

ADAPT to CLIMATE 2019 Conference

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Adapting an inland national capital to a warmer future: strategic interventions

Canberra, the national capital lies inland in the southeast region of Australia. It is a medium sized city of 400,000 and is often described as a 'city in a landscape'. This presentation will outline the journey from 2012 to 2019 of how collaboration between government, academics, business and community leaders has laid the foundations for adapting an inland urban centre to a warmer future. Adapting to a new climate future requires an integrated approach to both the built and natural environments. In the case of Canberra, the climate science is projecting higher temperatures, heat waves, flash flooding and an increased risk of severe storms. With this comes an increased risk of drought, fires and heat stress, and, as a result, damage to our built and natural environments. There is a real imperative to prepare the community for the climate futures ahead.

There have been several key strategic interventions undertaken over the last seven years that is better preparing the national capital for the shocks to come. Firstly the commitment to be 100% renewable electricity by 2020 will be achieved reducing both emissions and increasing the city's resilience to any future energy crisis particularly during prolonged heat waves. Secondly as a car dependent city based on a polycentric plan with urban nodes, a decision to introduce fast light rail has finally been achieved with stage one commencing in 2019. Thirdly and most recently there has been an acceptance by local elected politicians that an integrated approach to built and environment and the surrounding natural environment is essential. As a consequence a new Climate Change plan and a new Living Infrastructure Strategy are to be released by June 2019. All of these initiatives have been informed by advice by a Climate Council comprising experts in the field and community (including myself as Chair).

This presentation will highlight the importance of clear strategic goals supported by targets, the significant benefits of collaboration across the sectors, and the importance of understanding the benefits of an integrated approach to implementation. Canberra, as the national capital and a medium-sized city, can make a positive contribution –locally, nationally and globally – by sharing how we are adapting to a hotter, drier, inland urban centre.

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