

Receipt Number: 2

Name: Duncan Dey

Comments: as attached.

Attachment(s): 2\1946307\subm BSC Carbon Offset Policy.pdf



the General Manager
Byron Shire Council
Mullumbimby 2482

3 July 2023

submission: Carbon Offset Procurement Policy

Dear GM

I suggest changes to the Policy as listed below. Some go to the substance of the Policy, others involve language.

Yours faithfully,

1. Extent

Does Council have a Policy on Emissions? This draft Policy should be a part of that Policy. If we don't have one, let's do that first and this second.

Offsetting is a 'backup' arrangement and should be a last resort, as the Policy says.

2. Objectives

What are Council's climate change mitigation commitments, as cited in paragraph one? The document should say where they can they be found.

The second paragraph would be better as:

The policy's objectives are to:

- Ensure that Council's ~~decision-making regarding the~~ procurement of carbon offsets is only done after considering (i) relevant verification standards, (ii) Additionality, (iii) Permanence, (iv) measurability, and (v) transparency.
- Effectively mitigate against climate change.
- Demonstrate corporate leadership in mitigating climate change.
- Be a progressive and transparent environmental leader.

Numeration in the first bullet makes it clearer this is a list (not a story). Capitals indicate terms that are defined lower down (section 1.3 of the document itself). Italics is probably a better way to make that distinction.

Let's remove Co-benefits from consideration as they may dilute this initiative. For example, if an economic co-benefit (ie saving money) is included, then we will always escape the necessity of reducing or offsetting emissions.

Alternatively, remove "economic" as one of the sample Co-benefits. As described in the definition of Additionality, a carbon offset project must be beyond business as usual.

3. Scope

The Policy should apply to the Council body as well, by saying:

This policy applies to Council staff and to the Council body as well. Carbon offsets are procured to balance Council's operational emissions boundary, as defined using the Australian Government's Climate Active Standard.

4. Definitions – carbon neutral

I suggest saying for Carbon Neutrality or Carbon Neutral:

Carbon neutrality is achieved when all Council's annual CO₂e- emissions are balanced, including by purchasing ~~standard~~ carbon offsets

I presume here that Council can balance its emissions by its own carbon-hungry projects such as tree planting. Is that not the case?

"All" is a shout-word that adds no meaning and should be avoided (to endear readers to the actual content).

Add "annual" because the maths of balancing must have a timeframe. If that is not annual, let's insert whatever it is.

Remove the word "standard" - Carbon Offsets are defined but "standard" ones are not.

5. Definitions – permanence

I suggest removing the word "considered". The reduction must BE permanent, not just be considered permanent.

6. section 3.1

Sentence 2 in paragraph 2 should include "step 3" as well, before "step 4".

At paragraph 3, the language wanders from "will" to "must". Let's stay with "will" please.

Paragraph 3 raises the concept of selling offsets that fall below the standard or that fail to meet an updated standard. Can we replace offsets with ones that do meet the standard? IE can offsets be sold? If so, the Policy should address divestment as well as procurement.

In the second bullet point, the words "where possible" are redundant and should be removed. The word "prioritise" contains the concept of where possible.

Also in the second bullet point, should the word "purchase" be the word "own"?

7. section 3.2

Is it correct to have "2025" in the heading, and "2050" at the end? What does this mean?

8. section 4

This section is mostly about definitions. Why are these not in section 1.3 Definitions?

As I say above, there is discord between economic co-benefit and Business As Usual.

Receipt Number: 3

Name: Iris Ritt

Comments: Please see attached submission

Attachment(s): 3\1946307\Byron Carbon Offset Submission Final.pdf



20 July 2023

General Manager
Mark Arnold

Online submission

Draft Byron Carbon Offset Procurement Policy

Dear General Manager,

The Northern NSW Local Health District Health Promotion Unit welcomes the opportunity to comment on *Draft Byron Carbon Offset Procurement Policy (the Policy)*.

