

Closing the resilience gaps in Orange

COUNCIL NAME

Orange City Council

WEB ADDRESS

orange.nsw.gov.au

SIZE

285 square
kilometres

POPULATION

42,503

FUNDING PROGRAM

Increasing
Resilience to
Climate Change

Overview

The Orange local government area has four distinct seasons, elegant streetscapes and beautiful parks. Residents value their natural environment, lifestyle and sense of community.

At the same time as the community is predicted to grow to 50,400 people by 2036, the region is also expected to get hotter and the climate more unpredictable. According to the [AdaptNSW climate change snapshot](#), maximum average temperatures are projected to increase by up to 1.0°C in the near future and by up to 2.7°C by 2070. The number of days with extreme heat will rise, as will the severe fire weather days in summer, spring and winter.

To help its growing community adapt to a changing climate, Orange City Council undertook a climate resilience gap analysis – and then used the information uncovered to develop a community communications campaign.

Background

When Orange City Council embarked on its gap analysis project, the body of knowledge on adaptation options for its region were scant and the platforms to share knowledge scarce. Therefore, the project had three clear objectives:

1. Identify similar projects undertaken in other parts of the state and Australia, incorporate those learnings and identify gaps in community resilience and barriers to adaptation.
2. Provide a mechanism to support, educate and encourage staff and members of the community to build their capacity and knowledge of adaptation strategies.
3. Identify relevant adaptation options and communicate these to the community through a website.

Implementation

Orange City Council's consultants analysed the climate change projections for the local government area and prepared climate comparisons to understand how this would influence building performance.

Communication assets were then developed to help builders and homeowners understand how they could prepare for a changing climate and the dollars that could be saved by investing early. The tools provide current and relevant information to the local region.

For example, communication material for developers offers tips and tricks such as putting water at the centre of design decisions, investing in shade trees and working with the contours of the land to support passive solar homes. The gap analysis found that, while some climate friendly measures will cost developers more upfront, they will also increase property value and reduce running costs.

The project also aimed to empower homeowners with a list of questions to ask their designer, builder, architect or real estate agent when on the hunt for their new home. The questions include everything from a home's performance during a heatwave to its everyday running costs, the size of its water tank to how its star rating could translate into higher financial value.

The marketing assets were shared through the Central NSW Joint Organisation to spread the message far and wide.

Outcomes

Following the gap analysis project, Council has begun to explore options for green finance for energy efficiency and climate adaptation projects, alongside state government incentives to encourage renewable energy, heat pump systems and reduce the use of gas and wood fuels.

Council is also examining opportunities for partnerships with sustainable building industry groups, including the local central west Master Builders Association.

Findings from the gap analysis were also integrated into the Orange City Council Housing Strategy 2022, which was adopted by Council in October 2022.

The findings will be disseminated through the Central NSW Joint Organisation to further conversations with the local development industry about the merits of building 7-star NatHERS homes, and how careful consideration of the different typologies of homes can create homes that are comfortable, affordable and resilient to Orange's changing climate.

Key Learnings

The project was challenged by staff changes and Covid-19's disruptions, delaying the project rollout for some time. Engaging Council's manager of building services gained extra expertise at the right time, allowing the project to be completed.

The conversation with the community about climate change is an ongoing one, but this project helped Orange City Council lay the foundations for evidence-based dialogue.

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