

Climate Policy

Policy type	Council
Function	Development & Environmental Services
Policy Owner	Natural Environment & Sustainability
Effective date	28 August 2025
Last review date	28 August 2025

1. Purpose

The intent of this policy is to provide the strategic framework for Council to manage its climate change responsibilities by using a combination of climate change mitigation and adaptation strategies.

The Cassowary Coast is exposed to a number of natural hazards, all of which are likely to be exacerbated by anthropogenic climate change.

Direct hazards include:

- extreme storms
- heatwaves
- riverine and surface flooding
- sea level rise and coastal erosion
- tropical cyclones.

Indirect hazards as a result of climate change include impacts to world heritage values (reef & wet tropics), increased coastal erosion and landslides, reduced water security, changes to invasive species impacts, increased fire season duration, heat stress on crops and livestock and impacts on tourism activities and infrastructure.

Climate change is expected to affect a number of areas which Council is responsible/ partly responsible for or has an active interest in. These areas include:

- Land use planning
- emergency management
- infrastructure
- public health
- water security and waste management
- natural environment.

Responding effectively to climate change involves a combination of reducing greenhouse gas emissions, whilst protecting important carbon sinks such as rainforests and mangroves (mitigation); and building resiliency to prepare and adapt to climate change impacts (adaptation).

The Policy aligns with Council's existing commitments under:

- The Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority's (GBRMPA) Reef Guardian Councils stewardship and schools program
- Eco Certification

- The QCoast2100 Coastal Hazard Adaptation Strategy (CHAS) program
- Wet Tropics Healthy Waterways Partnership
- Far North Queensland Regional Organisation of Council's (FNQROC) Queensland Climate Resilient Councils (QCRC) program.

2. Scope

This Policy is applicable to Council including operations, Elected Members, employees, volunteers and contractors in all decisions and activities.

3. Definitions

Adaptation - Any action, initiative or strategy taken to reduce the vulnerability of the natural and/or human environment from climate change impacts.

Anthropogenic Climate Change – Climate change caused by human activities which lead to the release of greenhouse gases which accelerate climate change.

Climate Change – The statistically significant variation in the average state of climate over a minimum 30-year period for an extended period.

Carbon Offsets - Reducing or capturing greenhouse gas emissions to counterbalance greenhouse gas emissions released by another source or activity.

Carbon Footprint – The amount of carbon dioxide released into the atmosphere as a result of the activities of a particular individual, organisation or community.

Carbon Sink (Carbon Store) – Ecosystems, notably rainforests, mangroves and oceans, which remove greenhouse gas emissions from the atmosphere by absorbing and storing it.

Council - means the Cassowary Coast Regional Council.

Greenhouse Gas Emissions – A gas which traps heat in the atmosphere, accelerating climate change. The main greenhouse gases contributing to climate change are: Carbon Dioxide (CO₂), Methane (CH₄), Nitrous Oxide (N₂O) and Fluorinated gases (e.g. hydrofluorocarbons and perfluorocarbons). Activities such as the burning of fossil fuels for energy and transportation are a significant source of greenhouse gas emissions.

Mitigation – Actions taken to reduce greenhouse gas emissions in order to minimise their effects on global climate change. Instead of initiatives aimed at adapting to climate change, mitigation refers to the prevention and control of the sources of greenhouse gas emissions.

Staff - includes employees, contractors, volunteers and all others who perform work for Council.

Zero Net Emissions (Carbon Neutral) – Having a net zero carbon footprint by balancing a measured amount of carbon released with an equivalent amount sequestered, offset or by purchasing carbon credits.

4. Principles

Council operating within its local government functions and responsibilities, is committed to the following ten (10) principles:

- Recognise and understand the Council's vulnerabilities, through a dedicated climate risk assessment process, associated with climate change based on the best available climate science at the time of this policy's adoption
- Maintain a GHG inventory and develop a corporate emission reduction profile to understand and reduce Council's carbon footprint
- Develop and implement climate change mitigation actions which aim to reduce the impact of Council's operations on climate change
- Develop and implement climate change adaptation actions to strengthen Council's resilience to climate change impacts
- Seek external funding opportunities, where able, to implement this Policy and offset organisational costs
- Protect existing carbon sinks located within the Cassowary Coast Region and develop new opportunities
- Progress the expansion of carbon offsets, across the region and stack with other market offset opportunities, where appropriate
- To demonstrate climate change leadership to the Cassowary Coast community
- To participate in appropriate national, state and regional groups, which aim to share climate change knowledge, build capability and/or improve resiliency
- To comply with applicable legal requirements and implement any relevant Regional, State or Federal Government policies, guidelines and/or directives related to climate change (both now and in the future).

5. Provisions

Council climate change adaptation and mitigation strategies that align with this Policy will be detailed within the Corporate Plan and appropriately resourced in the Operational Plan (including relevant budget process).

Management of any financial gain (e.g. credit) associated with either a non-statutory or statutory environmental market mechanism will be allocated to a constrained reserve for a related climate mitigation or adaptation action, with any subsequent expenditure being approved by a relevant council resolution (e.g. budget consideration).

A net zero target arrangement will be considered in future iterations/ reviews of this Policy.

6. Monitoring and Reporting

A working group will be established to support and report on the integration of a range of actions consistent with this Policy, and organisational sustainability and reef action planning.

Related forms, policies and procedures	Planning Scheme Asset Management Plans Corporate Plan 2025-2029 Operational Plan
Relevant legislation	<i>Environmental Protection Act 1994</i> <i>Local Government Act 2009</i> <i>Planning Act 2016</i> <i>Waste Reduction and Recycling Act 2011</i>
Reference and resources	<p>Paris Agreement and the Kyoto Protocol <i>On 10 November 2016 Australia ratified the Paris Agreement and the Doha Amendment to the Kyoto Protocol. Australia has committed to reduce emissions by 26 to 28 per cent below 2005 levels by 2030.</i></p> <p>Australian Climate Change Science <i>A National Framework 2009 Identifies national climate change science priorities and sets out ways to harness Australia's full science capacity to address them.</i></p> <p>Queensland Climate Adaptation Strategy 2017-2030 <i>Provides a framework for ensuring an innovative and resilient Queensland that manages the risks and harnesses the opportunities of a changing climate.</i></p> <p>Queensland Climate Transition Strategy 2017 <i>Sets a vision of a zero net emissions future for Queensland that supports jobs, industries, communities and the environment</i></p>

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