

Petitioners call on South Gippsland Shire Council to declare a Climate Emergency

MORE than 2,000 people have petitioned South Gippsland Shire Council to immediately declare a climate emergency.

The petition, presented to Council at its October 21st meeting, was organised by Prom Area Climate Action (PACA) and carries 2,031 signatures. It says dangerous climate change is happening now and is accelerating and that this demands action at a pace far beyond business and politics as usual.

The petitioners are calling on South Gippsland Shire Council to take the lead within the South Gippsland community in implementing urgent action on climate change.

Lead petitioner, Veronique Hamilton, says she is "doing this for my young daughter".

Signatories want council to require that all its business and activity reports include a section on climate implications, both for the council's own operations and for the broader South Gippsland community.

PACA's Dr Jo Wainer says the Climate Emergency is the biggest threat to our way of life in our times.

"The coronavirus pandemic is but a symptom, a fraction of the threat of global heating," she said.

"We know climate change is already affecting the fundamentals of how we live in South Gippsland."

"There is less rainfall, the land is heating, the sea is warming, the flowers bloom and seed at times that no longer fit with the needs of the birds and insects. Bushfires leave forests and communities in ruins. The insects are dying. We have but a handful of years to stop destroying nature if we are to continue to farm, fish, and enjoy this beautiful land", Dr Wainer said.

Putting in place a strategy to manage the risk of climate heating is essential to ensure council can manage the risks to its own business, and plan for the financial implications.

In Australia, where the global climate emergency declaration movement was first



• Prom Area Climate Action group (PACA) members and supporters calling for recognition of the climate emergency.

launched in May 2016 through the Darebin City Council, close to 100 jurisdictions representing eight million people – a third of the national population – have declared a climate emergency, including Melbourne and Sydney City Councils and Bass Coast Shire Council.

In declaring or acknowledging the climate emergency, a council is recognising the catastrophic changes to the world's climate caused by human activity and resulting in a loss of a safe climate, which threatens all life on earth.

In making a declaration the council commits to tackling climate change by taking urgent action at a scale and speed that will contribute to the restoration of a safe climate.

Action includes developing a Climate Emergency Plan that outlines all actions council will take to embed a climate emergency response into its operations, such as switching to 100 per cent renewable energy, getting off fossil gas, redrafting procurement policy and practices to ensure suppliers to council are using renewable energy and resource recovery, and embedding climate

emergency thinking into strategic planning and updating planning schemes.

Back in May 2019 PACA had called on the previous elected council to declare a climate emergency. However, soon after, the council was removed by the State government and the subsequently appointed administrators declined to act on the call for a Climate Emergency Declaration.

Dr Wainer says there is no justification for any further delay by the council.

"We know what needs to be done. We have the tools to do it. It is urgent that the South Gippsland Shire Council takes up its responsibility to move to carbon neutral practice across its operations immediately. Denial and delay have brought us to the brink, and now we have no time to lose," she said.

Further information on the Climate Emergency Declaration and on PACA can be obtained by emailing promareaclimateaction@gmail.com.

Prom Area Climate Action is the South Gippsland independent community group of the Australian Conservation Foundation.