

Jeff Barlow's Address to Yarra Ranges Council Meeting on Tuesday 10 September 2019 in Support of Cr Mike Clarke's Motion on the Climate Emergency Declaration: Agenda Item 8.1

To: Mayor Cr Tony Stevenson and all Councillors, Council CEO Tammi Rose and all Council Staff

Thank you very much for allowing me the opportunity to address you tonight to express my support for Cr Mike Clarke's 'Councillor Motion' on the Climate Emergency, Agenda Item 8.1, which has my full support.

My name is Jeff Barlow, I live in Healesville where I have lived for 37 years and where I raised my family.

I am now semi-retired and spend my time working to support the environment and to engage our local community in developing resilience and connection in order to face the growing and severe impacts of Global Warming. My primary community work is as President of Healesville Community Renewable Energy Inc and YREAC, the Yarra Ranges Environment Advisory Committee.

Background Reasons for supporting the Motion:

I am not here tonight to formally represent either of these groups. I have been invited here **by the community** to address you on behalf of those Yarra Ranges community members who, like me, are frightened and deeply concerned by the impact of Global Warming and the Climate Emergency, people who are bewildered and angry at the lack of political leadership at a national level, not only in Australia, but internationally. We seek leadership from all our elected representatives on the issue of Global Warming. You know, as we all know, that strong inspired leadership and the potency of the language we use and the decisive action we take, all works to create a feeling of safety and security in the community.

Using the phrase *Climate Emergency* is speaking the truth. Emergency means "a situation of danger that requires urgent action", according to the New Shorter Oxford English Dictionary. Global Warming is certainly a 'situation of danger' for the planet and we need 'urgent action' to address the problem.

We also need a paradigm shift in our thinking – a shift away from 'business as usual' to embrace the actual crisis and emergency we are in. We are of the view that Cr Clarke's motion moves us as a community in the direction of acknowledging in the language we use, the Climate Emergency in which we now find ourselves. For Council to adopt this language would send a strong message to the community that we are now in a new, Climate Emergency paradigm!

Community Pride in our Yarra Ranges Council:

I do want to say that as a community we are proud of the work you are doing in renewable energy on our behalf as our Councillors, and we strongly support the initiatives you are taking to reduce the impact of carbon on our climate. The efforts you have been making over the past 10 years are admirable and are fully supported by the community. AND we all know there is more to be done

Why use the terminology, 'Climate Emergency'?

The push to start using the phrase, Climate Emergency, began in Australia and it has now become a global movement. In facing the significant dangers caused by Global Warming many jurisdictions internationally are of the view that we cannot tackle the problem if we just go about doing "business as usual". We need to work faster, smarter and collectively as we would if we were facing a life and death emergency. We believe we are actually in an EMERGENCY and that we need a society wide mobilization to make the necessary effort in a relatively short period of time to keep Global Warming below 1.5 degrees.

We do **not** believe that using the phrase *Climate Emergency* is hyperbole, as some would suggest. On the contrary, we believe it is an accurate expression of the actual dangers we and our children and grand-children actually face

right now. We also do not believe that this is language that will scare the community. We are already scared and we need leadership.

- A Climate Emergency has been declared already internationally by 990 jurisdictions in 18 countries covering 212 million people.
- Of this number there are 324 jurisdictions in the UK covering 47 million people.
- In Australia 45 jurisdictions covering 5 million people have declared a Climate Emergency, including the city councils of Melbourne, Hobart, North Sydney, Darwin and the ACT Government amongst many others.
<https://climateemergencydeclaration.org/climate-emergency-declarations-cover-15-million-citizens/>
- The Australian Medical Association on 3 Sept 2019 formally declared climate change a **health emergency**, pointing to “clear scientific evidence indicating severe impacts for our patients and communities now and into the future”. See
<https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2019/sep/03/australian-medical-association-declares-climate-change-a-health-emergency>

On 23 June 2016, just over three years ago, an Open Letter was published in The Age newspaper stating that the earth is already too hot, that it is time to declare a Climate Emergency and 24 eminent Australians signed that document. Some of these were:

Paul Barratt, former Head, Dept of Defence
Professor Judy Brett, Historian
Professor Peter Doherty, Nobel Laureate for Medicine
Ian Dunlop, former Chair Australia Coal Association
Mary Crooks, CEO, Victorian Women’s Trust
Professor Carmen Lawrence, former Premier of Western Australia
John Hewson, business man and former Leader of the Federal Opposition in Canberra
Professor Fiona Stanley, Epidemiologist
See: <https://climateemergencydeclaration.org/openletter/>

These eminent Australians and these 990 jurisdictions around the world speak an urgent truth to which we should all listen, pay attention and act i.e. we are in a Climate Emergency as Cr Clarke’s motion makes clear.

Cr Mike Clarke’s Motion:

I think it is important to note that Cr Clarke’s motion does **not** ask the Yarra Ranges Council to sign the Climate Emergency Declaration! The motion simply asks Council to adopt the phrase, *Climate Emergency Framework*.

The motion further asks that the *Climate Emergency Framework* be used as a container for the Council’s Endorsed Motion of 25 June 2019 PLUS two additional points related to council staff reducing carbon emissions and working with the community to do so. The latter point creates a direction for more creative engagement between council staff and communities within the Yarra Ranges, which is exactly what is required if we are to work collectively towards, and to achieve, Net Zero carbon within the Yarra Ranges **shire** rather than just within Council property.

To my mind this is a sensible motion, a motion that puts the phrase *Climate Emergency* on the Council record.

Councillors, I urge you to support Cr Mike Clarke’s motion and in doing so to demonstrate to the Yarra Ranges community and to governments that you consider we are indeed in a Climate Emergency and that by creating a *Climate Emergency Framework* you will point Council staff and the community in the direction we now need to go!

Thank you for the opportunity to speak and thank you for listening.
Jeffrey Barlow
Healesville 3777
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