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Council achievers have A GLOBAL REACH

Since 1997, local governments across Australia have saved the equivalent of 8.8 million tonnes of carbon dioxide through local actions – comparable to taking 2 million cars off the road for one year. As part of this effort, one, the City of Melbourne, was last year recognised as a key player in the global fight against climate change because of its domestic and international impacts.

Increasingly, local governments are taking the initiative on economic, social and environmental sustainability issues within

their own operations and in the communities they serve, with impressive results.

This movement is being supported by the International Council for Local Environmental Initiatives – Local Governments for Sustainability (ICLEI), an international not-for-profit organisation formed specifically to assist local governments in addressing sustainability issues.

According to the ICLEI website, the organisation works to build capacity, share knowledge and support local government in implementing sustainable

Left: The City of Melbourne's 6 star Green Star building, known as Council House 2 (CH2) is one of the initiatives taken under the Cities for Climate Protection campaign, in which Melbourne has partnered with the global International Council for Local Environmental Initiatives – Local Governments for Sustainability (ICLEI) network. City of Melbourne

Through a range of international campaigns and remarkably effective support programs, ICLEI has empowered local governments in 67 countries to engage business, industry, residents and wider levels of government to seize the sustainability initiative.

Wendy Pyper reports on the outstanding success of this visionary organisation.

development at the local level. Its premise is that 'locally designed initiatives can provide an effective and cost-efficient way to achieve local, national and global sustainability objectives'.

First steps

ICLEI was conceived in 1989, when 35 local government leaders from Canada and the US met to discuss the depletion of the ozone layer with a leading atmospheric scientist. The group pledged to establish local laws to phase out ozone-depleting

chemicals and envisaged an agency that could coordinate local government responses to global environmental problems.

Headquartered in Toronto, Canada, in early 1991, ICLEI Secretariats were subsequently established in Europe, Africa, Latin America/Caribbean, Asia, Australia and New Zealand.

The Australia/New Zealand Regional Office (ICLEI-A/NZ) was set up in September 1999, with the City of Melbourne as its host, and recently expanded to become the Oceania Secretariat.

ICLEI is supported by host councils worldwide, international agencies, foundations, national governments, and through partnerships formed to help deliver its campaigns.

In Australia, federal and state government agencies funding and partnering with ICLEI include long-term partners, the Australian Greenhouse Office, and more recent collaborators, the State Government of Victoria, the Government of Western Australia, the Adelaide and Mt Lofty Ranges Natural Resources Management Board and various water businesses.

Campaigning for sustainability

ICLEI funds are used to assist Australian local governments via three main campaigns – the Cities for Climate Protection Campaign, the Water Campaign and ICLEI-A/NZ Sustainability Services.

These campaigns share a common framework of five milestones:

- completing an inventory to identify where work needs to be done;
- setting political goals;
- developing an action plan;
- implementing the action plan; and
- reviewing and reporting on progress.

‘All our campaigns have fundamental frameworks that can work anywhere, but which are applied according to local government needs and local conditions – nationally and internationally,’ explains Executive Manager of ICLEI-A/NZ, Maria Simonelli.

The campaigns emphasise capacity building, measurement and performance.

‘If you can’t measure the results of your actions, you can’t manage the problem,’ Simonelli says.

‘We provide tool kits, software and training programs to build the capacity of local governments to understand the value of measurement and then to count the



In September 2006 Victoria’s Environment Minister, John Thwaites, presented 60 councils from across Victoria with awards recognising milestone achievements in the Water and Cities for Climate Protection campaigns. ICLEI-A/NZ



Left: ICLEI staff travel to work utilising the City of Melbourne’s bike lanes. ICLEI-A/NZ



Right: The Carisbrook Walking School Bus. Victoria’s Walking School Bus Program helps reduce vehicle emissions while promoting children’s health. Central Goldfields Shire Council

value of what they’re doing economically, environmentally and socially.

‘The milestones also provide tangible steps for councils to follow and ensure that the work is completed to a standard that allows us to aggregate the data on a state and national scale and present it in annual inventory reports.’

