17 March 2022

To Cardinia Shire Council

Attention Aruna Dias

**Submission by the Emerald Village Association to the Cardinia Shire Council Draft Climate Change Adaptation Strategy**

Dear Mayor and Councilors

On behalf of the Emerald Village Association (EVA) I am pleased to forward this attached submission to the Cardinia Shire Council Draft Climate Change Adaptation Strategy.

Note: we had approval to submit one day after the formal closing date for submissions to enable our submission to be formally endorsed through our regular scheduled Planning Sub Committee meeting.

The EVA congratulates the Shire on the positive steps it is taking in respect to climate change and climate change adaptation. The Emerald community and the EVA regards action on climate change and climate change adaptation as a very high priority and it looks to work collaboratively with the Shire. To this end we have invited Aruna Dias Council’s Environment Officer to present at the EVA Committee / Community Forum on the 27th April at the Hills Hub. We are widely publicising this event.

We are keen to learn more about the actions Council is taking and how the EVA can take a lead in conjunction with the local community and work with Council.

We look forward to working with the Cardinia Shire Council to assist in implementing the Strategy.

Yours sincerely

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cc Cr Jeff Springfield

**Submission by the Emerald Village Association Inc. to the Cardinia Shire Council Draft Climate Change Adaptation Strategy**

**Introduction**

The EVA commends Council on taking the initiative in September of 2019 and declaring a climate emergency across Cardinia Shire Council and in producing a draft Climate Change Adaptation Strategy and seeking public comment.

**The Emerald Village Association Inc**.

The Emerald Village Association Inc. (EVA) The Emerald Village Committee was formed over 20 years ago. Originally it was a Section 86 Committee of Council. Since early 2020 it has been independent of Council and incorporated as the Emerald Village Association Inc. (EVA). The stated purpose of the EVA is;

* To strive to be the voice of Emerald, by representing and liaising with local groups and individuals so that matters of public interest can be identified and evaluated;
* To liaise with the Cardinia Shire Council and others on matters of public interest;
* To identify the unique strengths of the Emerald village community to build proposals from those strengths;
* To provide a conduit for all local organisations and community members to the Cardinia Shire Council, its CEO, Ward Councillors, staff and representatives;
* To build and maintain a network of local community groups;
* To develop an annual business plan which clearly identifies objectives that EVA Inc. aims to achieve, and
* To promote specific community projects which will enhance the sustainability of Emerald village and the wellbeing of the community.

The EVA is currently in discussion with Council to jointly adopt a revised Memorandum of Understanding which embraces; Councils forward looking Council Plan and its five pillars which align closely with the priorities of the EVA and the Emerald community, the Shire’s approach to community engagement and the respective collaborative roles of the EVA and Council to represent the voice of Emerald.

**EVA position on Climate Change**

The EVA supports Council in its contention that “Climate change-induced natural hazards are increasing both in magnitude and frequency, which is having adverse effects on our ecosystems, human health and economy. Council is dedicated to supporting the community adapt to these climate change challenges.” The EVA is also dedicated to working with and supporting the Emerald Village community in addressing the adverse impacts on our ecosystems, human health and economy and in adapting to these climate change challenges. We are keen to explore a range of ideas and initiatives including applying for a community battery given the power outages experienced by the Emerald community.

The EVA is keen to work with Council as it rolls out its Climate Change Adaptation Strategy. We are keen to partner the Council in specific actions which will reduce the Emerald community’s vulnerability to adverse climate events and promote the resilience of social, ecological and economic systems. In our submission we have identified a number of opportunities where Council could work with the EVA and the community on pilot projects that would act as demonstration projects for the Shire.

Adaptation planning will need to embed adaptive measures into the development and implementation of an overall Strategy Plan for Emerald Village and Surrounds, and into the EVA 2022/23 Business Plan which will be finalised soon. The EVA has placed a high priority on the development of a new Strategy Plan for Emerald Village and Surrounds given the current Strategy is 13 years old. We expect that Council will embed operations and processes relating to climate change adaptation as they relate to the role of the EVA and for the Emerald community.

The EVA is looking for ideas, initiatives and actions that we can work with the Council on to reduce vulnerability to the impacts of climate change on individuals, households, businesses, organisations and the community in order to protect our natural and built environment and into the future for generations to come. To this end we have started a dialogue with Council and Council’s Environment Officer Aruna Dias. He will be attending the EVA Committee/ Community Forum on 27th April at the Hills Hub. We will be seeking at that meeting to identify a number of specific actions that the EVA could take in regards to climate change and climate change adaptation.

