

Attn: Mayor Steph Asher & Councillors City of Greater Geelong
PO BOX 104, GEELONG, VIC 3220

24 May 2022

[Submitted online](#)

Dear Mayor and Councillors,

Submission re. CoGG's Proposed 2022-23 Budget

Geelong Sustainability appreciates the opportunity to provide this written submission regarding the City's Proposed 2022-23 Budget, Rating and Revenue Plan.

As a Vision Partner, Geelong Sustainability (GS) continues to be an active contributor to the City's clever and creative vision. GS is a reliable future-focused change agent in our community. Our activities are aligned to four strategic pillars: 1) Climate Action, 2) Renewable Energy, 3) Circular Economy and 4) Sustainable Cities.

As we emerge from the pandemic, it's essential that we adequately address the other global challenge ~ climate change. A fast and fair transition will deliver economic opportunities and ecological benefits for Geelong and its people.

GS makes no apology for advocating assertively for the bold transformative action required for Geelong to become a zero carbon city region. When Council adopted its municipal target of net zero by 2035, GS was delighted and relieved that Council was declaring that it would step up and lead effective action.

However sadly the draft FY2023 budget is a BAU (business as usual) plan to spend hundreds of millions of dollars on capital works and less than \$100,000 on implementing its Climate Change Response Plan. Our disappointment and frustration demand some plain speaking in this submission.

The latest book from David Spratt and Ian Dunlop, *Climate Dominoes*¹ outlines the scientific evidence and gravity of critical climate tipping points being triggered around the world with unstoppable positive reinforcing loops. No public official can pretend to be ignorant of the dire state of the global climate emergency nor how crucial this decade is to rapidly reduce our emissions!

GS acknowledges that within Council there's a commitment to lower your own operational emissions. We are very supportive of these initiatives, including:

- the specification of modern heat pump technologies for two new aquatic centres at Norlane and Drysdale; and
- the plan to progressively convert your fleet to electric vehicles.

Having coordinated Sustainable House Day for the region for 13 years, GS is pleased to see \$15,000 allocated to SHD2022 although the era of relying on volunteers to run this event is passing.

We contend the foreword is misleading, *"Through our \$9 million Community Grants program, we are also supporting community-led sustainability initiatives. Among the variety of grant opportunities is the Environmental Sustainability grants pool, and a new Climate Change Action funding stream."* (p3). These statements infer that Council is allocating millions to sustainability initiatives, which it is not.

While the Budget does allocate \$4,464,500 to Community Grants there is only \$150,000 for Environmental Sustainability Grants. With a maximum of just \$10,000 per project and the onerous application and acquittal processes, in reality they are ineffective for organisations like GS.

GS is very supportive of the funding allocated to the Shared Trails Master Plan to implement specific projects and conduct feasibility studies for other routes.

We are puzzled by the large sum of \$735,000 committed over the next two years to the Sustainability Framework Implementation. What will the integrated sustainability performance framework achieve? The community needs its Council to be delivering effective practical programs that assist them to lower their

¹ <https://www.breakthroughonline.org.au/climatedominoes>

emissions and transition away from fossil fuels. The amount is twice the amount allocated over the next 3 years to Social Housing Implementation.

