

Moving Toward Net Zero Emissions

COUNCIL NAME

Clarence Valley Council

WEB ADDRESS

clarence.nsw.gov.au

SIZE

10,429 square
kilometres

POPULATION

51,647

Overview

Clarence Valley Council has been leading by example to reduce greenhouse gas emissions in its own operations. This was a good starting point for discussions with the community on how to achieve net zero emissions by 2050 across the whole local government area.

Background

Clarence Valley Council has been working towards reducing corporate greenhouse gas emissions for well over a decade with the first adopted Climate Change Policy in 2010. The latest Greenhouse Gas Emissions Reduction and Renewable Energy Strategy in 2018 includes organisational targets of:

- a 40% reduction of emissions (excluding landfill emissions) by 2030 compared to 2016/17 levels; with a long term goal of zero net emissions by 2050, and
- supplying 50% of electricity demand from renewable energy by 2030; with the long term goal to source all electricity from renewable energy.

After passing a Climate Emergency Declaration in April 2019, Council brought forward its commitment and funding of emission reduction actions. Council also committed to developing strategies that will engage and motivate the Clarence community to tackle the climate emergency challenge.

Implementation

Corporate emissions

Council has implemented corporate emissions reduction activities over two years including:

- Portfolio of 42 photovoltaic solar systems (total 12,000 kW) generating 1,700 GWh per year which is equivalent to 15% of Council's electricity demand.
- Installation of 5 batteries storing 82kWh.
- Upgrading minor road streetlights with LED lighting with main road lights next up.
- More than 1,300 lights in council buildings have been replaced with LED lighting as well as 6 sporting fields.
- Light passenger fleet vehicles have gradually been replaced with hybrid technology and it is anticipated 62% of the light fleet will be hybrid vehicles by 2021/22.
- Council has also had landfill gas capture for over 10 years. Flaring saves more than 12,000 tonnes of CO₂-e annually.
- The Food and Garden Organics (FOGO) collection also reduces landfill emissions.

Clarence Valley Council was able to fund these actions through an environment levy. However, energy reduction projects are generating a positive financial outcome to council.

Community emissions

The Clarence Valley community emissions are estimated at 777,600 tonnes of CO₂-e (from Snapshot community climate tool). Council's emissions make up less than 2% of the community's total emissions making reducing community emissions a priority in addressing the climate emergency.

Key stakeholders were engaged mid 2020 via a community survey on Council's 'bang the table' community engagement platform. As well as direct engagement with key groups to inform the development of the draft strategy, including Council staff, business representative groups, and a community climate action group.

Engaging with the Clarence Valley community identified:

- Climate change is an important issue and impacts are being felt by the community now.
- The community should aim to decarbonise in line with the 1.5°C science-based target, or at least in line with NSW Government's plans.
- Solar and batteries, grid decarbonising, energy efficiency (existing and new development) and community solar are key local priorities in the near term.

The resulting draft Strategy was also placed on public exhibition. The feedback was again positive and strongly recommended that a more ambitious emission reduction target should be adopted.

The adopted community emissions reduction target is net zero emissions by 2040, with 2030 emissions being reduced by 35% compared with 2019 emission levels.

Outcomes

The corporate emissions reduction activities are generating a positive financial outcome to council. By the end of this year, Council is expecting a 15% reduction in corporate emissions from the base year 2016/17.

The community energy and emissions reduction strategy provides our community with motivation and a pathway to achieving significant emission reduction in the Clarence.

Key Learnings

When planning emission reduction goals, it is important to also take into account planned new infrastructure which will likely work against reduction goals. Emphasising the financial saving achieved from emission reduction actions greatly helps maintain support for future actions.

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Landfill gas capture and destruction