

Response of the Ryde-Gladesville Climate Change Action Group to
Ryde Council's Draft Greenhouse Gas Reduction Action Plan 2007-2010

This response is made by the Ryde-Gladesville Climate Change Action Group. We are a recently formed resident group who have come together with the following aims:

- ✿To make government leaders aware of the strong desire in the community for immediate decisive action by government to ensure a sufficient reduction in greenhouse gases to stabilise climate changes;
- ✿To inform members of the community about actions they can take to reduce climate change.
- ✿To undertake and foster local projects and action on this matter

Who we are:

A politically unaffiliated group of concerned residents, who wish to see immediate and decisive action on the most important issue of our time.

Although we have only been formed for about one month, we have over 40 supporters in the Ryde/ Gladesville area, predominantly residents in the Ryde LGA. In that time we have met with both state local members, issued our first newsletter and expect to have our website launched within the next 2 weeks.

Ryde Council is to be commended for its participation in the Cities for Climate Protection Program and its early action to reduce emissions.

The development of this plan is an important step forward in concrete action to reduce emissions. The background information provided in the plan is also useful and well documented.

In light of the emerging and most recent science on the likely scenarios to be expected as the rate of climate change accelerates, it is unfortunate that the targets set by council are so modest. This is a problem that the evidence suggests will be exacerbated by delays in taking action. Further, savings will be made from implementing emissions targets, both to council and also to the community that will offset some of the expenditure required to reduce emissions.

The lack of funding allocated to this plan to install proven energy savings technologies is insufficient given the seriousness of this issue and the certainty that it will affect the health, welfare and economic status of all residents in this area.

This plan has the capacity to be visionary, highly creative and have a marked impact in terms of both real emissions reductions as well as educative impact on the local community. This opportunity should not be lost.

The following specific recommendations are also made in response to the Plan:

1. Review Emissions Reduction Goals (ERGs)

It is understood that these goals were set in 2005. At that time such goals probably seemed sufficient. We believe that the recent evidence of increased unpredictable weather patterns and ice cap melts suggest that the rate of climate change is accelerating. This requires higher targets to be set in order to control the changes we are experiencing. The ERGs set are projected from base years which are only very recent (2001 for community levels and 2003/04 for corporate levels) which means they are significantly higher than the 1990 levels that most other plans (including the Kyoto protocol) use as base years.

The Ryde-Gladesville Climate Change Action Group position is that emissions need to be cut by 30% by 2020 and 80% by 2050 when measured against 1990 levels. Using the plan's own forecast of growth, this means that the 2003/4 levels would have been more than 5% higher than the 1990 levels.

The net effect of a 20% corporate reduction in five years (2012) will be only approximately 15% reduction compared to 1990 levels. This falls well short of the early gains required to make a difference.

RECOMMENDATION 1

Both targets be increased to at least 30%.

2. Increase purchase of Greenpower

The target of 10% purchase of green power is too low to make sufficient difference. If the Council accelerates energy reduction measures, then this will reduce energy use and enable more green power to be purchased.

RECOMMENDATION 2

Council move to immediate purchase of 25% green power to be purchased, increasing to 50% in the life of the plan.

3. Instal movement sensitive lighting in Council buildings

The improved design of Council buildings and public spaces to include stipulated environmental specifications is welcomed.

However one of the most effective measures to reduce electricity consumption in commercial buildings is the installation of movement sensitive lighting. This is standard now in all NSW government buildings and is achievable in an organisation the size of Ryde Council. Extensive energy is consumed to light playing fields at night which is a valuable activity, however this lighting is often left on after it is required. A priority should be the exploration of measures to ensure that such lighting is only switched on when in use.

The proposed measure in the plan at C 27 is to “initiate a campaign to turn off equipment including lights at the end of each work day”. This falls well short of what is both possible and required.

RECOMMENDATION 3

The plan be amended to include progressive introduction of movement activated lighting in all Council buildings and research of possibilities for this in outdoor areas.

4. Allocate funding for installation of alternative energy generation

Extensive opportunities exist for council to generate power through the use of solar panels on the many buildings it operates. Energy production from waste stations through methane capture is now a proven technology within Australia. The Ryde Aquatic Centre is nominated in the plan as a high user of energy. The generation of solar hot water using the roof space of this building is an achievable measure, which would result in extensive energy savings and emissions reductions.

The plan fails to allocate any funding to such measures, proposing only to apply for relevant government grants. This is the most significant shortcoming of the plan. Such expenditure represents an investment as permanent savings to the budget will accrue, particularly in an environment where

RECOMMENDATION 4

Council allocates at least \$2m over the next five years to install alternate energy generating capacity.

5. Re-vegetation

Council’s proposal to increase street planting is welcomed. This provides not only a carbon sink, but also improves the micro-climate and provides shade to pedestrians which encourages walking. This strategy requires funding.

RECOMMENDATION 5

Council allocates sufficient funding to enable the vegetation cover in the LGA to increase by 3% in the life of the plan through street and park plantings.

6. Targetting Industrial Sector

In light of the data contained in the Plan on the high emissions productions by industry in the LGA, greater focus should be brought to bear on working with these businesses to reduce emissions. Energy audits should be targeted at the largest of these organisations rather than at local residents. Incentives and or penalties should be developed to prompt greater responsibility by industry. The purchase and disposal by industry of more sustainable plant should be included in this strategy, through for example metal and plastics recycling collection services.

RECOMMENDATION 6

Council develops an industry energy reduction plan to be supported by incentives such as rate reductions, achievement awards, tailoring of waste collection to promote reduced consumption and increased recycling.

7. Expansion of Bicycle routes

Although the Council has been active in the development of bicycle routes this remains at a level of activity too low to encourage residents to take up this form of transport. The establishment of bicycle lanes along all the major transport corridors including Victoria Rd, Pittwater Rd, Epping Rd, Lane Cove road is necessary for this to become a useful initiative for all residents.

In order to create bicycle transport as a viable option for school children Council is also called on to develop a plan in partnership with local primary schools to establish over time networked bicycle routes to enable children to bicycle to school. The creation of such networks would for the most part be low cost, involving predominantly signage, path marking and some traffic calming. Such a move would be warmly welcomed by parents as it would also encourage physical activity by children and potentially impact on obesity levels.

RECOMMENDATION 7

Council expands the resources allocated to bicycle transport to enable the installation of lanes on Victoria, Pittwater, Epping and Lane Cove and Quarry Rds and a network of routes for each primary school to a radius of 4km.

These measures represent only a fraction of what could be done by a responsible city council. No mention is made here for example of measures which could be taken in respect of housing, zoning, public transport and water recycling. Our recommendations are achievable and realistic and on a scale more appropriate to the size of the problem.

Our activities to date and national polls confirm that the residents of Ryde-Gladesville are ready for decisive and sweeping action on this issue. It would be unfortunate for Ryde City Council to introduce a plan which represented "least effort possible" instead of showing leadership on this pressing issue.

The Ryde-Gladesville Climate Change Action Group would welcome the opportunity to discuss these points and the Plan with Council and staff.

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31 March 2007