



Kurilpa Climate Strategy

**A climate resilience strategy
for the people and places of the Kurilpa Peninsula in Brisbane**

by Pam Burke, John Mongard and Bob Speirs
in collaboration with the Kurilpa community
November 2019

Living in the Kurilpa of today and tomorrow

As we look around the Kurilpa community in 2019, we can imagine that the weather and climate in coming seasons will drive changes in human behaviour.

In hot weather, initial responses of 'hanging out in air-conditioned shopping centres' for people not working in air-conditioned workplaces, will transition into increased visitor loads at air-conditioned public spaces - the museum, art galleries and libraries. And probably greater reluctance to leave an air-conditioned home for those with that option.

Outdoor work in the middle of the day will be increasingly contested under workplace health and safety regulation, which will change the arrangements for delivery of these services.

Walking down the street in the hottest part of the day will be avoided, with consequences for local businesses likely reflected in the daily cashflow patterns that depend on local and passing customers.

Shade, reduced reflection and cooler micro-climate areas will be sought and used for longer by pedestrians, and hard-surfaced, exposed areas will be avoided.

People with lung or heart conditions will be advised to stay indoors and everyone else will be encouraged to avoid outdoor activities to avoid the health impacts from smoke caused by seasonal bushfires.

We can imagine that a more Mediterranean or tropical lifestyle may emerge – less activity during the middle of the day and more in the evenings. That has implications for public spaces, trading and a range of associated social and community activities.

We will need to plan and design for a shifting climate and for responsive ways of living and working in Kurilpa.

Purpose of our strategy

In the increasingly complex and concerning world of climate change, we need shared, simple and sensible thinking about what helps us to respond effectively as a community.

As we face decisions and advocate changes that affect our community, we can choose to embrace our diverse worldviews, engage our concerns about climate risks, and act to thrive as a community in the Kurilpa Peninsula.

Why not just wait and see?

... because no one wants endless harm from heat, wind and rain.

“Climate change is making extreme weather events and disasters more frequent and intense across the world. These changes will impact just about every aspect of our lives.”

(Ref.: Red Cross Australia <https://www.redcross.org.au/get-help/emergencies/resources-about-disasters/resources-for-communities/climate-ready-communities>)

We need to anticipate the wider impacts we are already seeing making news. They will also affect us: higher food prices as we have more and longer droughts, population shifts as people are made climate refugees by coastal inundation and erosion, oppressive heat and bushfires, and struggling local economies. Degradation and loss of the services provided by natural ecosystems will steadily make life harder for people as well as for the plants and wildlife that depend on them.

Our framework

Our climate strategy focuses on *resilient adaptation*: an approach to climate adaptation that understands and respects the worldviews and the shared needs of our community and which intentionally designs and develops the urban setting to respond to our shared aspirations.

To us, *resilience* means our individual and collective capacity to respond to, and bounce back from shocks and impacts, and recover without losing our ability to thrive as a community. However, to be resilient, we must be prepared, and we must develop and nurture a shared, resilient mindset that makes us resilient every day, not just in emergencies. And most importantly, we need to get involved now, right now. To protect our interests and aspirations, we need to use our knowledge, capabilities and influence to lead the way, rather than drift into a hostile future built on lost opportunity and unfulfilled good intentions to address the disruption of our climate.

For us this involves three community actions:

Resetting - expectations about what is enough

Regaining - knowledge, skills and assets

Rebounding - from setbacks

The first action is questioning the presumption that ‘more is always good’ in relation to development and consumption, and cooperatively **resetting** expectations about what is enough and best for building and sustaining personal and community resilience. The second is **regaining** knowledge, skills and assets like those needed for local food growing, and for providing shady, cooler outdoor places in hot weather. The third goes to the core of

resilience, which is our capability to **rebound** from setbacks without losing our capacity to thrive as a vibrant community.

We appreciate that the State and Council Disaster Management Arrangements for our community are robust and can be relied upon in weather emergencies of floods and storms. Therefore, this strategy addresses the effects of creeping change in our normal climate and weather – more hot days, hotter hot days and longer warm periods, heavier downpours, and stronger winds.

These things affect everyone’s moods, thoughts and behaviour. Dealing with them is different to, but just as important as disaster preparation. Making our homes, businesses and community less vulnerable to harm from severe weather events is common sense. We can and do focus on reducing exposure to harm, reducing sensitivity to damage and increasing our adaptive capacity in relation to floods and storms in the Kurilpa Peninsula.

However, we also want to design and develop adjustments for our community that respond purposefully as the demand for services and the cycle of daily activity reflect the shifting character of our local climate. For example, people increasingly seeking to avoid hot times of day and hot, glary places will affect our local businesses and recreational and social activities, so we need to anticipate and adjust to our changing environment.

The foundations for our strategy

We seek to develop and agree on actions and guidelines for adaptation based on the current conditions of and the projected changes to our living places. We aim to help our community to adapt over the near and mid-term timeframes, depending on the emerging climate projections.

