

World Earth Day: Fighting the Climate Emergency St Paul's Cathedral, Friday 22 April

How does the Climate Emergency impact my context and what am I doing to fight it?

Dr Catherine Brown OAM, CEO, Lord Mayor's Charitable Foundation, Melbourne

I acknowledge the traditional custodians of the land on which we are meeting, the Wurundjeri and Bunurong people of the Kulin Nation and pay my respect to their Elders past, present and emerging. In the spirit of reconciliation the Foundation acknowledges the Traditional Custodian's connections to land, sea and community.

I am the CEO of the Lord Mayor's Charitable Foundation, the community foundation for Greater Melbourne. We focus our philanthropic work on the big challenges facing our city which are currently climate change, homelessness & affordable housing, and economic exclusion. We were established in 1923 by the Lord Mayor of the day Sir John Swanson to support returned service women and men who were financially disadvantaged and required health and medical support. This was before we had a public health system as we do now.

So today we are tackling another tough challenge: the climate emergency.

To understand our role as a foundation, here are two initial points:

- We give priority to supporting vulnerable groups and communities within our city.
- We support innovation and often provide early-stage funding to allow people to test and share new solutions to tough problems.

We have funded in the Environment since 2011 following a bequest which included environment in the charitable purpose. In early 2016, we placed a **climate lens** across all our work. This followed my participation in the international Climate Funders Initiative alongside COP21. It was very clear after hearing many briefings from Indigenous groups, farmers, Health Ministers, young people, city planners and many more experts and community groups that **climate change would affect everything we fund**. (I also note the leadership role that the C40 group of City Mayors played at COP21 and since).

Applying a climate lens means that we ask: is there a way to achieve a reduction in carbon emissions or an increase in resilience through this grant or initiative? We are working on both the **Race to Zero** and the **Race to Resilience**.

Some examples to help bring our work to life.

I will begin with the critical importance of a city's sustainable food system. We have funded FoodPrint Melbourne at the University of Melbourne for more seven years. FoodPrint Melbourne has mapped Melbourne's food bowl, including the peri urban fringe and identified climate stressors such as fire, drought and flood, loss of soil quality and also loss of farmland due to over development. The first report produced was a *Roadmap for a resilient and sustainable Melbourne foodbowl. A thriving Melbourne Foodbowl* is the vision and FoodPrint Melbourne is now going deeper into assessing the resilience of the city's food system to these stressors. Melbourne currently meets 80% of its fruit and vegetable needs from within the peri urban fringe so there is a lot at stake.

RESILIENT CITY FOODBOWL

A vision for Melbourne



The impact of this work has been profound in influencing planning within state and local governments. [<https://fvas.unimelb.edu.au/research/projects/foodprint-melbourne/home>] Nationally, it has also raised awareness and inspired a similar project in Perth and potentially Brisbane. Sustainable food systems are now being studied by thousands of secondary school students every year after we funded school resources based on FoodPrint Melbourne to be developed and incorporated into the national Year 9 Geography curriculum.

Another critical need in a city is housing. We work extensively in increasing the supply of affordable housing and, since applying the climate lens, we have added energy efficient and climate safe requirements to all affordable housing capital projects that we fund. We demand high energy efficiency ratings and well-located sites. For example, in our Affordable Housing Challenge program, where we partner with local government that provide a site (underutilised land) and community housing NGOs, we assess proposals for land based on site location criteria developed by University of Melbourne through the Affordable Housing Hallmark Initiative. This work has resulted in the HarT tool, (Housing Access Rating Tool) which is publicly available.

[<https://msd.unimelb.edu.au/research/projects/current/transforming-housing/affordable-housing-tools/housing-access-rating-tool-hart>]

This measures proximity to shops, medical services, schools, public transport, green space and work opportunities. This links to the idea of reducing emissions through 20-minute neighbourhoods (Melbourne 2050). The Darebin project is being built above a carpark in an extremely well-located place.

Another housing and energy initiative is **Climate Safe Homes**, which is addressing both **policy** change in national construction standards and **on the ground demonstration projects** to show how to achieve better energy efficiency standards and to ensure better weather protection, especially from heatwaves, for low-income households. Brotherhood of St Laurence is doing work in this space.

We have supported Renew over several years to work on policy change relating to housing energy efficiency. Renew has built a national coalition of more than 65 organisations to advocate for improved minimum energy performance and climate resilience of Australian homes in the National Construction Code, which will benefit more than 50% of houses by 2050. Other key organisations we have supported in this area are Monash Sustainable Development Institute, Smart Energy Council and Beyond Zero Emissions. This area truly collaborative effort across many sectors.

In the Next Economy Jobs challenge, we are supporting job creation in clean technology, waste management and recycling, and urban agriculture. We are also supporting Sweet Justice, a program supporting young people leaving prison into careers in beekeeping.

And now to the race to resilience

The health impacts of climate change on Melbourne are already being felt. The two worst heatwaves on record occurred during the Australian Summers of 2009 and 2014 and in January 2019, Australia recorded its hottest-ever month on record. (*Victoria, Heatwaves and Climate Change*, Environment Victoria, www.environmentvictoria.org.au; Bureau of Meteorology, Melbourne).

The Foundation initiated the Hot Spots program more than three years ago with three community organisations working with vulnerable populations (culturally diverse and older people) in disadvantaged areas and heat vulnerable areas of Melbourne. We applied the *Monash University Heat Vulnerability Index* which overlaid data on temperature in suburbs with socio economic factors to identify the pilot sites. The community service organisations are supporting older people to connect with a local support person who will assist them during a heatwave to get to somewhere safe and are developing increased access to cooler public places as well as creating peer-to-peer support networks for young people. This includes working with other stakeholder groups such as businesses and religious groups.

[<https://www.foundations-20.org/f20-members-internal-news-blog/#FromHeatwavestoResilience>]

This project has now expanded to two more sites, and we are also funding a Melbourne wide project identifying other high risk heatwave sites across Melbourne. This will be scaled up further. The overlap between suburbs which are socially disadvantage and vulnerable to heat is stark in Melbourne. We are working on a **Climate Resilience in the West** initiative to go deeper in this work and are supporting the **Collaborative for Community Climate Resilience** which we are founding with the Foundation for Rural and Regional Renewal, Emergency Management Victoria and the Victorian Council of Community Services. The project team are consulting about the design of a Hub of information and resources for local community groups wanting to learn and implement local climate resilience networks.

We have funded Monash Climate Change Communication Research Hub to enable weather presenters to share high quality information from CSIRO and Bureau of Meteorology so we can all understand how our climate is changing. We are now thinking about climate transitions. We all need to be inspired by what is possible and what a zero-carbon emissions city could look like.

Regen Melbourne is part of this inspiration. It is a network of more than 60 organisations and 900 individuals exploring a regenerative future for our city. The Foundation has been a seed funder of this network, which is exploring a sustainable future for Melbourne utilising the [Doughnut Economics City Portrait](#) methodology (developed by Dr Kate Raworth) which examines a city's ecological ceiling and social foundations. Regen has produced a report based on extensive consultations *Towards a Regenerative Melbourne*. They are now working on identifying

