

How they're doing it in Melbourne

It's more than ten thousand miles away but Melbourne in Australia has a lot in common with Hull.

Both cities developed on estuaries – in Melbourne's case beside the Yarra River – and became nationally-important industrial hubs with maritime links worldwide. But while the estuaries were a blessing for trade and for fishing, they've also made both cities vulnerable to flooding.

From the earliest years of its foundation, Melbourne has been inundated repeatedly. It's one reason why the city authority declared a climate emergency in 2019 – the same year as Hull City Council.

Even Melbourne's campaign for net zero sounds familiar: 'City of Yes'.

So it's fascinating to hear about the approach of Lord Mayor Sally Capp and her team. They're creating green spaces to absorb downpours, planting trees to provide shelter from heatwaves and pushing for 100% renewable power.

They're also encouraging businesses to retrofit their buildings, not just to save energy but also to create a commercial edge.

The payback, Sally says, is "very good economically".

Her approach is to emphasise the common sense of Net Zero - that it helps financially, and it's how she answers critics who object to doing anything about climate change.

Speaking to Oh Yes! Net Zero, Sally says "having no help from national government means she's instead focused on the things she can control. That includes forming new partnerships between the public and private sectors. Not everything will work, she admits, but what matters is to keep pushing forward."



What's your response(s) to those people who are resistant to climate change measures?

What does Climate Change mean for Melbourne?

Melbourne is a major city, responsible for a lot of carbon emissions, what are the main things you're doing to try to drive these down?

What are the main obstacles that you have found so far on your journey?

How big a challenge is it to plan for extreme events that are setting new records and entering new territory?

What measures have you introduced, or are you looking to introduce, to protect people from flooding?

Transcript for the Mayor of Melbourne

What does Climate Change mean for Melbourne?

Well, here in the city of Melbourne, we take climate change very seriously; we declared a climate and biodiversity emergency in 2019. And we are living through the current impacts of climate change and know that we're going to see more extreme events into the future. For example, we're having more heat waves than we've ever had before, more days where the temperatures exceed 38 degrees Celsius, more days when people are under enormous health pressures as a result of heat in our city. And how do we respond to become a place of sanctuary during extreme heat rather than a place for people to move away from. We're also experiencing more droughts, so the impacts on our parks and open spaces, and this is ironic because we're also having more extreme storms here, so the light rain across multiple days of these past years has gone and we're now experiencing extreme storm events that result in flooding. And how we manage those events into the future is also very important to us, so more garden rooftops to be able to manage stormwater, more porous areas around our city again, to be able to manage stormwater, and importantly, the more storage of rain to be able to use that later, when it's needed most. All of these sorts of elements of what we're experiencing here in Melbourne, highly regarded in the past for our very temperate weather, and now experiencing more and more extremities.

What measures have you introduced, or are looking to introduce, to protect people from flooding?

Well in addition to managing stormwater during flooding, of course, rising water levels is another critical element for Melbourne. We're on a bay so rising sea levels is a constant discussion at the moment and the impact on people living and working in those areas, but we also have a river running through our city and so we are very vulnerable to flooding during those extreme weather events. Just recently, in fact last year, we had one of those events in Melbourne and we were actually quite pleased to see that some of the longer term planning elements that we had put in place, making sure that areas prone to flooding had been maintained as open spaces, so we hadn't built on those areas and that enabled them to flood and those waters to recede over time, without damaging people's health and well-being or property. We've also built in banks and levees in areas that are vulnerable to flooding, to be able to provide that sort of confidence and security. And then of course, it's a lot about the programmes and measures that we put in place to respond, because we can't anticipate every element of flooding, but how do we respond at the time? All of those elements in terms of emergency service responses are important. I did just want to add one thing, and that is that planting trees and understorey around our city is beneficial for so many reasons, but one of them is also to provide those porous areas, but also stability during times of flood and the more established those plantings are the better and for us those planting programmes at pace are important for that. As well, of course, as things like our canopy cover during extreme heat events as well.

How big a challenge is it to plan for extreme events that are setting new records and entering new territory?

