

30 May 2013

Climate Change Authority

GPO Box 1944

Melbourne VIC 3001



Dear Sir/Madam

Re: Climate Change Authority Caps and Targets Review

Mornington Peninsula Shire would like to thank the Climate Change Authority for the opportunity to submit a response to the Caps and Targets Review.

Mornington Peninsula Shire strongly supports the need for mitigation of carbon emissions to avert the most severe impacts of climate change, and encourages immediate and appropriate action to be taken by all levels of Government.

The Shire's detailed submission is attached for your review. Please contact Natalie Peric, Policy Officer Renewable Resources on (03) 5950 1217 if you would like to discuss any aspects of this submission.

Yours Sincerely

Sophia Schyschow

Manager – Renewable Resources

Mornington Peninsula Shire's Submission to the Climate Change Authority's Caps and Targets Review

Background – About the Mornington Peninsula

The Mornington Peninsula Shire is located south east of Melbourne and covers approximately 720 square kilometres of land with a coastline that extends over 190 kilometres which is 10% of Victoria's coastline. The Shire has 40 settlements spread across the peninsula, with the majority of the residential population living along the coastline of Port Phillip. The Shire has an estimated permanent resident population of 145,356 (2008). As a popular holiday destination the population can increase by 30% during the summer holiday period.

Approximately 70% of the Shire is highly productive agricultural land as well as highly significant landscapes and ecosystems. The Mornington Peninsula and Western Port are also a part of the worldwide network of biosphere reserves recognised by the United Nations.

The Mornington Peninsula has a growing and diverse local economy that includes retail, manufacturing, construction, wine production and business services. Tourism is a significant contributor to the local economy, with the Peninsula being a popular weekend, recreation and holiday destination.

Our Approach to Climate Change

The Mornington Peninsula Shire has been preparing for the potential impacts of climate change for over a decade. Our approach has been driven by our *Sustainable Peninsula Initiative*, which was developed in conjunction with our community in 2001. The Initiative provides a framework that ensures we incorporate sustainability principles into our operations. Managing the potential impacts of climate change is one the eight key goals in the Shire Strategic Plan, which is translated into a number of specific objectives.

Key aspects of our approach to climate change have included reducing our greenhouse gas emissions (mitigation) as well as reducing our vulnerability to the potential effects of a changing climate (adaptation).

Greenhouse gas emission reduction initiatives completed by the Shire include reducing the size of fleet vehicles, energy efficiency retrofits, reducing air leakages from buildings, landfill gas capture, installation of solar panels on community facilities and coordinating solar power and solar hot water group purchase programs for residents. In March 2013, Council released its Energy and Greenhouse Management Improvement Plan, committing to a further 35% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions from Shire buildings, relative to current levels, by 2017.

Mornington Peninsula Shire Submission Climate Change Authority: Caps and Targets Review

The following commentary is provided in direct response to the content of the Climate Change Authority's Caps and Targets Review. Only those sections of the Issues Paper relevant to Mornington Peninsula Shire, its activities and its communities have been included within this submission.

Context

The Shire acknowledges climate change is affecting communities globally and the Mornington Peninsula community is no exception. To better understand local climate change impacts the Shire participated in a study conducted by the CSIRO investigating the impacts of climate in the Western Port Region. This study gave some dramatic predictions for climate impacts to 2070. Droughts will be longer and more severe. Temperature is predicted to rise by 3.5 degrees by 2070 and the number of days above 30 degrees will increase by 5 by 2030 and by 16 by 2070. Sea level is predicted to rise by up to 49 cm and storm surges could increase by 65 cm, putting coastal communities and infrastructure at risk of erosion and flooding. High fire risk weather will increase, placing ecosystems, life and property at risk. Storms will be more frequent and severe, which will increase the risk of flooding in many homes and shops as well as damage roads, water supply and sewage, placing greater strain on emergency services. Extreme weather events are already being experienced locally, as is the case across Australia.

The Shire has taken a proactive approach to reducing its greenhouse gas emissions, based on the climate science available. The Shire supports the Climate Change Authority statement that the climate science is increasingly highlighting the need for urgent, decisive and coordinated global action to reduce emissions if there is any real prospect of limiting global temperature increases to 2 degrees.

Emission reduction goals

The Shire acknowledges the Federal Government's interest in limiting warming to 2 degrees. Even under 2 degrees of warming, it should be acknowledged that there will still be consequences and the Federal Government will need to ensure all levels of government are appropriately resourced to manage these impacts, particularly local government, being the closest level of government to the community.

The Shire supports setting targets for periods of time beyond 2020, as this has several benefits as identified in the issues paper, including informing Australia's contribution to international negotiations post-2020 action, reducing uncertainty for long term asset investors, opportunities in technology transfer, capacity building and adaptation support. The Shire acknowledges the role that an intermediate target could play and would encourage consideration of a target between 2020 and 2050 being set. The Shire supports the retention of the federal government target of 80% below 2000 levels for 2050.

The Shire is supportive of Australia taking a leadership role in reducing its greenhouse emissions. In regards to Kyoto accounting, where Australia's emissions are lower than its Kyoto target, the Shire would give support to voluntarily cancelling the extra units and using that information to adjust our 2020 goals to make them more ambitious.

Whilst the carbon pricing mechanism has been designed as the central policy measure to reduce emissions, the Shire recognises the role of complementary policies such as the Renewable Energy Target. The Shire believes the Renewable Energy Target plays a very important role in emission reductions, and would support these targets being strengthened.

Setting Caps

The Shire recognises that the Climate Change Authority will need to estimate uncovered emissions and take into account this uncertainty when setting caps. The Shire would give support to a more conservative approach initially in cap setting, such as setting caps to create a buffer against higher than expected uncovered emissions.

Progress towards medium to long-term targets

The Shire broadly supports further investigation and research being conducted to review the progress to date and future expected progress towards emissions reduction targets.

In defining which medium and long term targets will be used, the Shire supports the use of defining milestones or applying intermediary targets between 2020 and 2050 to assess progress towards the long term target.

Further consideration and research in to the likely mix of emissions reductions in the domestic economy (in both covered and uncovered sectors), as well as consideration of the international context, is supported.

Given the make up of the land use on the Peninsula it would be useful for the review or associated research to include more detailed scientific consideration of uncovered emissions from mixed agriculture including carbon dioxide, methane, and nitrous oxide, and how reductions and offsets can be achieved. This would complement a partly Shire sponsored study undertaken by the Shire, which highlighted the considerable variation in greenhouse gas exchange and soil carbon storage among land-uses and natural ecosystems on the Mornington Peninsula.

It is agreed that once strategic milestones and timeframes are set it will be imperative to reassess the existing policy mechanisms and determine if these are sufficient to deliver the emissions reduction goals with equity, environmental and economic efficiency or if policy adjustments are required to appropriately transition to a low carbon economy.