



**BALLARAT
RENEWABLE
ENERGY
AND ZERO
EMISSIONS**

City of Ballarat Draft Ballarat Net Zero Emissions 2030 Plan

28 August 2022.

Submission on behalf of Ballarat Renewable Energy and Zero Emissions Incorporated (BREAZE Inc.)

BREAZE Inc. congratulates Councillors and Council staff on the completion of this important Draft Ballarat Net Zero Emissions Plan. There is much of value here – the Plan is articulate, comprehensive and readable for the layperson, with strong messaging about its intent, and doesn't get bogged down in details or technicalities. In this it acknowledges the needs of the target audience, the general public. The Plan sensibly focuses on the key emission-intensive sectors – business, homes, new developments, transport and waste with sensible outcomes outlined. The list of Actions at the end of the Plan, detailing the actual work to be done to deliver the policies foreshadowed in each of these sectors, is also focused on identifying the most practicable and cost-efficient opportunities for emissions reductions.

In terms of the gaps, however, there are several more actions that should ideally be added this list, and several additional topics/sections that should be included, perhaps as appendices. BREAZE offers the following five sets of recommendations and comments.

Firstly, the element of strategy is somewhat absent from the Plan, which while acknowledging that it is a 'roadmap for collaborative action' (p. 4) and indicating throughout that Council will lead in 'engaging' the Community, neglects to outline how it intends to mobilise the community to actively participate in this 'collaborative' action.

Getting our emissions to net zero by 2030 is a herculean task. The community has indicated that it sees climate change as a priority, however at the moment, there is a huge gap between aspiration and action. Activating the community, educating them about their role, and helping them to take action pose very significant challenges. Community groups, individuals, businesses and industry all need to be on board.

While the Plan indicates that Council accepts it has a key role here, there is no detail about how this vital work of educating the community, communicating and amplifying the messages about renewable energy, energy efficiency and the subsidies and programs that exist and those yet to be offered, along with the realities of climate change, will be rolled out. Obviously, some of this can be done by supporting and strengthening those groups within the community that are already working in this space, to be more effective, helping to coordinate their efforts.

However, in order to launch the Plan with the gravitas it requires there must be an initial community-wide public communication campaign, to explain the what, why and how and to build wide public support for this target, making it a focus for civic pride – in the spirit of 'we can do this Ballarat.'

BREAZE recommends that ZEB is launched with a public communications campaign, accompanied by a Ballarat Sustainability (or Net Zero) Awards event, in which awards are allocated to a wide range of categories/sectors across the community, including for instance, best school environmental program (primary and secondary), most energy efficient retro-fit, most sustainable home, most energy efficient business, most energy efficient manufacturer etc. An awards ceremony such as this could be



accompanied by social media campaigns to be shared via our network of environmental organisations in which videos of entries were posted for online voting. BREAZE recommends appointment of an Events Coordinator to manage the annual Awards annual event be added to the Identified Action Opportunities list (pp 33-36).

BREAZE also recommends that the community-wide ZEB campaign to launch the ZEB 2030 target has special branding developed, to identify who's on board and who is not and what stage they are at - e.g. a logo with a yellow tick for registering for the Net Zero challenge, and a green tick for achieving Net Zero. Once the community is behind the ZEB campaign it will be clearly in the interest of business and commerce to get on board too, if they are not already – identifying them will help to ensure their civic mindedness is rewarded.

BREAZE suggests that the broader ZEB campaign also needs to actively network with local community groups, and recommends the formation of a City of Ballarat Council Net Zero Information Team to address groups on an as-needs basis, and a Net Zero Information drop-in booth, open one day a week in a shopfront in Bridge Mall or other suitable site in the CBD. The team/information booth would connect people to programs – state, local and community – that could help them to cut their emissions and reduce energy bills. This is also an area where that collaborative partnership with community groups could see volunteers contributing. BREAZE recommends that an indication of how critical information is to be communicated to residents on an as-needs basis be articulated in the list of Actions (pp33-36). Certainly BREAZE already contributes to the dissemination of public information on these matters via its coordination of the Smart Living Ballarat Talks program, Ballarat Green Drinks and its auspicing of groups dedicated to sustainable living, such as Ballarat Repair Cafe, which is committed to reducing waste going to landfill.

Having been involved in the development of the Draft Plan through the Regional Sustainability Alliance Ballarat (RSAB) Steering Committee, and as an environmental organisation with a long-held regional goal of net zero emissions by 2030, BREAZE is committed to working with Council in facilitating and assisting with this next stage of community engagement and information sharing and with the Ballarat Sustainability Awards program, via our communications channels.

In terms of the ZEB launch and communications strategy, it is anticipated that once the wider community is on board, public and consumer pressure will help to bring business and commerce with it.

