

Thank you for considering Lighter Footprints' submission on the Boroondara Council Draft Budget. We are disappointed that Council has chosen to pursue a perfunctory budget consultation process.

In addition, we find the form in which the budget is presented to be opaque, particularly when trying to understand spending on the Climate Action Plan ("CAP"). CAP expenditure is classified as capital and yet we understand that it includes staff. It is impossible to determine exactly how much Council is spending to reduce Council and Community emissions. What we do know is that it is not enough. The current specific allocation for the implementation of the ambitious CAP is no more than is spent annually on the purchase of library books.

Boroondara Council declared a Climate Emergency and adopted the CAP in September 2021.

Since this time, there have been two Climate Action Implementation Plans 2021/23 and 2023/25, with only \$1,000,000 specifically allocated annually to their implementation. In view of the limited progress which has been made (see below) this amount is clearly inadequate, particularly in the context of budgeted expenditure of \$268 million (operating) and \$88 million (capital), with a surplus of \$13 million. It is very concerning that after a small increase in the allocation foreshadowed for 2025/26 (\$1.1 million) there is zero allocation foreshadowed for the following two years.

The Ambitious Climate Action Plan

Council's Climate Action Plan set significant targets for Council and Community.

Council emissions

- 90% actual emissions reduction by 2030 (compared to 2007/2008)
- 100% actual emissions reduction by 2040

Specific actions included a target to halve the number of council buildings that use natural gas by 2030 and convert 90% of council passenger fleet to electric vehicles (EVs) or other low emissions technology by 2030.

Community emissions

- carbon neutral by 2035
- 60% net emissions reduction by 2030 (compared with 2020 emissions)
- 100% actual emissions reduction by 2040.

Supporting measures

- Support the installation of more 50,000 kW (kilowatt) solar PV (currently 27,000 kw) across Boroondara by tripling the number of buildings with solar energy systems. This target is for all buildings in Boroondara.

- Support residents and schools to plant 50,000 new native plants, including 10,000 trees.
- Increase the tree cover in Boroondara from 28% to 30%.
- Make sure there is access to electric vehicle (EV) charging within 2km of all activity centres.
- Provide sustainability workshops and education opportunities for 3,000 people each year.
- Support the community to only use 130 litres of water per person per day.
- Divert at least 80% of waste from landfill.

Shortfall in staff resourcing

In September 2023 Electrify Boroondara (EB) made a submission to Council asserting that the Climate Action Implementation Plan (“CAP IP”) 2023/2024 and 2024/2025 is significantly under resourced and estimated staff resources needed to deliver the CAP was five FTE (full time equivalent) staff. A copy of that submission is attached with this submission.

EB submitted that five FTE staff roles, such as those set out below, would be required to implement the CAP.

1. **Energy Efficiency, Renewable Energy and Innovation** (1 FTE)
2. **Sustainable Transport and Innovation** (1 FTE)
3. **Monitoring and Evaluation** (1 FTE)
4. **FTE’s for electrification/climate action education & communication** (2 FTE)

We note that the 2023/25 CAPIP announced the appointment of an Energy Transitions officer. We applaud this appointment but concur with EB that a significant increase in the staffing for CAP implementation is required. There remains a staffing shortfall and this has contributed to failure to develop relevant policies and meet CAP implementation goals.

Climate Action Plan CAP unrealised actions

CAP themes 1: Energy efficiency and Renewable Energy and 4: Transport (account for 97% of Boroondara’s greenhouse gas emissions)

Theme 1: Energy efficiency and Renewable Energy

<https://www.boroondara.vic.gov.au/climate-action-plan/climate-action-plan/theme-1-energy-efficiency-and-renewable-energy>

Actions to make Council more sustainable

1.1 *Update and implement our Sustainable Council Building Policy.*

Three years on this still hasn't occurred, although we understand the drafting process has now commenced. This year Council is spending \$88 million on building works with a Sustainable Council Building Policy that dates from 2016.

