

Waimakariri District Council and the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals

Introduction

The Waimakariri District Council (WDC) has received numerous submissions in response to consultations and requests under the Local Government Official Information and Meetings Act 1987 regarding the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (UN SDGs).

Many other statements and claims have also been made to or about WDC in connection to the UN SDGs in the submissions and requests received.

This information sheet seeks to clarify WDC's position regarding the UN SDGs and the associated statements and claims.

The history of the UN SDGs at WDC

The UN SDGs were originally introduced to WDC by a Policy Manager and they were the topic of a workshop with Council in the lead up to the preparation of the 2021-2031 Long Term Plan. The intention was to link Council's community outcomes, mandatory measures and the four well-beings (Social, Economic, Cultural and Economic) to the high-level principles (shown in Appendix 1) of the UN SDGs, which had been adopted by the Government.

The UN SDGs first appeared in the official WDC documents: Corporate Sustainability Strategy and Action Plan 2019 and the Organisational Sustainability Strategy 2020. These documents state that they "broadly align with the 2030 United Nations Sustainable Development Goals". The latter references individual UN SDGs in the document.

The UN SDGs, linked to the WDC Community Outcomes, have been included in the Annual Plans for 2022-23 and 2023-24. Council has undertaken to review the



inclusion, or otherwise, of the UN SDGs in the 2024-2034 Long Term Plan.

The UN SDGs are likely to be referenced in future WDC documentation as it is developed. Council documentation, such as strategies and annual plans, is generally subject to public consultation and/or made available to the public on the Council's website.

Why WDC has included the UN SDGs?

The UN SDGs were adopted by the New Zealand Government in 2015 as a member state of the United Nations. The UN SDGs are non-binding on members, and therefore non-binding on WDC.

WDC supports the high-level principles of the UN SDGs (Appendix 1), which is why they have been shown linked to the Community Outcomes.

WDC consent for the UN SDGs

Claims have been made that WDC has adopted the UN SDGs without the consent of the people of Waimakariri. WDC has publicly consulted on each of the documents in which the UN SDGs appear and/or made these available on the Council website. Each Long-Term Plan and Annual Plan are consulted on, and opportunities are provided for submissions to be made. For those that chose to make a submission, there is the option to present it to Council at a hearing.

Find out more at waimakariri.govt.nz, or contact Customer Services on 0800 965 468.

WDC part of an agenda

Claims have been made that WDC is part of a wider agenda having included the UN SDGs in our documentation. This claim is categorically refuted. As stated previously, WDC has included the UN SDGs purely based on supporting the high-level principles they point to. There is no wider agenda at play and WDC is not under the authority of or being overseen by any other organisation either nationally or internationally, in connection with the UN SDGs.

World Economic Forum

Claims have been made that WDC is under the control, instruction or in some way connected to the World Economic Forum. Again, this claim is refuted. WDC is unaware of any connection or correspondence either from or to the World Economic Forum influencing its operations.

Local Governments for Sustainability (ICLEI)

Claims have been made the WDC is a member of ICLEI. WDC can find no record of either the Council as an organisation or individual staff being a member of this organisation. The only references to ICLEI in our records are an invitation by Local Government New Zealand in July 2005 to participate in an ICLEI survey (the invitation does not appear to have been acted on) and a letter by a former staff member in 1999 advising a change of address to ICLEI Canada in connection to a newsletter.

WDC as a corporation

Claims have been made that WDC is corporation registered in the United States of America. The evidence provided for this claim is that WDC owns shares in New Zealand Local Government Funding Agency (LGFA) and that WDC appears on a Dun & Bradstreet registry of companies.

Council currently owns 200,000 shares in LGFA, which was established under the Local Government Borrowing Act 2011. Being a shareholder allows Council to access debt funding at lower interest rates than it would likely pay if it were to borrow money from financial markets directly.

WDC is one of many Council shareholders across New Zealand, along with the Government. Only New Zealand Councils and Council Controlled Organisations can access funding through LGFA. The registration number for LGFA on the Companies Register is 3677052 and the New Zealand Business Number is 9429030861961. LGFA will be registered to offer debt securities in many countries around the world, including USA.