We commend Council for the extensive work it has undertaken in reducing and / or preventing greenhouse gas emissions and its commitment to reaching net zero by 2025. Council's conscientious approach to tackling climate change, given the high level of change and evolution that comes with climate science, is to be applauded. The Health Promotion unit offers the following information in the spirit of collegiality and recognises Council's significant efforts in creating a healthy environment for people to live, work, play, and visit.

Health context

Health professionals recognise the importance of the built environment in directly affecting people's health and the central role that planners play in providing environments which support healthy behaviour.¹ We support policies which aim to manage and improve the environment for future generations which includes balancing the impact of tourism, agricultural activities, environmental repair and protection, and infrastructure planning.

Climate Active

The draft Policy states in 2.1:

At a minimum, Council must only purchase carbon offsets or invest in carbon offset projects that are verified and eligible under the Climate Active standard at the time they are purchased.

The Four Corners program, 'Is the carbon trading doing more harm than good?', aired on the public broadcaster in February 2023. The episode explains the environmental devastation in the rainforests of Papua New Guinea as a result of carbon credit projects run by foreign companies seeking financial gain from carbon stored in PNG trees. Indigenous land owners, who signed agreements with these companies reveal that they do not understand carbon trading. Some Australian entities purchased carbon credits from these projects through Climate Active. The program explains that Climate Active does not do its own due diligence on such projects. The full episode is available here <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X7x4TWazWJg>

In February 2023 the Environmental Defenders Office (EDO), on behalf of the Australia Institute, wrote to the ACCC requesting that they investigate *'whether the Climate Active*

¹ Thompson S, McCue P. The CHES Principles for Health Environments: A holistic and strategic game plan for inter-sectoral policy and action. Sydney: NSW Premier's Council on Active Living; 2008 http://www.pcal.nsw.gov.au/_data/assets/file/0003/27651/ches.pdf in <http://www.health.nsw.gov.au/urbanhealth/Publications/healthy-urban-dev-check.pdf>, p 8 [hardcopy page numbers]

trademark program and its carbon neutral claims including its use by companies involved in the program, is misleading or deceptive under the Australian Consumer Law.²

In April 2023 the Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water (the Department), submitted a revised set of Certification Trade Mark (CTM) rules to the ACCC.³ In June 2023, 'the Department requested the ACCC suspend its assessment of the CTM as the Department is currently conducting a consultation on the future direction of Climate Active, which is considering a range of issues including use of the Climate Active certification trade mark'.⁴

We do not suggest that the complaint to the ACCC by the Australia Institute and the Department's consultation on the future direction of Climate Active are in any way related. Rather, we provide this information to demonstrate the unpredictable and dynamic nature of the business of and risk associated with purchasing certified carbon offsets.

In March 2023 the Senate established an enquiry into Greenwashing.⁵ The report is due in December 2023. The terms of reference include:

- a) *the environmental and sustainability claims made by companies in industries including energy, vehicles, household products and appliances, food and drink packaging, cosmetics, clothing and footwear;*
- b) *the impact of misleading environmental and sustainability claims on consumers;*
- c) *domestic and international examples of regulating companies' environmental and sustainability claims;*
- d) *advertising standards in relation to environmental and sustainability claims;*
- e) *legislative options to protect consumers from green washing in Australia; and*
- f) *any other related matters*⁶

The Senate has received 106 submissions including from the EDO. The EDO makes 8 recommendations including two relating to CTMs:

Recommendation 3: Urgent review of existing certification trade marks (CTMs) to ensure that those CTMs are sound having regard to the principles of competition, unconscionable conduct and consumer protection, and having regard to the best available technical and scientific information.

*Recommendation 4: Reforms to the mechanisms for review of certification trade marks (CTMs), including enabling ACCC to independently initiate a review of a CTM and to withdraw approval for a CTM or require changes to the CTM rules.*⁷

² <https://australiainstitute.org.au/report/accc-legal-letter/>

³ <https://www.accc.gov.au/public-registers/certification-trade-marks-register/department-of-climate-change-energy-the-environment-and-water-%E2%80%93-ctm-application-%E2%80%93-2042153>

⁴ <https://www.accc.gov.au/public-registers/certification-trade-marks-register/department-of-climate-change-energy-the-environment-and-water-%E2%80%93-ctm-application-%E2%80%93-2042153>

