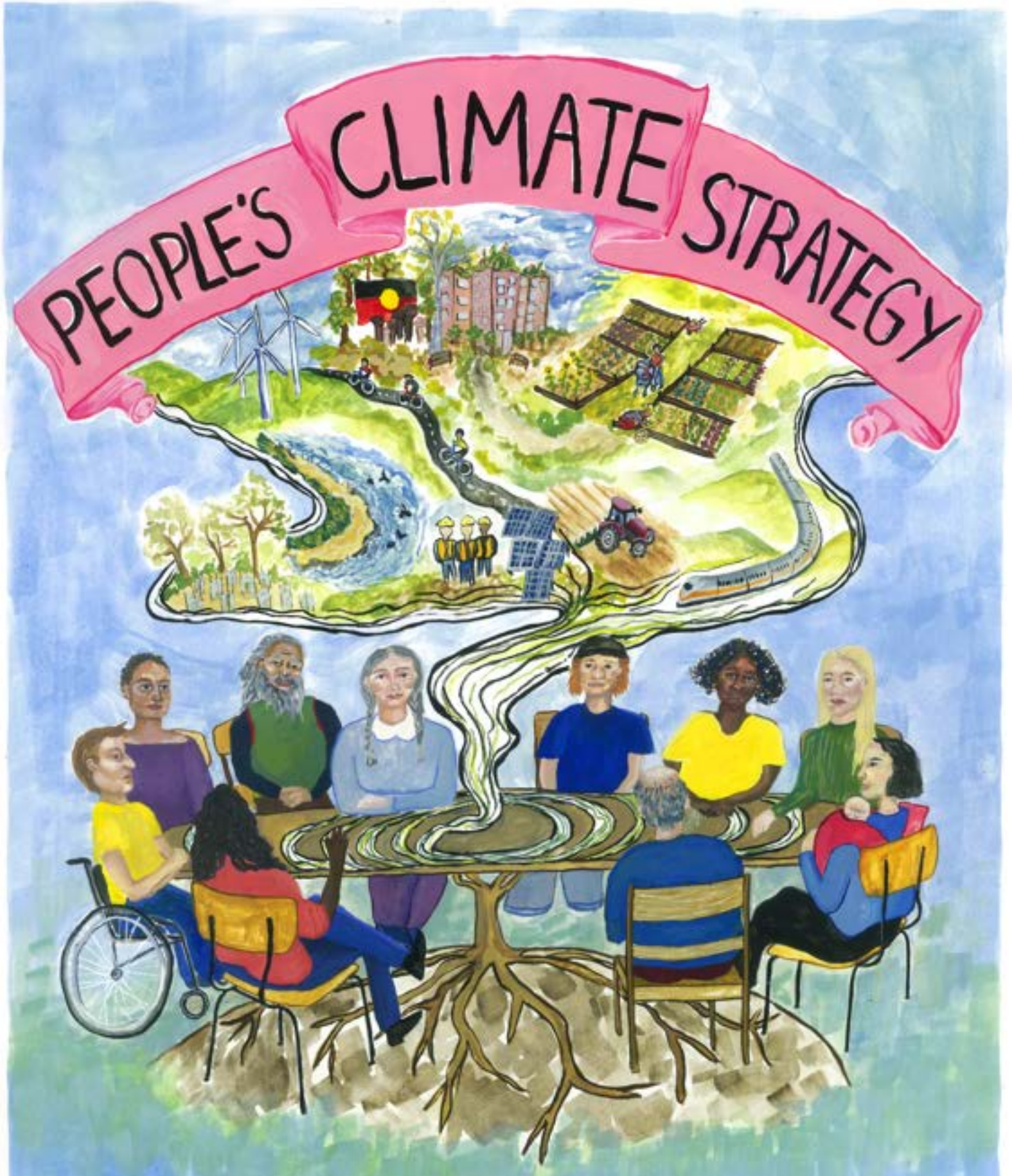

A People's Climate Strategy for Victoria

ACT ON CLIMATE
FRIENDS OF THE EARTH

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Acknowledgement of Country

Act on Climate and Friends of the Earth would like to acknowledge the traditional owners of the land, the Wurundjeri people of the Kulin Nations, on which this report has been written and published. We would like to pay our respects to their elders, past and present, and acknowledge that sovereignty of the land was never ceded. Our work for climate justice must centre First Nations justice.

Contents

Project Overview

Friends of the Earth Melbourne has been building the case for science-based Emissions Reduction Targets in Victoria since 2017 through the work of the Act on Climate Vic collective. With the federal government abandoning its responsibilities to protect communities from climate change impacts and failing to rapidly reduce emissions, our goal has been to demonstrate how much can be achieved at the state level by making Victoria the national leader on climate action.

The Victorian Government's Climate Change Strategy

The Climate Change Act 2017 (Vic) required the Andrews government to prepare the state's first Climate Change Strategy by 31 October 2020. This vital document will outline how each economic sector and region in Victoria can cut emissions over the next 10 years, and how Victoria will deal with the climate impacts that are already locked in.

However, in early 2020, Friends of the Earth foresaw that the disruptive nature of the COVID pandemic would delay completion of the government's strategy. With the Andrews government leading the pandemic response, FoE saw a need for civil society groups to step up with a clear vision for how the state can tackle the climate crisis by creating jobs, rapidly reining in emissions, and advancing social justice in communities.

That's why in June 2020, Friends of the Earth's Act on Climate collective launched this project to create a **People's Climate Strategy for Victoria**.

Project Premise: Led by Communities

The project is based on gathering local knowledge from communities about the climate impacts people are worried about where they live across the state, and the climate solutions they want to see funded and rolled out by the state government. We work with the guiding idea that no one knows a community better than the people in it, and that the climate crisis affects each community in different ways. Our aim has been to involve as many diverse Victorian communities as possible - from the union movement, to the disability community, to First Nations people.

Anna Langford and Leigh Ewbank, Friends of the Earth's Act on Climate Collective

The COVID pandemic and the lockdowns forced us to majorly change the way we work at a grassroots level with communities. We couldn't hit the road and connect with community members in town halls, across their kitchen tables, or on the streets, so we have carried out the People's Climate Strategy project entirely online. And in these unusual and difficult circumstances, the result has been inspiring: a high level of citizen engagement by a very passionate cross-section of people in Victoria.

Through surveys, forums, roundtables, social media actions and a dot-democracy voting action, we have shaped the Strategy to report on and directly deal with the climate impacts that people are observing across Victoria's regions. Our Strategy is based on community members' ideas for adaptation to and mitigation of climate change in ways that will create jobs and advance social justice for all.

Key Findings and Recommendations

General Findings - Community Participation

The number of people (over 1,000) who were part of shaping the Strategy in such unusual circumstances, and their deeply thought out responses, show a **real and widespread eagerness for community members to participate in the Victorian government's Climate Change Strategy.**

The differences between the climate impacts that participants are observing, and the impacts they are concerned about for the future, indicate a **need for government strategies that mitigate and adapt to climate change by engaging with the concerns of each community.**

The survey results highlight the need for **regional adaptation to climate change**, due to variable climate change impacts that are being seen - and are worrying - respondents across different regions.

The complexity of responses and a widespread concern for vulnerable populations demonstrates a **thorough community understanding of the interlocking nature of social justice and action on climate change.**

All survey respondents identified increased bushfire and grassfire risk as the top priority to prepare for over the next 5 years. This is followed by extreme weather events and heatwaves presenting as climate impacts requiring priority adaptation strategies over the next 5 years.

Respondents have an even stratification of length of time lived in their regions, with 55.9% of respondents living in their region for more than 20 years, and 72.9% of respondents living in their region for more than 10 years. Therefore the results can be viewed as an indicative representation of climate change impacts observed in the regions over decades of time.

A high proportion of responses centering concern for bushfire and grassfire risk may be a reflection of the 2019-2020 Black Summer bushfires across Victoria and New South Wales.

Community Statement of Policy Priorities

The Climate Change Act 2017 (Vic) requires the Victorian government to include a statement of policy priorities in its Climate Change Strategy. For our final participatory action to shape the People's Climate Strategy, we mirrored this requirement by holding an online dot-democracy voting action to develop a list of policy priorities.

The statement of policy priorities below presents the climate solutions that received the highest number of votes in the dot-democracy - one for each economic sector in a mitigation category, and one for each climate impact that participants were asked about in an adaptation category.

All of the policy ideas that participants were asked to vote on were drawn from the qualitative data from the Climate Solutions survey.

It is important to note that the five ideas people were asked to vote on in terms of their local priority in each category were already the most frequently-suggested ideas from the hundreds of responses to the Climate Solutions survey. Many community members who participated in the dot-democracy contacted us to assert that they had found it very difficult to choose just one, and that they hoped all five options in each category would be profiled in the People's Climate Strategy (not just the one that received the most votes). We have compiled the full list of climate solutions along with an in-depth explanation of the action in the **Climate Change Solutions: Dot-Democracy Results** section of the strategy.

Dot-Democracy Policy Priorities: Cutting Emissions

> "The weather is more extreme – more heatwaves, and fire and storm events putting pressure on ecosystems and wildlife. It is distressing to see a decline in wildlife numbers across a broad variety of species... myself and many other, friends, family and community members feel anxiety, grief and depression from the loss of nature and are concerned that state and federal governments are too focused on the economy and are not doing enough to protect and restore forests and wildlife from past and potential future climate change events."
>
> ***Respondent, Loddon Mallee***

Agriculture (e.g. methane from animals, fertiliser): Education, funding and incentives for farmers to move towards regenerative agriculture and other alternative farming practices (alternative to monoculture, high chemical use farming) - **62.8% of Votes**

Direct Combustion (burning fuels for industry or household use, e.g. wood-fired stoves): Transition households and industry to renewable electricity - e.g. subsidise replacement of wood-fired stoves - **33% of Votes**

Electricity Generation (electricity from coal and gas-fired power plants): Increase funding and support for decentralised renewable power generation in communities -**48.6% of Votes**

Land Use, Land Use Change and Forestry (e.g. logging native forests): Immediate ban on native forest logging with the transition plan for workers brought forward; logging from timber plantations only - **60.8% of Votes**

Transport (petrol and diesel): Policy and financial incentives for transition to electric vehicle use, starting with public buses and government fleet vehicles - **47.9% of Votes**

Fugitive Emissions (e.g. leaky gas pipes, methane from landfill): Phase out fossil fuel industries, with no new gas extraction and a supported transition away from gas usage in homes and businesses - **54.9% of Votes**

Dot-Democracy Policy Priorities: Adaptation to Climate Impacts

Increased Heatwaves: Government-regulated building standards for all new buildings (regarding efficiency, insulation, passive cooling etc.) - **45.1% of Votes**

Extreme Weather: Better stormwater management through capture, filtration and permeable surfaces e.g. with wetlands, underground storage - **41.7% of Votes**

Sea Level Rise: Coastal erosion prevention measures through planting of native vegetation and revegetation - **43.8% of Votes**

Increased Bushfire and Grassfire Risk: Burning off, back burning, cool burns and other forms of proactive land management guided by and implemented by Indigenous knowledges - **53.9% of Votes**

Changed Rainfall Patterns: Protecting existing ecosystems, and planting more trees, to encourage rainfall in dry areas - **58% of Votes**

Drought: Stopping land clearing, and planting more trees, to encourage rainfall in drought-stricken areas - **43.6% of Votes**

Crop Failure: Government funding and incentives for farmers to transition to regenerative agriculture practices - **51.3% of Votes**

Neil Morris: Climate Justice means First Nations Justice

The land beneath our feet, the air we breathe, the water we drink, the sounds, the sights, the places of this sacred vast part of country are Indigenous places. They are Indigenous places which have been part of something larger. Much larger. A big part of these places, this land, the water, the air, the sights, the sounds, is the tone of the key influences to its health. One of the most key parts of its health since time immemorial has been its custodians in deep, reverential, mutually beneficial exchange. I am speaking about the Original Custodians of so-called Victoria. The 38+ distinct Indigenous peoples of this land, living a way of life before the Climate Crisis was at all considered in western thinking.

As we know too well, colonisation has done so much to that relationship between people and the land, single-handedly dismantling and desecrating it. Colonisation continues to do these things. There have been efforts to move towards some form of healing and repair of damage done. However much damage done has already been to the most devastating effect.

We have lost places with the dislodging of Original Custodians' ongoing activity. And devastatingly, we have lost what is sacred to First Nations people and to First Peoples' way of life. We have lost Totemic species from the landscape. Many of which were central to ways of living. For my own people, the Yorta Yorta, we have entirely lost some plants from country that

had a key role in our system of living. We have lost totems that provided an axis to our overall function. And we have had to pick up pieces somehow, someway, in spite of this.

Indigenous people see Ecocide and Colonisation as not merely intertwined and as precursors to subsequent outcomes such as Climate Change and Climate Crisis. Rather, Climate Change and other such upheavals are inevitable when we do not honour the systems that were developed for us to be intertwined into.

In order to tackle Climate issues affecting First Peoples' communities of so-called Victoria, we need strong actions as a matter of urgency to reinsert Indigenous people into the landscape, fulfilling various aspects of what it means to be a Custodian continuing over a thousand generations' work. The necessity of this work is vital.

The majority of Indigenous communities are currently dislodged from the landscape. The opportunities under current constructs in the State to address this are not adequate at all. The fact that Indigenous communities still live more in cities and large, built up urban areas is a clear symptom of colonial and assimilative processes still at play. The opportunities for Indigenous people to reclaim their rightful position in the landscape are not being honoured in a meaningful enough manner. We see this play out where Indigenous people are still advocating for country to be protected from Desecration such as in the instance of the Djab Wurrung trees in recent years.

When you consider these things, the outcomes of severe destruction to the land continuing are not a surprise along with subsequently greater climate impacts - which are tragically not a surprise either. Indigenous people must be reinstated to their rightful position within country. Every single aspect of activity that First Nations people can be reinstated into that relates to care

for country will have a powerful, positive impact on Climate Change Mitigation. It can, and must, provide a central axis to the broader Climate Change Mitigation shift required for all living beings, subsections of society, and communities across so-called Victoria.

There is no more time to wait to strike a particular balance of factors to make it the right time. The right time was pre colonisation, and the right time is post colonisation in every moment. Every single moment, country is becoming more and more Unwell from severe neglect and separation from its rightful care, love and consideration.

And so these are echoes that are repeatedly being expressed by our people, as our Elders and generations before us have done also. Calls for People to be back in the landscape carrying out the desperately needed state of balance that will be provided through large scale reimplementation of Indigenous participation in the state of the health of country.

