

INQUIRY INTO TACKLING CLIMATE CHANGE IN VICTORIAN COMMUNITIES

1. ACTIONS BEING TAKEN BY COMMUNITY MEMBERS AND ORGANISATIONS TO MITIGATE THE SEVERITY OF CLIMATE CHANGE, INCLUDING ACTIONS TO REDUCE GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSIONS

Various **community members** are doing what they can to mitigate climate change, from residents adopting low carbon lifestyles (e.g. installing solar panels, travelling less, having smaller families, living less materialistic lives, building smaller, energy efficient homes) to farmers adopting regenerative farming practices.

Various **community organisations** in Albury-Wodonga are either directly or indirectly reducing greenhouse gas emissions. Examples include:

- **Renewable Albury Wodonga (RAW)** – installed five solar PV systems on local Beyond Housing social housing units, is installing 10 x 4kW solar power systems with full energy monitoring and has progressed the business case for building a minimum 2MW solar farm. See: <http://renewablealburywodonga.com.au/>
- **Repair Café Albury-Wodonga** – is keeping goods in circulation longer, avoiding embodied energy associated with new products. They've fixed more than 2000 items in 3.5 years. They open once a month with up to 20 volunteer repairers each session. See: <https://www.facebook.com/repaircafeaw/>
- **Border Eco-Living Program** (formed some years ago, not currently active) – a six week program to help residents reduce their ecological footprint, including greenhouse gas emissions.
- **Tiny Houses Albury-Wodonga** – is encouraging the construction of smaller dwellings that produce fewer emissions. See: <https://www.facebook.com/TinyHousesAW/>
- **Seed Savers Albury-Wodonga** – encourages backyard fruit and vegetable growing, thus reducing food miles and associated greenhouse gas emissions. See: <https://ssaw.org.au/>
- **Wodonga Urban Landcare Network** – is planting thousands of trees each year to draw carbon out of the atmosphere. See: <https://wodongalandcare.org.au>
- **Ecoportal website** – helps connect individuals with an interest in environmental sustainability by listing all local environmental groups (80+) and a calendar of events (40+ per month). See: <http://ecoportal.net.au/>
- **Wodonga Albury Toward Climate Health** – is engaging people in positions of influence, especially politicians, to take stronger action on climate change. For example they persuaded Albury and Wodonga councils to preference fossil fuel free investments. They are promoting climate mitigation initiatives via their monthly newsletter to almost 1000 residents. See: <https://watch.id.au/>

2. ACTIONS BY COMMUNITY MEMBERS AND ORGANISATIONS TO ADAPT TO THE CURRENT AND FUTURE IMPACTS OF CLIMATE CHANGE

Wodonga Albury Toward Climate Health (WATCH) – has established a local citizen science heatwaves impacts database to identify and publicise the impacts of heatwaves on flora, fauna, crops, livestock, human health and infrastructure, AND document attempts to adapt to these consequences. We contact 100+ citizen scientists (including farmers, engineers, health workers, gardeners, ecologists) after every significant heatwave to request observations. Examples of adaptations (both successful and unsuccessful) include:

- In 2013 a heatwave resulted in 3000 chicken deaths. Chicken producers adapted by establishing misting and other cooling systems.
- During a 2013 heatwave a pig farmer reported his sows had dropped a breeding cycle, hence no piglets and reduced pork supplies. He adapted by breeding his sows earlier the following season but unfortunately the piglets died because the sows stopped lactating.

- On many occasions heatwaves have negatively affected crops (scorching, frazzling, cooking on the vine, immature fruit drop etc). Some producers have adapted by installing shade cloths.

3. WAYS IN WHICH THE GOVERNMENT CAN BEST SUPPORT COMMUNITIES IN THEIR EFFORTS

- Liaise with organisations like Environment Victoria for their ideas.
- Establish ambitious policies to encourage communities to transition to low carbon lifestyles including strong renewable energy and carbon reduction targets, improved public transport, strengthening of vehicle emission standards.
- Engage the community on the need for urgent climate action, including raising the awareness of the potential for climate change to accelerate of its own accord once we pass certain tipping points.
- Show leadership with words and actions i.e. ensuring all VIC government departments walk the talk rather than just talking the talk.
- Showcase low carbon lifestyles, regenerative farming practices, low carbon businesses.
- Educate the community about embodied energy in food and consumables. Focus to date has been on reducing household energy, but it's only 30% of household emissions, with an additional 30% in food and 30% in consumables.
- Encourage less materialistic lifestyles which are associated with much higher emissions. Raise awareness that happiness levels peaked in the 1970s when people lived in much smaller houses, had few possessions and so on.
- Establish building codes to strongly encourage smaller, solar passive, energy efficient homes and discourage black roofs and claddings, minimal eaves etc. The current star system is inadequate.
- Encourage the Federal government to make planned obsolescence a crime.
- Put a moratorium on airport expansion to limit aviation emissions.
- Provide support for rural and regional community climate action groups, like WATCH and its local citizen science heatwaves project by either funding outreach programs through organisations like Environment Victoria, the Australian Conservation Foundation, or earmarking specific funds through local governments.

4. INTERSTATE AND OVERSEAS BEST PRACTICE MODELS THAT COULD BE IMPLEMENTED IN VICTORIA

- Again, liaise with organisations like Environment Victoria for their insights.
- In France, planned obsolescence is a crime. Since August 2015, company directors face a two-year prison sentence and significant fine if they use techniques that deliberately reduce the lifespan of products.

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