WDC is shown on the register of companies operated by Dun & Bradstreet, a global company headquartered in USA. The evidence provided was a registration number 59-202-5647. Dun & Bradstreet provide their clients data and analysis across a range of topics. One of the areas of information is a registry of companies, which appears to include organisations that are not registered as companies such as councils. The registration number mentioned is generated by Dun & Bradstreet for their registry and is not related to any formal registration by WDC.

WDC is governed by the Local Government Act 2002 and is not a corporation, either in New Zealand or anywhere else in the world.

The Waimakariri District Council is assessed by the Standard and Poors and attained an AA credit rating. This is a very high credit rating and only just below the sovereign rating of AAA. The WDC also has limits imposed on debt that is raised by policy and LGFA to ensure debt is managed to appropriate levels.

The Long-Term Plan forecasts are managed so that the Council is able to remain in a financially strong position and debt is being well managed.

In the recently released Taxpayers Union Report which compares rates of all Councils around New Zealand, Waimakariri comes in around the 14th highest for residential and around the 26th lowest for non-residential rates.

WDC and Climate Change

We are aware there are people in our community that deny climate change exists and claim the evidential science associated with it is incorrect. WDC is often mandated or guided by Government around policies it must follow. This is true of our work responding to climate change.

As one of 195 nations signatory to the Paris Agreement, New Zealand is legally committed to pursue efforts to limit the global average temperature increase to 1.5 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels. This position is informed by scientific assessments undertaken by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) which have been requested by the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) on behalf of the participating nations.

The work of the New Zealand Government is therefore underpinned by the scientific advice provided by the IPCC as well as additional climate change modelling

specific to New Zealand undertaken by the National Institute of Water and Atmospheric Research (NIWA) and published in their report 'Climate Change Projections for New Zealand'. The Ministry for the Environment (MFE) also provides advice to government and local government on climate change science, for example, in their 2022 report 'Aotearoa New Zealand climate change projections guidance'.

The science WDC has used to inform its climate change work is consistent with that used to inform the work of the New Zealand Government, including the preparation of national strategies such as the National Adaptation Strategy and Emissions Reduction Plan that we are required to take into consideration.

In 2020 Environment Canterbury engaged NIWA to prepare climate change projections for the Canterbury Region and in 2022 WDC engaged NIWA to prepare a similar report for the District to ensure geographical variations were taken into account.

WDC acknowledges there are uncertainties and limitations in projecting future climate scenarios but is required by the Local Government Act to promote the social, economic, environmental and cultural wellbeing of communities in the present and for the future. To do this, the WDC must take a precautionary approach to climate change, particularly considering recent litigation where the High Court of New Zealand accepted the evidence that scientific consensus demonstrates dangerous anthropogenic warming is likely to be unavoidable unless substantial mitigation steps are undertaken immediately.

Councils across New Zealand are generally not resourced to undertake in-depth scientific research, which is why external organisations are often engaged. Where members of our community dispute the science used by WDC, we suggest the matter is raised directly with the organisation that provides the research.

Rates proclamation by the 'Supreme Common Law Court'

WDC has become aware of emails and social media messages suggesting Councils across New Zealand have been served proclamation documentation from 'Supreme Common Law Court' that indicates residents do not need to pay their rates. This information is entirely incorrect and Local Government New Zealand are urging those involved in sending this information to cease doing so as it is misleading. WDC urges residents to ignore this information, as failure to pay rates instalments on time will result in penalties being incurred.

Appendix 1

The high-level principles Council supports from the UN-SDGs are:

No Poverty – End poverty in all its forms everywhere.

Zero Hunger – End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture.

Good Health and Well-being – Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages.

Quality Education – Ensure inclusive and equitable education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all.

Gender Equality – Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls.

Clean Water and Sanitation – Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all.

Affordable and Clean Energy – Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all.

Decent Work and Economic Growth – Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all.

Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure – Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialisation and foster innovation.

Reduced Inequality – Reduce inequality within and among countries.

Sustainable Cities and Communities – Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable.

Responsible Consumption and Production – Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns.

Climate Action – Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts.

Life Below Water – Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts.

Life on Land – Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss.

Peace and Justice Strong Institutions – Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels.

Partnerships to achieve the Goal – Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development.