Our Strategy needs to include actions on:

Our landscape and waterways:

How heat accumulates in various parts of West End, South Brisbane and Highgate Hill; and how water pools and flows into and away from specific areas in our neighbourhoods

Our built environment and circulation:

How landscape, buildings and traffic affect the accumulation and movement of heat, wind and water in our neighbourhoods

Our connections, linkages and infrastructure:

How our physical networks, nodes and links are impacted by climate change, including our roads, rail, bike and walkways; stormwater, sewerage, telecommunication and power lines; our parks and public spaces; our schools,

hospitals, community centres, club venues, public buildings, churches, halls and the like; and industrial activities, depots and depositories, fuel stations, hazardous waste and other waste storages

Our personal and community lives:

How our communities and friends will work together to manage and thrive in a changing climate, recognising the interests of those who live in, work in, visit or service the Kurilpa Peninsula. We seek to engage with what they know, think and feel about climate risk and what they can and will do to manage these risks. We seek to understand the impacts of a changing climate on our most vulnerable residents including older people, homeless people and people with disabilities and involve them in designing responses to those impacts.

Our businesses and jobs:

How we support business owners and managers to establish and maintain thriving businesses that provide the goods and services we need, and local jobs for young people through to seniors who need or want secure, properly paid employment

Our habitat and biodiversity:

How we maintain and restore our natural areas and networks of native flora and fauna as the population grows, and greenspace becomes marginalised

Our influence over the planning and presentation of our local community:

How our views are fairly and respectfully expressed, heard, adjudicated and acted upon by decision-makers to support social inclusion, gender equity, cultural diversity and the resilience to the effects of our changing climate

Assessment of climate risks and vulnerabilities

Starting from an understanding of our normal weather pattern of temperatures, rainfall and evaporation, and the severe weather events we normally expect (storms, heatwaves, hail, drought and flooding), we plan to manage and consider:

1. Climate hazards – projected changes in our normal climate and weather and extreme weather events. To a lesser extent we will consider any expected impacts to our part of the Brisbane River from sea level rise or ocean acidification
2. What groups of people, assets, systems and services are vulnerable to these climate impacts
3. The type of risks that may affect human health and wellbeing, and which impact local enterprise and prosperity
4. Risks and opportunities related to community cohesion, culture and social networks
5. How individuals and organisations in our community can manage these changes within their personal settings

Ideas for action

Working with our community and with decision-makers, we plan to develop ideas and actions for responding to the local climate change impacts affecting the Kurilpa Peninsula.

To support these ideas and actions we intend to develop positive and negative lists of criteria to support decision-making at all levels.

Our **positive list** will focus on factors that enhance resilience such as promoting multiple options, reducing dependency, and increasing collaboration and cooperation; or factors that reduce vulnerability by reducing exposure to harm, reducing sensitivity to harm or increasing adaptive capacity.

Our **negative list** will focus on factors that have the opposite effect to those on the positive list.

We see such lists of criteria as being useful for individual community members and households, and also useful for businesses and government to guide good decision-making and to keep Kurilpa well placed in dealing with the climate challenges in the years ahead.

These lists may lead to assisting community organisations to develop consistent and complementary statements of ‘position’ on climate related matters to guide their decisions and actions on service delivery, risk management, operational adjustment (adaptation) and the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions and carbon footprints.

Next steps

From here we intend to engage in conversation with thought-leaders in our community and our government – individuals and organisations that already appreciate the need and wisdom of responding constructively and creatively to our changing climate. This will be supported by establishing a **core group** to move the strategy forward.

From here we intend to engage in conversation with thought-leaders in our community and our government – individuals and organisations that already appreciate the need and wisdom of responding constructively and creatively to our changing climate. This will be supported by establishing a **core group** to move the strategy forward.

Development of a **companion project** outside the Brisbane metropolitan area will be investigated, perhaps focused in the Cairns hinterland (Atherton). The purpose of this would be to expand and test the scope of lessons learnt that would be transferrable to other communities.

This preparatory work will contribute to a forum at the University of Queensland on 20 November 2019, to present the thinking so far in relation to the Kurilpa Climate Strategy. The Forum will outline the draft strategy and workshop conceptual and practical responses to projected (and observed) climate stresses in the Kurilpa Peninsula and in the Rosalie area across the river.

The purpose of this first phase is to ground and consolidate our approach, understanding, and evidence base. It will build active support and shared endeavour within the community. We anticipate being able to develop strands of interest around local urban design, local business practices, and managing wellbeing and vulnerability within the community. For these strands of interest, we expect to scope out a ‘first-pass’ range of actions to be properly designed and project-planned to address emerging impacts, particularly from more severe heat and rainfall.

From there we will seek to reach more widely within our community to those who may not yet have felt the inclination to think forward about how they will be affected by changes in our climate. By then we expect to be able to offer straight-forward information that they may wish to incorporate into their worldview, and to offer the

invitation to pursue practical actions for the benefit of themselves and their community.

The Kurilpa Climate Strategy is a community initiative – organic, dynamic and likely to have its time frame set by the current of concern for climate action in the local community. It will see milestones emerge as it progresses. In the uncertain world of climate change, the Kurilpa Climate Strategy will be an on-going work in progress as a growing stream of focused community effort to build and nurture resilience to the increasing effects of climate change.