

MELBOURNE SAYS YES

Melbourne has set itself an ambitious but inspiring target of zero net emissions by 2020. For this goal to be realised, businesses, residents and organisations need to think creatively and work together.



THE PROBLEM

Climate change poses considerable challenges for cities, with more days of extreme heat, higher intensity rainfall, extreme storms, reduced levels of overall rainfall, rising sea-levels and risks of future droughts.

CLIMATE CHANGE IS A CHANGE IN THE PATTERN OF WEATHER, AND RELATED CHANGES IN OCEANS, LAND SURFACES AND ICE SHEETS, OCCURRING OVER TIME SCALES OF DECADES OR LONGER. MOST SCIENTISTS NOW ACKNOWLEDGE THAT CLIMATE CHANGE IS BEING CAUSED BY HUMAN ACTIVITIES THAT PRODUCE GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSIONS. THESE EMISSIONS ARE RESPONSIBLE FOR HELPING TO HEAT OUR ATMOSPHERE, WHICH IN TURN IS ALTERING THE PATTERNS OF CLIMATE.

Cities that plan and act early will better withstand the impacts of climate change and maintain a platform for future health and prosperity. To safeguard their famously liveable city, Melbourne City Council is taking action.

The City of Melbourne Council is responsible for close to 40km² in the centre of the greater Melbourne area. Although the Council doesn't have complete control over its emissions (emissions come from all kinds of public and private sector sources) they are determined to lead the way in tackling climate change, and to prove that local governments can make a difference.

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THE SOLUTION

Back in 2003, the Council set itself an ambitious but inspiring target: zero net emissions by 2020.

NET ZERO EMISSIONS MEANS THAT THE AMOUNT OF EMISSIONS WE PUT INTO THE ATMOSPHERE IS NO GREATER THAN THE AMOUNT WE CAN REMOVE FROM THE ATMOSPHERE THROUGH THINGS LIKE PLANTING AND PROTECTING FORESTS, AND THROUGH TECHNOLOGIES LIKE CARBON CAPTURE AND STORAGE. THE AMOUNT WE MAKE AND THE AMOUNT WE REMOVE SHOULD BE THE SAME.

For this goal to be realised, businesses, residents and organisations need to think creatively and work together. As such, the Council has implemented a range of collaborative programs to drive change. Through leading by example, and providing the right education and support to people and businesses, the Council is reducing its overall reliance on fossil fuels, reassessing the way it purchases energy, diverting waste from landfill, increasing its resource recovery, and creating more green urban spaces for everyone to enjoy. In the short-to-medium term, the Council is also offsetting any residual emissions by purchasing accredited carbon offsets.

As a result, the City of Melbourne achieved formal certification for the carbon neutrality of its operations in 2012 and has maintained this certification every year since.

MORE GOOD NEWS

The Council has implemented several programs to help them reach their goal. These include:

1200 Buildings

Commercial buildings and industry have the biggest impacts on the city's emissions, with electricity and gas use in these sectors alone contributing more than 70% of municipal emissions. Through *1200 Buildings*, City of Melbourne is encouraging the retrofit of 1200 commercial buildings, and providing business owners with tools to help them reduce carbon emissions. These tools include a website, seminars to improve knowledge around retrofitting, a panel of lighting providers to facilitate access to discounted upgrades, and links to state and federal grants.



RETROFITTING REFERS TO THE ADDITION OF NEW TECHNOLOGY OR FEATURES TO OLDER SYSTEMS, INCLUDING OLDER BUILDINGS.

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City Switch

Melbourne participates in the CitySwitch Green Office program, a nationwide initiative that supports office-based businesses in measuring, managing, and reducing their energy use and improving their sustainability. CitySwitch provides free advisory services along with web resources, discount offers, industry case studies, research and thought leadership and annual recognition awards. More than 150 office-based businesses in Melbourne have joined the program.

Smart Blocks

Approximately 80% of City of Melbourne's residents live in apartments, and studies have found that apartments in mid-rise and high rise buildings consume 25% more energy than detached dwellings due largely to the energy use of shared services and common property. The program provides resources and education tools to help apartment owners and managers improve energy outcomes in common areas, and reduce energy costs.

High Rise Recycling

The High Rise Recycling program works with the managers and committees of 101 apartment buildings to improve the waste and recycling systems available to residents. It has increased recycling by an estimated 35 kilograms per apartment and the collection of unwanted items for charity has been implemented in 76 buildings. As a result, an estimated 180 tonnes per year of unwanted household goods have been diverted from landfill.

Open Space Strategy

Open urban spaces are essential for city living. The Council directly manages 480 hectares of parkland and, through its Open Space Strategy, aims to increase this area by 7.6%; providing 20 square meters of open space per person. In recent decades, 46 hectares of asphalt from central city streets and parking lots has been converted into parkland and pedestrian paths and another 6.5 hectares is earmarked for conversion.



Urban Forest Strategy

Some 27% of Melbourne's tree population (70,000 council owned trees) is under threat in the next decade, and 44% in the next 20 years. City of Melbourne has worked closely with the community to develop an Urban Forest Strategy, which aims to double the canopy cover to 40% by 2040 to help cool the city by five degrees Celsius. To boost the urban forest's resilience to climate change, the strategy aims to increase tree diversity, with no more than 5% of any one species, 10% of any one genus, and 20% of any one family present in the city.

Image source: <https://www.broadsheet.com.au/melbourne/entertainment/article/trees-return-your-emails>

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Melbourne Renewable Energy

In an Australian first, the City of Melbourne has teamed up with a group of local governments, cultural and educational institutions and private companies to explore group purchasing of renewable energy. In April 2016, they launched a competitive tender to purchase large volumes of renewable energy through a group purchasing model. The group wants to purchase 110 GWh worth of energy from new large scale renewable energy facilities. This amount of renewable energy will save up to 138,600 tonnes of CO₂ each year, which is the equivalent of planting more than 160,000 new trees and is enough energy to power 28,475 Melbourne households.

Waste Management

If current trends continue, the municipality of Melbourne is expected to send 208,000 tonnes of waste to landfill by 2020; 84,000 tonnes more than the city produces today. The City of Melbourne's action plan for waste management, the Waste and Resource Recovery Plan 2015–18, aims to increase resource recovery, reduce waste to landfill and improve local amenity. Currently, the city's Degrales Street Recycling Facility uses traditional recycling and high tech machinery such as a food waste dehydrator and a cardboard baler to reduce landfill waste and to turn organic food waste into a soil conditioner that is used on city parks and gardens. Also, a Green Money recycling rewards project issues rewards to participating households based on the quantity of materials recovered.



Image source: <https://greenmagazine.com.au/degraes-street-recycling/>

Love your Laneway

Melbourne's laneways are loved by Melburnians and visitors for their unique characteristics. The Love Your Laneway program seeks to improve the amenity and presentation of Melbourne's celebrated laneways through improved waste management and stormwater issues / amenity and access in laneways / infrastructure, such as public lighting and road surfaces / council services, such as street sweeping and civil maintenance / artistic and cultural uses. The Green Your Laneway program helps transform the city's laneways into leafy, green and useable spaces for everyone to enjoy.

THINK NOTHING CAN BE DONE ABOUT CLIMATE CHANGE? THINK AGAIN.

GENERATION YES.