We also hear calls for those in power to rapidly transfer leadership, resourcing and infrastructure into Indigenous hands, that Non Indigenous land managers and Authorities have monopolised and continue to in the form of entities such as State mandated agencies. This impacts on key activities that must be reinserted in large scales such as traditional watering regimes, traditional burning practices, large scale landscape restoration, the integration of consideration of living Indigenous culture into broader societal planning and thinking, and access to land rights to practice cultural rights and ceremonies. These things are all vital, and these key matters will inevitably have a vast impact to bring society to a state of much lower Climate related risks.

Our people are calling for Land Justice and First Nations Justice. We need these things, and it is with these things, that we shall be on a path to Climate Justice: the best possible opportunity for all future generations living on the Unceded Indigenous lands of so-called Victoria.

Neil Morris
Yorta Yorta / Dja Dja Wurrung

Research Methodology

Mirroring the Climate Change Act 2017 (Vic)

The People's Climate Strategy mirrors the focus components of the Victorian government's Climate Change Strategy which the Climate Change Act 2017 (Vic) outlines in sections 29-33. These components are a statement of policy priorities, an adaptation section, and a mitigation section.

General Methodology

The People's Climate Strategy for Victoria has been formed from two surveys, the dot-democracy voting action, a social media action, and a series of roundtable discussions and online forums with community members and key stakeholders.

The design of the two surveys, the Climate Impacts survey and Climate Solutions survey, was based on a series of similar community surveys that FoE conducted between 2018 and 2020. The survey data was collected from June to November of 2020, and therefore provides a current representation of community members' concerns about climate change.

Responses to the surveys were collected online through the platform SurveyMonkey. Due to the nature of the COVID lockdowns which prevented face-to-face connection with communities, the surveys were promoted through social media, emails to FoE supporters, promotion by other community organisations that FoE reached out to, and peer-to-peer promotion.

The Statement of Priorities presents results from the final community input action held from December 2020-February 2021, with responses gathered through the platform Typeform. Community members were asked to vote for their top-priority climate solutions in categories for each economic sector (mitigation) and different climate impacts (adaptation). The solutions offered for voting on were drawn from qualitative data in the Climate Solutions survey: they were the most frequently suggested ideas contributed by community members.

By applying filters in SurveyMonkey and sorting qualitative responses by theme, the researchers have analysed the Climate Impacts and Climate Solutions surveys to produce these findings and shape the Strategy.

Results have been analysed and ranked according to the quantity of responses, rather than weighted averages, in order to give a more accurate representation of the voices of respondents within the survey. This is why in relation to questions of 'concern', in which weighted averages are usually used, the authors have chosen to show the results in regards to "strongly concerned" separate from a combined total of "strongly concerned" and "concerned".

Climate Impacts Survey

714 responses were collected over June, July & August of 2020.

Participants identified their locations from 6 regions as specified in the Department of Environment, Land, Water & Planning adaptation and mitigation documents: Barwon South West, Grampians, Loddon Mallee, Gippsland, Hume and Greater Melbourne. Participants

were also asked how long they had lived in their region. The stratification of respondents from each region was in line with the population density of those regions. There was also an even stratification of respondents regarding the length of time they had lived in their region.

Participants were then asked a series of quantitative questions with several options. Questions asked respondents about the climate change impacts they had observed in their region, and in Victoria overall, as well as what impacts in their region and Victoria concern them the most. Many participants also chose to provide a qualitative response to what impacts in Victoria concern them the most, and what they thought were the impacts that needed addressing in their region. Participants were asked to rank impacts from 'most observed' to 'least observed', and select a level of concern from 'strongly concerned' through to 'not at all concerned'. Participants were also asked who in their communities would be most exposed to these impacts, as well as what they thought were the greatest sources of greenhouse gas emissions in their region.

Climate Solutions Survey

311 responses were collected over September, October and November of 2020.

As with the Climate Impacts Survey, participants were asked to identify their regional location and how long they had lived in this region. Again, there was an even stratification of regional responses and length of time participants had lived in their region.

Participants were asked a series of quantitative and qualitative response questions regarding their regions over the next 5 years: the most important climate impacts to prepare for, their top ideas to respond to this impact, and then the most important source of greenhouse gas emissions to address in their regions, with their top ideas to cut emissions in this sector. These same questions were also asked in relation to Victoria as a whole.

Victorian Emissions

(latest 2018 report)

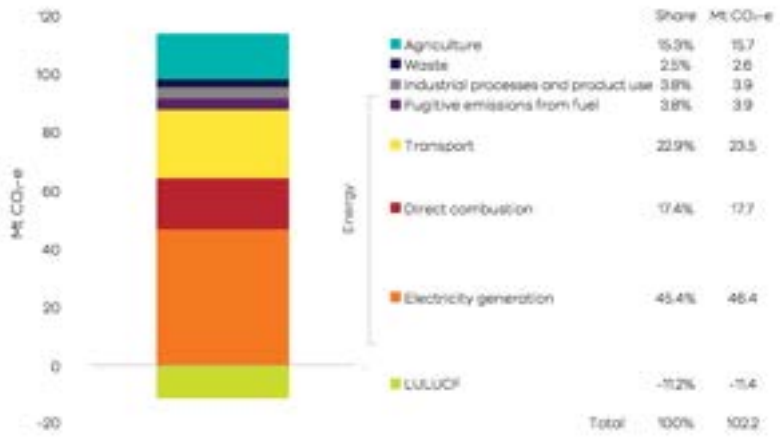


Figure 1: Victorian emissions by sector and energy sub-sector, 2018[1]

(Source: Victorian Greenhouse Gas Emissions Report 2018, State of Victoria, 2020)

Breakdown: sources of emissions in Victoria by economic sector, highest to lowest:

1. Electricity generation (45.4%)
2. Transport (22.9%)
3. Direct combustion (17.4%)
4. Agriculture (15.3%)
5. Fugitive emissions (3.8%)
6. Industrial processes and product use (3.8%)
7. Waste (2.5%)
8. Land use, land use change and forestry (-11.2%) - the net result for this was negative, due to ecosystems such as native forests removing carbon from the atmosphere.

Comparison with survey results - What respondents identified as the greatest source of GHG emissions in Victoria:

1. Electricity generation
2. Transport
3. Direct combustion
4. Agriculture
5. Land use, land use change and forestry
6. Fugitive emissions

What respondents identified as the most important source of GHG emissions to address in Victoria over the next 5 years:

1. Electricity generation
2. Transport
3. Agriculture
4. Land use, land use change and forestry
5. Direct combustion
6. Fugitive emissions

Analysis

- The responses indicate an alignment between respondents' knowledge about sources of GHG emissions, and the emissions Victoria produces.
- The differentiation between respondents identifying agriculture as the fourth largest emission sector, but prioritisation for agricultural emission reductions in the top three sources of GHG emissions to address over the next 5 years, shows a community prioritisation of agricultural emissions reduction strategies. This may be a result of the current GHG emissions strategies that are aiming to address electricity generation, transport and direct combustion, but a lack of prioritisation for land use emissions reductions across Victorian climate change mitigation policies.

*Note: our surveys did not include the Waste and Industrial Processes sectors, so respondents were not asked to rank these

Victorian Emissions: Respondents' Perceptions of Emissions in Regions

In our surveys, we also asked respondents what they believed different economic sectors' GHG contributions are in their region, from highest to lowest. These results are displayed below. However, the Victorian government does not currently report this data in its annual GHG emissions reports, so we are unable to compare these results with the true data. As a recommendation to the Victorian government, we believe it is important for this regional data to be determined and shared with the public each year. It would give communities a better understanding of the industries that locally contribute the most emissions where they live, and should prompt members of parliament to initiate discussions with their constituents about the local climate solutions that will reduce emissions in these sectors and benefit communities.

> "Infrastructure in the shape of distributed grids and also neighbourhood batteries. Less huge transmission lines – make the power where it's needed."
>
> ***Respondent, Grampians***

How respondents ranked sectors by emissions contribution in Barwon South West:

1. Transport
2. Electricity generation
3. Agriculture
4. Direct combustion
5. Land use
6. Fugitive emissions

How respondents ranked sectors by emissions contribution in Gippsland:

1. Electricity generation
2. Agriculture
3. Transport
4. Direct combustion
5. Fugitive emissions
6. Land use

How respondents ranked sectors by emissions contribution in Grampians:

1. Agriculture
2. Transport
3. Electricity generation
4. Land use
5. Direct combustion
6. Fugitive emissions

> "Start seaweed food production to sequester carbon, feed people and spawn a new industry."
>
> ***Respondent, Barwon South West***

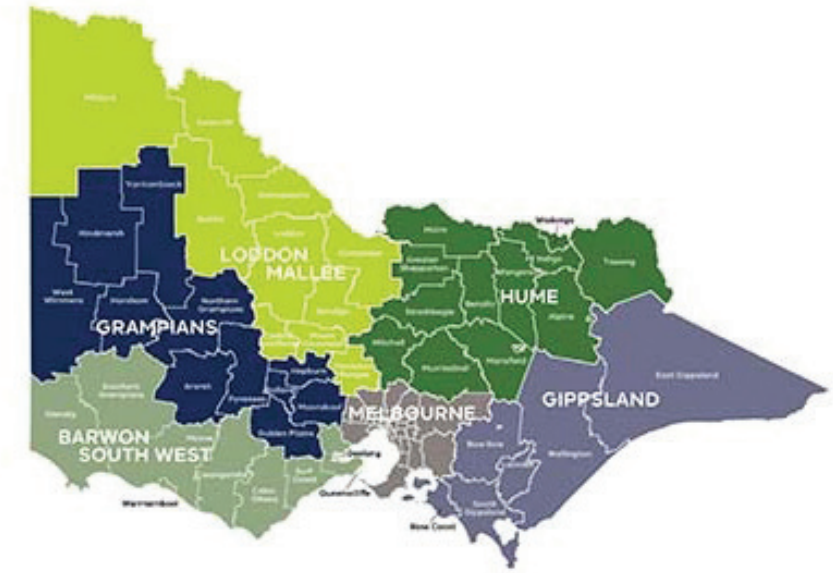
How respondents ranked sectors by emissions contribution in Greater Melbourne:

1. Electricity generation
2. Transport
3. Direct combustion
4. Agriculture
5. Land use
6. Fugitive emissions

How respondents ranked sectors by emissions contribution in Hume:

1. Transport
2. Electricity generation
3. Agriculture
4. Land use
5. Direct combustion
6. Fugitive emissions

Climate Change Impacts: Victoria



Source: Regional Development Victoria
(https://www.rdv.vic.gov.au/regional-development-australia)

Demographic

Population: Approximately 6.5 million people

Survey notes: Even stratification of respondents living in Victoria over a diversity of time periods, with slightly more respondents (24.19%) of respondents living in Victoria for 40+ years.

Respondents across Victoria as a whole cited these groups as most exposed to the impacts of climate change in the community:

1. Wildlife & ecosystems (70.3%)
2. Low socio-economic households (57.5%)
3. Farmers (54.1%)
4. First Nations people (38.7%)
5. First responders (36.3%)
6. The elderly (33.7%)
7. Young children/infants (20.5%)
8. Other: please specify -"everyone" (17.9%)
9. People with disabilities (15.2%)
10. Workers (11.6%)

Respondents cited the following as the top climate impacts already being observed:

1. Seasons changing (66.8%)
2. Increased heatwaves (61.3%)
3. Changed rainfall patterns (54.2%)
4. Extreme weather (50.1%)
5. Increased bushfire and grassfire risk (49%)
6. Changes in wildlife and ecosystems (40.6%)
7. Drought (39.6%)
8. Sea-level rise (13.2%)
9. Crop failure (9.3%)

Analysis

- Across Victoria, 70.3% of respondents cited concern for wildlife and ecosystems as most exposed to the impacts of climate change. This may be a reflection on the demographic of the respondents, but also represents a concern that current conservation and environmental protection policies are inadequately addressing the climate change impacts that wildlife and ecosystems are being exposed to. This is particularly relevant in light of the Black Summer bushfires in the summer of 2019-2020, where vast areas of land across Victoria and Australia were burnt.

> "I am seeing the impacts of climate change all around me – from longer, hotter summers with increased bushfire risk, to decreased rainfall impacting people I know who are farming. And through my work in health promotion, I know that these changes are having the most dire impact on those who are least able to adapt, cope – low income households (most of which are headed by women), the elderly, First Nations people – the most vulnerable in our society. I see nothing ambitious, meaningful or substantial enough being done at a state or federal level and it terrifies me, because we are now locking in climate chaos – it's what we are choosing for ourselves, these vulnerable people around us and the landscapes we live in and depend upon."
>
> ***Respondent, Hume***

- Concern for low socio-economic households across Victoria being exposed to the impacts of climate change demonstrates respondents' understanding of the interlocking nature of climate change and economic injustice, with living and working conditions of disadvantaged people already being further exacerbated by climate change. This finding is also strongly emphasised in the findings from the Social Services Roundtable (reported on later in the strategy).
- Seasons changing, increased heatwaves and changed rainfall patterns are the top impacts that respondents have observed across Victoria. However, it is important to note that while heatwaves are definitely a top concern for the whole state, the large number of proportionate responses from Greater Melbourne, which listed increased heatwaves as the region's top impact observed and top concern for the region, may have influenced this result.

Respondents' top concerns for Victoria as a whole (selected "strongly concerned"):

1. Increased bushfire and grassfire risk
2. Drought
3. Increased heatwaves

Respondents cited these impacts as most important for Victoria as a whole to prepare for over the next 5 years:

1. Increased bushfire and grassfire risk
2. Extreme weather
3. Increased heatwaves

Analysis

- Concern for increased heatwaves features heavily across the regions. This may be influenced by the high number of responses from Greater Melbourne that listed 'increased heatwaves' as a major concern for the region.
- However, for Victoria as a whole, respondents' top concerns are increased bushfire and grassfire risk, drought, and increased heatwaves. This is in contrast to the top impacts

currently observed across Victorian regions: seasons changing, increased heatwaves, and changed rainfall patterns. This indicates the **importance of aligning climate change adaptation strategies with future concerns of communities, not just adaptation strategies that address the current impacts experienced by communities.**

> "Bushfires and biodiversity loss in Victoria give me ongoing anxiety about my future, the ongoing impacts of climate change, and our capacity to manage future extreme weather events and natural disasters. I worry about what the world (and Victoria) will look like in five, 10, 20 years. I am seriously considering whether or not to have children and settle down in Victoria, due to uncertainty about their capacity to lead a healthy life in a climate-changed future."
>
> ***Respondent, Greater Melbourne***

> "Increased bushfire risk and temperature extremes have already caused my partner and I distress as we have been living our first year in a regional area of Victoria. There were several days last summer that were so hot it was unbearable to be outside. We've had little rainfall this winter, and I'm worried about being able to grow our own food in the future, something that connects us to our land and brings us a lot of joy in life."
>
> ***Respondent, Loddon Mallee***

> "Our vulnerable and disadvantaged populations are at increased risk of the effects of climate change. We are going to see an increase in extremes in weather, water and food insecurity, increase in financial hardship due to drought, fire, flash flooding, poor physical and mental health outcomes, an increase in social issues such as family violence, alcohol and drug use... Climate change effects will touch on all areas of life for us in Victoria."
>
> ***Respondent, Gippslandt***

Climate Change Impacts: Barwon South West

Source: South West Climate Change Portal (swclimatechange.com.au)

First Nations land that the Barwon South West region covers: Wadawurrung, Gadubanud, Gulidjan, Djargurd Wurrung, Girai Wurrung, Gunditjmara, Buandig, Bindjali, Djab Wurrung, Jardwadjali.