1.2 *Expand the amount of renewable energy we generate.*

There is no Council Building Renewable Energy Plan to guide strategic and effective installation of PV panels and where appropriate batteries.

The CAIP 2021-23 had a target of 5 - 8 PV installations. The CAIP 2021-2023 Update Report noted that only two installations had occurred (ie 40% of the minimum target)

1.3 *Transition Council buildings off natural gas*

Develop a natural gas transition plan for Council buildings with a focus on high emission sites including aquatic centres

<chrome-extension://efaidnbmnnnibpcajpcglclefindmkaj/https://www.boroondara.vic.gov.au/media/69876/download?inline>

In 2021 Council planned to develop a Natural Gas Transition Plan and yet nothing has eventuated. Council should have an overall Electrification Plan for all council buildings including as yet unbuilt buildings such as the new Kew Recreation Centre and Kew Library Upgrade. This plan needs to include targets for existing buildings and priority actions.

Without a plan there is a very high risk of new buildings having inefficient, expensive-to-run, high emissions gas heating installed despite the more efficient, lower cost-to-run, lower emissions alternative of heat pump technology.

Council owns more than 200 buildings. According to the CAIP 2021-2023 Update Report, only three small buildings have been electrified, Lynden Park Reserve Pavilion, Hawthorn Tennis Club and the Freeway Golf Clubrooms. However natural gas disconnection has not occurred at these sites.

At this rate only 12 small buildings will be electric by 2030, well short of the council's target of 50% by 2030 (roughly 100 buildings)

1.6 *Audit our building stock to find more energy efficiency opportunities over time.*

The lack of a Sustainable Council Building Policy may impact the effectiveness of these audits or require them to be repeated once the policy is in place.

1.7 *Upgrade major road streetlights to LED (subject to Victorian Government co-funding and an updated business case).*

According to the CAIP 2021-2023 Update Report the updated feasibility study has been deferred.

Partnership actions 1.9-1.15

<https://www.boroondara.vic.gov.au/climate-action-plan/climate-action-plan/theme-1-energy-efficiency-and-renewable-energy>

Council has made significant strides in its engagement with the community in support of CAP goals, particularly over the last 12 months. Solar Savers is soon to expand to include heat pumps, there is a new home energy audit service, new drop-in sessions and an expanded webinar program. We congratulate Council on these actions. However, given the significant targets for community emission reductions in the CAP, this is an area where we see a need for significant additional staffing and other resources.

According to the CAIP 2021-2023 Update Report a Climate Action Plan community engagement/education plan has been developed. This report has not yet been published. Our concern is that Council has traditionally let the community come to it, rather than Council going out into the community to achieve engagement on the CAP.

In addition to employing more staff, we support fast tracking a permanent demonstration centre in a high pedestrian trafficked area. We also propose that Council purchase a purpose equipped van that could be used to hold regular sessions at shopping centres and sports grounds, with a focus on weekends. Advertising of Solar Savers and the Business Energy Savers Program has not penetrated the community with, for example, only 31 solar installations under Solar Savers. A step change in community engagement is required.

Actions to adapt to climate change

1.19 Support vulnerable and low-income residents to upgrade home energy efficiency

With the exception of subsidised home energy audits, it is unclear that there are any proposed actions to achieve this aim. These households are likely to be living in energy poverty and have individual vulnerabilities that put them at very high risk of negative health effects from living in a home that is too cold in winter, too hot in summer and damp. Inefficient housing is a huge and serious public health risk. We advocate that Council fund and implement programs to subsidise low income households to improve the energy efficiency of their homes and adopt rooftop solar.

Other councils have specific schemes. For example Merri-bek.

