

NAME	Submission to GWRC Draft Climate Change Strategy
PREPARED FOR	Greater Wellington Regional Council
PREPARED BY	VUWSA Executive
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1. Introduction

- 1.1 The Victoria University of Wellington Students' Association (VUWSA) welcomes the opportunity to make a submission on the Greater Wellington Regional Council's Draft Climate Change Strategy (DCCS). We would also like to appear in person to present an oral submission.
- 1.2 VUWSA was established in 1899, making it the oldest students' association in the country. VUWSA exists to represent the needs and views of the thousands of students who attend Victoria University of Wellington (VUW).
- 1.3 At VUWSA's 2013 Initial General Meeting, two motions regarding climate change were passed: That VUWSA acknowledges the current and future impacts of climate change on students and society and the need for an urgent and comprehensive response and that VUWSA takes appropriate action where possible to support the transition to a prosperous and equitable low-carbon economy. It is therefore with the support of our membership that we make this submission.
- 1.4 As the representative body of Students' at VUW, VUWSA understands that climate change is an issue with growing significance for students. Through this submission, VUWSA acknowledges the large proportion of students who are young people, who will deal with the intergenerational effects of climate change.
- 1.5 VUWSA also acknowledges the widespread challenges climate change poses socially, economically and culturally; which graduates will be faced with when entering their future industries and building their lives, families and communities.
- 1.6 VUWSA welcomes the commitment of GWRC in introducing their first climate change strategy. We see this as an important step towards addressing climate change at a Greater Wellington Regional level.

2. Executive Summary

In general, VUWSA finds the DCCS to present a strong showing of leadership by the the GWRC on climate chage issues. In terms of specific elements of the strategy, there are many which deserve to be commended, and some which could benefit from ammendment.

The element of the DCCS which VUWSA has identified as being specifically problematic, is the failure to include tangible and measurable targets in each of the three overarching objectives which guide the strategy. It is this issue that will make up the bulk of this submission, and to which most reccomendations will be directed.

VUWSA also identifies that GWRC has the opportunity to make better use of the tools at its disposal, particularly in regard to its *mitigation* objective. As the provider of public transport in the Wellington Region, GWRC has the capacity to make major progress on its green house gas (GHG) reduction objectives by drastically increasing the accessability of public transport. Reducing public trasport fares for students is an issue which VUWSA has been campaigning on for number of years through its Fairer Fares campaign, and is one which would, if implimented, reduce gross emissions.

In regard to Objective 3: *awareness*, VUWSA finds there to be a gap between GWRC's vision and its strategy. The strong and commendable vision illustrates a highly resilient city with the ability to successfully respond to climate variability and change, but the strategy to "increase" awareness of climate change issues falls short what is required to stimulate the cultural shift the city must undergo to achieve this vision.

3. Overarching Objectives

The three overarching objectives established to guide GWRC's climate change actions are of mixed credibility. In terms of covering the spectrum of issues that need attention, and presenting these issues in a way that is thorough and well reasoned, the objectives are positive. By dividing the action needed on climate change into three categories; mitigation, adaption and awareness, the DCCS has effectively framed the areas that need addressing.

Where the objectives fall short concerns what the substantive commitments are from GWRC. The way in which progress on these objectives is defined is highly ambigugous and fails to specify how these will be tangibly measured.

A failure to incorporate measurable targets into the objectives of the DCCS greatly undermines the credibility of the strategy in its entirety.

3.1 Objective 1 - Mitigation

3.1.1 Feedback

Objective 1 specifies a commitment to “reducing Green emissions”. The DCCS is clear on the significance of GHG emissions and cites the need for mitigation as the first step for climate change action. It provides background on the political framework for GHG regulation, and highlights slow progress on national level which has heightened the need for leadership from local government. Despite this, the Mitigation objective offers no tangible GHG emissions reduction targets.