Demographic

Population: Approximately 400,000 people

About the area: Barwon South West spans a long stretch of coastline from Geelong City to the South Australian border. The region's inland rural population is shrinking, while its coastal population grows in its towns with strong tourism and fishing industries. Overall, it has the second-largest regional population in Victoria behind Greater Melbourne.

Survey notes: Even stratification of respondents living in Barwon South West over a diversity of time, with slightly more (23.2%) living in Barwon South West for 40+ years.

> "Our local beach is eroded year after year, though lately it seems the pace has increased. Pathways created just three years ago are now being washed away."
>
> ***Respondent, Barwon South West***

Respondents from Barwon South West cited these groups as most exposed to the impacts of climate change in the community:

1. Wildlife and ecosystems (75.4%)
2. Farmers (59.6%)
3. Low socio-economic households (54.4%)
4. The elderly & First responders (both 38.6%)
5. Young children/infants (28.1%)
6. First Nations people (22.8%)
7. Other (please specify) – "everyone" (21.1%)
8. Workers & People with disabilities
9. (both 17.5%)

Respondents cited the following as the top climate impacts already being observed:

1. Seasons changing (75.4%)
2. Changed rainfall patterns (59.6%)
3. Increased bushfire and grassfire risk (57.9%)
4. Increased heatwaves (52.6%)
5. Drought & Extreme weather (both 52.6%)
6. Sea-level rise & Changes in wildlife and ecosystems (both 43.9%)
7. Crop failure (8.7%)

Analysis

- Respondents in Barwon South West are incredibly concerned for wildlife and ecosystems (75.4%) being exposed to the impacts of climate change. This may be a result of seasonal weather patterns changing in the area, as well as changed rainfall patterns and sea-level rise having an impact upon the coastal areas of Barwon South West.
- In addition, farmers are a top concern for the respondents of Barwon South West, as 59.6% of respondents cited farmers as one of the most exposed to climate impacts. This may be a reflection of the farming demographic of Barwon South West, which produces a quarter of Australia's dairy production.
- With a higher result than other regions of Victoria, 43.9% of respondents from coastal Barwon South West have cited sea-level rise as an impact they have already observed in their region. The region contains growing coastal populations in areas with strong tourism industries, where residents are already observing coastal erosion.

A majority of Barwon South West respondents said they are 'strongly concerned' about the following climate impacts:

1. Increased heatwaves
2. Increased bushfire and grassfire risk
3. Drought

With "strongly concerned" & "concerned" results combined, respondents' top concerns are:

1. Changed rainfall patterns
2. Increased bushfire and grassfire risk
3. Drought & Seasons changing

Respondents' top concerns for Victoria as a whole (selected "strongly concerned"):

1. Increased bushfire and grassfire risk
2. Increased heatwaves
3. Changes in wildlife

Respondents cited these impacts as most important to prepare for over the next 5 years:

1. Increased heatwaves
2. Changed rainfall patterns
3. Increased bushfire and grassfire risk

Analysis

Athough seasons changing, changed rainfall patterns, and increased bushfire and grassfire risk are the top impacts observed in the region of Barwon South West, the impact that respondents are most strongly concerned about in the region is increased heatwaves. Increased heatwaves are also prioritised as the most important climate change impact to prepare for over the next 5 years.

> “Living on the coast provides access to beautiful nature and wildlife, as well as tourism and livelihood for many people. The negative effects of climate change are more apparent as summer temperatures increase, posing a major threat for our community (especially the elderly and young children) and the oceanic wildlife. Increased ocean temperatures mean different aquatic life begin to inhabit the once-cool waters of the Victorian coast. This puts the native aquatic life at risk, including the vast kelp forests which act as a carbon sink. Additionally, increased temperatures and prolonged drought mean more severe bushfire risk. We rely on the old growth forest along the Great Ocean Road to help soak up carbon dioxide in the air, but that can change with one bad bushfire season. The health, beauty, and economic welfare of the Surf Coast and surrounding community will be very seriously affected by climate change if Victoria doesn’t act now.”
>
> ***Respondent, Barwon South West***

Climate Change Impacts: Gippsland

First Nations land that the Gippsland region covers: Gunai Kurnai, Bidwell, Bunurong, Wurundjeri, Daung Wurrung, Jaitmatang, Ngarigo, Waveroo.

Source: Regional Development Victoria (https://www.rdv.vic.gov.au/victorias-regions/gippsland)

Demographic

Population: Approximately 270,000 people

About the area: Similar to Barwon South West, Gippsland is a largely rural area with many coastal towns which maintain important fishing and tourism industries. The region supplies a large proportion of Melbourne's water supply. Coastal erosion due to sea level rise at Inverloch has been heavily reported on in the last couple of years by community members. Gippsland was also severely impacted by the 2019-2020 Black Summer bushfires.

> "Being a primary producer (farmer) I am concerned with the intensifying changes to climate patterns which impact our stock and thus economic yield. This has also discouraged me from pursuing my own career in crop based production as this field is now too uncertain."
>
> ***Respondent, Gippsland***

Survey notes: 22% of respondents have lived in Gippsland longer than 40 years, followed by an even stratification of respondents who have lived in Gippsland for other lengths of time.

Respondents from Gippsland cited these groups as most exposed to the impacts of climate change in the community:

1. Wildlife and ecosystems (62.7%)
2. Farmers (57.6%)
3. Low socio-economic households (49.1%)
4. The elderly (40.7%)
5. First responders (37.3%)
6. Other (please specify) – "everyone" (22%)
7. Young children/infants (20.3%)
8. First Nations people (16.9%)
9. Workers & People with disabilities (both 15.3%)

Respondents cited the following as the top climate impacts already being observed:

1. Changed rainfall patterns (62.7%)
2. Seasons changing & Increased bushfire and grassfire risk (both 61%)
3. Increased heatwaves, Extreme weather & Sea-level rise (all three 47.5%)
4. Changes in wildlife and ecosystems (42.4%)
5. Drought (37.3%)
6. Crop failure (13.6%)

Analysis

- Respondents from Gippsland are concerned about wildlife and ecosystems and farmers as the most exposed groups to climate impacts. This aligns with the impacts observed in the region, as change of rainfall, seasons changing and increased bushfire and grassfire risk all have an impact upon wildlife, ecosystems, and farmers.
- The impacts of changed rainfall patterns and the impacts on ecosystems also affect Melbourne's water supply, as the lionshare of Melbourne's water catchment area sits within Gippsland. In addition, the summer bushfires of 2019-2020 ravaged large areas of Gippsland, but interestingly the top impact observed in the area was changed rainfall patterns.
- The high level of concern for farmers is likely a reflection of the large rural population working in agriculture, with respondents concerned that employment through farming is already being negatively impacted by the changing climate in the area.

A majority of Gippsland respondents said they are 'strongly concerned' about the following climate impacts:

1. Extreme weather
2. Increased bushfire and grassfire risk
3. Increased heatwaves & Sea-level rise

With "strongly concerned and "concerned" results combined, respondents' top concerns are:

1. Increased bushfire and grassfire risk
2. Extreme weather
3. Sea-level rise

Respondents' top concerns for Victoria as a whole (selected "strongly concerned"):

1. Increased bushfire and grassfire risk
2. Sea-level rise
3. Changes in wildlife

> "I remember the first year I was afraid of summer. The year before, my high school friends had to spend a week living in caravan parks and relatives' homes because it was too dangerous for them to remain at home. Bushfires were such a constant risk that they kept bags of photo albums in the car all summer long. We installed sprinklers on our roof. We kept watch on the hills for a red glow we knew we could never stop. I spent months choking on the smoke of the [Hazelwood] mine fire that felt like it would never end, and yet somehow that barely felt like anything compared to this year [2020]. A whole summer spent indoors. Windows shut, unable to even check the mail without a coughing fit, unable to see the end of the street through the smoke... We cannot live on the hope that enough was burnt the year before to stop fires starting again. There is too much dry land. Too much forest that should not be a tinderbox. Too little done about the true cause."
>
> ***Respondent, Gippsland***

Respondents cited these impacts as most important to prepare for over the next 5 years:

1. Increased bushfire and grassfire risk
2. Extreme weather & sea-level rise
3. Increased heatwaves

Analysis

- It is important to note that though Gippsland experienced the full devastating force of the bushfires over summer 2019-2020, respondents are more 'strongly concerned' about extreme weather events in the region. This may be a reflection upon extreme weather events increasing the force of a bushfire due to high winds and unpredictable conditions, or the impacts of coastal devastation during extreme weather events.
- Gippsland responses indicating a strong concern for the impacts of bushfire and grassfire risk aligns with the devastating bushfires of summer 2019-2020, with respondents citing bushfire and grassfire risk as their top priority to prepare for over the next 5 years.
- As Gippsland has a large coastal area, sea-level rise was cited in the top concerns for the region, with sea-level rise and extreme weather events also a priority to prepare for over the next 5 years.
- Respondents have quite evenly observed changed rainfall patterns, seasons change and increased bushfire and grassfire risk in the region, however extreme weather, sea-level rise and increased heatwaves all feature strongly across top concerns for the region and is a priority to prepare for over the next 5 years.

> "For 40 years i have enjoyed a rural life surrounded by the Nicholson River flowing all year. In the last three years the river has stopped flowing in summer, it's become so polluted due to fires you can no longer drink the water, the platypus are no longer present ,the bird life and wildlife have been decimated. I am not alone, more and more of Australia is being devastated every year. How long I can stay on the land is very questionable."
>
> ***Respondent, Gippsland***

Climate Change Impacts: Grampians

Source: Regional Development Victoria (https://www.rdv.vic.gov.au/victorias-regions/grampians)

First Nations land that the Grampians region covers: Bindjali, Jarwadjali, Djab Wurrung, Wadawurrung, Wergaia, Jaara, Wurundjeri.

Demographic

Population: Approximately 220,000 people

About the area: The Grampians is an inland area of largely rural land, with populations concentrated around townships. Ballarat accounts for nearly half of the Grampians population. `

Survey notes: Interestingly, 35.3% of respondents from the Grampians have lived in the region for 40+ years (more than any other region), followed by 17.7% of respondents who have just moved to the area (0-5 years).

> "It began by noticing how the rainfall had changed in Ballarat, where once it rained or drizzled fairly often, even during summer. But then it began to be very dry, for say, a month, when we would suddenly receive a downpour, most of which just ran off as the soil was too dry to absorb. The downpour would make it appear we were receiving our average rainfall, but everything was wrong."
> ***Respondent, Grampians***

Respondents from Grampians cited these groups as most exposed to the impacts of climate change in the community:

1. Wildlife and ecosystems (64.7%)
2. Farmers (50%)
3. Low socio-economic households (41.2%)
4. First responders (38.2%)
5. The elderly & Other "everyone" (both 23.5%)
6. First Nations people (20.6%)
7. Young children/infants (11.8%)
8. People with disabilities (8.8%)
9. Workers (5.9%)

Impacts Observed:

1. Increased bushfire and grassfire risk (67.6%)
2. Seasons changing (58.8%)
3. Changed rainfall patterns (55.9%)
4. Drought & Changes in wildlife and ecosystems (47.1%)
5. Increased heatwaves (44.1%)
6. Extreme weather (38.2%)
7. Crop failure (26.5%)

Analysis

- Like many of the regions, wildlife and ecosystems were cited as the most exposed to the impacts of climate change, followed by farmers and low socio-economic households. This may be due to the large areas of woodland and national parks that cover the region, in addition to the large rural areas inhabited by farming communities.
- Increased bushfire and grassfire risk was a top impact observed, which is interesting considering the summer bushfires of 2019-2020 were mostly concentrated in the Gippsland and Hume regions.
- Respondents have cited seasons changing and changed rainfall patterns as the second and third most common impacts observed, and follows the state-wide trend of identifying these impacts as most observed, but they are most strongly concerned about drought, increased heatwaves and changes in wildlife as issues to prepare for over the next 5 years.

> “Bushfire is a huge risk and a massive fear for all children and families I teach. This year we were extremely lucky to get through the season without loss of life, but fires close to school were a very traumatic experience for the children. The financial impact of drought, heatwaves and changes to rainfall directly affects the farming families as well as those who work in related areas... and the flow on effect is seen throughout the entire town, both in loss of income and in increase of mental health concerns. I also see many low income families impacted by severe weather events including flood, fire and storm damage. In the past 10 years I have seen many families with young children rendered homeless, unable to afford to fix the damage or replace most of their lost belongings.”
>
> ***Respondent, Grampians***

A majority of Grampians respondents said they are ‘strongly concerned’ about the following climate impacts:

1. Increased bushfire and grassfire risk
2. Changes in wildlife
3. Increased heatwaves

With “strongly concerned and “concerned” results combined, respondents’ top concerns are:

1. Drought
2. Increased bushfire and grassfire risk
3. Changes in wildlife

Respondents' top concerns for Victoria as a whole (selected "strongly concerned"):

1. Increased bushfire and grassfire risk
2. Changes in wildlife
3. Drought

Respondents cited these impacts as most important to prepare for over the next 5 years:

1. Increased bushfire and grassfire risk
2. Changes in wildlife
3. Increased heatwaves

Analysis

- Changes in wildlife is a major concern for the respondents from the Grampians, even though this is not one of the top three impacts observed. This is also listed as the second most important impact to prepare for that respondents have identified will need to be addressed over the next 5 years.
- The respondents from the Grampians region are very concerned about the impacts of increased bushfire and grassfire risk in the region, and have cited this as the top impact to prepare for over the next 5 years. This aligns with many of the regions and Victoria as a whole, as respondents across the board are concerned about the impacts of increased bushfire and grassfire risk, and believe it is a top priority to address in the next 5 years.
- Although respondents are 'strongly concerned' about increased bushfire and grassfire risk, changes in wildlife and increased heatwaves, when responses of 'strongly concerned' are combined with responses of 'concerned', drought becomes the top concern for the region. This is reflected in respondents of the Grampians region being 'strongly concerned' for drought across Victoria as a whole.

Climate Change Impacts: Greater Melbourne

First Nations land that the Greater Melbourne region covers: Wurundjeri, Bunurong, Daung Wurrung, Wadawurrung.

