Waimakariri District Council Climate Change Policy

1. Introduction

The intention of this policy is to ensure the Waimakariri District Council is well prepared to proactively lead, in partnership with communities, organisations and businesses within and outside of the District, a response to climate change challenges that is appropriate, timely, cost-effective and equitable.

The policy is an initial statement in relation to Council's role in climate change mitigation and adaptation.

2. Policy context

Greenhouse gas emmissions are causing significant changes to Earth's oceans, atmosphere and climate which are expected to be very long-lasting and in some cases, irreversible. These changes have wide-ranging consequences for New Zealand's culture, economy, infrastructure, coasts and indigenous biodiversity. Climate change affects everyone, but the most vulnerable people and communities have the most exposure. The scale and impact of both adaptation and mitigation on people and business has little precedent.

Climate change effects for New Zealand for the next 100 years have been predicted[1] with some degree of certainty. However, good information about the cumulative and cascading effects of climate change is lacking. Further to this, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) states that *'continued emissions of greenhouse gases will cause further warming and long-lasting changes in all components of the climate system, increasing the likelihood of severe, pervasive and irreversible impacts for people and ecosystems. Limiting climate change would require substantial and sustained reductions in greenhouse gas emissions which, together with adaptation, can limit climate change risks.'*[2]

Both the World Bank and the New Zealand Treasury have warned that the longer reducing emissions is delayed, the harder and more expensive it will be to mitigate and adapt, and that while mitigation involves risks, those risks are not as great as those from a changing climate.

New Zealand has been a party to international targets for reducing greenhouse gases under the Kyoto Protocol for the period 2008-2012, and the United Nations Framework Convention for Climate Change (UNFCCC) for 2013-2020. In 2015, New Zealand was one of 200

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[1] Ministry for the Environment 2018. *Climate Change Projections for New Zealand: Atosphere Projections Based on Simulations from the IPCC Fifth Assessment, 2nd Edition*
[2] IPCC,2014: Climate Change 2014: Synthesis Report. Contribution of Working groups I, II, and III to the Fifth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate change

countries which came together in Paris to reach agreement about limiting global warming this century to between 1.5 to 2 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels. To achieve this New Zealand is required to reduce its gross emmisions by 30% below 2005 levels for the period 2021- 2030.

The *Climate Change Response (Zero Carbon) Amendment Act 2019* set into law a new 2050 domestic target of net zero emissions of all greenhouse gases other than biogenic methane by 2050.

Local government is a key player in regulating resource use in New Zealand and Section 7(i) of the *Resource Management Act 1991* requires all persons to have particular regard to the effects of climate change. Local government is also a significant provider of community infrastructure. Under the *Local Government Act 2002,* Councils are responsible for promoting the environmental, social, cultural and economic well-being of the communities they serve. As such, local authorities have a significant role to play in both climate change mitigation and adaptation.

In 2017 Local Government New Zealand (LGNZ) released a position statement on climate change stating that *'Responsive leadership and a holistic aproach to climate change is urgent. We must act now to avoid future risk and, at the same time, agree how to manage safety, existing risks, limitations and liabilities to underpin effective mitigation and adaptation.'* [3] Key roles for local government were outlined in the paper and these have been taken into account when developing this policy.

Te Rūnanga o Ngāi Tahu are influencial on regional and national climate change policy having released their tribal strategy; He Rautaki mō te Huringa o te Āhuarangi: Te Tāhū o te Whāriki, Anchoring the Foundation; in 2018, and held their first tribal wānanga on climate change in 2019.

A Canterbury Regional Climate Change Steering Group was established in 2019, under the Mayoral Forum. Environment Canterbury supports the Regional Climate Change Working Group which co-ordinates the region's climate change response and reports to the Steering Group. The Regional Natural Hazards Working Group, which reports to the Policy Forum, also has a role to play in co-ordinating climate change adaptation efforts. The Waimakariri District Council is represented on both of these groups as well as the Canterbury Chief Executives Forum which has undertaken a regional climate change risk assessment to enable the climate change risks and opportunities for Canterbury to be better understood.

The adoption of this policy is an acknowledgement of the need for the Waimakriri District Council to demonstrate responsible leadership and develop its programme of action to play an appropriate part in ensuring as smooth as practicable transition to a low-emissions future and achieve the Council's vision *'to make Waimakariri a great place to be, in partnership with our communities'*.