Cities for climate protection

As the first ICLEI campaign introduced in Australia in 1997, Cities for Climate Protection (CCP) has the largest number of participating councils. CCP-Australia is delivered in collaboration with the Australian Greenhouse Office, and assists councils and their communities to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

More than 650 local governments around the world are now involved in CCP. By December 2006, 218 Australian councils were involved – representing

about 82 per cent of Australia’s population – and more than 100 had progressed to a related but more advanced initiative known as CCP Plus.

The CCP Rural Victoria Initiative – focusing on rural and regional councils’ abatement efforts – is extending sustainability progress beyond urban areas.

According to the 2006 CCP Australia Measures Evaluation Report,¹ almost 2.9 million tonnes of carbon dioxide-equivalent were abated in 2005–06. This was achieved through actions at both ‘corporate’ (council) and ‘community’ (residential, industrial and commercial) levels, which include retrofitting lighting systems, improving energy efficiency, purchasing Green Power, using LPG-fuelled or petrol-electric vehicles, using alternative energy (solar, methane),

¹ CCP Australia Measures Evaluation Report 2006. Australian Greenhouse Office. www.iclei.org/index.php?id=4922

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mulching green waste, and community training and education programs.

Through CCP Plus, some councils are now also contributing to the international climate change debate (see below).

'Through this collaboration ICLEI-A/NZ and the Australian Government have jointly steered CCP Australia so that it has become the most successful local government greenhouse initiative in the world,' representatives from the Australian Greenhouse Office say.

'The strength of our approach is that both ICLEI-A/NZ and the Australian Government "own" CCP and are committed to its success.'

Taking the impact forward

Building on the strength of the first and second-generation CCP programs that established local government capacity for greenhouse action, a range of new initiatives is now taking off.

'The emphasis for the next phase – the third generation – is accelerating action through Carbon Neutral Communities. This program will create a leadership pathway to achieving carbon neutral councils and communities, and be a catalyst for real and lasting change,' ICLEI-A/NZ's Maria Simonelli says.

'It will be offered in conjunction with another initiative, the "Adaptation Initiative", which will build capacity for



Maria Simonelli, Executive Manager of ICLEI-A/NZ which also hosts the Oceania Secretariat, is helping drive local change by example from Melbourne. ICLEI-A/NZ

In 2002, ICLEI commenced its Water Campaign, using the same milestone framework and guidance to build the capacity of local government to make improvements in water management at corporate, community and catchment levels.

Eighty-eight councils across five states are now participating, working with water authorities and state and federal governments. Initiatives include stormwater reuse on parks and fields, rainwater tanks, water-

sustainability more broadly, into the everyday planning, decision-making and reporting of local government.

Training and workshops on triple bottom line tools, sustainability reviews of council management systems and processes, and assistance in developing performance indicators are all part of the program.

Queensland's Noosa Council CCP Officer, Kamaldeep Singh, says ICLEI-A/NZ is supporting the council in its review of policies and operation management plans to identify where triple bottom line considerations are, or are not, included.

'Complementing this program, the Noosa Council has established a Cleaner Production and Sustainability Working Group, which will assist Council to achieve sustainable best practice within its operations, and in turn inspire its community to follow suit, through strong leadership,' Singh says.

Celebrating diversity

ICLEI-A/NZ and its local government partners have come a long way in nine years and are increasingly regarded as leaders on the world sustainability stage. Internationally, ICLEI is achieving phenomenal success given its rapid evolution, unique model, multiple and diverse participants and significant local impacts. It shows what can be achieved with appropriately tailored, proactive approaches.

'Globally, our offices share a common information base and devise solutions that are appropriate to local circumstances,

In 2006, Melbourne was invited by the Mayor of London to become part of the Large Cities Climate Leadership Group – including New York, Paris, London and Berlin, which have all pledged to significantly reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

climate change variability impacts.'

Alongside this, a new Australasian Mayors' Council on Climate Protection was recently launched at the inaugural ICLEI-A/NZ Australasian Conference in early May.

'Climate change issues can get bogged down in politics very quickly,' says Bob Abbot, Mayor of Noosa and member of the Mayors' Council planning group.

'The essence of this council is to be non-partisan and to find ways to move past the barriers that crop up around climate change, to get messages out to the community and to get local authorities to accept that climate change is their issue and that they need to do something about it.'

less urinals, responsible fertiliser use workshops and water sensitive urban design.