Source: Regional Development Victoria (https://www.rdv.vic.gov.au/regional-development-australia/melbourne/about-us)

Demographic

Population: Approximately 4.9 million people

About the area: Greater Melbourne is the most densely populated region, with large urban areas covering most of the land. This makes it more susceptible to the heat island effect during heatwaves. The 2019-20 Black Summer bushfires impacted heavily on workers whose workplaces had no OHS plan to respond to the dangerous smoke. This demonstrated the growing intensity and geographical reach of climate impacts, and much of society's lack of preparedness for them.

Survey notes: Respondents have lived in Greater Melbourne for an even stratification of time, with slightly more (24.4% of respondents) living in Melbourne for 40+ years.

Respondents from Greater Melbourne cited these groups as most exposed to the impacts of climate change in the community:

1. Wildlife and ecosystems (74.6%)
2. Low socio-economic households (63.8%)
3. Farmers (51.2%)
4. First Nations people (47.7%)
5. First responders (34.5%)
6. The elderly (33.8%)
7. Young children/infants (21.7%)
8. People with disabilities (15.4%)
9. Other: please specify -"everyone" (14.3%)
10. Workers (11.5%)

Respondents cited the following as the top climate impacts already being observed:

1. Increased heatwaves (70.1%)
2. Seasons changing (69.2%)
3. Extreme weather (55.2%)
4. Changed rainfall patterns (53.1%)
5. Increased bushfire and grassfire risk (43.2%)
6. Changes in wildlife and ecosystems (40.6%)
7. Drought (35.8%)
8. Sea-level rise (8.5%)
9. Crop failure (5.1%)

Analysis

- Greater Melbourne respondents cited wildlife and ecosystems as most exposed to the impacts of climate change, with the highest response of any region at 74.6% of responses listing wildlife and ecosystems in the groups most exposed to the impacts of climate change.
- Respondents from Greater Melbourne identified increased heatwaves as the top impact observed in the region, closely followed by seasons changing. This may be a reflection on the intense summer of 2019-2020 that respondents witnessed before conducting the survey, but also makes sense generally given the way that cities retain heat for longer during heatwaves within their infrastructure (e.g. tar roads, concrete).

> "Since moving to Victoria in 2004, I have observed a concerning shift in the seasons. Most notably the high temperatures stretching out into autumn. The reduction in trees concerns me, and the lack of trees in the suburbs, which makes for higher temperatures. I feel like there is no planning for sustainability and there are so many housing estates being built out west. It's dry. It's dusty."
>
> ***Respondent, Greater Melbourne***

A majority of Greater Melbourne respondents said they are 'strongly concerned' about the following climate impacts:

1. Increased heatwaves
2. Changes in wildlife
3. Increased bushfire and grassfire risk

With "strongly concerned and "concerned" results combined, respondents' top concerns are:

1. Increased heatwaves
2. Extreme weather
3. Changed rainfall patterns

Respondents' top concerns for Victoria as a whole (selected "strongly concerned"):

1. Increased bushfire and grassfire risk
2. Drought
3. Increased heatwaves

> "The latest bushfire season highlighted the issue perfectly – longer seasons, a depression hanging over the whole country, animals and human lives lost, and this is just the beginning."
>
> ***Respondent, Greater Melbourne***

Respondents cited these impacts as most important to prepare for over the next 5 years:

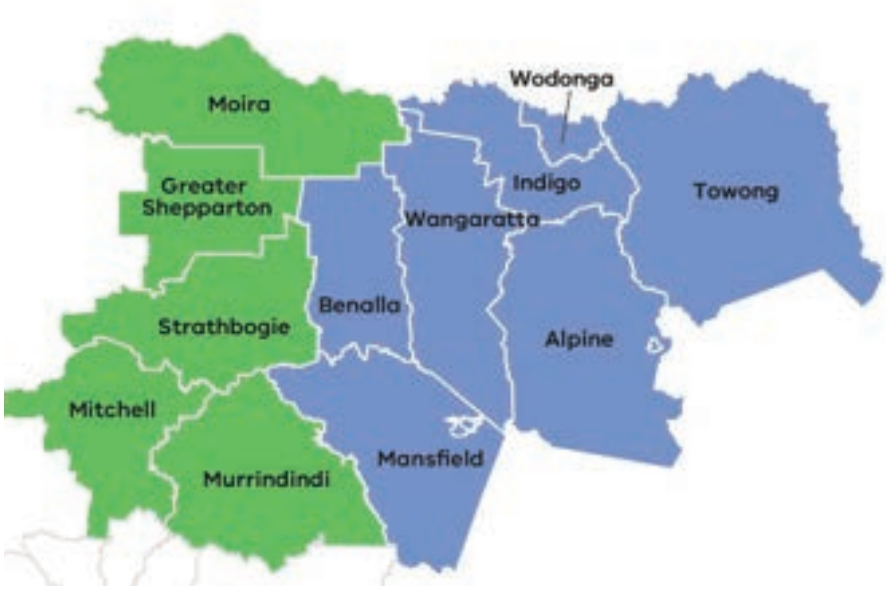
1. Increased bushfire and grassfire risk
2. Extreme weather
3. Increased heatwaves

Analysis

- Greater Melbourne mirrors Victoria's top priorities of impacts to prepare for over the next 5 years, citing increased bushfire and grassfire risk as the top priority, followed by extreme weather and increased heatwaves as the most important to prepare for. However, across the board, respondents are most concerned about the impacts of increased heatwaves affecting the region, with changes in wildlife also featuring strongly.
- Greater Melbourne respondents have not identified drought as a top concern for the region, but are 'strongly concerned' about the impacts of drought across Victoria as a whole.

> "Victoria is experiencing several changes which are detrimental to the environment and population. Water scarcity and drought puts pressure on agriculture which is tough for farmers and raises prices for consumers. Heatwaves are very dangerous for vulnerable people, particularly the elderly and those who cannot afford air conditioning. More frequent heatwaves and lack of precipitation due to climate change are causing bushfires to be less controllable and impact huge areas, destroying peoples homes, livelihood and horrendous numbers of wildlife. This also impacts health, from respiratory conditions to poor mental health as people try to rebuild their lives."
>
> ***Respondent, Greater Melbourne***

Climate Change Impacts: Hume



Source: Regional Development Victoria (https://www.rdv.vic.gov.au/victorias-regions/hume)

First Nations land that the Hume region covers: Yorta Yorta, Waveroo, Daung Wurrung, Wurundjeri, Ngurai Illam Wurrung, Jaitmatang.

Demographic

Population: Approximately 269,500 people

About the area: The Hume region's main industrial income comes from agriculture, forestry and fishing, but hospitality and tourism are the biggest employers, with 4 million day visitors to the region every year. The region contains Victoria's fragile alpine ecosystems, which will change drastically with heavily decreased snowfall as a result of warmer temperatures.

Survey notes: Even stratification of respondents who have lived in the region over diverse lengths of time (slightly more respondents have lived in this region for longer (20-30yrs, 30-40yrs & 40+ years).

> "It concerns me that the bushfire seasons are almost overlapping each other thus permitting a reduced window of opportunity for hazard reduction burning. Much farm land appears to be increasingly marginal and more difficult to insure. The loss of wildlife I find devastating"
>
> ***Respondent, Hume***

Respondents from Hume cited these groups as most exposed to the impacts of climate change in the community:

1. Farmers (72.7%)
2. Wildlife and ecosystems (52.3%)
3. Low socio-economic households (45.5%)
4. First responders (38.6%)
5. The elderly (34.1%)
6. First Nations people (25%)
7. Other: please specify -"everyone" (22.7%)
8. Young children/infants (13.6%)
9. People with disabilities (11.4%)
10. Workers (6.8%)

Respondents cited the following as the top climate impacts already being observed:

1. Seasons changing (68.2%) & Increased bushfire and grassfire risk (68.18%)
2. Drought (61.4%)
3. Changed rainfall patterns (56.8%)
4. Increased heatwaves (52.3%)
5. Changes in wildlife and ecosystems (45.5%)
6. Extreme weather (43.2%)
7. Crop failure (13.6%)

Analysis

- Aligning with Hume's top earning industries of agriculture, forestry and fishing, respondents from Hume are most concerned about farmers being exposed to the impacts of climate change, with 72.7% of respondents identifying farmers as one of the groups most exposed to the impacts of climate change.
- Within the region, seasons changing and increased bushfire and grassfire risk were evenly observed across the region, with 68.2% of respondents observing these impacts within the Hume region. This was followed by drought, changed rainfall patterns and increased heatwaves, with above 50% of respondents citing these as observed impacts in the region.

> "In our rural location we often experience 40-plus degree days... Our infrastructure struggles to support our needs, such as increased use of cooling systems, causing blackouts and overwhelming hospitals for heat-related health issues. Vulnerable populations often cannot afford the increased utility bills to care for themselves during this time... We also face longer, more intense bushfire periods. Different wildlife is forced into the area, competing with local species for food and habitat."
>
> ***Respondent, Hume***

A majority of Hume respondents said they are 'strongly concerned' about the following climate impacts:

1. Increased bushfire and grassfire risk
2. Increased heatwaves
3. Changes in wildlife

With "strongly concerned and "concerned" results combined, respondents' top concerns are:

1. Increased bushfire and grassfire risk
2. Drought
3. Changed rainfall patterns

Respondents' top concerns for Victoria as a whole (selected "strongly concerned"):

1. Increased bushfire and grassfire risk
2. Drought
3. Changes in wildlife & Increased heatwaves

Respondents cited these impacts as most important to prepare for over the next 5 years:

1. Increased bushfire and grassfire risk
2. Extreme weather
3. Increased heatwaves

Analysis

- Although respondents from Hume have observed seasons changing, increased bushfire and grassfire risk, and drought, their top concerns for the region also include increased heatwaves, changes in wildlife and changed rainfall patterns.
- In addition to this, although extreme weather is not a top impact that has been observed, and is also not a top concern for the region, respondents have identified extreme weather as the second most important climate change impact to prepare for over the next five years, just behind the impacts of increased bushfire and grassfire risk.

> "My baby and my sick mum both couldn't breathe through bushfire smoke. This is happening more often, for longer, more intense. We are not built for this."
>
> ***Respondent, Hume***

Climate Change Impacts: Loddon Mallee

First Nations land that the Loddon Mallee region covers: Bindjali, Wergaia, Ngargad, Latji Latji, Dadi Dadi, Wadi Wadi, Wemba Wemba, Baraba Baraba, Jaara, Wurundjeri, Ngurai Illam Wurrung, Duang Wurrung.

Source: Regional Development Victoria (https://www.rdv.vic.gov.au/victorias-regions/loddon-mallee)

Demographic

Population: Approximately 310,000 people

About the area: The Loddon Mallee region is a landlocked rural area, with populations concentrated around regional towns. It contains the second largest regional population outside of Greater Melbourne behind Barwon South West, with a high projected population growth expected in coming years. Healthcare and social assistance are the largest employers.

Survey notes: Even stratification of respondents who have lived in Loddon Mallee over a diverse length of time (most respondents – 22.2% living in Loddon Mallee for both 40+ and 10-20yrs).

> "The issues that need to be solved in my area include our reliance on fossil fuels, not generating our own electricity from greener alternatives... lack of reliable public transport, reliance on cars and trucks, deforestation, not enough support for lower-socioeconomic and First Nations peoples."
>
> ***Respondent, Loddon Mallee***

Respondents from Loddon Mallee cited these groups as most exposed to the impacts of climate change in the community:

1. Farmers (58.5%)
2. Wildlife and ecosystems (50.9%)
3. First responders (45.3%)
4. Low socio-economic households (35.8%)
5. The elderly (28.3%)
6. First Nations people (26.4%)
7. People with disabilities (18.9%)
8. Young children/infants (11.3%)
9. Workers (9.4%)

Respondents cited the following as the top climate impacts already being observed:

1. Increased bushfire and grassfire risk (48.2%)
2. Seasons changing (46.3%)
3. Changed rainfall patterns (44.4%)
4. Drought (38.8%)
5. Increased heatwaves (33.3%)
6. Extreme weather & Changes in wildlife and ecosystems (both 27.8%)
7. Crop failure (20.4%)

Analysis

- A large geographical area of the Loddon Mallee is land used for farming, and this is reflected in the high level of concern for farmers in regards to climate impacts. In addition, concern for first responders is consistent with the regional impacts of climate change, namely an extended and intensifiedfire season. This concern aligns with the top impact that has been observed in the region; increased bushfire and grassfire risk.
- The top impacts that respondents observed are increased bushfire and grassfire risk, seasons changing and changed rainfall patterns. This may be a reflection of the 2019-2020 summer bushfires which devastated a large area of the Loddon Mallee region. The impacts highlighted by respondents also present as strongly interlocking: the bushfires were arguably made more intense by seasonal weather patterns changing and changed rainfall patterns in the area intensifying the threat of fire on hot days.

> "I'm a twenty-year-old who has lived in central Victoria all my life, and I've experienced longer droughts and other impacts of climate change since I was really young. I grew up in government housing, and experienced extreme heat and long summers without air-conditioning or a car. This made me realise how vulnerable low-socioeconomic people are and how climate change will hit marginalised and impoverished people first and hardest... As a young person, I feel so much fear when thinking about my future and how climate change could affect it."
>
> ***Respondent, Loddon Mallee***

A majority of Loddon Mallee respondents said they are 'strongly concerned' about the following climate impacts:

1. Increased bushfire and grassfire risk
2. Drought
3. Changes in wildlife

With "strongly concerned and "concerned" results combined, respondents' top concerns are the same as above - this is the only region where this double emphasis appears:

1. Increased bushfire and grassfire risk
2. Drought
3. Changes in wildlife

Respondents' top concerns for Victoria as a whole (selected "strongly concerned"):

1. Increased bushfire and grassfire risk
2. Changed rainfall patterns
3. Drought

Respondents cited these impacts as most important to prepare for over the next 5 years:

1. Increased bushfire and grassfire risk
2. Increased heatwaves
3. Changes in wildlife

Analysis

- Respondents from Loddon Mallee are most concerned about increased bushfire and grassfire risk for the region and across Victoria as a whole, and is the top impact that respondents have cited as most important to prepare for over the next 5 years, indicating that it is the top priority that adaptation strategies need to address in this region.
- Although respondents cited seasons changing and changed rainfall patterns as the second and third most common impacts, respectively, that have been observed in the region, neither of these impacts are the top concerns for the region or most important impact to prepare for over the next 5 years. Although drought featured as fourth most commonly observed climate change impact in the region, it is in respondents' top concerns for the region and for Victoria as a whole.
- As a result, we can identify increased bushfire and grassfire risk as the top concern and respondents' priority to prepare for over the next 5 years, followed by increased heatwaves and changes in wildlife, with high levels of concerns over the impacts of drought, and some concern over the impacts of changed rainfall patterns as well.