3.1.2 Recommendations

- In its Executive Summary, the DCCS identifies the need for “information sharing and integration across councils.” Where there is a need for the Wellington region to have specific, universal GHG reduction targets, there is an area where integration between councils could be highly beneficial. GWRC must further its work with other councils in the Wellington region to adopt a coordinated regional reduction framework including reduction targets, reporting standards, reporting platforms, and compliance.
- Councils have shown an ability to work together on GHG reduction, with a consortium of councils in the Wellington Region collectively commissioning the 2014 *Greenhouse Gas inventory for the Wellington Region*¹.
- In their 2013 Climate Change Action Plan, the Wellington City Council set a GHG reduction target for Wellington City: 30% below 2001 levels by 2020. This target, together with the 2014 collective report, present an appropriate starting point for inter-council collaboration on a GHG reduction framework.
- **The recommendation is** that GWRC initiates the adoption of a GHG reduction framework by a consortium of councils in the Wellington Region, and this framework is based on *The Compact of Mayors*² - an agreement by city networks to register, report, and disclose GHG reductions as a means of achieving climate change mitigation goals, which was established at the New York Climate Summit 2014.
- **Additionally**, it recommends that GWRC makes better use of its position as provider of public transport to the Wellington Region. As shown in Figure 2 of the DCCS, GHG emissions from buses

¹ URS New Zealand Limited, 2014. Greenhouse Gas Inventory for the Wellington Region. Prepared for: Wellington City Council (on behalf of the Buyer Consortium consisting of the Wellington City, Porirua City, Kāpiti Coast District, Hutt City, Upper Hutt City and Greater Wellington Regional Councils). <http://wellington.govt.nz/~media/services/environment-and-waste/environment/files/greenhouse-gas-inventory-web.pdf>

² Climate Summit, 2014. CITIES: Mayors Compact Action Statement (provisional copy). <http://www.un.org/climatechange/summit/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2014/07/CITIES-Mayors-compact.pdf>

are a slither of what is contributed by general petrol and deisel use. As identified in section 4.2 under Mitigation objectives, the first step for climate change action is mitigation, which means GHG emission reductions. If GWRC is serious about reducing GHG emssions, then improving public transport services and increasing their accesability offers a logical way forward for achving these reductions. VUWSA's proposal to offer teriary students reduced public transport rates, is one way the GWRC could increase the accessability of public transport.

3.2 Objective 2 – Adaption

3.2.1 Feedback

Objective 2 specifies a commitment to “increase” resilience. The DCCS is clear about the importance of becoming a resilient city in order to be adaptive to the effects of climate change. It explores, in depth, the charateristics that consititute resilience, however doesn't provide an illustration of what success on this objective would look like. Again, the intent is positive and commendable, and the DCCS does not waiver on the importance of becoming resilient, however what should we expect from “increased” resilience? Although the flavour of what is discussed under this objective is that a major increase in resilience is needed for it to be successful, what it ultimately says is that any level of increase would consitute success. For VUWSA to feel confident that GWRC's adaption strategy was adequate, particularly with regard to Victoria University's low lying Pipitea campus, the DCCS would need to include more ambisous tangible targets on what constitutes its success.

3.2.2 Recommendations

That the DCCS adopts clear and meaningful criteria as to what constitutes success on this objective.

3.3 Objective 3 – Awareness

3.3.1 Feedback

Objective 3 specifies an “improvement” of awareness of climate change issues. In order to strive to achieve the vision of a dynamic, resilient city that is highly adaptive and capable of responding successfully to climate variability and change, a major cultural shift must occur. The path to true resilience requires reassessment of our values and structures. Without a well informed and motivated public, the social innovation needed to achieve mitigation and adaption targets will not materialise. The region must not experience a mere “impovement” in attitudes, it must undergo a cultural shift.

3.3.2 Recommendation

That the DCCS recognise the cultural shift needed in order to achieve true resilience, and rethinks its objectives around awareness, to represent the magnitude of this shift.

4. **Summary of recommendations**

- 4.1 VUWSA recommends that the DCCS include in its overarching objectives, tangible targets to enable the measurement of their success.
- 4.2 VUWSA recommends that the GWRC combine with other councils in the region to adopt a framework for registering, reporting and disclosing GHG reduction targets.
- 4.3 VUWSA recommends that the GWRC make better use of the tools at its disposal in regard to GHG reductions- namely its provision of public transport.
- 4.4 VUWSA recommends that the DCCS recognise the cultural shift needed in order to achieve true resilience, and that its awareness objective is adjusted accordingly.

5. **Contact**

We would greatly appreciate the opportunity to discuss submission in more detail in person. Please contact us in the event further clarification of this submission is needed, or to arrange for VUWSA to make an oral submission.

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