| 2022-23 TO 2025-26 NON CAPITAL PROGRAM - NEW AND INCREASED INITIATIVES | | | | | |
|--|---|---------------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| Project Name | Description | 2022-23 Expenditure \$ | 2023-24 Expenditure \$ | 2024-25 Expenditure \$ | 2025-26 Expenditure \$ |
| 2P Parking, 1 hour free | Second hour free in 2P street parking zones. | 2,068,865 | 2,068,865 | 2,068,865 | |
| Integrated Transport Plan | The engagement of an external consultant to plan Geelong's transport future and guide investment decisions for the transport system within City of Greater Geelong over the next 30 years (by 2051) in response to growth. | 150,000 | | | |
| Shared Trails | Implementation of three 'shovel ready' projects in 2021-22 and the resources to investigate the viability of network gaps and associated planning to help with future capital investments. | 254,609 | 259,702 | 264,896 | |
| Coastal and Marine Management Plan | These management plans will assist the council in prioritising where funding will be allocated as well as assist in securing state government grant funding for the delivery of capital works. | 190,000 | | | |
| Kardinia Pool | Extended opening of Kardinia pool, covering winter months. | 500,000 | 500,000 | 500,000 | 500,000 |
| Lara Swimming Pool | Open Lara pool from 1 October each year, one month earlier than the scheduled opening. | 45,000 | 45,000 | 45,000 | 45,000 |
| Connecting Communities & Growing Tourism | Planning to determine the feasibility of shared trail infrastructure for Bellarine, Lara to You Yangs, Rail Trail and Barwon River Loop | 350,000 | | | |
| Cyber Security | Funding to establish an organisation wide information security management system and cyber security risk management framework to manage changing security identify management and information protection needs of the organisation. | 300,000 | 300,000 | | |
| Norlane Community Hub | Facilities Development Plan to identify future renewal works at the community hub. | 100,000 | | | |
| Climate Change Plan Community Programs and Engagement | Developing a climate change community awareness and engagement program, including community workshops, provision of subsidised energy audits. | 95,000 | | | |
| Sustainability Framework Implementation | The integrated sustainability performance framework is a foundation piece needed to create integrated dashboard reporting, which will break down silos and show each department's contribution to strategic outcomes. It will ensure our decision makers are provided with holistic, transparent insight. | 365,000 | 370,000 | | |

GS is most critical of the lack of funding for the Climate Change Response Plan (CCRP). Our committee and members committed many hours to rounds of community consultation as did many other groups in good faith that Council would adequately fund the Plan's implementation. In the Acknowledgements, The CCRP expresses *"gratitude to Encader Consulting, as well as the many individuals and organisations whose enthusiasm, commitment and contributions helped shape the plan"*.p2 ²

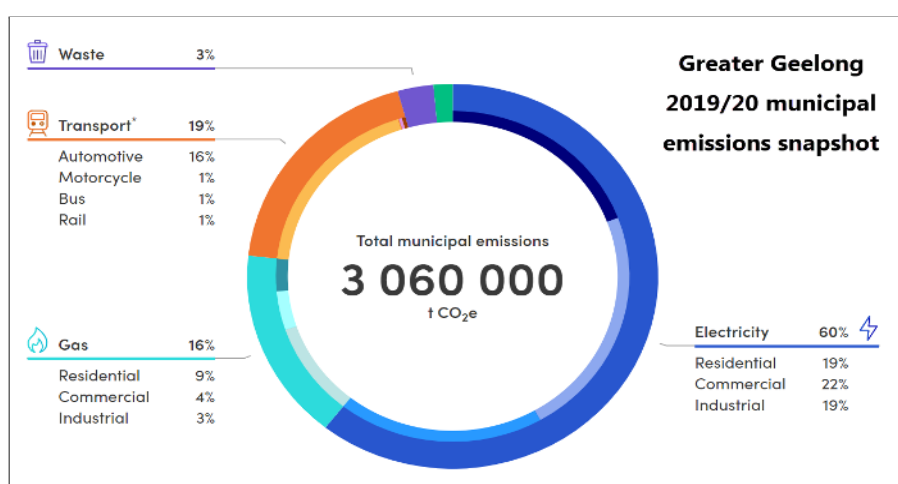
Are you now telling the community that responding to this global existential threat is not a priority and only warrants a paltry \$95,000 with no funds committed in the forward estimates? We understand that officers asked for \$1m. We'd suggest that's a small investment in a safe, liveable future.

So we ask Councillors, where is the funding to begin addressing the key goals and principles in the CCRP?