> "As Victoria is becoming warmer and drier, we face terrifying and unpredictable impacts on our environments and lives. The threat of fires is likely to drive me from my home in the coming years, impact food supplies and cause devastating impacts for people from all walks of life. The ongoing destruction of forests and support of fossil fuels isn't slowing at the rate it needs to and I'm genuinely terrified and upset with humanity's inaction."
>
> ***Respondent, Loddon Mallee***

Section Two: Climate Change Solutions

This section shares the results from a series of engagement methods we used to gather the climate solutions that people from different communities around the state want to see prioritised, funded and rolled out by the Victorian government.

When discussing solutions to tackle causes of climate change and climate impacts, we always emphasise the necessity of a strong social justice framework to shape those ideas. Climate impacts are already heavily hitting vulnerable communities in Victoria - communities generally the least responsible for the historical and structural causes of the climate crisis. With this knowledge in mind, we wanted to generate discussions and thinking about climate solutions that will not only do the most direct job of lowering emissions, but that also advance existing social justice goals which so many communities are fighting for.

We used the following methods to shape this part of the Strategy:

'Ideas for Action' social media action: Before launching the Climate Solutions survey, we invited people to participate in a warm-up action in which they submitted a COVID-safe masked selfie, the area they live in, and their big idea to tackle climate change in Victoria. We then created graphics out of these submissions, and posted them on our social media platforms. These are the graphics which are interspersed throughout the Strategy. During the lockdown, when we couldn't have any in-person events for people to share ideas, it was heartwarming to share the faces of community members from all over the state who were contributing.

Roundtable discussions: We hosted three roundtables via Zoom in July 2020, September 2020, and February 2021. Each brought together representatives from different social and environmental justice and services groups for in-depth discussions about the different communities that climate change is affecting in Victoria, and accordingly, what holistic solutions are needed that will better the lives of these communities. The summaries are detailed below.

Dot-democracy voting action: Results and explanation below this section.

Climate Solutions survey: The methodology of this survey is explained at the beginning of this Strategy. Quotes from respondents' answers are spread throughout the Strategy.

Friends of the Earth campaigners' analyses: Friends of the Earth Melbourne is the home of multiple grassroots community campaigns advocating for climate solutions in sectors including energy, transport, and land use. The campaign coordinators leading this work have contributed their analysis of the current state of these sectors, and the solutions they are working to see implemented in Victoria with community members.

Organisation Statements: Some of the groups we have worked with on this project have contributed their own statements to articulate their visions for tackling climate change.

> "We need to support our primary industry by ensuring adequate safe water supplies, and minimising whenever possible any further climate change. We need to ensure that urbanisation does not further reduce and degrade our agricultural lands."
>
> ***Respondent, Barwon South West***

> "Revegetate tree stripped land. Lower consumption of meat. Grow crops organically without damaging fertilisers."
>
> ***Respondent, Barwon South West***

> "Assistance and advice in land and ecosystem protection. Grassroots action is doing all it can, there needs to be consistency and support from the top down. Government and local councils need to get their act together and actively support citizens and organisations to make positive changes."
>
> ***Respondent, Grampians***

Climate Change Solutions: Dot-Democracy Results

The Climate Change Act 2017 (Vic) requires the Victorian government to include a statement of policy priorities in its Climate Change Strategy. For our final participatory action to shape the People's Climate Strategy, we mirrored this requirement with a community voting action in the style of a dot-democracy activity, to unearth policy priorities.

Traditionally, a dot-democracy action happens in a public space such as a town hall. It is used as a way of gauging the most popular options out of a list of ideas or proposals, through mass-participatory cumulative voting. In its most common form, people are given a limited number of sticker dots to place under the options listed around the room that they wish to vote for.

Due to the lockdowns and continued restrictions on gatherings in late 2020, we were unable to organise with in-person gatherings across the state, and so we designed an online dot-democracy through the platform Typeform. The action was promoted through emails, social media, sharing by community groups, and ads in regional newspapers in coastal areas.

How the action worked

Over 1,000 people in Victoria took our two surveys and shared their thoughts on the climate impacts they are worried about, and the climate solutions they want to see implemented.

The online dot-democracy listed the top five most commonly-suggested solutions by theme from those surveys, for each climate impact and economic sector in Victoria. We asked community members to vote for their top-priority climate solution from the five options in each category, to further distill the longer list of the most popular solutions into a statement of priorities.

Because we know that each climate impact and source of emissions needs a diversity of policy responses to tackle it, and also in accordance with community members' wishes, we have displayed every option that people had available to vote for in the dot-democracy. All up, 328 community members participated in the action.

Dot-Democracy Solutions: Adaptation to Impacts

Crop Failure

1. Government funding and incentives for farmers to transition to regenerative agriculture practices: **51.3%**
2. Research into and incentivising of drought-tolerant and diverse crops (including native crops): **20.1%**
3. Revegetation on farmland and of surrounding natural ecosystems to stop erosion and soil depletion: **14.5**%
4. Education and incentives around buying and producing food locally: **8.2%**
5. Education and funding for set-up of community gardens in urban design: **6%**

Sea-Level Rise (coastal erosion)

1. Coastal erosion prevention measures through planting of native vegetation and revegetation: **43.8%**
2. Legislation, building zones and building requirements for high-risk location sites on the coast: **28.4%**
3. Funding and resources to support local municipalities to strengthen community resilience: **12.5%**
4. Compensation and support for communities to relocate inland: **8.8%**
5. Groynes and protective infrastructure to prevent erosion: **6.6%**

Changed Rainfall Patterns

1. Protecting existing ecosystems, and planting more trees, to encourage rainfall in dry areas: **58%**
2. Government subsidies for water tank installments and guttering maintenance, both privately and on public buildings: **14.4%**
3. Government investment in upgrading and maintaining public water infrastructure, such as storm water drains and water catchment areas: **12.5%**
4. Research and modelling into changed rainfall patterns, with this information available to farmers and the wider community: **9.7%**
5. Education on diverse and resilient plants and crops for public and private land: **5.3%**

> "Our area is best suited to mass revegetation schemes and renewable energy projects. The revegetation projects lock up carbon as well as reconnect the landscape. The renewable energy projects can only happen if the state government invested in supporting infrastructure."
>
> ***Respondent, Loddon Mallee***

Drought

1. Stopping land clearing, and planting more trees, to encourage rainfall in drought-stricken areas: **43.6%**
2. Incentivise and fund transitions to regenerative farming practices: **34.8%**

3. Incentivise and provide funds for farmers to transition to crop diversity and crop suitability to location and seasonal patterns: **16%**
4. Incentivise and subsidise water tank installment on public and private buildings: **2.8%**
5. Supporting communities that are likely to experience drought with resources and funding: **2.8%**

Extreme Weather

1. Better stormwater management through capture, filtration and permeable surfaces e.g. with wetlands, underground storage: **41.7%**
2. Identify locations most at risk and modify planning to prevent development in these areas, building location risk assessments: **39.5%**
3. Community education and resources to prepare residents and support vulnerable community members: **12.2%**
4. Council resources for mass evacuation of people and local emergency shelters: **4.4%**
5. Improved technology and communication for warning systems: **2.2%**

> "Localisation of food supply and power generation, mitigation of fire risk and community education around fire, water security, house design and accessibility, bush regeneration, better public transport, building community resilience and connection."
> ***Respondent, Loddon Mallee***

Increased Bushfire and Grassfire Risk

1. Burning off, back burning, cool burns and other forms of proactive land management guided by and implemented by Indigenous knowledges: **53.9%**
2. Legislation and protections for forests and other wet ecosystems to encourage rainfall and decrease fire risk: **32.5%**
3. More funding for first responders, aerial fire response and volunteer training and management: **7.9%**
4. Funding, communication and implementation for community evacuation plans in high risk locations, and future high risk locations: **4.4%**
5. Upgraded and accessible technology and signage for warning systems: **1.3%**

Increased Heatwaves

1. Government-regulated building standards for all new buildings (regarding efficiency, insulation, passive cooling etc.): **45.1%**
2. Plant a diverse variety of more native trees for more shade canopy in cities and towns: **36.4%**
3. Subsidise cost of power for most vulnerable people in communities: **6.9%**
4. Community heatwave shelters able to accomodate people staying overnight in extreme conditions: **6.6%**
5. More frequent, air conditioned public transport with properly shaded stops/stations: **5%**

Changes in Wildlife and Ecosystems - not included in dot-democracy action

1. Legislated protection and recovery plans for vulnerable habitats, species and ecosystems.
2. Follow advice from First Nations leaders and fund First Nations-led conservation.
3. Expand sanctuaries and parks with a focus on creating wildlife corridors.
4. Research to determine where and how to protect our most vulnerable wildlife and ecosystems.
5. Fund conservation groups, wildlife carers/volunteer animal rescue.

Adverse Impacts to Human Health - not included in dot-democracy action

1. Funding for mental health services, including programs specific to the climate crisis, vulnerable communities, regional areas and schools
2. Incentives and subsidies for housing insulation, air filtration systems and air purifiers
3. Research and advice from experts on air quality and protective measures for communities
4. Create community centres for refuge in extreme weather events
5. Fund urban greening and active transport infrastructure

Dot-Democracy Solutions: Cutting Emissions

Agriculture (e.g. methane from animals, fertiliser)

1. Education, funding and incentives for farmers to move towards regenerative agriculture and other alternative farming practices (alternative to monoculture, high chemical use farming): **62.8%**
2. Promote and fund planting of native trees to improve soil quality, provide shade and encourage rainfall: **16.4%**
3. Education and advertising about reducing meat consumption and promoting more plant-based diets: **9.1%**
4. Subsidise and promote low-methane feed for stock, such as seaweed supple: **6.3%**
5. Ban and/or reduce the use of synthetic fertilisers: **5.4%**

Fugitive Emissions (e.g. leaky gas pipes, methane from landfill)

1. Phase out fossil fuel industries, with no new gas extraction and a supported transition away from gas usage in homes and businesses: **54.9%**
2. More government incentives for homes and industries to transition from gas to electricity: **15.5%**
3. More government investment in renewable energy: **14.8%**
4. Regulation to prevent new buildings from being connected to gas: **7.9%**
5. Audits and maintenance of power and gas plants, and distribution infrastructure, including penalties for leakage: **6.9%**

Direct Combustion (burning fuels for industry or household use, e.g. wood-fired stoves)

1. Transition households and industry to renewable electricity - e.g. subsidise replacement of wood-fired stoves: **33%**
2. Subsidise retrofitting existing houses to improve their energy efficiency and insulation, especially for vulnerable populations: **26.2%**
3. Invest in local solar batteries & decentralised grids: **19.9%**
4. Improved building standards that include passive heating and cooling technology in structures: **12.5%**
5. More incentives for solar installation and batteries for both businesses and residential housing: **8.4%**

Land Use, Land Use Change and Forestry (e.g. logging native forests)

1. Immediate ban on native forest logging with the transition plan for workers brought forward - logging from timber plantations only: **60.8%**
2. Limit urban sprawl and increase urban greening - e.g. micro nature reserves in every

neighbourhood: **14.7%**
3. Provide grants for farmers and landowners to revegetate areas of their property, along with education on the importance of revegetation and wildlife corridors: **12.5%**
4. Increase environmental protection for natural ecosystems: **10.3%**
5. Fund community landcare and a workforce for revegetation of already logged and depleted land: **1.6%**

Electricity Generation (electricity from coal and gas-fired power plants)

1. Increase funding and support for decentralised renewable power generation in communities: **48.6%**
2. Incentivise uptake of solar power for residential and industrial buildings: **21.3%**
3. Fund more wind farms across Victoria: **11.9%**
4. Incentivise home batteries for renewable power storage: **9.4%**
5. More funding and subsidies for solar power installment on rental properties: **8.8%**

Transport (petrol and diesel)

1. Policy and financial incentives for transition to electric vehicle use, starting with public buses and government fleet vehicles: 47.9%
2. Urban development based on the '15 minute city' principle of localisation - with education, services, employment, and housing accessible by bikes and public transport in under 15 minutes: 25.9%
3. Transition all freight (cargo/goods being transported) from trucks to rail transport: 13.9%
4. Make public transport more accessible and attractive as a transport option - e.g. more regular bus services: 6.6%
5. Create safer and wider bike lanes both in Melbourne and regional Victoria: 5.7%

Friends of the Earth Analysis: Big Picture Thinking

Community members across the state have demonstrated their commitment to tackling the climate crisis.

Record numbers of households, businesses, and community organisations are installing rooftop solar, adopting energy efficiency measures, purchasing 100% renewable electricity, shifting to sustainable transport, and growing their own food to rein in emissions.

Communities on the frontline of climate impacts, such as the horrific Black Summer bushfires of 2019/20 and the coastal communities now seeing dramatic erosion, are rebuilding with a greater focus on climate resilience.

The People's Climate Strategy for Victoria is the latest example of the community's commitment to action. Governments can show that they are on the community's side by showing greater leadership on climate.

Friends of the Earth believe that the Victorian government can supercharge the state's response by taking the following steps:

1. Setting science-based Emissions Reduction Targets

Friends of the Earth believe all efforts must be made to achieve zero emissions as soon as possible.

The Victorian Climate Change Act (2017) requires the state government to set interim Emissions Reduction Targets every five years to achieve the goal of net-zero emissions. The Andrews government will soon announce targets for 2025 and 2030.

The interim targets represent an opportunity for the Andrews government to align the state's climate policies with the latest science.

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change warns of catastrophic impacts if global warming cannot be kept to 1.5°C or below. Victoria can expect intensifying bushfires, droughts, heatwaves, extreme weather, and rising sea levels.

With the Federal government's ongoing climate and energy policy failure, communities, unions, civil society, and the business sector are looking to state governments to step up. Target setting is a powerful tool for governments to set the direction for our economy.

The University of Melbourne modelling, commissioned by Friends of the Earth, finds achieving emissions reductions consistent with 1.5°C emissions trajectory is possible with a range of strategies across different sectors. It shows that an emissions reduction of 75 percent (below 2005 levels) by 2030 is viable, would create at least 53,900 jobs, and stimulate $51.7 billion worth of investment.

The Victorian government can become the first state to match the Australian Capital Territory's level of ambition and commit to an Emissions Reduction Target of 75 percent by 2030. The adoption of this target would situate Victoria among global leaders Denmark and Scotland ahead of the critically-important COP26 climate summit in November 2021.

2. Modernizing the Budget to account for Climate Change

Strategic investment is now needed to ensure Victoria can meet Emissions Reduction Targets and enhance resilience to climate change impacts.

Each year, the Victorian government allocates billions of public investment in infrastructure, government-supported programs, and services. While the government has a clear grasp of expenditure on education, health, infrastructure, or law enforcement, there's currently limited knowledge around climate change expenditure and the ways in which climate impacts will affect the budget in coming decades.

The Victorian budget has evolved over the years to deal with the changing context and issues. The Cain government modernised the Victorian budget in the 1980s. It brought greater transparency to the process by linking expenditure to a broader economic strategy and later including social justice thinking. Victoria became the first state to adopt accrual accounting under Premier Kennett.

