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Committee Policy, Finance and Strategy
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Report on the ICLEI Oceania Conference on Climate Change, Melbourne 2-5 May 2007

1. Purpose

To report on the ICLEI Oceania conference, *Accelerating Now*, on climate change, that I recently attended in Melbourne, Australia.

2. Background

In February 2007, Council agreed to join the Communities for Climate Protection-NZ Programme (CCP-NZ) that is led by the International Council for Local Environment Initiatives – Australia/New Zealand Ltd (ICLEI).

CCP-NZ and Genesis Energy provided \$2000 NZ to assist the Chair and the CCP-NZ Primary Contact Officer (Dr Jane Bradbury) to attend the above conference.

3. Conference

Unfortunately, because of a clash with a very important Wellington Regional Strategy Committee meeting, I was unable to get to Melbourne until the morning of the 3 May 2007. Nevertheless, I was still able to attend the substantive part of the conference.

Dr Bradbury attended the “CCP-NZ recognition breakfast”, held to recognise NZ councils’ achievements with the programme. She accepted a framed certificate on the Council’s behalf. A list of the Council’s programmes contributing to climate change action was read out to the assembled guests.

The breakfast guests were also given a preview of a DVD that CCP-NZ is producing to inform people about the climate change issue.

The conference began with Steve Herbert, Parliamentary Secretary, presenting the Keynote Address for John Thwaites, Minister for Water and Minister for Environment. Mr Herbert noted that the scientific evidence on climate change

compels us all to act and act quickly. He also stressed the need for solid targets which should be underpinned by strong programmes such as CCP.

Wayne Wescott, ICLEI Oceania Chief Executive Officer, presented the second Keynote Address. Wayne made the following points:

- Measurement works. Although it is sometimes difficult to justify measuring progress when resources are scarce, most people respond to proof of change. Successful change often leads to more change. For example, Melbourne City changed a goal of 20% carbon emission reduction by 2010 to zero emissions by 2020. When they could see movement and monetary savings with their original goal, there were willing to take on more.
- Partnerships are hard. No single sector by itself can drive sustainability. But working in partnerships is easy to say and hard to do. People have different languages and different agendas. Therefore, one of the competencies that we need to develop is how to conduct partnerships more effectively.
- Complexity must be handled simply. The milestone framework of the CCP programme allows us to tackle a complex issue in a structured, simple way.
- The aggregation of many small things becomes a powerful story. For example, retrofitting one library is a story for the community; retrofitting 2000 libraries across the country is a message to the country and the world. There are multiple small actions which, when picked up, become huge.
- Thinking globally and acting locally is still really important. It's a bit clichéd now – but ten years ago a conference such as this would never have been held. Local government in NZ and Australia can have a strong influence on addressing climate change. The sector has been and needs to be proactive.

He hoped that the conference would address the following:

- Issue of using market mechanisms as emissions trading becomes a reality
- How we can get climate change locked in so that we can carry on during changes in markets and economies.
- How we can escalate what we do now – and do it better, e.g., energy efficiency
- How we can better integrate adaptation and reduction of emissions. We need to take care that we don't divert resources from reduction to adaptation as that would just be giving a worse problem to the next generation.

- How we can encourage hope. Hope is a great motivator. As there are continual reports to describe what is happening around the world, we don't want people to think that this is just too hard.
- The notion of "carbon neutral communities" needs to be teased out. This is a notion that ICLEI will be promoting.

One panel discussion on "in a world that increasingly values carbon, what does this mean for the acceleration of local government's abatement action?" was interesting and relevant to local government's role. The main points made were:

- In 1-5 years there will be a price for carbon, potentially internationally driven, which will affect every business and every household. It will cause shifts in economies and there will be winners and losers. The community will not be prepared for this. Local government's role will be to support our communities and help them understand what is happening.
- The current use of fossil fuels will be more expensive and the key question will be "who is going to change first and smartest?" The biggest hurdle for businesses will be the timing of change – when do they change to become more efficient in return for a possible economic advantage? Local government's role will be to provide information to help the decision-making. They need to be able to tell businesses what they can practically do.
- Local government needs to be a role model and take leadership. We need to practice what we preach.
- Councils can make it easier for people to take the right actions, e.g., install solar power heating and water tanks and are potentially significant players in the uptake of new technology.
- Local government can be the aggregator of small scale initiatives.

Another panel discussion was entitled "how do we plan for the future with climate change?" There was agreement that climate change would bring such things as increased storm events, localised flooding events, forest fires etc. The insurance industry expressed concern about the pricing of premiums to cope with, for example, damage from wildfires, roof damage from larger hailstones and the effects of coastal vulnerability. Once again key roles for local government were community education, readiness to deal with hazards and the facilitation of new infrastructure development, such as wind power.

The workshops that Dr Bradbury and I attended related to "integrating sustainability into your organisation" and "transport strategies for sustainable outcomes". Our impressions were that NZ had a definite advantage with the emphasis on sustainability in transport and resource management legislation as well as the sustainability outcomes (social, economic, environmental and cultural well-being) of the Local Government Act 2002. Also, in Australia,

local government's role in transport is one of advocacy only – very different from ours.

At the conference dinner, which was an “unusual event”, Greater Wellington, along with 120 councils, collected a glass globe, which marked the celebration of a decade of achievement for ICLEI.

4. Comment and Implications for GW

It was fascinating to attend a conference where people were so zealous about the subject matter. We did note that the terms “climate change”, “sustainability” and “environment” were often used interchangeably, when in our minds they are very different. Nevertheless, it was clear that local government has a key role to play in climate change – with both emission reduction and adaptation.

You will all be aware that our government is committed to sustainability in general and, just recently our Prime Minister has said that New Zealand should aim to be the first nation to be truly sustainable and carbon neutral. The Minister Responsible for Climate Change Issues, Hon David Parker, has announced that government officials are working on how an economy-wide emissions trading scheme to support the objective of driving down our greenhouse gas emissions could be designed.

Councillors will also remember that we had strong feedback from our community on our last LTCCP that we should be assuming a leadership role on climate change. Our response at the time was that climate change would be addressed in the review of the Regional Policy Statement – and this is happening.

Joining the CCP-NZ Programme was a commitment from this Council that it will address climate change. The first milestone is to establish an inventory and forecast for key sources of greenhouse emissions in the council and the community - and this is already underway. The CCP-NZ Programme also requires us to set an emissions reduction goal and develop a greenhouse gas emissions action plan. This Programme will provide a climate change “umbrella” not only for any new initiatives that we may introduce, but also for the many initiatives that we have already undertaken or are currently undertaking, e.g. travel plan, energy audits, wind power generation etc.

From the conference itself and from recent events, it is clear that Greater Wellington needs to understand the implications of carbon trading for our communities so that we can serve as an educator and information provider. Also, local government needs to be a role model and a leader with climate change.

This Council does need to discuss our approach to climate change. Although it is being addressed in the Regional Policy Statement review, our next LTCCP – which we will be starting soon – will provide the vehicle for these discussions.

It is essential that we start thinking early for our next ten-year plan and I know that this is the intention of staff. Meanwhile we will progress with the CCP-NZ Programme.

Lastly, I'm grateful for the opportunity to attend the conference. It was certainly an eye-opener and made me focus on the issue.

5. Communication

No communication is necessary at this stage.

6. Recommendations

That the Committee:

1. *Receives the report.*
2. *Notes the content of the report.*

Report prepared by:

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