the Green-Blue infrastructure area. We think that this is an area where Council needs to develop a new approach.

Over the past decade Council has developed or started Strategies and Plans around Public Space, Stormwater Management, Permeability, Urban Forest, Flood Mitigation, Urban Heat Island, Coastal Hazard, Integrated Water Management and Biodiversity. All of them have been carried out independently, without the essential integration necessary to make these projects fully functional.

In essence, the interrelationship between water planning and landscape planning is not properly implemented, and the necessary integration and coordination of these domains has not occurred. An example of how this process can be successfully implemented can be seen in the City of Melbourne, which is well into developing stormwater harvesting systems with 22 installations to date, enabling the irrigation of the parks with water sourced from within each of the catchments.

DELWP has published a manual for Councils, Planning a Green-Blue City, which sets out the key principles as follows:

*'The inherent multi functionality of natural systems requires an equally integrated approach to identify, prioritize and deliver initiatives that will create greener and more successful cities. The planning of green-blue infrastructure aims to do just that: to explore synergistic opportunities for integrated greening and water management outcomes and to create a framework for collaboration between Council departments and key industry and community groups to deliver a new blue print for cities and towns.*

*Accordingly, a green-blue infrastructure action plan should be an integrative document that draws on documents and evidence already developed by the council, but should be embedded in the current Council plan, strategic resource plan and the budget to enable integrated delivery of initiatives'*

And within the context of integration, there are a number of separate Council programs which are interrelated and where review/implementation require integration with other programs/strategies.

First, the Greening Port Phillip program needs major review. Its canopy cover targets (an increase of 1.9% by 2028) are completely inadequate, are well short of best practice and do not reflect the imbalances across the municipality. Mapping by DELWP and RMIT shows significant reductions in canopy cover in a number of areas across Port Phillip between 2014 and 2018. The consultant's work for the 2017 report did not examine senescence levels of the existing tree stock, or the need for better species selection in the context of time to canopy maturity, or resilience to lower rainfall and hotter temperatures. Our understanding is that Greening Port Phillip is to be updated in 2020/21. We think this review should be given high priority in conjunction with the completion of the Public Space Strategy, together with heat mapping across the municipality which has been on Council's to-do list for several years but is still to be undertaken.

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Mapping heat spots should be an integrative component of a Greening Port Phillip review; it would enable the identification of urban heat spots and precincts, and in turn enable the development of Precinct Priority Plans which some Councils are now programming and which we think should be a high priority in Port Phillip.

### Catchment-Based Integrated Water Management

The preparation of an Integrated Water Management Plan is another issue that has been on Council's to-do list since publication of the Water Plan in 2010. Council's work in this area has not been catchment based and consequently decisions have been made on an ad hoc basis. The years spent chasing a viable stormwater harvesting scheme at Albert Park Lake are an example of this kind of decision making. We commend the Council for completion of the Alma Park stormwater harvesting scheme, which brings Council's alternative water harvesting annually to about 30ML, but point out that Council is still a long way short of the 80ML target of alternative water resource set many years ago. The Catani gardens project now under examination by Council should be given strong support if its viability can be confirmed upon closer examination.

The pause in WSUD funding this year may be opportune given that it is time to review the cost-effectiveness of raingardens as a major mechanism for WSUD in Port Phillip, given their inability to capture stormwater. There are significant opportunities for stormwater harvesting within Port Phillip's 20 catchment systems, Alma Park being the best example to date.

### Elster Creek and Elsternwick Park

PECAN strongly supports Council's continued involvement in this important project. On completion it will bring major benefits to Port Phillip - it literally ticks all the boxes. Apart from being the first major flood reduction intervention in Elwood for nearly 30 years, it could provide more than the missing 50ML of harvested stormwater referred to above – the estimated total amount of water able to be harvested is approx. 270ML annually. In addition it will provide significant benefits in limiting the amount of nitrogen pollutants which now flow into the Bay. The State Government has provided funds for expanding the woodlands area of the Park, and the wetlands will be further expanded; both expansions will provide greater biodiversity across the Park.

The existing Park is already widely used by Port Phillip residents, and on completion it will become an iconic nature reserve which will attract many more users from Port Phillip and across Melbourne.

**Recommendation 10: That Council develops a Green-Blue Infrastructure Action Plan, incorporating a review of Greening Port Phillip together with a catchment-based Integrated Water Management Plan.**

### 3) Integrated Transport Plan

Move Connect Live, Sustainable Parking Policy and the Parking Management Policy all recognize the increasing pressures caused by private car usage, and Council is proposing actions that redesign a number of our streets to provide enough capacity to carry an additional 55,000 walking trips, 27,000 bike trips and 14,000 public transport trips by 2028. This process will integrate these preferred modes with new parking policy and associated roadworks. Within the framework of the Green-Blue Infrastructure Plan described above, increased canopy cover and passive irrigation capacity can be developed in a way that will enhance the attractiveness and amenity of these new streetscapes.



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Since the pandemic's arrival many more people are cycling and it is likely that this will persist for some time given the aversion to travelling on public transport.

Major cities around the world (Berlin, Milan) and Melbourne have installed temporary bike lanes using water barriers or bollards. Consideration should be given to the installation of temporary lanes which are proposed in Council's planned bicycle network or form part of State strategic routes.

**Recommendation 11: Council integrates ongoing work through Move Connect Live and related transport policies 2020-2028 with the proposed Green -Blue Infrastructure Action Plan, and in the short term gives priority to temporary bike lanes.**

### 4) Upgraded Planning Scheme

To accelerate the transition towards zero-carbon buildings and precincts, Council needs to work through CASBE to advocate to the state government to raise mandatory standards, and to work towards including minimum energy performance standards to be required at point of sale and lease for residential and commercial buildings.

Improved building efficiencies must be part of a Port Phillip Climate Emergency Plan, and while Planning Schemes cannot be upgraded overnight, it is important that Council supports the CASBE working process and joins with other Councils in bringing about a more efficient building modality.

**Recommendation 12: That through participation in CASBE, Council's Planning Scheme can be successfully updated to upgrade building performance standards with a target of 2023.**

### 5) Resourcing Sustainability

Given the urgency of Climate Action we are concerned about the effect of the proposed restructure of Sustainability, involving the abolition of a number of positions, including that of Sustainability Manager. Capability within Sustainability appears to us to need to be increased in terms of both expertise and authority if key projects are to be managed to completion.

As a community group, we wish to ensure that this structural review will enhance the strategic capacity and the operational efficiency of the Council in dealing with Sustainability and Climate Change issues facing our community. We make the general point that the projects proposed are complex and will require adequate resourcing to bring to successful completion.

**Recommendation 13: That Council reviews Sustainability staffing capability in the context of Project requirements in 2020/21.**