In 2017, ratings agencies Standard & Poors and Moody's stated that banks, cities, and states that fail to account for climate risk could face credit rating downgrades. It is advantageous for governments to adopt climate-risk accounting measures to get out in front of the move.

Friends of the Earth have identified two key ways in which the Victorian government can modernise the budget to meet obligations under the **Climate Change Act 2017**:

- ***Greater transparency:*** There is a clear need for the government to understand how expenditure contributes towards direct mitigation, indirect mitigation, adaptation, and disaster response. This analysis can form a baseline and allow governments, departments, and stakeholders to track trends.
- ***Better accounting:*** Adopt carbon emissions valuation, such as the social cost of carbon used in the United States, to account for the greenhouse gas emissions liabilities of state government activities. This would be incorporated into cost-benefit analysis of government programs and investments.

Victoria could be the first jurisdiction in the country to modernize the budget process to cope with a major challenge of the 21st Century.

3. Support communities with a dedicated Victorian Climate Change Action Fund

Communities are crying out for greater government support for local climate solutions.

In 2017 the Victorian government established a $4.3 million Victorian Climate Change Innovation Partnerships (VCCIP) Grant Scheme to provide start-up funding to community groups, local councils and businesses for the development of innovative solutions to the challenges of climate change.

Attracting over 240 applications, the VCCIP grant scheme unearthed strong demand for state

government investment. Friends of the Earth analysis finds that $72 million would have been needed for all of the projects to get support. The $4.3 million scheme could only support 24 projects.

On climate adaptation, the Victorian government has provided more than $11 million worth of emergency funding to support local government responses to the impacts of sea-level rise over the last two years. Demand for support will only increase over time.

Friends of the Earth recommends the state government establish a $100 million Victorian Climate Change Action Fund (VCCAF).

The Victorian Climate Change Action Fund would retrofit public libraries, schools, community centres, neighbourhood houses and sporting clubs to become Climate Emergency Refuge Centres in times of crisis. This would involve installing rooftop solar, battery storage, air-conditioners and other energy efficient equipment at those sites.

The fund would distribute grants in yearly rounds following the approach the state government took to its New Energy Jobs Fund.

4. Urgent Climate Impacts on the Coast

Scientists have long warned that continuing to burn coal, oil, and gas would have consequences. Rising sea levels and intensifying storm surges are among them.

The People's Climate Strategy found that rising sea levels was a top climate impact already being observed in Victoria for 13% of respondents. The issue was of particular importance for Gippsland respondents, who identified climate impacts on the coast as a top issue for both their region and the state.

Sea-level rise is an emerging issue in Victoria. Communities in Apollo Bay, Inverloch, Port Fairy, Elwood, Loch Sport, and Bellarine Peninsula have already sounded the alarm about these impacts. And many more communities will join them in coming years. How will these communities cope with the IPCC's prediction of 1.1 metre of sea-level rise by 2100?

Professor Tom Kompas of University of Melbourne and Victorian Marine and Coastal Council advising the Victorian government told The Age that "sea level rise was the 'biggest risk to the Australian economy from climate change' – bigger even than bushfires, heat stress and the damage to agriculture."

All levels of government must pay greater attention to the issue and take early steps to minimise the disruptive impacts.

Policy makers can draw inspiration from the People's Climate Strategy which unearthed strong community support for nature-based solutions to rising sea levels. Coastal erosion prevention measures through planting of native vegetation and revegetation emerged as a top priority in the Dot-Democracy phase of the research.

Friends of the Earth will kick off on-the-ground research in 2021 to identify impacts sites across the Victorian coastline and support communities who are concerned about rising seas.

We believe the Victorian government can show leadership on this front by preparing a special report on climate impacts on the coast and embark on a public education campaign. The first and last time sea-level rise impacts were investigated by the Federal government, Kevin Rudd was the Prime Minister.

In lieu of national leadership, the Victorian government can draw on the best-available science to alert the community about the amount of sea-level rise we will see by 2030, 2050, and 2100; identify vulnerable housing, infrastructure (such as sewage treatment facilities), and ecosystems; and outline steps to manage impacts and support communities on the frontline.

The Victorian government can also show leadership by clearly articulating the climate dimension of public works to defend or upgrade infrastructure to cope with intensifying impacts (e.g: public information signs where groynes are constructed or rock walls put in place).

5. Climate Change and Occupational Health & Safety:

For thousands of working people across Victoria, the climate crisis is already here. Many now find themselves on the frontlines of intensifying climate impacts which threaten their health and safety.

This was brought into focus on a grand scale during the 2019-2020 Black Summer bushfires. The smoke haze from these fires which blanketed Victoria for months showed that natural disasters and extreme weather are growing in scale to levels that workplaces are not currently equipped to respond to. Outdoor workers were heavily hit by the smoke, but the intensity and duration of the 2019-2020 bushfires meant that indoor workers felt it too.

The massive infrastructure projects required to drive our transformation to a zero-carbon economy will require tens of thousands of outdoor

workers, who will become more exposed to worsening climate impacts, like heatwaves, in coming years. As the Victorian Trades Hall Council's Transitions From Crisis (2020, p 42) report emphasises, increasing extreme weather events such as flooding are forcing workplaces to shut down more frequently, or obstructing people from even getting to work.

Additionally, workers in the female-dominated care economy, such as nurses, are being saddled with increasing responsibilities in high-pressure situations as climate impacts threaten more lives and livelihoods. As it is put in Transitions from Crisis (2020, p 30): 'Healthcare workers, particularly nurses, are now, in effect, first responders to climate disasters. In some instances, as was the case with the 2019-20 bushfires, healthcare workers found themselves in the position of being the victims of bushfires, while also being expected to attend to other victims.'

Climate change poses more OHS issues than we have investigated yet, and will throw up more in coming years. To begin tackling this challenge and to ensure that workers' justice is centred in a climate-constrained future, we recommend that the Victorian government:

Establish a parliamentary inquiry into the OHS impacts of climate change that are now occurring and those that are on the horizon. The government can form policies to protect workers in response to the inquiry findings.

Direct WorkSafe Victoria to investigate the full range of climate impacts that are affecting people in their workplaces and undertake a public education campaign around these identified risks.

Note from the People's Climate Strategy surveys: as can be seen in the Climate Impacts section of this Strategy, it emerged during our survey data analysis that though workers are on the frontlines of the first climate impacts in Victoria, they are not widely seen as a group very visibly vulnerable to climate impacts.

One reason for this is likely that survey respondents saw the 'workers' category as already partially represented by other categories, such as 'low-income communities' and 'farmers'. However, it also indicates that more work needs to be done to publicly illustrate the ways that climate change is affecting people's health and safety in their workplaces, and to talk about climate change through a prism of workers' justice.

Friends of the Earth will strengthen its work with the Victorian union movement this year, by collaborating to undertake surveying of union members about the climate impacts they are most concerned about and the responses they want to see.

Friends of the Earth Analysis: Sustainable Cities and Transport

The transport sector is the second largest and fastest growing source of polluting greenhouse gas emissions in the state. We need a massive expansion of public transport infrastructure: all future state and federal budgets should direct transport spending away from new major road projects and into improving the public transport network.

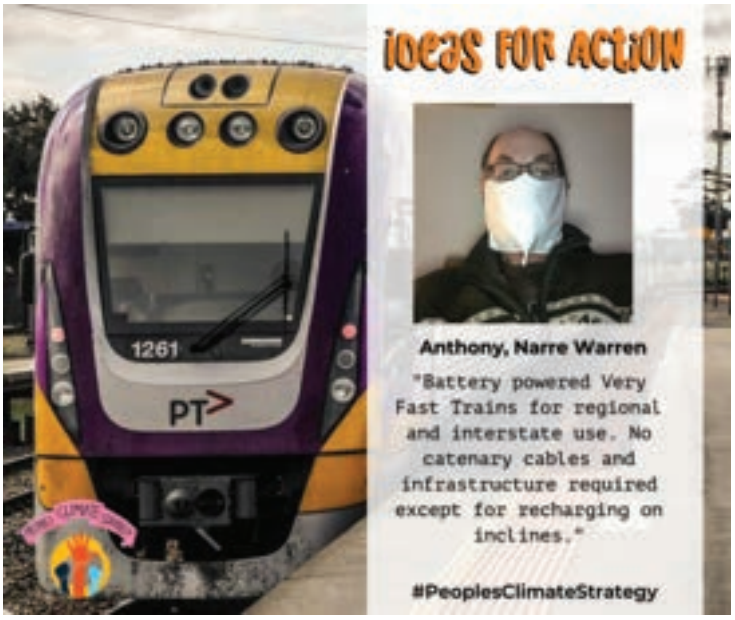
Transport Sector

We commend the Victorian government for committing to the Metro Tunnel 1, the Suburban Rail Loop and the Airport Rail Link. This momentum must be continued with initiatives such as the Metro Tunnel 2 and improved bus services, to meet our population's needs.

The above combined projects will transform Melbourne and prepare us for a climate constrained future. They will take thousands of cars off the road, improve air quality, decrease road accidents, and free up existing road networks for those who do need to drive.

Climate Solutions

Public transport is an essential service that is key to reducing emissions, and making cities more accessible and liveable. We recommend the Victorian government:



- Boost funds to construct and maintain walking and cycling paths, and immediately fund all bike paths with development approval. Walking and riding are safe and healthy options for people to access essential services.
- Fund a business case for Melbourne Metro 2 in the 2022 budget, which will unlock key hubs, create jobs and increase capacity across the Melbourne rail network.
- Put disability accessibility at the heart of all transport infrastructure, upgrade tram lines and continue the rollout of modernised E-class trams.
- Prioritise and put in place systems to facilitate rail freight, to reduce toxic emissions from trucks currently transporting freight.
- Stimulate the manufacturing of electric buses to revamp local manufacturing jobs.

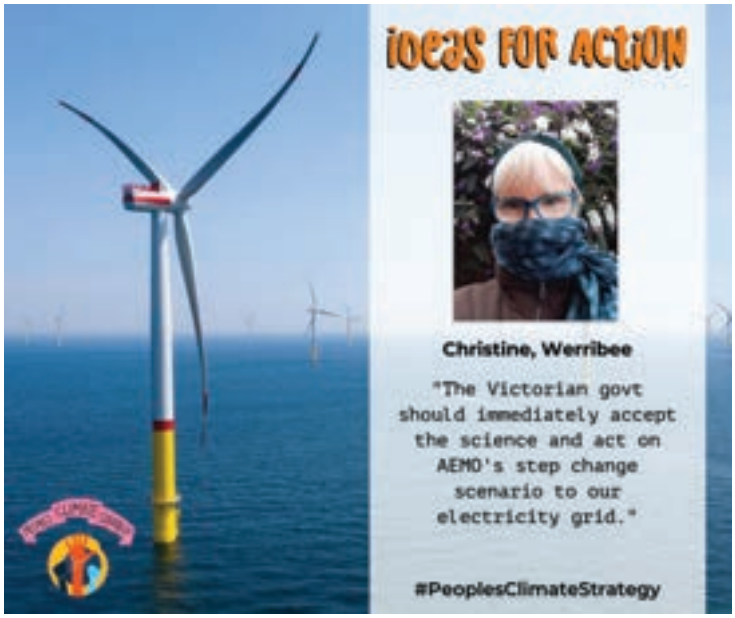
- Upgrade the bus network by increasing bus services along major and popular transport routes with 'turn up and go' frequencies, as well as identifying and servicing hubs where there are no alternative public transport options. This will unlock potential for people to easily get to work or study, and participate in and contribute more to society without cars.
- Bus stops should be converted to high quality, accessible and comfortable bus shelters.
- Power all new transport infrastructure -- trains, trams, buses, and electric vehicle charging stations -- with renewable energy to lock-in emissions reductions and create regional jobs.

Conclusion

Communities are advocating for serious change in the transport sector. With sustained commitment and increased funding to the public transport network in Victoria, our government can ensure that Melbourne is ready to reduce climate impacts and create a resilient city of the future, as well as better servicing regional Victoria.

> "Wholesale conversion to renewable energy generation and storage (preferable via community owned models). Better public transport links to reduce car travel. Long supply chains for fresh food need to be shortened via support, investment, reduction of "red tape" around agriculture, conversion to regenerative agriculture – producers need to be able to process and distribute their fresh produce without having to jump through hoops."
>
> ***Respondent, Hume***

Friends of the Earth Analysis: Transitioning to Renewable Energy



Victoria's privatised energy system is currently in the midst of a largely unplanned transition away from predominantly coal-fired generation, towards a combination of new renewable energy sources. As the federal government continues failing to be proactive on climate and energy, it has fallen to the states to roll out renewable energy. The state's shift to wind and solar power is now being driven by the Victorian Renewable Energy Target.

Moving quickly to decarbonise the electricity system will give Victoria the best chance of reducing emissions at the scale and speed needed to address the climate crisis. The solutions - the transition to 100% renewable energy supported by storage and energy efficiency measures - are commercially viable and create significant social and economic benefits. Additionally, decarbonising electricity is essential to reducing greenhouse gas emissions in other sectors, such as transport and industry.

Plans to establish six Renewable Energy Zones across the state will be essential to setting the energy system up for the future, and coordinate the construction of new renewable energy projects.

The necessary rapid transformation of our energy system must be underpinned with an understanding of social and climate justice. Who benefits from this transition, and who owns assets in the new renewable energy economy are important considerations. The Kennett government's privatisation of the electricity system has had disastrous consequences for workers and communities, and has failed to produce the benefits predicted. Governments should seek wherever possible to increase the extent of community and public ownership of the energy system.

It is essential that plans to rapidly roll out renewable energy are matched with requirements for local content and local ownership, to maximise the social and economic benefits. Currently, this occurs at the project level but could occur at a regional

level -- for example, plans for a Gippsland Renewable Energy Zone could include funding for a new offshore wind training centre to offer workers in coal, oil and gas the opportunity to retrain as wind technicians.

As new industries such as offshore wind, renewable hydrogen and energy storage are established, governments have the opportunity to maximise the benefits to Victorians by creating training opportunities and moving early to establish domestic manufacturing.

While Victoria has a renewable energy target in place, the current target of 50% renewable energy is not compliant with the Paris Climate Agreement. Doubling this target is a realistic goal that would be in line with the Australian Energy Market Operator's (AEMO) 'step-change' scenario in the Integrated System Plan.

On cost, renewable energy is now the most competitive form of new generation, making the closure of Victoria's ageing coal-fired power stations inevitable. Currently, this is occurring in an unplanned manner based on the self-interest of large energy companies: an outcome likely to perpetuate inequality, and create anxiety among working class communities dealing with the economic fallout of job losses. It is essential that governments show greater leadership by establishing clear timelines for the closure of coal-fired power stations, matched with plans to deliver justice and new economic opportunities for communities.

