

Cr Jane Addis  
Mayor  
City of Boroondara

## **City of Boroondara. Proposed Budget 2019-20**

Lighter Footprints welcomes the opportunity to comment on the City of Boroondara's Proposed Budget for 2019-20 which gives insights into the priorities and operations of our Council. We see the invitation as a significant contribution to democracy in local government.

### **Lighter Footprints values the contribution of local government**

Lighter Footprints is a group of concerned residents (now around 2000) from the Boroondara municipality who came together in 2006 to see what we could do about the challenge of climate change. Our members and supporters recognise that climate change has been scientifically demonstrated; that it has become a threat to the future of our world; and that it requires immediate and effective action by all levels of government.

We recognise that local government is a significant player in meeting this challenge. Local councils have a range of levers that they can use to adapt to and mitigate the effects of climate change. As first responders and custodian to much community infrastructure and natural assets, their budgets will be severely impacted by the damage caused by climate change.

We note that Boroondara already undertakes a range of activities to meet its commitments and obligations with respect to the environment and climate change. However, it is impossible to identify these activities and how effective they have been in the current format of the Proposed Budget.

We are also disappointed that the Council has not responded in ways that reflect the urgency of this challenge. The substantial consultation exercise that Boroondara undertook in 2016-17 to develop the 10 year Boroondara Community Plan generated much interest amongst the local community with more than 11, 800 residents contributing to the result. During that exercise, many residents used the various forums to express their concern over climate change and their desire for the Council to take more action to address this threat.

The commitments and obligations that are listed in the Community Plan and various other Council strategy documents need to be treated as integral to all decision making and to give rise to substantial and timely initiatives. The Budget must reflect the priority that the community puts on the environment and their concern that climate change is a significant risk that will affect the health and future of all people especially their children and grandchildren.

The Council must respond to this call for action in ways that go beyond gestures of goodwill. Unless we act more vigorously now, the future cost of measures to mitigate and adapt to this threat will be overwhelming.

**Recommendation:**

- That greater detail be made available in Budget Papers and other reports of the measures that the Council is already taking or plans to take to meet the Strategic Objectives and Strategies that it identified in the Boroondara Community Plan 2017-2027 especially in response to the theme of The Environment.
- That measures be put in place to ensure that considerations around climate change and the environment are taken into account in all Council decision making.
- That the Council set aside funds to revisit the 10 year Community Plan in the near future to reflect the growing demands amongst Boroondara residents for increased action on climate change.

**Local Government as a partner with other organisations in responding to climate change**

The Proposed Budget includes a number of expenditure items to cover advocacy for various causes. For example, the Communications Service Category, under the theme Civic Leadership and Governance lists proposed net expenditure of \$3.6 million. We consider that some of these funds should be directed to supporting the work of the Australian Local Government Association and the Municipal Association of Victoria to bolster their advocacy around climate change.

**Recommendation:**

- That the Council use funds identified for advocacy activities to support the work of the ALGA and the MAV to get more action by both State and Federal Governments on climate change.

**Capital Works program**

We note that the Capital Works Program in the Proposed Budget contains several large items of expenditure that are currently being implemented or in the planning stage.

These include the following projects:

- Kew Recreation Centre redevelopment (\$61.2 million over four years, completed in 2021-22).
- Canterbury Community Precinct (\$11.7 million over three years, completed in 2020-21).
- Camberwell Community Centre (\$8.1 million over two years, completed in 2020-21).
- Ashburton Seniors Centre (\$7.7 million over two years, completed in 2019-20).
- Balwyn Community Centre (\$8.7 million over two years, completed in 2019-20)

As we pointed out in our submission to the Proposed Budget 2018-19, Lighter Footprints is interested in the opportunities that such projects can offer through their

design, construction and operation for adapting to or mitigating the effects of climate change. These include measures to reduce emissions, increase energy efficiency, manage water usage and provide a demonstration of the commitment that our municipality has to addressing the impact of climate change and contributing to solutions.

