

COP28 Mayor report January Council meeting

## **COP28 Climate Change Conference**

### **Background**

Having had the privilege of being invited by the United Nations to participate in COP28 as their guest, it was good that we accepted.

1. It was the first time Local Government was involved.
2. It was an opportunity to engage with world leaders to hear their thinking in discussions with other world leaders.
3. We are involved as Unley Council is pulling our weight to achieve net carbon zero for the planet. Our proposals are globally significant.
4. We had two leadership opportunities, and we were heard globally.
5. Other cities face the same problems we are facing and:
  - a. we shared our plans to achieve carbon neutral by 2030.
  - b. we shared our plans to mitigate rising global temperatures.
  - c. we listened and learned from others.
6. Local Government as a sector needs to continue to organise sessions like the American Mayors session which was attended by Mayors and staff from around the world including 20 Mayors from the USA.

### **What is COP28, and why is it important?**

COP28 – was the 28th annual United Nations meeting of the Conference of the Parties on climate. In 2023, the conference was hosted in Dubai from the 30 November to the 12 December. Delegates from over 200 countries attended alongside several other key stakeholders across private, public, and not-for-profit sectors.

Accelerating the switch from coal, oil and gas to clean energy sources was expected to be the dominant topic of discussion at the summit. An international pledge to triple global renewable capacity and double energy efficiency by the end of the decade was expected to be the headline outcome of the conference. Nuclear power as part of the Global Carbon Zero approach by countries across the globe was a surprise learning. The UAE, hosting the conference, will complete a Korean designed nuclear power station to supply 25% of its energy needs in the next 5 years. The UAE is also building the world's largest solar power plant, a national fast train network, 100% waste recycling, (albeit 45% will be feedstock for a power plant), and energy efficient buildings. They are also on track to plant 150 million trees (largely mangrove species) by 2030 which apparently absorb carbon at 10X the rate of terrestrial trees.

The choice of location has come under much scrutiny from environmental and human rights groups due to the UAE being one of the largest oil-producing countries in the world, as has the selection of Dr Sultan Ahmed al-Jaber, the head of the UAE's State-owned oil company, to Chair the conference. However, the conference's focus predominantly revolved around reaching targets set in the 2015 Paris Agreement.

COP28 is one of the last opportunities to hit the international goal of limiting long-term global temperature rises to 1.5C. The world is currently on track for about 2.5C of warming by 2100, and scientists warn that the window for keeping the 1.5C limit in reach is ‘rapidly narrowing’.

Based on several speakers and information sessions during the conference, I have come to the opinion that we will achieve the 2.5C warming by 2100. This has implications for the City of Unley.

At the 2023 Asia Pacific Cities Summit I was invited to present a paper, “[Inner suburban tree canopy, Let's get real!](#)”. I was then also asked to be nominated by ICLEI Oceania to be part of a delegation of four Mayors from the Oceania region. The Lord Mayor of Hobart, and the Mayors from Fiji and a Pacific Island also attended. The invitation by the UN also covered fully the costs of a support staff member to attend. Our CEO, Peter Tsokas, accepted the Mayor’s invitation to join him. COP28 brought world leaders together to engage in crucial negotiations and commitments concerning the climate crisis. The Mayor and CEO represented local solutions and elevated the voice of the City of Unley, South Australia. This became very real in the Local Government workshop session where we were able to participate in two parallel workshop groups with the leadership of Councils from around the world.

## What’s the importance of COP28 for Local Government?

While COP28 is a global conference, that may feel disconnected from the day-to-day work of implementing climate action, the decisions made over the two-weeks will make an important impact on the shape and pace of local climate action.

Local authorities have a vital role to play in leading climate action. Councils are often on the front lines of the climate crisis and face the challenging task of both protecting communities from the impacts of the climate crisis and cutting emissions to reach net zero targets.

Despite the numerous challenges associated with climate action at a local level, Councils across the world are taking bold leadership on this issue. In recognition of the important role of local authorities, the European Union is set to formally advocate for an “increased involvement of local and regional governments in the implementation of international climate agreements, recognising their leadership in accelerating and broadening climate action.”



Mayors across the Globe attended COP28 Climate Change Conference.

Mayors across the USA had united with spectacular effect. In 2023 the Federal Government directly funds Councils, each year, \$1.5Billion to plant trees across the nation.