We recommend the Victorian government adopt the following measures to both accelerate the transition to renewable energy, and deliver justice to workers and communities.

Recommendations

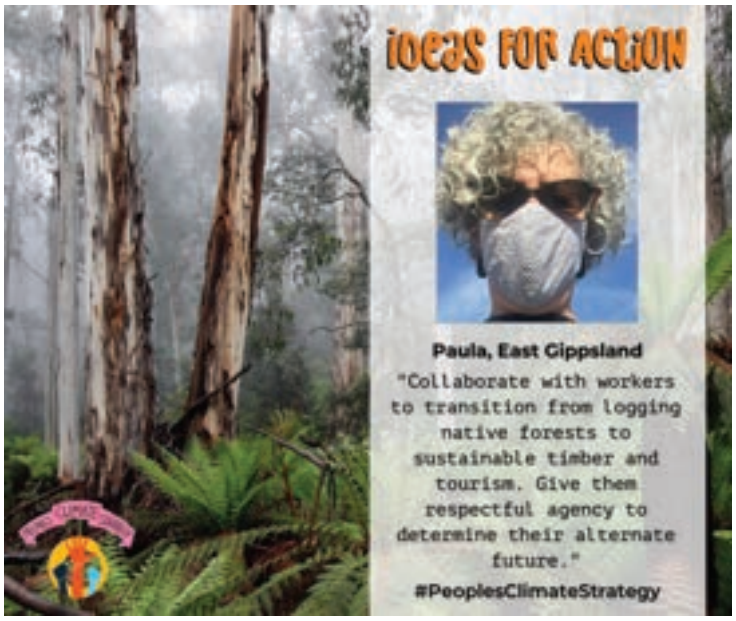
- Double the current Victorian Renewable Energy Target to 100% renewables by 2030.
- Establish a Just Transition Authority responsible for implementing a timeline to retire Victoria's ageing coal-fired power stations, while protecting workers and creating new opportunities for regional communities.
- Release an offshore wind strategy to coordinate development of this important new industry, and fund training opportunities.
- Legislate a Community Energy Target of at least 100 megawatts, backed up by a financial

mechanism to ensure communities are able to participate directly in building their own wind and solar farms.

- Create a publicly-owned renewable energy retailer to ensure all Victorians are able to access clean, affordable electricity.
- Mandate that all new renewable energy projects are built with strong local content requirements to maintain the longevity of existing manufacturers and strengthen the local supply chain.
- Require new renewable energy projects to offer ownership of at least 20% of new projects to local communities, and encourage the widespread use of community benefits sharing.

> “Replace local government ‘old cronies and mates’ to proactive and compassionate people, concerned for the planet and the local community. Interlink with other local communities on health, land custodianship, farming, energy grids and local sustainable jobs.”
>
> ***Respondent, Hume***

Friends of the Earth Analysis: Protecting Native Forests



There are major opportunities for our native forests, and forestry in general, to be part of reducing emissions in Victoria, protecting and enhancing wildlife and water security, and creating jobs across a spectrum of industries and businesses.

It is abundantly clear that current levels of native forest harvesting are not sustainable. Change is now coming as a result of market forces and loss of supply (driven by historic over-harvesting and also, to a significant degree, by the increased fire activity we are seeing as a result of climate change). According to long term research on Victoria's Central Highlands forests "logging has caused an 'extinction debt' that is highly likely (92% certainty) to trigger an ecosystem-wide collapse within 50 years" (***Burns, Lindenmeyer*** et al 2017). These are the forests that Melbourne relies on for its drinking water, clean air, moderation of temperature extremes, and for recreation and tourism.

In late 2019, the Andrews government committed to 'immediate' protection of old growth forests and an end to native forest logging by 2030. The government needs to establish and fund a comprehensive transition plan for the native forests sector. This transition needs to be dealt with in conjunction with the transition of the stationary energy sector. The Latrobe Valley Authority (LVA) is already playing a significant role in supporting former workers from the Carter Holt Harvey facility transition into other work, and its brief should be expanded to include managing the transition of workers at the Australia Paper Maryvale pulp mill and other facilities in the Latrobe Valley.

In terms of policy response in the short term, the Victorian government should:

- bring forward the 2030 transition out of native forest logging
- reduce the logging that happens between now and the end date
- amend the Wood Pulp Agreement Act (the laws that currently commit the state to log to 2030).

This transition would include opportunities to substantially increase the carbon sink provided by Victoria's land sector. This can be done through supporting the further development of farm forestry and implementing changes in forest management on public land. Support for strategic ecological restoration across rural Victoria will have economic, climate and ecological benefits. The Fenner School of Environment has noted that "native forest logging results in significant greenhouse gas emissions, because, typically, less than 5% of the biomass carbon of logged forests ends up as long-term timber products".

The transition out of native forestry logging can make a major contribution to reducing Victoria's emissions, for two reasons:

1. Native forest logging currently makes up a significant proportion of the greenhouse gas emissions in Victoria. By stopping logging, we can stop these emissions.
2. Victoria's forests are the most carbon dense in the world. Given a chance to continue to grow, they are highly effective at removing carbon dioxide from the atmosphere.

In the Latrobe Valley and surrounding area, there are employment opportunities in:

- Plantation establishment on farmland;
- Ecological restoration in areas currently harvested for timber;
- Fire control and management in native forests, including control of invasive species; and
- In time, employment in harvesting native timber from plantations.

What is clear from recent fires across Victoria which have destroyed plantations in places like the Strzelecki Ranges, is that Victoria needs increased capacity to fight wildfire. With fire seasons becoming longer as a result of climate change, there is an argument for the establishment of a significant permanent wildfire fighting force based in the Latrobe Valley to manage and respond to fire risk in the Strzelecki Ranges, Central Highlands and Central Alps region of the High Country. Contractors currently employed by the timber industry whose heavy machinery is used to fight fires should form an essential part of a strengthened fire fighting capacity in the east of the state.

The creation of the Great Forest National Park (or equivalent reserve) is expected to generate up to 760 FTE jobs. It will also result in a major increase in economic activity in the region, well in excess of existing financial returns from logging native forests in the area. Returns to the state budget through tax revenue raised from this economic activity can, over time, ensure that restoration of these forests is cost-neutral.

The cessation of logging will require a renegotiation of the government Resource Supply Agreement with Maryvale Pulp Mills (Nippon). This could be achieved by replacing the existing native trees that feed the mills at Maryvale with the mountains of recycled paper that are currently stored across Melbourne, and more widely in Victoria. This would ensure that existing jobs at the mill will be protected.

Roundtable: Social & Environmental Justice Organisations

Our first People's Climate Strategy roundtable was held in July 2020. It brought groups together from across the environment and social justice movements in Victoria, which offer different perspectives on the diversity of communities impacted by climate change.

Representatives from the following groups attended:

- Victorian Council of Social Services
- Climate and Health Alliance
- Democracy in Colour
- Rail, Tram and Bus Union
- Victorian Trades Hall Council
- Disability Resources Centre
- Environment Victoria
- Climate Media Centre
- Hepburn Wind
- Coalition for Community Energy
- Beyond Zero Emissions
- Climate Council
- Public Transport Users Association

Discussion: Communities affected by climate impacts in Victoria

- *Low-income communities:* The living and working conditions in these communities mean that climate impacts are felt more acutely and climate change is exacerbating existing inequalities. People's health is also impacted, e.g. by heat stress and increased anxiety.
  - *Extreme weather:* A combination of poorly-built public housing and unaffordability of efficiency measures (e.g insulation) means people are more exposed to extreme heat and cold. Many escape to shopping centres during the day and sleep outside on lawns at night during heatwaves.
- *Outdoor and frontline workers:* Extreme weather and increasing bushfire intensity are putting pressure on workers, whose workplaces do not currently have adequate systems and provisions to deal with climate impacts. During the Black Summer, extreme heat and heavy smoke caused ongoing stress, exhaustion and health impacts for workers.
  - *Frontline workers* like firefighters and nurses, whose work is already physically and mentally taxing, are dealing with added pressures from climate impacts. Nurses face spikes in patients suffering from smoke impacts, fire injuries and extreme heat health impacts.
  - *Agriculture:* Extreme weather, changing seasons and drought are causing high stress for farmers, e.g. fruit is ripening at the wrong times and impacting supply and production, milk production declines due to drought and heat stress on animals. Agriculture workers struggle to work in high temperatures.
- People with disabilities: this community is more vulnerable to climate impacts, primarily due to factors impacting on their accessibility to frontline and emergency services and transport.

More attention needs to be given to the disaster preparedness of people with disabilities, e.g. accessible transport to leave dangerous areas during bushfires.

- ***People of colour (POC):*** Climate change disproportionately impacts many POC, often due to their economic situations in low-socioeconomic communities. Many work in insecure, low-paid jobs which offer insufficient or no support for workers exposed to climate change impacts. Low-paid work also means that rising energy bills during extreme weather cause ongoing economic stress for households.
  - ***Impacted by climate***, but not focused on it: Climate change as a concept is often not the number one priority of these communities. More immediate human rights concerns threaten their lives and livelihoods, e.g. discrimination and being targeted by the media. An example is the 'hard lockdown' imposed on Melbourne's public housing towers last year, which caused multicultural communities extreme stress, anxiety and loss of trust.
  - ***Language barriers:*** POC are often left out of the climate conversation due to lack of linguistically-diverse communication and connection with their communities.
- ***Sport:*** A pillar of communities rural, regional and city-based across the state as well as a professional sector, sport is heavily impacted by a range of climate impacts including extreme weather, bushfires, seasons changing, drought and heat waves. For kids in particular, sport was disrupted due to the danger of exercising in the smoke haze during the Black Summer bushfires and risks of heat stress. Communities will endure ongoing, increasing costs of maintaining pitches and fields as droughts worsen.

> "Education and honesty in the community about climate change, the impacts and building preparedness and resilience in our community. Evidence shows that feeling a sense of control and preparedness reduces the negative impacts of traumas such as natural disasters."
>
> ***Respondent, Gippsland***

- ***Public transport users:*** Victoria's public transport network is vulnerable to multiple climate impacts, the worst currently being extreme heat. During heatwaves, trains can't run as fast (especially older carriages) and require bus replacements. Many carriages don't have adequate air conditioning, and lack of regular services means people are sardine-packed into carriages, sometimes passing out on V-lines due to heat.
  - ***Infrastructure:*** Public transport stops and stations need improvement to protect people from extreme weather. Many stops have no shade, which exposes people reliant on public transport to heat stroke.

These factors discourage many people from using public transport in the first place.

- ***Public transport workers:*** The same climate impacts affecting commuters, affect workers. In older trams with no air conditioning, the driver's compartment can reach over 50°C during a heatwave. The Rail, Tram and Bus Union is now working on its first climate change policy to improve worker protections from climate impacts, as well as reducing the emissions that the industry produces.

- *Coastal communities:* Communities along Victoria's coastline, such as Inverloch and Apollo Bay, are already battling coastal erosion as a result of rising sea levels and intensifying storm surges. This threatens infrastructure on the coast line with surf clubs and surf lifesaving towers as the first casualties, and is eroding well-loved beaches. House insurance on the coast will become much harder to secure in the near future.

Ideas to cut emissions and cope with climate impacts

- *Community controlled energy:* The Victorian Emissions Reduction Targets need to include a community energy target, with government funding for local community-owned renewable energy projects. Grassroots, community-owned energy is an important element of the transition we need to make away from our privatised energy system, which currently takes power out of the hands of communities in planning their futures.
- *Planned exit from coal:* The state and federal governments must establish Just Transition Authorities to plan for the closure of remaining coal-fired power stations. Taking this initiative is essential so that communities aren't thrown by surprise with each new closure announcement left to private energy companies.
- *Transport:* our public transport system needs to become an attractive, viable primary option for communities outside of inner Melbourne, including regional Victoria. This means more regular services in off-peak times and in suburbs where communities are more car-dependent. Public money should be shifted away from new mega-roads and into public transport services and infrastructure, with priority projects like converting the bus fleet from diesel to electric power. This investment would create a pipeline of jobs.
    - *Accessibility:* Much of Victoria's public transport is currently inaccessible to people with disabilities, including 85% of Melbourne's tram network. The tram network should be made fully accessible, as well as buses and regional trains. This would mean that people with disabilities who currently rely on friends or family to drive them, or expensive taxis, can independently travel.
- *Protection from extreme weather:* For low-income households, cost is a major barrier to making homes more energy efficient and sheltered. We need solutions both in homes and public spaces: more cool public spaces for people to shelter during heatwaves, and funding to upgrade housing with better insulation and energy efficiency measures.
    - *Climate Action Fund:* The establishment of a Victorian Community Climate Action Fund would help local communities to set up climate emergency facilities tailored to local conditions and needs, and for local councils to undertake and implement zero emissions plans.
- *Union involvement:* Support is growing for the concept of a cooperative economy as a mechanism to roll out more renewable energy and energy efficiency measures, to give workers and their communities more control and cost benefits. For example, the building of cooperative housing designed with maximum efficiency and insulation, built with sustainable local materials, would demonstrate the possibilities of alternatives.
    - *Energy workers:* higher labour standards are needed for renewable energy workers, so that the emerging renewable energy industry does not replicate current exploitative practices that have developed under neoliberal capitalism.
    - *Manufacturing:* A government taskforce on manufacturing is needed to ensure there is local procurement for renewable energy projects, and to identify what local industry can and cannot currently deliver (e.g. Australia doesn't currently produce the right steel for offshore wind).

- ***People of Colour:*** Upskilling young people of colour should be a priority in climate action jobs plans. A benefit of this would be heightened communication about climate change by young people of colour to their families, who are often left out of conversations on climate change due to cultural and language barriers. This should be coupled with proactive communication on climate impacts and solutions in different languages, and active involvement of communities of colour, by local and state levels of government.
- ***Media framing of climate change:*** more proactive discussion on climate change should be led by members of parliament to inform their constituencies via local media about both climate impacts and climate solutions. A strong linking of jobs, social justice and climate action (as US President Joe Biden is demonstrating) in the public sphere by members of parliament is essential to counter the fear deriving from uncertainty that many people have around economic transformation. This kind of discussion driven by politicians is particularly needed in regional and rural Victoria. For example, climate solutions in the agriculture sector are not yet discussed proactively by governments, compared with sectors like energy and transport.

Roundtable: Ballarat Community

The second People's Climate Strategy roundtable was held in September 2020 for community groups in Ballarat. Roundtable participants represented a range of ages (from high school to retiree), occupations, and experiences of climate change within the Ballarat community, and contributed valuable perspectives on climate change impacts and solutions in a regional Victorian context. Participants also brought a strong depth of local knowledge on various economic sectors regarding both cutting emissions and dealing with locked-in climate impacts, namely transport, energy, agriculture and housing.