**Specific Comments on the Climate Change Adaptation Strategy**

The EVA strongly supports Councils commitment to;

* Responding to the strong local community engagement and the overwhelming scientific consensus.
* Using adaptation in Cardinia Shire to present an opportunity to empower our communities to be healthy, connected, and resilient.
* Supporting the creation of liveable spaces and places.

The EVA supports the Shire’s emphasis in the Strategy on the following actions and invites the Shire to work with the Emerald community and the EVA on a series of pilot – demonstration projects.

* *Emphasising climate change adaptation and mitigation actions as key priorities in the Council Plan 2021-25.* On this point the EVA commits to working with Council on implementing selected priorities in the Emerald Village and surrounds as a pilot project.
* *Ensuring that the best and most cost-effective approach for climate change adaptation is embedding relevant actions into Council’s exiting service delivery.* On this point the EVA encourages Council to consider selecting Emerald Village and surrounds as a pilot project to trial a series of service delivery programs and projects, in conjunction with the EVA, in Emerald Village and surrounds as a demonstration project for the whole Shire.
* *Planning for and managing the risks of climate change and the associated extreme weather events.* The EVA is keen to ensure that a new Strategy Plan for Emerald includes a plan for and management of the risks of climate change and the associated extreme weather events.
* *Seeking opportunities for partnerships and collaboration with stakeholders and the community that support climate change adaptation.* The EVA is keen to partner and collaborate with Council to make this happen and has provided various suggestions in this submission.
* *Using the natural environment to build our adaptive capacity.* The natural environment in Emerald embraces public land - including public reserves and road reserves, and private land holdings. The natural environment is a very strong element of the livability and character of Emerald Village and Surrounds. There is strong individual, organisational and community interest in the natural environment. The EVA strongly submits that the Emerald community is an obvious pilot community for the Shire to work with in respect to using the natural environment to build our adaptive capacity.
* *Encouraging future proofing design – foster places capable of adapting to change and responding to current and future risks.* The EVA has placed a high priority on the development of a new Strategy Plan for Emerald Village and Surrounds given the current Strategy is 13 years old. We are working on the basis that the new Strategy Plan will place a strong emphasis on design and development in Emerald that ‘future proofs’ the Village and surrounds and ‘fosters a place capable of adapting to change and responding to current and future risks’.

The EVA agrees that: *the severity and frequency of future hazard events such as heatwaves, floods, fire and weather events are dependent on the extent of climate change.* Council is well aware of evets that have impacted on the Shire recently and particularly in the Hill community. The impact hasn’t just been physical. Social and economic stress and impact have been huge on many household, businesses and on people from all ages. The strain on emergency services and all volunteers and volunteer organisations has been severe. The EVA is keen to work closely with Council to ensure that an extensive range of support services are in place.

The Emerald community is particularly concerned about bushfires. According to analysis by the CSIRO, there is a strong likelihood that climate change will result in more incidences of severe bushfire danger. By 2090 it is expected that severe fire danger days are projected to become twice as frequent. 74% of Cardinia Shire residents have concerns about bushfires over the next 10 years, expecting significant increases in bushfire danger days and fire seasons to start earlier and end later and that there will higher fuel loads.

The Emerald community is particularly concerned about high rainfall events and storms, often leading to power and internet service outages, in some cases lasting for days*.* Our understanding is that these maybe less frequent but will be more intense with more extreme rainfall events resulting in infrastructure and private property damage.

Through Council providing leadership and good governance and working collaboratively with local communities and groups like the EVA we support developing and delivering locally appropriate adaptation responses. These need to build the resilience of local assets and services and develop innovative local responses to climate change risks**.** The provision of a community battery would be an example of strengthening local resilience. We are keen to work with Cardinia Shire to develop a submission for funding.

The EVA supportsearly collaborative community planning and action as ways to reduce the adverse impacts associated with climate change and extreme weather events on social, economic, and natural environmental systems.

The EVA recognizes that all this action comes with a cost to the community. To this end we support:

* The allocation of at least $3.6M over ten years as set out in the Plan. It is our contention that, through collaborative projects with local communities and group like the EVA, those funds can be stretched further, targeted to projects with strong community support and deliver greater take up and achieve targets faster.
* The appointment of a Climate Resilience Officer.
* Development an Urban Forest Strategy to reduce urban temperatures– we submit that this project needs serious funding to be effective.
* Delivering a rolling program to futureproof open space with climate resilient plant species.
* Investigate traditional burning techniques for use in Council bushland reserves.
* Implement tactical firebreaks based on study and understanding locations that will increase resilience to bushfire threat.