## Did COP28 live up to the promise – Unite. Act. Deliver?

It was important that we attended. This is the first COP to formally include Local Government. The program was relevant and important both locally and globally. We attended sessions with world leaders in discussion and debate on matters that mattered. These sessions gave insights to the future of our planet; insights that are important to Local Government authorities globally. In one of our lectures and debates series, the adjacent was presented which illustrated a five-point step to implementing a global vision. This process is just as relevant to our local one. Indeed, our Council did not have the five-point plan, but we have followed this path.



## A global stocktake

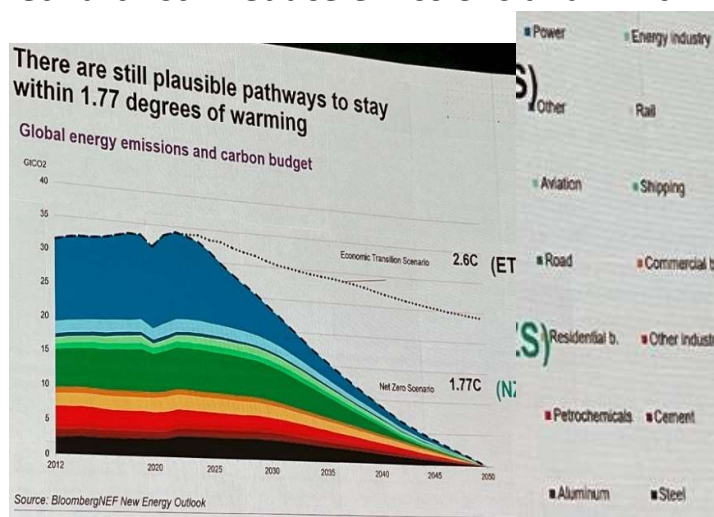
[https://unfccc.int/sites/default/files/resource/cma2023\\_L17\\_adv.pdf](https://unfccc.int/sites/default/files/resource/cma2023_L17_adv.pdf)

COP28 enabled the UN to conclude its first-ever “global stocktake”, which has assessed the world’s collective progress towards addressing the climate crisis against the goals of the 2015 Paris Agreement. This stocktake will shape the expectations of every country to set stronger national emissions reduction targets. The stocktake comprises two elements: a technical aspect and a political aspect. The technical phase saw the UN release a Global Stocktake Synthesis Report in September 2023, which revealed that although countries had made significant progress since 2015, the world is significantly off track from its goal of holding global temperature rise to 1.5C. The political aspect will see a declaration on what countries will do next, with discussions on the transition to renewable energy sources. Simon Striell, UN Climate Change Executive Secretary, called the report “a report card of our collective climate action. And not a good one.” before adding that “COP28 is our chance to make a dramatic course correction. Let’s seize that chance.”

## Can the humans on planet Earth still reduce emissions and limit warming to 1.7°C ?

There are a lot of government commitments and promises that are not necessarily delivered. But progress globally, with the notable exception of India and the belated but now impressive actions of China, suggest that we will contain our emissions.

But what is the most likely outcome in terms of global temperature increase?



To find out I focused on two areas.

### 1 What other Local Governments were doing, their successes and their failures?

It was clear to the CEO and I that we were not going to achieve net zero, the **NZS** scenario on the plausible pathways graph above.

### 2 What would money alone achieve?

The Mayor and CEO participated in the presentations and debates and were able to participate.

Given the pivotal role Local Government authorities play in fighting the climate crisis, COP28 and the Local Climate Action Conference provided an invaluable platform for national and world leaders to directly engage and learn about the comprehensive climate plan, progress, and ongoing projects of cities around our planet. This potentially paved the way for transformative, collective ambition and action on a global scale.