Representatives from the following groups attended:

- Ballarat Climate Action Network
- Ballarat Public Transport Users Association
- Ballarat Renewable Energy and Zero Emissions
- Ballarat Community Alliance
- Extinction Rebellion Ballarat
- Ballarat Bicycle Users Group
- Ballarat Permaculture Guild
- The Hidden Orchard
- Talina Edwards Architecture firm

Attendees emphasised the naturally hot and dry climate of Ballarat as a factor making the area vulnerable to the increased heatwaves and drought that climate change is bringing to Victoria. They noted the population growth of Ballarat as a regional centre, accelerated by an exodus from cities to regional and rural areas sparked by the pandemic, as well as the continued agricultural importance of the country surrounding Ballarat. These factors were seen as imperatives to prepare the Ballarat community for a changing climate, and ensure that all new growth in the city has sustainability and emissions reduction centered in planning.

Climate change impacts affecting the region

- *Transport:* train services are affected in extreme heat (e.g. trains having to drive more slowly, disrupting timetables)
- *Transport*: Many public transport stations (e.g. bus stops) do not provide adequate shelter, such as shade from heatwaves. This disincentivises people from using public transport, and exposes people who are reliant on public transport to extreme weather.

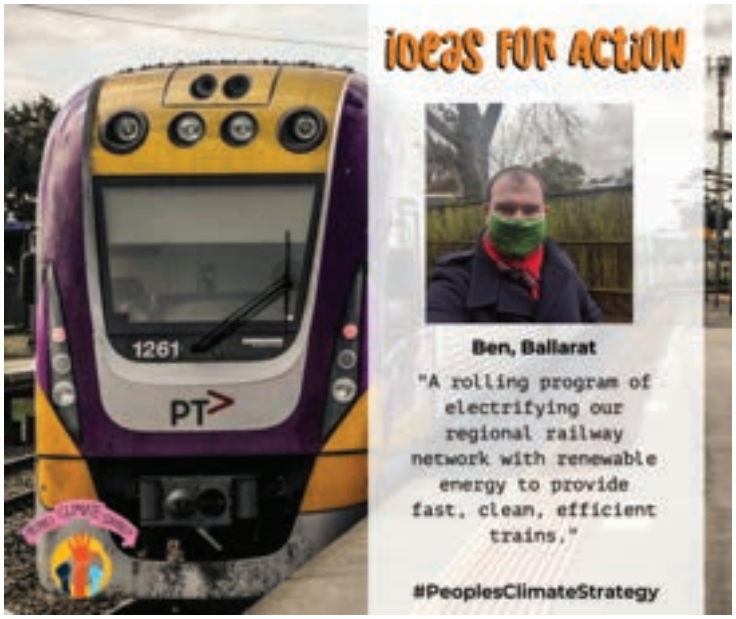
- *Housing:* People increasingly want efficiently-designed housing that will buffer them from extreme weather when renovating and buying, but this remains a cost barrier to many as it had not been adopted widely enough in planning and design.
- *Agriculture*: Seasons changing due to climate change mean they are no longer reliable for growing food, making it harder to predict harvests. At The Hidden Orchard, fruit now ripens at the wrong time or can rot on the trees due to extreme weather.

- *Agriculture:* Water security is a constant concern, with droughts becoming more frequent and intense. The centrality of agriculture in the Ballarat community was noted: 'Everyone knows someone who grows something around here' (roundtable participant).
- *Mental Health:* Young participants brought up increased anxiety and feelings of hopelessness among young people due to a lack of apparent concern and sense of urgency from governments. Some young people have already lost their homes in bushfires, and anxiety around bushfires is accelerating throughout the community.

Key recommendations for the Victorian government

- *City Planning:* Participants expressed deep concern that Ballarat's growth is creating sprawling suburbs that render people car-dependent and too far from services to walk, cycle or access public transport. They emphasised the need for planned, independent suburbs with integrated services accessible without need for a car.
- Noted that even in the city centre, new housing developments situated five minutes from public transport stations are required to provide two car parks per house, entrenching car-centric living.
- *Transport:* All houses in the city need accessible, regular public transport. Increased use will generate more revenue to spend on service improvements.
- *Transport:* Regional trains and all new buses should be electrified with renewable energy. The state government can play a role in tackling the main barrier with electric buses, which is their upfront cost, by funding a rollout.
- *Transport:* Ballarat can be a hub for electric train and bus production. Noted that buses and trains are already built in Ballarat, so the workforce and infrastructure are there. Alstom, which builds trains in Ballarat, is already producing electric trains overseas.
- *Transport:* Construction of separated, safe bike lanes, especially around services

like schools, as current unsafe riding conditions deter parents from riding with kids. Local production of electric bikes was suggested.



- *Housing:* High minimum standards for sustainability and efficiency of new houses (Talina Edwards Architecture builds all homes to International Passivhaus Standard - much higher than 6-star standard here). Grants for sustainable building and retrofitting of old houses could promote this - noted that building grants currently given have very short timeframes attached and insufficient efficiency standards, meaning mainly poorly built homes are constructed.
- *Housing:* Many materials for sustainable building are only produced overseas - there is a gap in the market for sustainable, thermally-efficient materials to be manufactured here.
- *Energy:* community-owned renewable energy and utilisation of spaces in city, e.g. solar panels over all car parks.
- *Community engagement:* Opportunities for deeper citizen engagement on climate solutions at a council level, e.g. citizen assemblies.
- *Community education:* education and resources to promote more local, sustainable living. Noted that climate change impacts and increased concern about the failures of industrial monoculture agriculture have generated growing interest in food production including permaculture practices - there is an opportunity for education around local food growing and creation of more participatory community gardens.

Roundtable: Social Services

In February 2021, the final People's Climate Strategy roundtable was held with representatives from Victorian social service organisations who support some of the communities most impacted by climate change.

Representatives from Council to Homeless Persons, Jesuit Social Services, Uniting Age Well, UnitingCare ReGen and the Victorian Public Tenants Association participated in the roundtable discussion. Collectively, they provide services to people experiencing homelessness, people at risk of homelessness, people living in or on the waitlist for public housing, people living in insecure private rentals, the elderly, people within the justice system, recently arrived migrants, refugees and asylum seekers, and people who rely on Centrelink payments or live on low incomes. The services they provide range from advocacy, to community development, to service provision, including emergency relief.

In line with the findings from the Climate Impacts survey, roundtable attendees identified heatwaves and bushfires as the top concerns for the communities they serve and for organisational service provision. Extreme weather events and emergencies have wide ranging and significant impacts to the health, wellbeing and quality of life for these communities. Further, attendees emphasised that climate change impacts intensify existing forms of social and structural oppression experienced by their service users.

Key impacts of heatwaves on communities and service provision

- People living in public and community housing experience physical and mental stress due to poor insulation and lack of access to air-conditioning - current government policy is that people can request air conditioning if it is 'medically required' but often have difficulty proving this.
- People relying on Centrelink payments or living on low incomes cannot stock up on food during heatwaves. They often have to travel further for services and essentials as they are forced to live in suburbs with fewer resources and less public transport.
- Heatwaves increase energy prices for households, putting people into further financial insecurity – this has a flow on effect as household budgets are tightened for education, food and other resources.
- Isolation and social disconnectedness, especially for the elderly.

- Frontline service delivery is disrupted by electricity outages caused by heatwaves.
- Services may have difficulties reaching service users who are unable to travel during heatwaves.

Key impacts of bushfires on communities and service provis

- Smoke across Victoria during the 2019-20 Black Summer bushfires had impacts on physical health, particularly for residents of public housing towers or in housing with no air-conditioning.
- The smoke also created social isolation, especially for the elderly.
- The severe shortage of public housing makes it difficult to relocate people displaced by bushfires, and creates competition with others who already needed access to housing, such as people experiencing homelessness or family violence.
- Bushfires create employment insecurity and job losses, with marginalised workers generally the first to be dismissed after a natural disaster.
- Service providers may experience staff shortages if staff are impacted by bushfires themselves, and workers experience stress by continuing to provide services while managing the risk of bushfires.
- Provisions distributed in trucks from Melbourne to regional Victoria were held up during bushfires due to a lack of system in place for this level of intense bushfire.

Key recommendations for the Victorian Government

- Increase Victoria's stock of public housing as a matter of priority. This stock needs to include vacancies to temporarily house people displaced during natural disasters, such as bushfires.
- Increase funding to retrofit public housing to make it more insulated and efficient (e.g. with passive cooling) and make air-conditioning more readily available.
- Ensure public, community and affordable housing is available across the city to ensure people on low incomes are not forced into areas with limited services and facilities.
- Change restrictions on government funding to allow service providers to move resources or funds to areas in need. Currently funds must be used within a catchment area.
- Improve city planning and urban greening in consideration of people who need to walk or catch public transport in extreme heat.
- Provide funding for climate mitigation and adaptation specialist roles within social services. Currently organisations are too under-resourced to create these roles.
- Fund local governments to implement localised climate change adaptation strategies with priority attention given to vulnerable populations.

Statement: Just Transition South Gippsland

Who We Are

Driving through South Gippsland, geographically known for its green rolling hills and steady (though declining) rainfall, you could almost arrive at the conclusion that the area will be spared the worst impacts of climate change. A smokestack or factory is a rare sight, with larger scale agribusiness less common than farm gates and family-owned high street shops. The traditional markers of low-paid and exploitative work are similarly harder to spot. However, both economic inequality and signs of a changing climate are present forces in the region.

Just Transition South Gippsland (JTSG) was formed in 2019 by community members who are passionate about tackling climate change and inequality, which the group recognise as inextricably linked.

Our vision of a just transition

South Gippsland's major employers are farming, tourism and services. Unlike places such as the Hunter Valley or Collie in Western Australia, South Gippsland's economy has not historically been built around one extractive industry. Therefore, our focus is wider: transitioning away from fossil fuels means there is a necessity for us to reconsider almost every aspect of our shared lives and economy.

To decarbonise, we need to reassess the ways we produce what we need for ourselves and our communities. For the transition to have justice at its heart, it must meet the needs of the many, rather than the few. And the way to do that is to build the transition democratically and from the ground up. JTSG's aim is to become a platform that gives all South Gippslanders a say in creating the future of the region. With this in mind, a Just Transition for South Gippsland is made up of two pillars:

1. The need to decarbonise by moving away from fossil fuels.
2. Ensuring the transition is just by making it democratic and participatory

The opportunities and obstacles for South Gippsland

South Gippsland is an area dominated by beautiful countryside and agriculture. With climate change altering rainfall patterns, South Gippsland may become the primary food bowl for Victoria, as we are more water secure than the rest of mainland Australia. When thinking through what a fossil fuel-free economy would look like, there is a need for more policies and projects focused on firstly; lowering emissions in agriculture and making agriculture more resilient to climate impacts, and secondly; conservation of natural ecosystems. Having the magnificent Wilsons Prom on our doorstep is beneficial in that there already exists a strong understanding within communities about the need to protect the environment, and the benefits (economic and more) that doing so brings.

As a tourist hotspot that has seen an influx of tree changers following the COVID exodus, South Gippsland also needs to tackle issues of what sustainable growth means for our region. More tourists need more cafes; more cafes need staff; more staff need affordable housing. Yet rental properties are increasingly being converted to holiday use through platforms like AirBnB and pushing up the overall price of renting, to name one of the many contradictions present in the region. Many houses are installing solar power and some communities have started investigating the opportunities of community energy projects. However, it is still clear that individual efforts to combat climate change predominantly depend on household wealth. So, for us there is a pressing need for a societal-wide transition that leaves no one behind. It requires tackling the whole range of social, ecological, and economic issues facing our region.

How we plan to move ahead

There is already incredible community work going on across our region with focuses on climate change and social inequity. Yet, what has been missing is a space to bring these groups and ideas together to form a cohesive strategy that addresses the two pillars mentioned above. JTSG is working to create a strategy produced by and for South Gippslanders, that can be a roadmap for the region to move away from fossil fuels.

To form the strategy and create a platform for all, several working groups have been formed to look at different sectors: farming and food production; work, education and training; energy; health and care; housing; public transport; conservation and environment; and sports, arts and community. The working groups bring people together to work out what is already working to build on, and what still needs to be done to make a holistic transition. At the moment, these working groups are beginning to carry out conversations with the wider community, collating and mapping out what is already happening and starting to articulate what a Just Transition for each issue would look like for our region.

The next step will be to collate these visions into one strategy. This will then be taken back to the community through as many town hall meetings as possible. The aim of this collective strategy, in a similar vein to the People's Climate Strategy, is to provide a blueprint for the next Shire Council, as well as other institutions in our community. Our goal for the region is an economy and communities independent from fossil fuels. However, what is equally vital for us is the way we get there: through the democratic participation of South Gippslanders in the process from the very beginning.

If you want to find out more and follow how our meetings are going, check out our website:

https://jtsouthgippsland.org/overview

Follow us on Facebook:

Just Transition South Gippsland

Or send us an email:

contact@jtsouthgippsland.org

JUST TRANSITION

SOUTH GIPPSLAND

Conclusion

We are facing a climate crisis which is already here and now in Victoria. To tackle this crisis head-on, Victoria's goal must be to reach zero emissions as soon as possible.

This means that the heaviest lift on emissions reduction must be done over the next ten years, with 2030 as the important year in our minds rather than 2050. As well as rapidly reducing emissions, governments must provide communities with the resourcing they need to withstand climate impacts that are locked in.

In ramping up these efforts, it is crucial that Victoria's response centres the idea of climate justice.

Responding to the climate crisis requires more than just technical solutions to lower emissions; our new green economy cannot be a replica of the current neoliberal structures which exploit people for their work and exploit stolen Indigenous land for its resources, only powered by renewables.

More than a few tweaks to the current model, people are hungry for big change. The pandemic has highlighted deeply entrenched inequalities in our communities, and it now presents us with an opportunity: to make strong action on climate change that is rooted in social justice the mission of our economic recovery.

Across the board in the surveys, round tables, forums, and other actions that have shaped this Strategy, there has been a strong understanding in communities that climate solutions should be vehicles that advance all existing social justice goals.

The People's Climate Strategy process that Friends of the Earth facilitated has engaged thousands of people across the state during the unprecedented disruption of the pandemic.

It has unearthed local knowledge about the climate impacts already changing Victoria, and has generated a wealth of creative ideas to tackle this multifaceted crisis.

This People's Climate Strategy can be a resource that communities use to identify the concerns of their region, ideas that already have support, and opportunities for local campaigns.

We believe that numerous briefings we held over the past few months have influenced the Victorian government's own Climate Strategy—the state's first—which will be released in 2021.

And we believe the People's Climate Strategy for Victoria makes a valuable contribution to state efforts to tackle the climate crisis.

The People's Climate Strategy was written by over a thousand people from across the state. What comes next will be written by all of us. See you on the campaign trail.