



**Submission on the  
*Wellington City Council Draft 2010 Climate Change  
Action Plan***

**Victoria University of Wellington Students'  
Association**

**9 May 2010**

Submission on the Wellington City Council's Draft 2010 Climate Change Action Plan on behalf of the Victoria University of Wellington Students' Association.

For further comment, please contact:

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To Wellington City Council,

## **1. Victoria University of Wellington Students' Association (VUWSA)**

- 1.1 VUWSA is the official representative body for the students of Victoria University and represents around 22,000 students. Occasionally VUWSA makes submissions on policy issues that affect students, based on student-mandated policy.
- 1.2 The Victoria University of Wellington Students' Association (VUWSA) welcomes the opportunity to submit on the Plan, which will have a significant impact on students in the Wellington region, especially in the medium to long term.

## **2. Summary**

- 2.1 VUWSA supports Wellington City Council having a Climate Change Action Plan, but would like to see it significantly strengthened.
- 2.2 VUWSA is advocating a 40 percent below 1990 levels by 2020 emissions reduction target for Wellington. Long term we would like to see stabilisation of atmospheric greenhouse gasses at 350ppm CO<sub>2</sub> equivalent.
- 2.3 In order to reach these strong targets, Wellington City Council must take greater action in the areas of building and energy and transport especially. The Climate Change Action Plan must also be more long-term focussed.
- 2.4 Future generations must be considered and treated fairly by the action plan. Furthermore, economic and research opportunities must be seized to ensure Wellington remains a prosperous city in which current students will wish to remain.

## **3. General comments**

- 3.1 Climate change presents huge risk factors to every region in the world. It is likely to be the defining issue of the 21<sup>st</sup> century and calls for a

dramatic transformation in the way we live. The effects will be more greatly felt by future generations.

3.2 Students at Victoria University are mainly young and will therefore bear the burden more than most current Wellingtonians. Many are likely to be still living in Wellington well after finishing their studies. We therefore have a keen interest in Wellington playing its part in mitigating and adapting to climate change.

3.3 Further, as future innovators, current students have a keen interest in overseeing an economic transformation in Wellington to a much more sustainability city. This will help us continue to prosper in a competitive and increasingly environmentally conscious world.

#### **4. Emission reduction targets**

4.1 In order to keep in line with the internationally recognised emissions reductions target for developed countries to keep global average temperature rise to around 2°C, all wealthy countries need to commit to at least 40% reduction targets below 1990 levels by 2020. VUWSA supports this target, and therefore Wellington needs to make this target policy. The 30% below 2001 levels is not sufficient.

4.2 Strong actions, building on any Central Government support, need to be planned and taken in order to start reducing emissions from the region as soon as possible. The longer we wait, the faster the emission cuts will need to be in order to reach a given 2020 target. The three percent by 2013 target therefore needs to be strengthened.

4.3 VUWSA further supports a global long term aim of keeping greenhouse gas concentrations below 350ppm CO<sub>2</sub> equivalent, a widely recognised target that would avoid most harmful effects of climate change from occurring. This means that Wellington needs to plan now to become carbon neutral, not just aspire to it. Further, Wellington could play a role in decreasing greenhouse gas concentrations (which needs to be done to reach 350ppm) by planning to become a net remover of greenhouse gasses.

4.4 Fiscal and economic implications of these targets need to be taken into account for current and future generations in the Wellington region. However, a transformation to a green economy will ensure Wellington's economic future, and could have economic benefits in the form of carbon credits now, and likely more and more into the future.

#### **5. Adaptation**

5.1 Given the lag in the climate system, current emissions will continue to affect the climate system for decades to come. In the spirit of inter-generational fairness, as well as long term risks to the region, adaptation planning and investment needs to be taken seriously. Risks

need to be assessed based on the most up to date science and prepared for accordingly.

5.2 More funding and taking stronger initiatives in city planning need to be undertaken than proposed in this Draft Plan.

## **6. Buildings and Energy**

6.1 This is a highly important area for reducing emissions – and strong targets for a high proportion of renewable energy supplies for Wellington are commendable.

6.2 Many students live in substandard, uninsulated housing. Greater incentives to increase the heating and energy efficiency of housing, especially for landlords, are strongly supported by VUWSA. Wellington should aim to work with Central Government and ensure high quality sustainable housing is achieved as quickly as possible within the city.

6.3 Victoria University is one of the largest landowners in the city. It is an example of the many organisations around Wellington needing greater incentives to decrease emissions from its buildings and ensure future buildings are highly sustainable. Plans for Victoria University to become carbon neutral have been scrapped in recent years due to high costs – this should be made more economic.

## **7. Transport**

7.1 Transport is another important sector for reducing emissions. With high rates of sustainable transport usage among Wellingtonians (and especially students) this can be built on to ensure highly sustainable transport infrastructure and usage.

7.2 Victoria University students already are leaders in sustainable transport choices. Forty-five percent of students use passenger transport, 35 percent walk, while only 15 percent use private cars to travel to University.<sup>1</sup> This can be explained by the small budgets students must live off. Therefore the many students, as low income Wellingtonians, would strongly benefit from cheaper, faster and more reliable public transport. We would likely increase patronage if this were the case, especially if tertiary student concession fares were introduced. Further, more cycling could likely be encouraged by safer cycling infrastructure around Wellington's typically dangerous streets.

7.3 In order to improve public transport, more funding should be directed towards this aim. Roading projects currently planned for the region, such as the proposed Basin Reserve Flyover, only promote more car usage at the expense of funding for far more sustainable transport options.

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<sup>1</sup> Victoria University of Wellington, *Victoria University: Travel Plan Scope Statement*, June 2007, pg.4.

7.4 The airport creates a very significant amount of emissions (18% according to this Plan) which shows how climate changing a transport method it is. Emissions from this sector need to be reduced to enable significant reductions in Wellington's overall emissions – it's hard to see how this would be achieved whilst doubling passenger numbers. More sustainable, long-distance transport methods, such as trains, should therefore be prioritised and made attractive and cheap. Students from outside Wellington who visit family around the country regularly could benefit from this, especially if there were student prices for these services making them more attractive and cheaper than high-emissions flights.

## **8. Other comments**

8.1 Tree planting is important if Wellington is to become carbon neutral, or a net remover of atmospheric carbon. Therefore this should be given a high priority.

8.2 Energy capture initiatives for waste are to be applauded. Greater composting and the ability to recycle more materials will also help Wellington reduce our emissions.

8.3 Victoria University is a leading University in New Zealand for its Environmental Studies programme and sustainability curriculum at its design school. This presents the opportunity for many mutually beneficial research projects that could be undertaken by students or academics to help the Wellington City Council guide Wellington in becoming more sustainable.

## **9. Conclusion**

9.1 With the welfare and success of current and future students and Wellingtonians taken seriously, Wellington City Council must invest more heavily and take stronger action on climate change than is currently proposed in the 2010 Draft Action Plan.