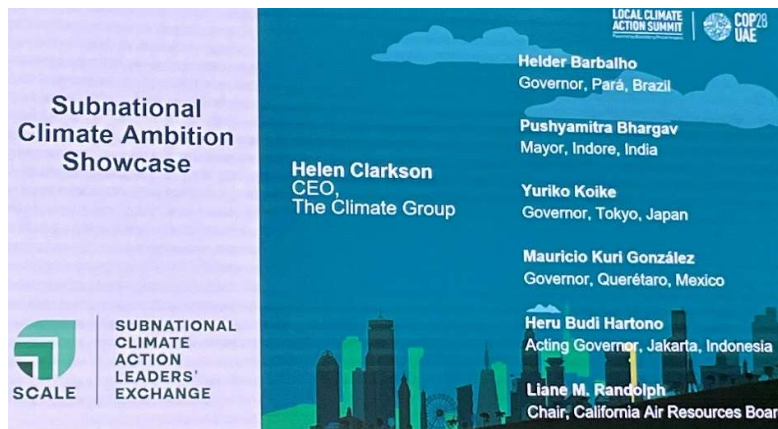


## Raise the finances

### A just transition away from fossil fuels

The role of money to enable carbon reduction, abatement, and the achievement of net zero carbon emissions was the key to so many successful stories of strong progress across the planet. Indiana in the USA gave a detailed commercial road map to its eventual success. It required many players working together as no one entity had all the tools needed to achieve success.

Given the results of the UN's global stocktake, catalysing a just transition away from fossil fuels was a key issue for delegates at COP28. Phasing out fossil fuels was discussed as part of a broader package on energy, which includes targets on scaling up renewable energy and improving energy efficiency. The "Climate Finance in Focus" sessions over two days described how evening social gatherings at COP 28 of the leaders of USA, Japan, Indonesia, and financial speakers pictured above resulted in brainstorming how to finance the removal of coal fired power plants in Indonesia. Their staff worked on the solutions





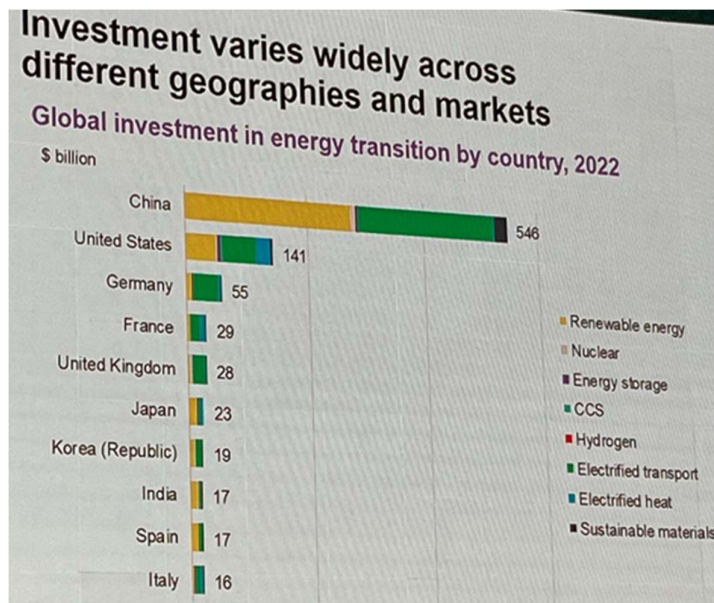
during the following day, and two days later we were told that they had an agreement in place.

Previous conferences have seen a growing number of countries call for a global phase out of fossil fuels. At COP26, countries agreed to “accelerate efforts towards the phasedown of unabated coal power”, the first COP decision to ever refer to a fossil fuel, whereas at last year’s COP27, 80 countries including the USA, India and the EU called for a decision on coal to be expanded to a total global phaseout of fossil fuels, which ultimately was unsuccessful. I hope that COP28 delivers on this, as I note that the UAE unsurprisingly tried to water this down. It is predicted that the UAE will run out of oil in 20 years’ time.

### Follow the money.

I was particularly interested in understanding the finance, the incentives and the factors that enabled private finance to be involved in finding and implementing solutions. The financial opportunities in developing solutions to reduce CO<sub>2</sub> emissions globally became apparent. I understand why the Chinese are far outspending everyone else. EV cars, Solar Panels, nuclear power plants and sustainable materials are providing great commercial opportunities for China globally.

Given Carbon neutral energy supply and the large investment in CCS, (Carbon capture and Storage), the production of Aluminium is closed in Australia and grows in China with Australian mining exports.



### Round Table Invitation

I was invited to participate and participated in a round table discussion on Local Government finance and shared our aim to be carbon neutral in our Council operations by 2030. In the high-level panel discussions, carbon credits are a global issue. “They are not bankable”. (Bill Winters Standard Charter Chief Executive) Speakers made it clear that we need globally agreed carbon offsets that are bankable. “They may be only 95% reliable, but at least that would work.” We were told from a financial point of view that the current carbon offset regime is variable, open to abuse. For example, “what is the credit of planting trees after a forest fire?”

