

Your local voice

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■ ■ ■ community
■ ■ ■ council

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Minutes of General Meeting Wednesday, 25 June 2014

Opening of Meeting

The meeting was opened at 7.40pm. The Deputy Chair welcomed members and guests including Professor Will Steffen from the ACT Climate Change Council.

Apologies: Tom Anderson, Judith Tregonning, Robyn Coghlan, Mal Ferguson

18 people attended the meeting.

PRESENTATION

Adapting to a changing climate – Directions for the ACT – Professor Will Steffen from the ACT Climate Change Council

Professor Steffen gave a worldwide view of climate change, an Australian view and implications for the ACT.

Worldwide

The land and sea temperatures are rising. The amount of Arctic summer ice is reducing. The amount of CO₂ is increasing and the pH is reducing.

The change in climate will have impacts on natural and human systems on all continents.

Australia

Heatwaves

A heatwave is defined as three or more days of unusually hot weather. In the ACT this is 35^o+

In Australia:

- The number of heatwaves is going up;
- the frequency of heatwaves is increasing;
- the duration of heatwaves is longer;
- heatwaves are starting earlier; and
- the hottest day is becoming hotter.

In the ACT:

- 1961-1990 5.2 days were 35+ on average
- 2000-2009 9.4 days were 35+ on average

It is projected that by 2030 the average would be 8+ days (already over this). By 2070, with low emissions this figure will be 10+ days and with high emissions it will be 18+ days.

Bushfires

There is a link between climate change and the number of fires. The number of high fire danger weather is increasing. This is days of high temperatures, low, humidity and strong winds.

Southeast Australia and inland areas have increasing fire risk.

Winds

Winds from the Antarctic are now no longer hitting Western Australia and Victoria. They are still hitting Tasmania.

Sealevel

The level is continuing to rise.

Ocean Acidification

This is continuing to worsen.

Rainfall

Instances of extreme daily rainfall are increasing in frequency and in intensity.

In Summer (December – March), the northern part of the continent will have wet seasons where the rainfall is very much above the current average. Perth, Tasmania and Victoria will become drier.

In Winter (April – November), the south west of Western Australia and the southeast corner of Australia will get drier.

Seasonality will change which will mainly affect the farmers.

In general, the modelling shows that that rainfall will drop and droughts will increase in southern Australia but this is not apparent yet. In northern Australia the modelling shows that the number of cyclones will reduce but the intensity will increase.

Q. Do you model El Nino?

A. Not separately but the observations include it.

Implications for the ACT

There is an increased likelihood of bushfires, droughts, extreme rainfall and extreme heat. This will impact on human health, built infrastructure, energy security, water resources, biodiversity and ecosystem services.

The ACT's 2012 climate change strategy and action plan (AP2) lists 18 actions that need to be undertaken. Three of these directly relate to adaptation. AP2 will have a significant review in 2017.

Water

There will be more extreme rainy days. There is a need to increase security of supply. The enlargement of the Cotter Dam and increased access to the Murrumbidgee River has delivered this.

There will be an emphasis on water sensitive urban design in the future.

There will be increased emphasis on demand management ie changed behaviours in ACT residents and businesses to lower water usage.

Q. If we have increased dam capacity why do we need access to the Murrumbidgee River?

A. As back up.

Q. If we have a millennium drought won't the Murrumbidgee River be dry?

A. Probably but it depends on snow levels.

Next steps

The ACT Climate Change Adaptation Strategy (beyond AP2) commits to:

- fill knowledge gaps
- assess the risks
- engage with the community
- set targets
- take action
- review and improve the strategy.

A draft will be prepared in 2014 with a final adaptation strategy in place by the end of 2015. The work will be informed by the NSW and ACT Climate Model (NARClIM). This will be a shared responsibility, Whole of Government approach.

If we can reduce emissions we can stabilise temperature at +2° from today. Otherwise the temperature will rise by +7° by 2100. We can emit 1000 billion tonnes to maintain the situation but we have already used 40% of this.

The Act has the following emissions targets:

- 2020 – emissions to be less than 40% of those in 1990
- 2050 – emissions to be 80% less than those in 1990
- 2060- 0% net emissions

This is a total reduction by 2020 of 2,024,000 tonnes of CO₂.

Electricity

By 2020 electricity usage will need to decrease by 40%. Wind generation can cover 80,000 households (approximately 50% of households).

Solar power is generated within the ACT. Wind power is not so we need to use a regional approach. This is happening with the NSW and ACT Climate Model.

There is a solar farm at Royalla and they are planned for Mugga Lane and Urriara. They can be erected in one year where other forms of electricity generation take 10 years to build. They can also be moved if demand changes. Costs are currently coming in under budget.

Around the world solar and wind farms no longer need subsidies.