⁵

https://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/Senate/Environment_and_Communications/Greenwashing

⁶

https://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/Senate/Environment_and_Communications/Greenwashing

Carbon offsetting is a part of the suite of strategies used to address climate change and reach net zero global greenhouse gas emissions. However, there is a growing body of evidence that demonstrates the significant and deeply concerning flaws in the carbon trading system. We recommend Council put on hold adopting a Carbon Offset Procurement Policy until the Senate enquiry makes its findings public and establishes a course of action on greenwashing. Alternatively, we recommend that council adopts this policy conditionally and reviews it within the next 12 months.

Council's considerable commitment of resources to its goal of reaching net zero by 2025 exemplifies good governance and responsible leadership in the battle to address climate change. These recommendations are intended by way of preservation of this work.

Please contact us if you require any further information as we would be more than happy to assist.

Yours Sincerely,

Iris Ritt
Health Promotion Officer | Healthy Environments
Health Promotion, Northern NSW Local Health District

Receipt Number: 4

Name: ZERO EMISSIONS BYRON Ltd (ZEB) - submitted by Seb Crangle

Comments: Zero Emissions Byron believes it would be prudent to take action towards emissions reductions sooner rather than later. One imperative is the dubious past record of carbon offsetting, and the scrutiny it's likely to come under from constituents, especially for international offset schemes. (for example, see: <https://www.abc.net.au/news/science/2023-03-10/carbon-neutral-emissions-climate-active-greenwashing-companies/101991904> from the ABC).

- Carbon Offset Procurement is clearly expensive (especially Australian offsets), and we strongly urge Council to invest that money directly into local emissions reduction and/or renewables generation, as soon as is practical. It's a case of "ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure". Rather than, for example, paying money towards an international carbon offset project, council could spend that money on local abatement projects, eg transitioning the fleet to electric vehicles, or programs to reduce landfill waste (the highest of council's carbon emitters). We will include other examples below.
- the term "fiscally responsible" is used in the report in relation to offset procurement, yet in our opinion this translates to "cheaper in the short term", or when it comes to international offsets, a distancing and abstractification of the outcomes, and a risk in terms of authenticity.
- Instead of stretching the time to achieve Net Zero targets, achieve the targets sooner with smaller, achievable goals with cumulative impact.

In terms of initiatives to reduce emissions we're sure there are many in Council's Net Zero Emissions Action Plan for Council Operations that could be given greater priority to reduce Council's emissions prior to 2025, and thereby reduce the need to pay for carbon offsets/avoidance. Nonetheless, here are a few ideas that may overlap with this plan:

1. Reducing council's transport emissions accelerating the transition of the council's own light and heavy vehicle fleet to electric vehicles. Determine which of the council fleet uses the most fuel, and replace those vehicles. That's likely to be garbage trucks, as this seems to be what other councils have replaced first. Some examples:
 - <https://www.tr.qld.gov.au/about-council/news-publications/media-releases/15429-electric-truck-to-join-fleet-as-trc-approves-waste-contract>
 - <https://www.ipswichfirst.com.au/world-class-safety-technology-for-new-ipswich-garbage-truck-fleet/>
 - <https://councilmagazine.com.au/city-celebrates-arrival-of-first-ev-waste-truck/>
 - <https://www.sunshinecoast.qld.gov.au/news/New-waste-contract-media-release>

There are a host of other recommendations in relation to fleet electrification, including upgrades to EV charging capacity.

2. Tackling a reduction of open landfill waste, and it's high greenhouse gas emissions, through public education, or exploring technological solutions. Increase council rates on landfill significantly as a pilot over x time and use that to offset / remediate locally.
3. Increasing uptake of greener alternatives to carbon intensive materials, particularly asphalt and concrete.
4. Electrifying Council facilities, rapidly phasing out the use of gas.

5. Reducing energy consumption across the board, conducting audits and implementing improvement strategies in facilities ranging from Council offices to wastewater facilities.
6. Accelerating production of renewable energy, effectively creating offset facilities that are close to the source of consumption, and very tangible and visible to the public.

Attachment(s): None