- Principle 1: Support an empowered and active community
- Principle 2: Increase energy efficiency and renewable energy production
- Principle 3: Switch to sustainable transport and cleaner fuels
- Principle 4: Reduce non-energy emissions and increase carbon storage
- Principle 5: Increase awareness and understanding of climate change impacts
- Principle 6: Build climate action into decision making
- Principle 7: Increase collaborative climate change responses

Across our region, smaller councils are finding resources to tackle these challenges. Council says it wants to be a leader but your Budget Plan shows this is not the case. **If not now, when?**

The most urgent challenge is developing a collaborative Roadmap to Net Zero. Over the last three years, the carbon emissions for Greater Geelong have been static at 3.1m tonnes. [Source: Snapshot ³]



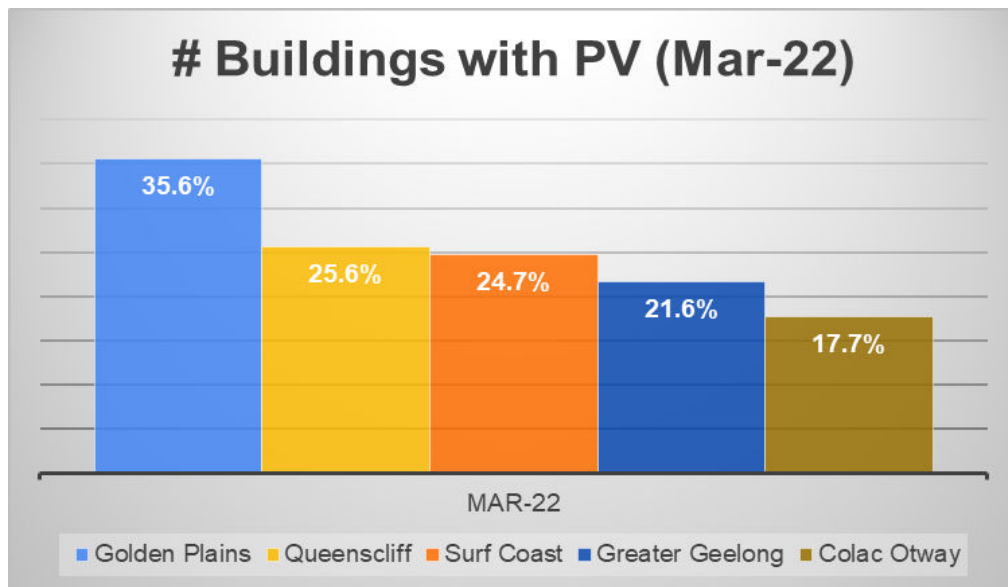
²

<https://www.geelongaustralia.com.au/common/Public/Documents/8d9b3d6e2bec4ce-climatechangeresponseplanfinal.pdf>

³ <https://snapshotclimate.com.au/locality/municipality/australia/victoria/greater-geelong/>

GS has been actively pursuing renewable energy projects and community bulk buys in our region. ⁴ The Geelong+ Community Solar Program was our region's largest ever community solar bulk-buy. It resulted in over 280 households & businesses adding solar and/or batteries to their buildings ~ adding 2.5MW of renewable generation and storage to the grid.⁵

However currently only 21.3% of dwellings in Geelong have rooftop solar. ⁶ Our region needs to more than double its uptake of renewables to reach the state's Victorian Renewable Energy Target (VRET) of 50% by 2030.⁷ Only Golden Plains Shire is on track to meet these targets.



[Source: pv-map.apvi.org.au]

If we don't make deep emissions cuts before 2030, our remaining carbon budget will be severely restricted in the period 2031-2035. This will require much steeper cuts to be made in a very short period of time.

GS agrees with the opening sentence from the Mayor and CEO, *"Budgets bring to life an organisation's purpose, values and priorities"*.

As the results of Saturday's federal election have shown, citizens are demanding their elected representatives deliver on their priorities. We respectfully submit that this budget does not deliver on the community's priorities nor what the extraordinary times demand.

Climate solutions are ready to go and they are good for our lives, our kids, our jobs, our economy and our big beautiful planet. It's time for transformational change. Every decision, every policy, every investment, every day and every tonne of climate pollution matters.

Yours sincerely,

Vicki Perrett, President, Geelong Sustainability Group Inc.
on behalf of the committee and members

w: www.geelongsustainability.org.au



⁴ <https://www.geelongsustainability.org.au/community-solar-success/>

⁵ <https://www.geelongsustainability.org.au/community-solar-success/>

⁶ <https://pv-map.apvi.org.au/historical#12/-38.1302/144.4105>

⁷ <https://www.energy.vic.gov.au/renewable-energy/victorias-renewable-energy-targets>