

The 4550 meeting of the Brisbane City Council, Tuesday 6 March 2018

Councillor TOOMEY: Thank you, Madam Chairman. My question is to the Chair of Environment, Parks and Sustainability Committee, Councillor McLACHLAN. I understand that Brisbane City Council has received official notification that our operations are carbon neutral. Can you please outline Council's commitment to being 100% carbon neutral and a clean, green and sustainable city?

Chairman: Councillor McLACHLAN.

Councillor McLACHLAN: Thank you, Madam Chairman, and thank you to Councillor TOOMEY for the question. Madam Chairman, as we are all aware, this city is the largest city council in Australia, and I am proud to say we are now the largest certified carbon neutral city in the country. This letter I have received from the Department of Environment and Energy, 'I am pleased to let you know that Brisbane City Council has met all the requirements of the national carbon offset standard for organisations, and is now certified as carbon neutral for its Council operations.'

We committed to achieve and maintain carbon neutral status for our operations from 2016-17, and now we've received this official stamp of approval from the Federal Department of Environment and Energy. Its National Carbon Offset Standard, known by the acronym of NCOS, is the standard to which all organisations need to adhere to attain carbon neutrality.

It provides best practice guidance on how to measure, reduce and offset, report and audit emissions for organisations, products and services, events, precincts and buildings. So, I'm quite often asked the question, 'what makes up our carbon footprint?' We have a fairly large footprint. This is the 2016-17 chart. Some 24% of that is landfill, and 19% is from fuel use. There's a variety of other things that we now are able to measure and attempt to reduce or offset if we're unable to reduce. So that's the carbon footprint for 2016-17. So that's what we're measuring.

What accounts for those things? So, three main areas. There are direct emissions. That's what we generate through our operations. There's indirect electricity emissions, the emissions that are generated by others as a result of electricity consumed by Council, and those things that are in the indirect supply chain; so, emissions generated by others as a result of goods or services that are consumed by Council. So three things that we need to reduce or offset: scope 1, 2 and 3. They're the things that we measure.

Emissions that are assessed as part of scope 3 are probably the hardest ones to measure. That includes emissions from staff who are telecommuting, food and catering, postage and freight, stationery, office printing, cleaning services, IT services and telecommunication services. So, all those things account for our carbon footprint.

Madam Chairman, Council has been actively reducing its carbon footprint as a part of its commitment to carbon neutrality through ongoing renewable energy purchases and investments in energy efficiency, and other emission reduction measures such as the installation of onsite solar photovoltaic systems, the PV systems.

So, in regards to offsets, all carbon offsets purchased by Council must be eligible for use under the NCOS and in order to be eligible under the NCOS, offsets must meet strict integrity requirements. They must be additional to what would occur in the normal course of events and not

counted more than once; are permanent, or in the case of carbon storage, the greenhouse gas will not be released into the atmosphere for a period of 100 years; measurable and quantified using clear and convincing evidence; they are transparent, so consumers and other interested stakeholders can access that information about the offset project; they are not subject to leakage or material increases and emissions elsewhere as a result of the offset project; and can be independently verified by appropriately qualified third parties.

So these are the standards to which we have adhered, and now are certified by the Federal Department of Environment and Energy. Madam Chairman, carbon offsetting will continue to play an important role for the foreseeable future, as there are Council emissions such as the landfill operation that currently don't have zero-emission technologies. So that's why we've embarked on the path of offsets.

We've talked about the things we've done in the past to achieve energy efficiency or renewable energy or sustainable transport or broader sustainability—they are some of the things that we have talked about previously, Madam Chairman. A number of clean energy and emission reduction projects across all our projects, including the retro-fitting of street lights, retro-fitting the Story Bridge with LED lights, the number of solar panel systems that we've installed on Council buildings, including the Council Powerhouse and our bus terminals, electric vehicles and our passenger fleet, the trialling of bio-fuels, hybrid electric and smart transmissions.

So, Madam Chairman, a lot of things that we're prepared to do and will continue to do to make sure that we maintain our carbon neutral status, now certified by the Federal Department of Environment and Energy. Thank you, Madam Chairman.