3. Principles

In making decisions that impinge on climate change matters, Council will apply the following principles. Each is not an absolute in itself and will need consideration in relation to each other and with wider social and economic factors as well:

- The precautionary principle – that is, if there are threats of serious or irreversible environmental damage, lack of full scientific certainty should not be used as a reason for postponing measures to prevent environmental degradation;

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[3] LGNZ Local Government Position Statement on Climate Change

- Inter-generational equity – that is, the present generation should ensure that the health, diversity, and productivity of the environment is maintained or enhanced for the benefit of future generations;

- Kaitiakitanga/Stewardship – Council shares in a collective duty to safeguard the natural environment. Climate change policy frameworks and decisions need to be flexible and enabling to allow for local decisions and empower organisations and individuals to reduce and mitigate emissions;

- Conservation of biological diversity and ecological integrity;

- Equity/Justice – Council will consider the needs of the most vulnerable and those without a voice, including future generations, as it responds to climate change. This includes recognising and advocating for the needs of communities and individuals disproportionately affected by climate change;

- Inclusive decision making –The Council will take a collaborative approach to working with communities, particularly those who are the most vulnerable, to identify appropriate mitigation and adaptation actions.

- Informed decision-making – Council will use the best available information to understand the potential impacts of climate change and the available options for responding to those impacts, including their costs and benefits. Council will make this information available to engage in meaningful conversations with its communities.

- Improved valuation, pricing and incentive mechanisms – that is, sustainabiltity factors should be included in the valuation of assets and services, such as:

  o Polluter pays – that is, those who generate pollution and waste should bear the cost of containment, avoidance, and abatement;

  o The users of goods and services should pay prices based on the full life cycle of costs of providing goods and services, including the use of natural resources and assets and the ultimate disposal of waste;

  o Sustainability goals, once established, should be pursued in the most cost-effective way, by establishing incentive structures, including market mechanisms, that enable those best placed to maximise benefits and minimise costs to develop their own solutions.

4. Policy objectives

Waimakariri District Council acknowledges concerted action is required by all levels of government, and by all people, to act responsibly and address climate change for current and future generations. The Council wants to work with the community in becoming more sustainable, supporting vulnerable people, improving the quality of the environment, mitigating our impact on the world's climate, and adapting to the effects of climate change that are already underway. To this end this Climate Change Policy has the following objectives:

1. To enhance the Council's preparedness to respond to climate change challenges in an appropriate, co-ordinated, timely, cost-effective, and equitable way.

2. To enable the Council to provide transformational leadership that will ensure the long-term wellbeing, sustainability and resilience of the District's communities and businesses.

3. To provide for a planned approach to mitigating and reducing emissions, including

minimising activities, that contribute to climate change.

4. To work collaboratively with the community and other organisations to adaptively plan for, and increase resilience to, climate change effects on the District's social, cultural, environmental and economic wellbeing.

5. Policy Statement

Local government is used to strategically managing natural resources and hazards risks in a largely unchanging and predictable environment. Climate change is altering the intensity and frequency of existing risks and hazards and creating new risks, the rate of increase and cascading effects of which are unpredictable. Being responsible for land use planning and the provision of core utility services Council also has key part to play in mitigation. Addressing the above will require a fundamentally different planning approach and some long-term shifts in response regimes in the District.

To meet the impacts and opportunities of climate change, the Waimakariri District Council will:

5.1 Governance and collaboration

- Establish a collaborative governance structure responsible for overseeing the Council's climate change response;

- Embed climate change considerations into all Council decision-making processes and work programmes;

- Commit to keeping up-to-date with, and respond to, the changing understanding of climate change and its implications.

- Proactively respond to evolving Government legislation and policy that directs and guides emissions reduction and climate change adaptation;

- Advocate to Central Government a nationally consistent response to climate change and where relevant appropriate risk sharing and funding mechanisms at a local level to deal with climate change effects;

- Work collaboratively with other Local, Regional and Central Governments, Te Ngāi Tūāhuriri Rūnanga and other relevant entities;

- Support and collaborate with other agencies, including non-profit organisations, that are working with communities dealing with climate change challenges;

- Promote public awareness of climate change risks and opportunities and work collaboratively with communities within the District;

- Prioritise its actions on the most vulnerable sectors and communities.

5.2 Strategy and planning

- Develop a comprehensive Climate Change Response Strategy;

- Include measureable targets for reducing emissions from Council operations in the Climate Change Response Strategy;

- Incorporate emissions reduction targets into the investment decisions that the

Council makes on transport, fleet, procurement and waste management;

- Incorporate climate change mitigation and adaptation in Long Term Plans and 30 Year Infrastructure Strategies;

- Ensure Activity Management Plans take into account the need to mitigate climate change, as well as the need to identify and adapt to hazards and risks arising from this;

- Develop its understanding of the impacts of zoning and land-use decisions on the emissions trajectory for the District;

- Ensure that low carbon, climate-resilient development is adopted as a key tenet of urban growth and development and land use decisions;

- Identify areas of enhanced risk from climate change in District Planning, and include in District Plans and strategies appropriate provisions in response;

- Focus on the significant impacts climate change will have on the District's natural assets and ecosystems.