ICLEI-A/NZ support includes quantification methodology, technical support and training workshops, political and media support, access to a range of resource materials, and multiple networking opportunities with local government and other partners, both nationally and internationally.

Sustainability services for broader changes

In 2005 ICLEI-A/NZ established the Sustainability Services (ISS) program to provide a structured method of incorporating triple bottom line principles, and



Solar energy powers street lights around the City of Mitcham in South Australia. City of Mitcham, SA

rather than imposing them,' says Simonelli.

'So we don't compare programs, but we do learn from each other, and we celebrate and showcase our achievements at local, national and international levels. It is through this cumulative approach that we'll make a difference.'

Leading by example

After agreeing to host the Australia/New Zealand office of ICLEI in 1998, the City of Melbourne has achieved outstanding success in its own and its community's operations. It is now also engaging internationally in climate change discussions and responses.

The partnership began after the council conducted a strategic review of Melbourne's future and recognised that it needed to take more environmental responsibility.

'We realised that these were global issues and that we needed to access international debate and leading thinkers in private and public sectors to develop a local response,' says Geoff Lawler, Director of Sustainability at the City of Melbourne.

'We also realised that if we were to encourage the community to make sustainable choices, we had to improve our own operations.'

Like most councils that join ICLEI-A/NZ, the City of Melbourne started on the Cities for Climate Protection (CCP) campaign. Lawler says there were many

advantages to this entrée into the organisation – for example, access to ICLEI's internationally recognised methodology to estimate greenhouse emissions from any municipality in the absence of actual measurements; and the common information base, enabling the exchange of information about solutions between international cities.

Among the City of Melbourne's local greenhouse-related initiatives deployed under CCP and CCP Plus are:

- powering street lights with 40 per cent renewable energy;
- building Australia's first 6 star Green Star building, known as Council House 2 (CH2)²;
- joining the Greenhouse Challenge program³; and
- developing a range of community programs for sustainable living and sustainable buildings.⁴



Noosa Council vehicles took part in a biodiesel trial that showed that the use of B20 biodiesel in the Council's work and waste collection vehicle fleet is likely to lead to significant reductions in particulates and CO₂ emissions. Noosa Shire Council

'Council aims to end Melbourne's contribution to global warming by 2020,' Lawler says.

He adds that, through its relationship with ICLEI, the council has also enhanced international links.

'The Lord Mayor of Melbourne, John So, is a member of an international group of mayors involved in the debate on climate change. One of our councillors has also been on the international executive board of ICLEI, which allows us to directly engage with international cities and ICLEI's partners, such as the United Nations.'

In 2006, Melbourne was invited by the Mayor of London to become part of the

Large Cities Climate Leadership Group – including New York, Paris, London and Berlin, which have all pledged to significantly reduce greenhouse gas emissions. The group and ICLEI are partnering with the Clinton Climate Initiative⁵ to mitigate climate change.

'This sort of activity is the next step in our partnership with ICLEI – they've become a collaborator in profiling Melbourne internationally, as a city that counts in these important global, environmental issues,' Lawler says.

Also, in 2005, the City of Melbourne, the State Government of Victoria and ICLEI-A/NZ joined with the Global Reporting Initiative to establish the Centre for Public Agency Sustainability Reporting. This Centre will now work to build the capacity of public agencies to undertake sustainability reporting and to improve their performance.

The City of Melbourne is continuing to build the capacity of its community to address the issues of greenhouse gas emissions and water shortage.

'A survey of residents has found that we're not meeting local demand for information on resolving environmental issues. So there's a gap in our performance base which we will be working to fill,' Lawler says.

'A lot of the work we do with the community now is what ICLEI-A/NZ led – it's about seeding ideas and watching them grow as others pick them up.'

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² Henderson H (2006). Wanted for lease: 6 star office. *Ecos* 131, 8–11.

³ See www.greenhouse.gov.au/challenge/index.html

⁴ www.melbourne.vic.gov.au/info.cfm?top=218&pg=2582

⁵ <http://www.clintonfoundation.org/080106-nr-cf-cci-pr-president-clinton-launches-clinton-climate-initiative.htm>