Look, it's a really big challenge, I think uncertainty combined with change can be a lethal weapon and you know, many situations, over analysis leads to paralysis, and we see communities and cities in inertia, at a time when we really need to be responding at pace and at scale. It's one of the reasons why we declared the climate and biodiversity emergency was to say, not only do we know that this is important, but we know we need to act and respond with urgency and energy. From our perspective, I think actually one of the big learnings out of COVID, again, another time of incredible uncertainty in a situation where we didn't have a rule book, we didn't have a playbook to utilise, is that during that time we decided to become a City of Yes. And I think that would really resonate with the people of Hull at the moment, with their Oh Yes! Campaign. And underlying the City of Yes approach, was that we knew we were going to try some things that may not work, but that was okay because we would learn from those and we could adjust as we kept moving forward, but that momentum of being a City of Yes, and showing that willingness to try more often than not many things were effective, has also been a positive for us as we've looked at our responses and plans, both from a mitigation, and then adaptation perspective. I think it encompasses it really nicely, we need to be cities and communities of Yes, where we're really involved in and committed to action. And learning from whether things go well, or things don't, the failures can be just, in fact, sometimes even more valuable in terms of providing that leapfrog forward and it's been a very positive momentum for us here in Melbourne.

Melbourne is a major city, responsible for a lot of carbon emissions, what are the main things you're doing to try to drive these down?

One of the first things is really setting targets, because if you don't do that how do you create that accountability and that transparency? And so we've set ambitious targets of being a 100% renewable energy city by 2030, which, of course is looming, as is being a net zero emission city by 2040. And I think ambition, like being a City of Yes, that's absolutely necessary in the current circumstances, so we are going for it, but targets are important. We've also put in place, and this was an enormous leap by our organisation to adopt the SDGs across our business at every level, and to use that as a way of learning, of being accountable, of communicating, and also of sharing. From our perspective, ensuring that every effort and programme and investment that we made, was able to be measured, and to be measured objectively in many ways was important. And so they were two really big things we put in place. And then from that we have developed some fantastic programmes. One is the Melbourne renewable energy programme, where to get towards that 100% renewable energy we needed to take some big steps. So, we have led now two rounds of at scale power purchasing agreements with other local governments and with the private

sector big users, to now have big wind farms in the north of our state. Which means that at the City of Melbourne, our organisation, we use 100% renewable energy. But so do many others, because as we know, we're not going to make the biggest difference on our own. It's how we work together and push and shove each other to make sure that right across our city, people are focused on the same targets. We've taken 5% off our emissions just with that programme, Melbourne Renewable Energy Programme, which sometimes doesn't sound like a lot, but when you consider the vast nature of emissions, the breadth of emissions across the city, to be able to take 5% off in one programme is truly outstanding. Every streetlight, every one of our office buildings, barbecue in our parks and elliptical in our city gyms, powered by 100% renewable energy is absolutely fantastic. We are just starting a new project called Power Melbourne, which is to really be at the forefront of pushing along on battery technology for the storage of renewable energy in our city, and creating an ecosystem where our residents and small business owners that couldn't participate in MREH, because we took the large energy users for that project, but we're now creating an ecosystem where they'll be able to access renewable energy directly. One of the big things about cities is we're responsible for the majority of emissions, that's certainly true here in Melbourne, but also the majority of our population live in high rise of some sort, 84% of our population, where it's not easy to put solar panels on a roof, so we're really searching for those other alternatives and doing it at scale. And we've got 95% community approval for those community batteries to be located around the city and for us to work with the big retail energy companies, again, to push them towards transition at a pace is important too. So there are a couple of examples on the mitigation side.

Transcript for the Mayor of Melbourne

What are the main obstacles that you have found so far on your journey?

