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## Rob Pyne's climate emergency declaration goes down in flames after council vote

In its first test of a new policy that councillors feared would stifle freedom of debate, Cairns Regional Council discussed whether or not it should declare a climate emergency.



Isaac McCarthy

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Rob Pyne invoked images of the Hawaii wildfires in his attempt to convince his fellow councillors to declare a climate emergency. Picture: File photos

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Division 2 councillor Rob Pyne's attempt to force Cairns Regional Council into declaring a climate emergency has gone down in flames at the council's ordinary meeting on Wednesday.

In the first test of a new general business motion policy, that [some councillors feared would stifle debate](#), Mr Pyne told his fellow councillors the declaration was pivotal in readying the city for heatwaves during the coming summer.

Mr Pyne said the region's elderly were vulnerable without the climate emergency declaration.

"The resolution is itself (focuses on) preparations to help our elderly and vulnerable people in the upcoming summer to survive extreme heat and all the problems that creates for health and survival," Mr Pyne said.

"I turn on the news every morning like everyone else and [hear about Hawaii burning](#)... people are dying and we're in the middle of a climate emergency.



Division 2 councillor Rob Pyne declared a climate emergency but his fellow councillors did not support his motion. Picture: Isaac McCarthy

"Across Australia more than 100 local governments have declared a climate emergency ... the warming world is a clear threat to Australian society ... the climate is already dangerous ... the Earth is unacceptably too hot now.

"National security analysts warn (further warming) may result in outright social chaos ... climate change must be accepted as an overriding threat to our national and human security."

A busy gallery was literally split between left and right.

Behind Mr Pyne on the room's left was a team of climate change action advocates, standing quietly with banners and placards that supported Mr Pyne's motion.

The room's right had very little patience for Mr Pyne – audience members hissed, scoffed and whispered words such as "stupid".



Climate change action advocates stand behind Division 2 councillor Rob Pyne. Picture: Isaac McCarthy

Council's new policy for general business motions, otherwise known as items not on the agenda, demands councillors obtain permission from their colleagues to debate the matter; if they're successful in gaining permission, and successful in obtaining a seconder, the council then debates and votes on the motion.

Councillors slowly raised their hands to allow Mr Pyne to proceed; some didn't raise them at all.

Division 9 councillor Brett Olds threw his hand up to second Mr Pyne's motion.

"I second the motion only because I don't want to silence my colleague (but) I'm against the motion ... I don't buy into the alarmism and tokenism," Mr Olds said.

"I think it's really easy to say words ... but backing them up with actions is a totally different thing.



Division 9 councillor Brett Olds said the climate emergency declaration was "alarmism". Picture: Isaac McCarthy

"Our council is far in front of (most) councils with what we're doing to help the planet and be good custodians of the Earth."

Division 4 councillor Terry James said the local disaster management group had a vulnerable persons register.

"[In times of disaster](#) we encourage people to notify the LDMG who these people are so we can co-ordinate assistance as required," Mr James said.

Division 1 councillor Brett Moller said insufficient certainty existed concerning how a climate emergency declaration would impact council's operations and governance.

"Effective decision making is informed decision making," Mr Moller said.

The council voted 9-1 against the motion.

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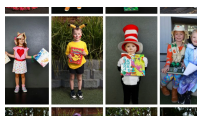
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