

## City of Greater Geraldton

# 3.1 CLIMATE CHANGE

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### SUSTAINABILITY THEME

Environment

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### OBJECTIVES

The objective of this policy is to outline the City of Greater Geraldton's commitment to addressing climate change through:

- Acknowledging causes and understanding its impacts in a local, regional and international context;
- Reducing green-house emissions through sustainable decision-making and actions;
- Developing appropriate adaptation strategies.

### POLICY STATEMENT

Climate change has a range of legal, indemnity, budgetary, asset management, infrastructure, planning and environmental implications. These need to be embedded in strategic frameworks and actioned at both, a political and operational level.

The *Local Government Act 1995* states:

*"In carrying out its functions a local government is to use its best endeavours to meet the needs of current and future generations through an integration of environmental protection, social advancement and economic prosperity".*

The City of Greater Geraldton recognises that it has an ethical obligation and an opportunity to play a leadership role for addressing the impacts of what is now considered to be a climate emergency.

### POLICY DETAILS

#### 1. Climate Change – Causes

The City of Greater Geraldton recognises that:

- Natural processes have determined Earth's climatic change history, but human industrial activities have introduced a new mechanism that is driving Earth's climate change future.
- Global climate change is occurring as a consequence of greenhouse gas emissions in the atmosphere. Further climate change will occur as a result of past, present and future emissions.
- Carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) levels today are higher than at any point in at least the past 800,000 years. The last time the atmospheric CO<sub>2</sub> amounts were as high as they are now was more than three million years ago, when the sea level was 15–25 meters higher than it is now.

## **2. Mitigating Climate Change – Emission Reductions**

The City of Greater Geraldton acknowledges that meeting emission reduction targets is ongoing. No single policy measure or technology provides the solution to climate change. The City of Greater Geraldton is committed to:

- Reducing its operational greenhouse gas emissions.
- Supporting the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions in the community.
- Contributing towards agreed national emission reduction targets.
- Using appropriate research frameworks and data to inform its own strategies, decision-making and leadership activities.
- Encouraging and supporting community and business in the transition towards sustainable lifestyles that reduce climate change impacts.

## **3. Adapting to Climate Change – Collaborative Action**

Climate change impacts are not shared equally across Australia. Whilst risk from bushfire is broadly distributed, as a coastal city, risk from flooding and coastal inundation is highly concentrated. The City of Greater Geraldton is committed to:

- Supporting the establishment of institutions and regulations that ensure effective, action by stakeholders for climate change management.
- Developing individuals, communities and businesses to understand and adapt to the impacts of climate change.
- Ensuring that planning, investment and project decisions take into consideration the likely impact of climate change through:
  - Including the impact on current and future human settlements, natural resources and ecosystems.
  - Assessing the adaptive capacity of the plan, investment or project.

## **4. Resilience to Climate Change – Equity and Social Justice**

The City of Greater Geraldton acknowledges that the impacts of climate change and policy responses have significant equity implications. The City of Greater Geraldton is committed to:

- Advocating that the burden of reducing greenhouse emissions must be equitably dispersed.
- Supporting development of policies and strategies that identify and minimise the impacts of climate change.
- Working with State and Commonwealth governments to resource mitigation, adaptation and resilience-building measures within the community.

## **5. Climate Change Action – Priorities**

The management of climate change impacts must reflect the priorities of the City of Greater Geraldton and its community. The City of Greater Geraldton is committed to:

- Reducing greenhouse emissions through sustainable decision-making and actions.
- Considering a pathway towards a zero-carbon community;
- Reviewing and updating its climate change adaptation actions;
- Minimising climate change risks to its operations/communities;
- Working with State and Commonwealth Governments to plan and implement appropriate strategies.

## KEY TERM DEFINITION

**Adaptation** means modifying decisions, activities and ways of thinking to adjust to a changing climate.

**Adaptive capacity** means the ability to adjust to climate change, taking advantage of opportunities, and coping with the consequences.

**Climate change** means a statistically significant variation in either the mean state of the climate or in its variability, persisting for an extended period (typically decades or longer). Climate change may be due to natural processes or external forcing, or to persistent anthropogenic changes in the composition of the atmosphere or in land-use.

**Mitigation** means ways of reducing the causes of climate change by reducing emissions.

**Resilience** means the ability of a social or ecological system to absorb disturbances while retaining the same basic structure and ways of functioning.

## ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

This policy applies to everyone who's actions could impact or influence climate change.

## WORKPLACE INFORMATION

*Local Government Act 1995*

Geraldton Coastal Hazard Risk Management and Adaptation Plan

Batavia Region of Councils Climate Change Adaptation Action Plan

Council Policy 1.1 Towards Sustainable Decisions

Council Policy 3.2 Coastal Adaptation

Directorate		Officer	Review Cycle	Next Due
Infrastructure Services		Manager Engineering Services	Biennially	2023
Version	Decision Reference	Synopsis		
3.	IS234 – 25 May 2020	Policy Review		