

# **strategic plan 2024-25**

earth system and climate centre





## **A commitment to social and environmental equity**

The Earth System and Climate Centre is committed to advocacy for the betterment of the environment, for reducing humanity's negative impact on the climate system, and the socio-cultural damage that has been caused by human activities. By developing sustainable practices, we can move towards a future where the impact of society is to uplift all peoples and living things, and live sustainably on a healthy planet. We reject the cultural norms that have allowed the destruction of the environment and society to take place. We acknowledge the wisdom in us to improve our way of life, and work towards a hopeful future.



## **Acknowledgement of country**

We acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of the lands, waters, and skies on which we work and live. We pay our respects to Elders past and present and extend that respect to all First Nations peoples.

We recognise that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples have cared for country for tens of thousands of years — as stewards of the land, and as a part of it. Caring for the environment requires a deep spiritual connection to place, and we hope that all Australians can embrace similar principles in their lives and take inspiration from the wisdom of Indigenous knowledge and practices. In a time of climate crisis and environmental uncertainty, we acknowledge that embracing these traditions are vital to guide us toward true sustainability.



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## **Acknowledgements**

The Earth System and Climate Centre relies on a passionate and dedicated volunteer base, without which we would not exist and the work we undertake would not be done. We would like to thank the many individuals who have contributed, do contribute, and will contribute to our work.







## Vision

The vision of our organisation indicates our larger and longer-term view of our place in the world and what we want to achieve.

Our organisation identifies that climate change is the most existential and clear threat to humanity and the environment of planet Earth. The damage caused by human activities have caused mass destruction to ecosystems and communities, and this will continue and accelerate into the future unless massive change to our way of life can be achieved. While human actions have caused this crisis, human actions can also resolve this crisis. One of the critical challenges with this is the ability of stakeholders, including academia, government, and community to find common ground and speak a common language towards a common goal.

The Earth System and Climate Centre wishes to build a bridge between research, policy and communities to provide useful and relevant information about the ways in which climate change has, is, and will impact local areas. By providing support between stakeholders at a local level it is hoped that solutions relevant to specific communities can be achieved, rather than large scale solutions which often ignore the nuance in differences from place to place, even for adjacent locations.

To become a leading organisation in fostering public understanding, actionable solutions, and professional networks for global environmental and climate resilience the Earth System and Climate Centre acknowledges that supporting local communities involves addressing global issues and vice versa. We wish to act as a supporting intersection between different stakeholders at different levels to support humanity in its transition to a more sustainable way of living.

## Mission

The mission of our organisation indicates the real-world ongoing mechanisms by which we can implement our vision through actions in the short to medium term.

We view outreach, research, and public advocacy as mechanisms through which we can empower communities and advance knowledge to address environmental and climate challenges.

The Earth System and Climate Centres aims to advance research and public engagement in environmental and climate sciences by fostering a deep understanding and active participation among citizens and communities through relevant research and the development of digital and dynamic outreach initiatives to inform all stakeholders. This includes supporting both directions in stakeholder relationships, for example informing communities about research relevant to their communities and informing researchers about perspectives of local communities in regards to research activities.

To achieve its mission, specific goals have been identified:

- Conduct rigorous citizen science research in environmental and climate sciences to generate new and relevant insights to bring understanding to our changing world, using both global and local knowledge to address local issues;



- Develop digital tools that empower individuals and communities to engage effectively with environmental issues and solutions;
- Engage the public in environmental and climate issues through the creation and dissemination of digital content; and,
- Enhancing social media engagement to foster a community of informed and active citizens who are motivated to participate in environmental stewardship and climate action.

## Reflections

The 2023/24 financial year had a great many achievements for the Earth System and Climate Centre, as well as opportunities to learn from.

Our achievements during this time included:

- Undertaking research and analysis on estuaries in southern Western Australian through remote sensing, in-situ data and climate modelling;
- Doing further work on marine heatwaves in northern Western Australia, building on our unofficial work undertaken in the 2022/23 financial year; and,
- Studyiing climate change impacts on pumice raft drifts affecting coastal communities in the western Pacific Ocean, which although focused on Australia, also had relevancy to a broader regional and international audience.

We also:

- Became officially incorporated and recognised as a not for profit at the state and federal level;
- Produced a podcast series to engage with the public, including interviewing early career researchers in Earth sciences, and addressing climate anxiety; and,
- Although not funded by the Earth System and Climate Centre itself, some of our staff attended international conferences and undertook training on advanced climate and weather modelling at world leading institutions.