<https://zerocarbonmerri-bek.org.au/solar-and-energy-financial-support-for-residents-on-a-low-income/>

Theme 4: Transport

<https://www.boroondara.vic.gov.au/climate-action-plan/climate-action-plan/theme-4-transport>

Actions to make Council more sustainable

- 4.1 *Reduce the total number of vehicles in our fleet and speed up the transition to electric-powered or other low emissions options.*

According to the CAIP 2021-2023 Update Report after 2 years the Council fleet is 4% electric or alternative low emissions option (10 vehicles). There still isn't a Council Fleet Transition Plan (see also 4.24 on Council's website). Council has a target of 90% EV's by 2030

Partnership actions

- 4.7 *Support the installation of electric vehicle and bicycle chargers.*

Only 2 new fast charging stations (2 chargers at each location) have been installed to date. Public uptake of electric vehicles is accelerating. We advocate that Council allocate funding to fast track the installation of chargers and fund a trial of pole mounted chargers for residences without off street parking.

- 4.8 *Support improved off-road shared or separated bicycle and pedestrian paths.*

Cycling infrastructure investment in Boroondara is grossly underfunded. Transport emissions account for 20% of community emissions. The lack of safe cycling infrastructure is a significant barrier to the community mode shifting from vehicles to active transport.

The 2022/23 budget only had an allocation of \$160,000 for the Hawthorn to Box Hill Rail Trail.

The 2023/24 budget allocated a further \$160,000 to the Hawthorn to Box Hill Rail Trail, \$100,000 to shared lane markings on some routes, \$75,000 to lighting on the Anniversary Trail and \$217,000 for on-road infrastructure. This makes a total of only \$552,000 or approximately 0.2% of the total budget expenditure.

In the 2024/25 draft budget, spending on implementing the Bicycle Strategy falls to only \$284,574 and \$226,300 for lighting on the Anniversary Trail. A tiny \$100,000 is allocated to the Bicycle Strategy Implementation Plan the next financial year with no money allocated for the following 2 years.

Policy and advocacy actions

- 4.15 *Review and update our Integrated Transport Strategy.*

The Integrated Transport Strategy was last updated in 2006. Funding should be allocated to update the strategy.

A key objective of the Integrated Transport Strategy should be to encourage the use of alternatives to private car use in the municipality, including walking, bicycles and public transport. The updated Integrated Transport Strategy should include traffic calmed streets that form a safe travel network to schools.

Given the large number of schools in the municipality and the high degree of traffic congestion around these schools, funding should be allocated to implement 10 traffic calmed streets annually. This action should not be delayed by the lack of an Integrated Transport Strategy.

4.16 *Develop a Bicycle Strategy.*

Updated in 2022, however key elements were removed and the strategy is grossly underfunded.

4.17 *Develop a Public Transport Strategy.*

This still has not happened. See comment above regarding the Integrated Transport Strategy.

4.21 *Review our Car Share Policy and Procedures to provide support for sustainable transport.*

The current policy was last updated in 2013. The proposal to update the policy in 2018 did not eventuate. According to the CAIP 2021-2023 Update Report this policy will be available for consideration by Council in the near future. We hope that this is the case.

Absent and out of date Plans/Strategies/Policies

. Sustainable Council Building Policy	2016
. Council Building Renewable Energy Plan	none
. Climate Action Plan community engagement/education plan - not yet published	
. Natural Gas Transition Plan	none
. Integrated Transport Strategy	2006
. Public Transport Strategy	none
. Car Share Policy and Procedures	2013
. Council Fleet Transition Plan	none
. EV Charging Strategy	none

Conclusion

The scale and urgency of the actions needed to reduce greenhouse gas emissions is unprecedented.

The specific allowance of only \$1 million to implement the CAP in the Draft Budget is clearly inadequate, and it is extremely concerning that no expenditure is foreshadowed beyond 2025/26.

The lack of multiple up-to-date policies, strategies and plans makes it nearly impossible for Boroondara Council to reach the Climate Action Plan aims and targets. This lack also makes the process inefficient.

The existing sustainability team needs to be significantly expanded to enable the development of these policies and to implement them. We endorse the submission made by EB on 5 September 2023 in this regard. We ask that the allocation of funding to the CAP themes 1 Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy and 4 Transport be significantly increased to at least 2% of Council's budget.

Yours faithfully,

Lynn Frakes
Co-convenor
[Lighter Footprints Inc.](#)
0425 843 685