Q. What happens at night – do we lose power?

A. Grids are used to take intermittency out. Can also use storage or battery technology.

Q. Are any small, communities investigating the use?

A. Bega is looking at it. Technology exists to do individual, community and commercial areas.

Q. What is the efficiency of the panels?

A. Low 20 megawatts. Costs are going down as well as efficiency improving.

Sustainable Transport

We need to use more public transport such as buses and light rail. Light rail will be carbon free in the 2020s).

Energy efficiency in Commercial buildings

There is an up to 25% remission of lease variation charges where a high standard of sustainable design and adaptable housing are nominated in the development application. This runs from March 2014- March 2016.

Q. With the densification of the ACT ie more apartments being built it seems that every apartment has an air conditioner.

A. They can be built better with less need for air conditioning but builders put a lot of pressure on to keep the building methods the same.

Q. There are regulations for new buildings to stop them overshadowing others. What about trees?

A. Trees work both ways. They provide shade in hotter times.

Q. Is energy consumption higher in summer or winter in the ACT?

A. Winter but the usage is getting closer.

Q. We need to reduce temperatures in commercial buildings.

A. We need to change people's behaviours eg put more layers on, close or open windows. Behaviour affects the efficiency rating of a building. It can be built to be efficient but it needs to be used efficiently.

Q. What is happening with electric cars?

A. There are polarised opinions from users. They are expensive to buy and need charging often.

Q. Do any of the existing cars companies innovate?

A. They only do hybrids. Tesler is doing electric cars but they are outside the mainstream car industry. By 2030 Volvo will only be making electric buses. they are expensive to buy but cheap to run.

Q. We need to get the message about the benefits of public transport out earlier.

A. This is true for the US and Australia. In Europe the use of public transport is already high.

Q. There needs to be more community engagement in relation to alternative forms of energy. Can we go on visits to wind farms and solar farms?

A. That is a good idea – will be followed up.

Q. When building homes or doing renovations people need to be educated on what is around and what demands they can make on builders. Builders only do what they have to do. They often take the easy/cheap options to get energy efficiency rating up rather than the best options. Is there a brochure?

A. This will be followed up.

Q. Houses need to be insulated but this seems to have dropped off since the Pink Batts issue.

A. Builders need to be educated.

Q. Insulation and double glazing should be mandated.

A. Again, builders should be educated.

These things can be mandated but planners/inspectors let things go through. Builders often recommend but clients don't do it because of price.

Q. The cost of solar farms are going down. How come the price of electricity is going up?

A. the problem is with the pricing system. We can't decouple from the grid.

and community groups were in attendance.

There were many comments made about light rail only benefitting one area of Canberra. Everyone thought that Weston Creek should be the next area to receive light rail. There needs to be more transparency around this.

There was a view expressed at the WCCC meeting that the first route should start from Epic and go to Civic rather than Gungahlin as the Gungahlin to Epic section will be empty during the day. It was thought that it should then go onto the airport and the parliamentary triangle.

Concerns were also raised about the poor use of public transport by people in Canberra. The light rail could be a white elephant regardless of where it is positioned. Concerns were also raised about the speed of light rail. At 11-16kmh it is much slower than a car.

Concern was also raised about where the electricity was coming from to power the light rail.

Q. What modeling has been done?

A. The modelling is being done now. It needs 45,000 people to make it viable. Modelling will take into account the positive effect on climate change (as discussed by Professor Steffen) and the redevelopment of Northbourne Avenue leading to more people living there.

Traditionally people do use light rail where they won't use buses. There is only one stop planned for Gungahlin but people will use Park and Ride.

Buses

The bus routes need to be modernized. The new bus timetable is to be released on 1 July 2014 and it is hoped that this will occur.

Trolley bays in Trenerry Square

There are still no trolley bays despite repeated requests for them.

The Masterplan has indicated that the Brierley Street entrance to Trenerry Square will be closed so all access will be from Liardet Street. This may lessen the number of trolleys in Trenerry Square.

The WCCC committee will write to TAMS to follow up the request for trolley bays.

The WCCC committee will also write to Mirvac and ask them to contact their tenants about the matter.

Update on DHA housing development

There are still issues with water runoff from the development. DHA are trying to resolve it. The amount of water has exceeded expectations including what was allowed for in the modelling. The underground water tanks may help but at the moment the water is running past the one that has been installed.

Cotter Road/Streeon Drive road works

The current temporary configuration is not working. There are problems with the lights. A slip lane from Streeon Drive to Cotter Road heading towards Molonglo would help.

WCCC committee will write to ACT roads to find out when the Cotter Road/Streeon Drive intersection will be finalised.

The meeting closed at 9.10 pm

Next Meeting Wednesday 30 July, 2014
Weston Club, 1 Liardet St, Weston