There were several lessons learned during this time, some of which were implemented as changes. For example:

- We stopped development of our EarthEye and EarthSearch smartphone applications. These were developed, respectively, for monitoring weather conditions, and browsing the web in a way that allowed users to direct profits made by internet search companies to different environmental causes. However, these projects represented an overextension of our capacity for multiple reasons including but not limited to: inadequate staff resourcing and being volunteer based meant that these applications could not be maturely developed or maintained on an ongoing basis, particularly in light of challenging security requirements in the I.T. development space, and competition from other



developers. Additionally, our EarthEye application was comparable to many other tools that already exist. Our EarthSearch application, while unique in its functionality, was difficult to justify given our challenges in distributing this tool and a preference of users to rely on brand name applications.

- We established our online presence across social media, however we experienced high levels of negative interaction and decided to delete accounts on certain platforms. It is unclear if this particular mission goal can be maintained going forward or needs to be adapted to suit the current socio-political environment.
- Although we had intended to establish a policy analysis program focusing on both environmental and social justice issues this was delayed until 2024/25 due to staff resourcing.

Other considerations made during this time were:

- Our organisation name “Earth System and Climate Centre” is considered by some to be too long. We are considering rebranding to embrace a similar shorter name.
- Our ownership and use of the domain earths.com.au is considered inappropriate because .com is typically used for commercial organisations whereas .org is used for not-for-profit organisations. We may consider alternative domains in the future.
- There are many requirements of upholding our not-for-profit status including meetings and reporting. This may be challenging given staffing issues and the tendency of volunteer-based programs to experience a high turnover. Additionally, several committee members have expressed a desire to move on from their commitments. It is unclear how the organisation may continue moving forward given these challenges.
- Consideration must be given to the option for pursuing funding, including donations, grants and other financial matters.

## Our Strengths and Opportunities

An overall evaluation of our organisation’s strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats is useful to know what we can rely on and what areas need improvement or risk management. Knowing these points will help us leverage what resources or capabilities we have, address gaps, and realistically plan our path and the potential risks moving forward. This can help ensure that our strategic plan is based upon reality and plays an important part in our strategic management process.

We identify our strengths to be our highly skilled and passionate membership, who go above and beyond to make our projects happen, despite the fact that being volunteer-based means many of us are juggling our professional and personal lives on top of this. Our range of activities that we have performed and intend on undertaking include but are not limited to the following: climate modelling and forecasting; environmental monitoring and assessment including in-situ and remote sensing; developing digital tools and content; engaging with stakeholders, including government, academia,



community, and industry; research and analysis on a variety of topics including fire risk, marine and coastal environments and ecosystems; engaging in professional development activities including attending conferences and internationally relevant training.

We identify that many of our weaknesses are also related to being volunteer-based, as this means that we suffer from high turnover and low membership. This makes it difficult for projects to be properly resourced. Despite these challenges, our commitment to a volunteer-base is due to a belief that helping the planet requires us to *not* be profit-based, as this cultural system has been an underlying root cause of so much of the damage that humanity has inflicted on the environment.

We identify that our opportunities remain the fact that there continues to be a strong need for stakeholder-relevant climate materials.

We identify that threats to our organisation include social and political changes, which make it challenging to engage with stakeholders, as well as competition from the large number of organisations in this general space, which mean it is easy for us to get lost in the crowd.

## Goals and Objectives

Our goals and objectives are designed to be specific, measurable, achievable, and time-bound targets our organisation wants to achieve. Ensuring our goals are achievable, measurable, and time-bound means they can also be more clearly communicated as part of our strategic planning.

For 2024/25 we wish to achieve the following goals:

- Continue production of social media content on platforms that focus more on the production of content, rather than on managing social interaction. Examples of this include continuing to produce our podcast, establishing ourselves on platforms that are more professionally focused than socially focused, while withdrawing from platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, and X.
- Use open-source platforms, software and tools that demonstrate a commitment to ethical principles, which better align with our organisational philosophy. This includes reducing reliance on paid and proprietary software and systems.
- Establish our policy analysis program, initially by focusing on two branches – environmental policy, and social justice policy. We view the environmental policy program as more substantive, while the social justice policy program will be smaller scale to investigate issues intersecting between climate change and related issues such as the inequity of the renewable transition or the cost of living crisis. This will require us to expand the number of volunteers that we can take





onboard, which will require enhanced administrative duties ensuring that we meet legal obligation requirements in taking on volunteers.

- Continue our research program, by focusing more on community specific research. We wish to address issues relevant to local government areas, however meeting the needs of over 500 areas may prove challenging. At the same time, we wish to explore the implications of our previously conducted research, particularly that looking at the South Pacific region, and see if research related to the Asia-Pacific, the Indo-Pacific and Oceania is relevant to our organisation. We also wish for our research to be more broadly publicised and accessible by releasing it not only to relevant stakeholders, but also seeking academic publication and inclusion in traditional news media releases.
- We wish to continue our professional development activities, including attending conferences, undertaking training, developing our volunteer base to support our activities and projects, and applying to become accredited under the UNFCCC.