For a long time nationally we haven't really had any policy leadership, even so it's really been a vacuum for a long time here in Australia, that has changed more recently and we've seen a real uptick in momentum. But without policy there aren't programmes or investments either from that national government to then waterfall down into the state and local governments, so it's been really tough. There are a couple of things that we've done here, I'm a really big believer in focus on the things that you can control and take the steps that you can manage, and so looking towards the steps that that were really within our control, our own power use, for example, was a great start and gave us some momentum. Secondly, was really looking for partners that were mostly willing and able, and particularly where those partners could assist with funding, so co-investing. And we do that a lot even with our greening strategy, our urban forest strategy here in Melbourne, a lot of that programme is 50/50 funding. So we're working with the private sector, even on projects on private land, to continue to green the city on the basis that together it has an impact that has good public outcomes right across our city. So I think looking for those partners that are willing but also have resources to be able to work together. And you know, shoulder to shoulder and co-investment really changes the paradigm and the culture in many ways. And look, the last thing I'd say is really building the coalition of the willing amongst those that are in your community and that you represent. We've been able to use the voice of our community, their expectations, and their demands to help us advocate up through other levels of government and out across other sectors. And it's very compelling when you speak on behalf of others who are important cohorts, to your partners or other levels of government and one that's been particularly important to us is youth. At the end of the day, as leaders in our community, we really are leading for our youth to make sure that we have a positive legacy for them, that we're not shirking our responsibilities now to create more issues for them in the future, and they're so proactive, intelligent and full of good ideas. I know from time to time, there's a lot of criticism and sometimes conflict but when we sit down to look at common goals and really mobilise people around the issues that we agree on, and the goals that we share, it can create a lot of positive momentum. And look, the last thing is, again, as leaders, we have a responsibility for the most vulnerable in our community, and humanising these elements and helping people understand the reality for people suffering from extreme heat is a life and death situation for people. You know, the loss of our parks and gardens as a result of, again, droughts and heat creates a lot of reaction from local community and other leaders. These humanising and I think really making people understand situations that resonate with them, these create bearing compelling conversations and I think really mobilise actions so there are a few things that we've done here in Melbourne.

What's your response(s) to those people who are resistant to climate change measures?

Well look, there are two big things that we focus on here in Melbourne when it comes to the costs and particularly costs as a barrier to action. The first point is to really dig into the economics of not investing now creates massive costs in the future, and that for every dollar invested now that will have a multiple dollar return in the future from a community, economic and social outcome. And from our perspective, building those types of scenarios, and bringing that information to people is important. I don't want to say justify, but really rationalising the investment today to offset future costs, and for people to understand what those risks are in the future, and frankly, cost to them as well personally, as well as costs across the city, this has been an important plank of overcoming some of those barriers. The other one for us has really been to go to the commercial opportunities frankly, that come particularly from adaptation. I know there's a lot of money in mitigation, and people get that in terms of now moving into renewable energy, I think there's much more of an understanding, but a lot of that investment happens at scale, because we're transitioning energy systems, and infrastructure. The other commercial opportunity does lie in adaptation, and one of those areas of focus for us at the moment has been in the retrofit of existing commercial buildings. The biggest emitter for us in cities comes from existing commercial buildings and we need to electrify them at scale. We've calculated here at the moment about seven buildings a year are being electrified, and we need that to be 70 buildings a year to be able to hit our targets by 2040. And being able to create an economic business case for building owners on the improvement to the value of their property, the improved appeal to tenants in the future of an upgraded, retrofitted building, the appeal to workers in those buildings, and of course then the benefit that they will be able to create across the broader community. But very much those commercial imperatives and having other stakeholders like real estate agents, echo that and present their own cases for change, has helped us create some momentum, still got a lot to go, but presenting those economic opportunities from adaptation is important to seeing change and action. I think a lot of people are interested in the way that they can contribute to the greater good, but their day to day decisions are based on the impact on them and what their capabilities are, and what is the economic impact on their business or even on them personally. By taking a different tack, investing with them providing economic rationale, showing the business case of the way forward bringing in other advocates and frankly, avenues of support. That's something we've been able to do with state and federal government is look for those funding sources where building owners particularly may not have the means to undertake a retrofit programme. But the payback is very, very good economically, once they achieve those cost savings from reducing energy. For example, once they realise better tenants because of their upgraded buildings or new capital growth in their assets, those paybacks are excellent. So sometimes it's just

being able to provide the funding in the short term to see the action. All of those things really make a difference, because you have to be able to go to people's own agendas, to be able to have them contribute to the greater good.