5.3   Implementation and monitoring

- Regularly measure corporate emissions and lead by example by reducing these;

- Regularly report to the community the challenges and progress made on achieving the aspirations of the Climate Change Policy and the actions set out in the Climate Change Response Strategy.

6. *Links to legislation, other policies and community outcomes*

The *Climate Change Response Act 2002* puts in place a legal framework to enable New Zealand to meet its international obligations under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and the Kyoto Protocol. The Act allows for units representing New Zealand's target allocation for greenhouse gas emissions under the Protocol to be managed, and traded on the international market. It also establishes a national inventory agency to record and report on information relating to greenhouse gas emissions.

The *Climate Change Response (Zero Carbon) Amendment Act 2019* provides a framework for New Zealand to develop and implement climate change policies that contribute to the Paris Agreement and allow New Zealand to prepare for, and adapt to, the effects of climate change.

The Act:

- Sets a new domestic greenhouse gas emissions reduction target for New Zealand;
- Establishes a system of 5 yearly emissions budgets to act as stepping stones towards the long-term target;
- Requires the Government to develop and implement policies for climate change adaptation and mitigation;
- Establishes a new, independent Climate Change Commission to provide expert advice and monitoring.

As part of this a national climate change risk assessment and national adaptation plan is

required for which Council may be obligated to provide information.

Climate change cuts across all Council Community Outcomes but those of particular significance are:

- Effect is given to the principles of the Treaty of Waitangi
- There are wide ranging opportunities for people to contribute to the decision making that effects our District
- There is a safe environment for all
- There is a healthy and sustainable evironment for all
- There are areas of significant indigenous vegetation and habitats for indigenous fauna
- Transport is accessible, convenient, reliable and sustainable
- Core utility services are provided in a timely and sustainable manner
- Businesses in the District are diverse, adaptable and growing.

7. *Adopted by*

This policy was approved by the Council on 1 December 2020 in accordance with its delegated authority.

8. *Monitoring and Review*

The policy will be reviewed annually to ensure the review outcomes take into account any relevant matters arising from the Climate Change Response Strategy, to enable it to feed into the Long Term Plan budget process, and to ensure it remains relevant to changing legisative and local circumstances.

9. Definitions

Adaptation

Process of adjustment to actual or expected climate and its effects. Adaptive capacity is the ability of systems, institutions, humans, and other organisms to adjust to potential damage, to take advantage of opportunities, or to respond to consequences.

Climate

Statistical description of weather in terms of the mean and variability of relevant quantities over a period of time ranging from months to thousands or millions of years.

Climate Change

Change on climate that persists for an extended period, typically decades or longer.

Community

A group of people who:

- Live in a particular area or place (geographic or place-based community); or

- Are similar in some way (relational or population-based community); or

- Have friendships, or a sense of having something in common (community of interest).

People can belong to more than one community, and communities can be any size. With increasing use of social media and digital technologies, communities can also be virtual.

Ecological integrity

An ecosystem has ecological integrity when...it has the living and non-living pieces expected in its natural region. Its processes (the engines that make an ecosystem work; e.g. fire, flooding, predation) occur with the frequency and intensity expected in its natural region.

Exposure

Presence of people, livelihood, species or ecosystems, environmental functions, services and resources, infrastructure, or economic, social, or cultural assets in places and settings that could be affected.

Hazards

A process, phenomenon or human activity that may cause loss of life, injury or other health impacts, property damage, social and economic disruption or environmental degradation.

Mitigation

Reducing climate change involves reducing the flow of heat-trapping greenhouse gases into the atmosphere, either by reducing sources of these gases (for example, the burning of fossil fuels for electricity, heat or transport) or enhancing the "sinks" that accumulate and store these gases.

Resilience

The ability to anticipate and resist the effects of a disruptive event/s, minimise adverse impacts, respond effectively, maintain or recover functionality, and adapt in a way that allows for learning and thriving.

Risk

Effect of uncertainty.

Sustainable

State of the global sytem, including environmental ,social and economic aspects, in which the needs of the present are met without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their

own needs.

Vulnerability

The conditions determined by physical, social, economic and environmental factors or processes which increase the susceptibility of an individual, a community, assets or systems to the impacts of hazards.

Wellbeing

Our quality of life, including: civic and human rights, culture and identity, housing, knowledge and skills, leisure and recreation, material standard of living, employment status and job satisfaction, the physical and natural environment, safety and security, health and social connectedness.