



Media Release

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Brighton adopts climate change and greening strategies

BRIGHTON Council has adopted a comprehensive climate change strategy designed to demonstrate its local leadership in mitigating and planning for climate change.

At the same time, the Council has also embarked on a long-term and co-ordinated greening strategy to dramatically increase the number of trees in the municipality's streets, parks and private gardens.

Brighton's Chief Operating Officer James Dryburgh said Council recognised the scientific community's broad consensus on climate change and had adopted strategies that acknowledged climate change and its impact.

Council accepted the accelerated changes in the earth's climate in recent times were a result of human-induced actions caused by the additional, non-natural, release of greenhouse gas emissions, for example, from land clearing and the use of fossil fuels.

As a consequence, Council had agreed to a broad range of initiatives, both for its internal operations and in its role as a leader for the broader area, that would place Brighton at the forefront in establishing a sustainable future for the whole community.

"The greening strategy is a tangible example of action we are taking and over the first five years, will see close to 1,000 trees planted to significantly increase the tree canopy across Brighton's urban areas," Mr Dryburgh said.

"The first five years of the strategy has a strong focus on planting street trees to improve the main streets of Bridgewater, Gagebrook and Herdsman's Cove.

Mr Dryburgh said Brighton's climate change strategy was aimed at reducing risks and minimising costs as well as Council's environmental footprint. The strategy also seeks to work with and empower the community to address climate change issues, minimise harm, reduce environmental impacts and create a more resilient and sustainable community.

"The benefits for Council and the community include links to future funding opportunities, improved risk management, energy efficiencies and cost savings, improving Council's own practices and developing community and environmental adaptability to change.

"Brighton Council recognises climate action integrates and overlaps closely with its broader social, economic and environmental sustainability goals.

"Therefore, the strategy draws from and builds on our current initiatives to create a unified approach to climate change and broader sustainability objectives.

"It has four key strategic directions – to provide leadership for effective climate change programs locally, to reduce greenhouse emissions, environmental impacts and become more resource efficient, to adapt and plan for climate change, and to identify opportunities

to innovate in research, markets, technologies, institutions as well as build sustainable communities better able to manage climate change.”

Mr Dryburgh said Brighton Council’s leadership team had considered the implementation of the strategy in detail and would review and report regularly on progress and performance.

“The strategy will demonstrate our leadership in managing the impacts of climate change and in practical terms, promote initiatives to reduce the environmental impact of Council’s activities. It integrates sustainability principles into all Council functions and actions to reduce resource consumption costs and promote innovation and the identification of economic and environmental improvement opportunities.

“Much of the work required to effectively address climate change does not need major adjustments or re-allocation of Council’s core responsibilities or resources.

“However, it does require better integration of climate change considerations when planning or delivering projects, programs or legislative functions. Generally, such integration is more efficient in the long run anyway, especially if it is done early and clearly shown.”

Mr Dryburgh said there were strong financial drivers for councils to increase efficiency and minimise costs.

“Brighton already has a great culture of being innovative and embracing opportunities that benefit the community or provide savings or additional revenue.

“For example, our solar installations on Council offices and depot are generating annual savings of approximately \$15,000/year and we will shortly replace more than 1,000 streetlights, with vastly more efficient LED lights saving around \$100,000 a year in running costs. Our new parks also feature solar lighting, demonstrating that these practical investments also provide long-term savings.

“This comprehensive strategy will require internal resourcing and a small amount of external resources, however Council’s climate change actions to date have generated both long-term financial savings, benefits to the local economy, community benefit and improvements to the local environment.

“Strategic tree planting under the associated ‘Greening Brighton’ strategy emphasises the community benefits and environmental improvement, as well as encouraging the local community and private developers to improve landscaping practices,” Mr Dryburgh said.

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