Secondly, it is not clear how the plan will be resourced. This needs to be addressed to validate the Plan. This is especially relevant to Outcome 7 and to several Actions listed in the Plan. Given the main contribution that local householders can make to achieving the Plan is to reduce their energy emissions, by variously installing rooftop solar and electrifying their hot water, cooking and space-heating systems, the Actions outlined relating to solar and heat pump bulk buys are very important and very welcome, but need to be accompanied by a greater level of commitment. The wording on page 17, 'Advocacyto consider increasing rebates and subsidies during this transition period so that purchasing replacement appliances is possible,' is also ambivalent. BREAZE recommends changing 'consider' to 'endorse.' BREAZE also recommends the insertion of the word 'ongoing' to those previously noted Actions, to build confidence that these are not just window-dressing and will not just be one-offs, along with adding a commitment to additional help, in the form of advice and low/no interest loans to assist low socio-economic householders with home energy-efficiency retro-fits to help to reduce their power bills and emissions.



Thirdly, monitoring, reporting and evaluating the plan and communicating outcomes are key to the ongoing support for the plan. Developing a much clearer and more robust evaluation framework that articulates what success will look like, is important.

The monitoring, reporting and review on page 31 notes annual reporting to Council on 'achievements, highlights and challenges for the implementation of programs' with a review in 2025. Given the short time frame, BREAZE believes frequent reporting is critical. and recommends that the plan include sector-by-sector interim targets – every year or every second year, with offsetting equivalences noted. Obviously, the need for routine review is important to re-set policy/directions as needed, but public accountability also requires interim emissions reductions assessment, to give a clear indication of progress on how the ZEB target is travelling, and how much more we have to do. Interim targets are important to demonstrate transparency, maintain community support and help to build momentum.

While understanding the importance of the Plan being a readable and accessible document, in the interests of transparency and procedural rigor, BREAZE recommends:

- Annual reporting on the action plan has clear lines of responsibility for council and partners.
- A clear evaluation framework showing what outcomes are expected from each strategy, when can they be expected by and how will these be measured.
- Details the budget for the plan and what resources (human and monetary) within Council and by community partners have been allocated towards its implementation

Fourthly, we suggest the addition as a Case Study under Outcome 3, Net Zero New Developments – a description of the *Building Better Homes for the Future Project* - as a case study of collaboration.

Victorian homes on average emit 8.8 tonnes of CO2 per annum. With good building design and appropriate materials, this can be reduced to 2.2. tonnes. Further, the addition of solar can take homes to net zero. Given that the number of homes in Ballarat is set to increase by almost 25% in the next 14 years, this is a significant area where we can make a difference. The City of Ballarat work on the Elevating Sustainable Design project has the potential to significantly reduce the carbon output of all new homes going forward. The ESD policy aims to change the planning requirements for new homes to ensure they have a smaller carbon footprint

BREAZE's *Building Better Homes for the Future project* – run in collaboration with Committee for Ballarat and the City of Ballarat - focuses on engaging and educating builders, developers and the community on what is needed to shift to building more sustainable homes. The project has been funded by Council and DWELP this financial year to run three forums. Funding for future years would enable this program to be expanded and carried forward.

In addition, promotion of the green star home ratings program to volume builders and promotion of a ratings score for houses at point of sale could go a long way to supporting the transition to more sustainable homes. <https://new.gbca.org.au/green-star/rating-system/homes/>

BREAZE recommends Council advocate for State legislation similar to that passed in the ACT: In 1999, the ACT government introduced mandatory Energy Efficiency Ratings (EER) for houses at the point of sale. In the two decades since the EER policy was introduced, it has helped to create greater consumer awareness about the benefits of higher ratings, which has translated into a price premium for houses that score between 7- and 10-stars. This will help to alleviate the problem now faced by Victorian home owners who have invested in energy efficiency, when selling – that the real estate



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industry and hence home buyers put little value on this, despite the energy savings it brings. When these home-owners sell, whether to relocate or downsize, they frequently find themselves doubly disadvantaged, having to spend again to retrieve the comforts and energy savings they previously enjoyed. Clearly, we need to reward those who do the right thing and reduce their energy consumption and greenhouse gas emissions, if we want more householders to emulate them.

Fifthly, the statement on page 31, 'The Plan will expire in 2030, the year of the aspirational target of achieving net zero emissions for the municipality,' leaves open the question of what will happen if net zero emissions is not met. I suggest some assurance needs to be added to this sentence to the effect that while the Council is committed to assisting the community achieve this ambitious target, in the event of net zero not being achieved by 2030, Council will nevertheless continue its support to the wider community as detailed in the 'Identified Action Opportunities' on pages 33-36, until such time as Council has time to re-evaluate and re-set its Target and Action Opportunities.

Finally in relation to:

- Outcome 2 - we would like to see the energy efficiency ratings requirement to 8 stars +
- Outcome 3 - we would like to see the 7 star rating increased to 8 stars +
- Outcome 4 - we would like to see more proactive goals for the transition to low emissions transport - EVs and green-hydrogen powered for heavy vehicles and buses and a timeline for that transition.
- Outcome 5 - Timeline for FOGO waste collection, investment in a Bioenergy Centre of Excellence, and a target on waste going to landfill.

Thank you for the opportunity to give feedback on this important Draft Plan.

Yours sincerely,

Mary Debrett
President, BREAZE Inc.