

Powering Towards Zero Emissions

COUNCIL NAME

Inner West Council

WEB ADDRESS

innerwest.nsw.gov.au/

SIZE

35 square kilometres

POPULATION

183,772

Overview

Inner West Council is the first Australian council to be 100% divested from fossil fuels, achieving its 100% renewable electricity target three years early. Solar capacity has doubled from the installation of solar at 80 community sites, including strata buildings, businesses, homes, and schools. Inner West have reduced street lighting emissions by 20% and expanded food recycling service for apartments to 1,080 buildings. Council has achieved emissions reductions through tenders and capital works.

Background

The “[Our Inner West 2036](#)” strategy sets out the community’s vision: an ecologically sustainable, zero emissions community that is recognised for its leadership in sustainability and tackling climate change.

Inner West Council recognises the urgent and critical need for climate change, so that:

1. Council is carbon neutral and 100% renewable for electricity by December 2025, and 100% divested from fossil fuels
2. Community emissions are 75% less by 2036, community solar capacity is 20 times greater in 2036 than 2017, and 100% of schools have solar.

Calculations showed Council generated around 22 kilotonnes (kt) CO₂-e, while its community generated 1,134kt CO₂-e. Various actions to reduce emissions were modelled, which helped form the pathway for Council to reach net zero. Electricity emissions were prioritised as they made up 75% and 67% of Council and community emissions respectively.

Council’s Strategy intended to:

- Achieve real emissions reductions through local projects, rather than purchasing carbon offsets
- Manage emissions from equipment and supply chains through whole-of-Council sustainable procurement
- Fully divest Council’s portfolio of fossil fuels
- Commit to 100% renewable electricity from 1 July 2022
- Support the community through targeted programs and services, including through the Solar and Green Living Centre programs to support solar and expanding organic waste services to divert food waste from landfill.

Objectives were developed through consultation with senior managers, the community, and councillors. All objectives were seen as meeting the SMART goal criteria.

Implementation

Council emission reductions implementation:

To achieve these targets, Council updated tender templates to include sustainability requirements. A new “trigger” requires Requests for Tenders/Quotes be referred to Sustainability staff for input. This resulted in: reduced waste to landfill, additional solar installation, building EV charging infrastructure, preparing for future installations of batteries, developing technical specifications for solar and LEDs and purchasing 8 EVs for lease-back.

In addition, Council worked with Southern Sydney Regional Organisation of Councils to procure a 100% renewable electricity contract.

Community emission reductions implementation:

Council supported Solar my School, Solar for Business and Solar for Strata, which targeted key audiences for large solar installations. These included:

- 26 schools
- 217 strata properties
- Selected local businesses with high daytime electricity consumption.

Council worked with sector experts to engage the community, including through: communication campaigns, independent energy advice, solar feasibility and compliance advice, Green Living Centre workshops, a free solar quotes and comparison service, and assistance to secure funding.

Council expanded its kerbside organic waste service by using a champions program to increase participation.

Outcomes

Corporate actions have reduced Council emissions by 34% (compared to 2015/16), including by:

- Doubling council solar capacity since June 2020 to 774kW
- Installing a new monitoring and fault-identifying system to reduce solar down-time
- Upgrading ~600 fluorescent lights to LEDs
- Reducing Council's streetlight consumption by >1,500tpa CO₂-e
- Transitioning to ~50% of lease-back vehicles to hybrid electric vehicles and purchased eight new fully electric vehicles
- Updating the electric bike fleet offered for safe cycling training
- Converting Ashfield Aquatic Centre to electric heat pumps and replaced gas with solar at Haberfield Community Centre and Library, reducing Council's gas use by >9,500,000MJ pa.

In 2022, Inner West became the first council in Australia to divest 100% from fossil fuels and be powered by 100% renewables. The new 100% renewable electricity contract signed will result in:

- Council achieving the 100% renewable electricity target three years early
- Reducing Council's carbon footprint from 22MtCO₂-e in 2015/16 to about 5.8Mt CO₂-e by July 2022, which is a 75% reduction in Council's total emissions

Council has achieved a sustainable procurement culture of "advanced" as assessed by Local Government Procurement.

Council solar programs directly supported the installation of 80 solar projects worth 902kW and battery installations worth 26.6kWh of storage.

Key Learnings

Council has learnt:

- The importance of partnerships and internal relationships – all projects required the skills, energy, and support of partners

- The impact of strong leadership from the elected Council. Direction provided via Council resolutions gave license to prioritise climate action and secure the necessary resources
- All projects under the Strategy reduce climate impact and save money in operational costs to Council.

Next steps for the project include expanding access to electric vehicles, eliminating waste to landfill, eliminating gas, and incorporating low embodied carbon materials in projects.

New challenges to be addressed include:

- Transitioning Council's truck fleet to zero emission vehicles
- Finding alternatives to rooftop solar
- Reducing electricity demand by encouraging efficiency
- Identifying acceptable offset options for emissions that cannot be eliminated
- Innovating Council's planning controls to encourage low carbon development
- Rolling out food and garden organics (FOGO) to every Inner West household.



Contact

Name: Kate Jackson

Position: Coordinator Community Sustainability

Phone: 0293352147

Email: kate.jackson@innerwest.nsw.gov.au

Inner West Council was the 2022 winner of the Local Sustainability Award at the LGNSW Excellence in the Environment Awards