## Strategic Actions

The specific courses of action that our organisation will take to achieve our goals include:

- Establish ourselves on LinkedIn and Seek Volunteer to formally advertise for volunteer roles to take on a larger volunteer base. This will allow us to establish a wide-reaching policy analysis program and expand our membership base, potentially leading to increased ability to undertake administrative tasks as well, such as reporting requirements and other needs.
- This will require us to develop a volunteer program with relevant administrative materials for onboarding and inducting volunteers as well as managing and coordinating them as well as meeting legal requirements of taking on volunteers.
- Redevelop our website to showcase our many activities both past, present and future, as well as linking to LinkedIn, PodBean/Spotify and other digital platforms. This will also allow us to embed digital interactive content and may allow us to apply for Google Ad Grants.
- Enhance our financial capabilities, including applying for a business banking account to facilitate receipt of donations, grants and other funds. Linking to donations through PayPal and applying to Google Ad Grants may also provide additional financial support.
- Seek deductible gift recipient (DGR) status from the Australian Tax Office (ATO). We believe this will allow us to receive more donations, however this process may require substantial administrative effort to undertake.
- Transition away from the use of Google Workspace, Microsoft Windows, Grammarly, Microsoft Office and PodBean, which are paid, proprietary platforms, many of which scrape our data using AI tools. Despite our requests for them to stop doing so, it is clear some of these organisations are engaged in unethical data harvesting practices. Furthermore, the outlay of costs does not bring benefit when compared to many cost-free alternatives. We will consider transitioning to open-source, ethical and free or reduced-cost platforms and systems, such as Linux, Libre Office, and Spotify instead.



- Develop local community research programs relevant to locations where we have previously done research. The southern coast of Western Australia has been proposed as the most likely option to start relevant programs, from which we can expand. Research focusing on the local climate and local industries will be ideal case studies for these programs.
- Develop the marine heatwaves and pumice raft drift studies from 2023/24 into papers and posters to submit to various international conferences and journals.
- Reconsider the type and nature of digital tools that may be published – for example, online content embedded on our website may be easier to maintain than developing digital applications.
- Rebrand ourselves using a shorter business name and consider alternative domains for our website using the .org suffix.
- Consider temporary arrangements if committee members wish to move on from their roles until replacements can be found.
- Apply for UNFCCC accreditation, which will bring us enhanced reputation and allow us to attend UNFCCC related events.
- Apply to the Conversation, which will allow us to publicise our content through better respected and more professional channels than social media.

## Resourcing Strategy

To achieve our strategic objectives the Earth System and Climate Centre needs to allocate sufficient human, financial and other resources.

### *Timeline*

#### Phase 1: Transition to Strategic Plan 2024-25 (0-3 months)

- Prepare materials for volunteer program
- Redevelop website on a .org domain
- Rebrand organisation
- Establish ourselves on LinkedIn and Seek Volunteer and advertise for positions
- Apply for business banking account, PayPal account, Google Ad Grants, and DGR status
- Develop marine heatwave and pumice raft drift studies into abstracts/articles and apply to conferences/journals

#### Phase 2: Initiate volunteer program (3-6 months)

- Initiate policy analysis program and take on board first volunteers
- Attend conferences
- Begin transition of systems away from unfavoured providers towards preferred providers

#### Phase 3: Expansion of volunteer program and initiate community program (6-9 months)

- Progress and finalise policy analyse program
- Wind down large-scale volunteer cohort
- Identify volunteers from wider cohort to continue on in other roles



- Reach out to local community partners to identify overlapping priorities and potential opportunities
- Identify datasets and methodologies relevant to local community program
- Consider regionally relevant research opportunities within the research program

#### Phase 4: Reflection and Winding Up Strategic Plan 2024-25 (9-12 months)

- Release policy analysis materials to stakeholders
- Initiate local community program
- Apply to UNFCCC and the Conversation
- Finalise transition of systems to preferred providers

#### ***Funding***

- Apply to Google Ad Grants
- Seek out and apply for environmental research and outreach grants
- Facilitate donations through PayPal

#### ***Human resourcing***

##### Policy analysis program:

- 1 manager
- 1 support person
- 40 volunteers

##### Local community program:

- 1 manager
- 1 support person

##### Research program:

- 1 manager
- 1 support person

##### Administrative, reporting and financial responsibilities:

- 1 manager
- 1 support person