We again refer you to the 2017 report by Beyond Zero Emissions (BZE) entitled *Rethinking Cement*<sup>1</sup> which sets out the issues around cement production and the degree to which it contributes to increased carbon emissions and other negative environmental effects. For more information on the use of natural refrigerants which can be used instead of the environmentally destructive but commonly used fluorocarbon refrigerant, we suggest you consult the case study report by The Australian Institute of Refrigeration, Air Conditioning and Heating.<sup>2</sup>

### **Recommendations**

- The Council aim to achieve a 6 star Green Star Rating (World Standard) for all of its new or refurbished buildings in compliance with the City's Sustainable Council Building Policy.
- As part of the design and construction of new and refurbished buildings, the Council investigate the use of environmentally sensitive and sustainable construction materials, such as zero emissions cement; and the use of natural refrigerants in the heating and cooling of the building.
- The Council set funds aside to investigate new measures to reduce the carbon emissions, increase the energy efficiency and reduce the environmental impact of all building stock and other infrastructure in the municipality whether public or private.
- The Council examine how it can use the planning system to encourage land use and building design to reduce carbon emissions.

### **Initiatives to reduce carbon emissions**

We are aware that Boroondara has an active campaign to reduce carbon emissions in its buildings and other infrastructure such as street lighting. It also provides funding to maintain our public parks and gardens and seeks to discourage the loss of trees on private land through its Tree Protection Law. It also conducts activities to educate residents on matters relevant to sustainability. We welcome the new Food Organics Green Waste Organic service and see it as a good approach to addressing the waste problem.

We are concerned, however, that these initiatives still see climate change within the paradigm of sustainability. It is becoming increasingly apparent that this is no longer an adequate way to address this massive challenge and that all layers of government need to see it is an emergency which requires urgent action.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://bze.org.au/rethinking-cement-plan/>

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.environment.gov.au/system/files/resources/38b4f6fc-9232-49d0-9550-68558bd26978/files/refrigerants-guide.pdf>

We see that these initiatives are often limited in their impact by the level of resources devoted to them. For example, anecdotal evidence suggests that the Tree Protection Local Law has limited success in protecting trees on private land because there are too few officers involved in the implementation of this measure and prosecuting breaches.

Transport and the related infrastructure contribute significantly to the generation of carbon emissions and we would ask the Council to include in its Budget measures that reduce these emissions. This would include:

- measures to encourage the uptake of electric vehicles such as the provision of publicly available charging stations, preferential treatment of electric vehicles in car parks, and updating the Council fleet of cars and other vehicles with electric models;
- measures to encourage greater use of public transport such as the provision of shading at tram stops;
- enhancement of tree care and renewal programs to increase the level of shading in public places and over roads and pavements to increase cooling and reduce the heat island effect of bitumen and other heat reflecting surfaces and where buildings cover much of the plot of land.

## **Proposed Review and Update of the Council's Climate Change Risk Assessment**

We regard with interest the initiative listed in the Proposed Budget to spend \$50, 000 in 2019-20 on for a review and update of the Council's Climate Change Risk Assessment (Attachment C of the Proposed Budget papers)<sup>3</sup>. We presume that this proposal derives from recommendations by the Audit Committee in its report of 28 November 2018<sup>4</sup>.

We think the review and update should be opened to public consultation before the Risk Management Assessment Plan is presented to the Audit Committee in May 2020. This will provide an opportunity for the community to express its views on the risks surrounding climate change and how these should be reflected in actions the Council takes to fulfil the objectives and strategies listed in Boroondara's Community Plan under the theme of The Environment.

### **Recommendation**

- That further information be made available within the context of approving the Budget about the proposed review and update of the Council's Climate Change Risk Assessment.
- That this proposed review and update be opened up to public consultation and that Council officers with expertise in climate change matters be available to assist in advising the community on the factors affecting this assessment and its application.

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<sup>3</sup> <https://www.boroondara.vic.gov.au/sites/default/files/2019-04/proposed-budget-2019-2020.pdf>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.boroondara.vic.gov.au/sites/default/files/2019-02/7.1-Recommendations-of-the-Audit-Committee-Meeting-held-on-28-November-2018.pdf>

We thank you for facilitating community consultation on the Budget and would welcome the opportunity to further discuss these matters with Councillors and Council officers.

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