This part of the conference had 45-minute breaks every two hours allowing delegates to meet, understand each other’s



background, concerns, and hopes. This process was an invaluable part of the trust and commonality that arose from the formal round table process and discussion.

During the round table discussion, with about 20 participating, I was asked to present Unley Council's actions, issues, hopes, and concerns.

- In November 2020, the City of Unley committed to becoming a member of the Global Covenant of Mayors for Climate and Energy (GCoM), a global coalition of like-minded Councils and city leaders who have pledged to reduce greenhouse gas emissions to galvanise climate and energy action across cities worldwide. In joining, we pledge to measure emissions, set targets, and develop a plan to support emission reductions.

[Carbon Neutral Unley by December 2030](#)

[City of Unley Climate and Energy Plan 2023](#)



- In March 2021, the City of Unley participated in an external audit of corporate climate change risk. The City of Unley demonstrated a good understanding of the climate risks presented as an organisation and a top score was received for Strategic Planning, Public Risk Disclosure, Asset Management and Greenhouse Gas Emissions Reduction. View the [full report](#). Council is taking direct action in our operations to reduce the impact on our environment.
- I shared how the newly elected Council shifted the focus from purchasing external carbon credits to spending the amount of money this would cost on reducing our own Council footprint. I shared how some of our elected members were concerned about the credibility of carbon credits and I fully supported the need for a reliable and recognised international system of carbon credits.

My global take away is, "Follow the money".

With India, in general lagging behind, and despite China now spending more than anyone, we will not achieve global net zero but will achieve the Economic Transition Scenario. Our planet's temperature will rise by 2.5°C.

All levels of government need to plan and adapt, mitigate where possible.

One example, because water expands with heat, the oceans will rise. Unley is more than 30m above our sea level, so we need to ensure we have over 30% tree canopy to reduce our extreme hot days by 10°C.

## Local Government in focus

We had the opportunity to participate in group discussions and share our story of actions we are taking locally to address problems common across all continents and nations. The CEO and I attended the “Local Climate” programme and we separated into six discussion groups.

The organisation and management of this was exceptional. Each working group had a professional scribe and another facilitator named in the adjacent pictures. In my group, we had Mayors across Africa, South America and the USA. A number of others spoke about their problems in adapting to rising temperatures. Whether it was Ecuador, or the USA, the issue raised was the lack of trees on private property. It is a problem across Africa, South America, and the USA.

When I talked about our work in Unley, the group were stunned.

Unley is making a national, regional, and global contribution to ensuring a liveable City of Unley, a liveable Australia, and Asia Pacific region. Unley may have the opportunity to make a significant CO<sub>2</sub> reduction globally with our innovative work to mitigate and adapt as temperatures rise.

Inner cities’ areas lose trees and cities globally become heat radiators. Our National prize-winning IT work has now enabled the City of Unley to involve and inform our citizens and property owners of the tree canopy cover on their property. We now know that 50% of our local tree canopy loss is from just over 200 new developments that increased the built form. Our proposal to undertake a 10-year trial of an incentive scheme could reduce future temperatures by 12°C on hot days, resulting in lower CO<sub>2</sub> emissions from Airconditioners in cars, work and homes. We seek to trial a 10% incentive/charge for owners of these properties to achieve at least 15% tree canopy cover. [Inner Suburban Tree Canopy – Let’s Get Real!](#)

I was asked, “Have you implemented the scheme?” The disappointment that we were yet to have the signature of our State Planning Minister, to be able to proceed with the trial, was apparent. Nevertheless, I was given email addresses of Mayors from all three regions to receive a copy of the paper.

The CEO, participated in a discussion around mobility options, making streets safer, more accessible and providing real alternatives to the use of the car. Our city-wide lower speed limit and bicycle Plan were discussed as was the work we have been undertaking to provide “safe routes to school” for



children. These initiatives were all relevant for work other municipalities in the USA are currently undertaking.

In the final reporting to the larger group, a great deal of time was spent reporting the comments from the “Australian Council”, from both the Mayor’s and the CEO’s group.

Unley has much to offer and a great deal to learn.

## **Additional sessions attended that were of interest**

### **Next Generation Solar Panels**

Flexible thin solar panels are to be introduced on exterior walls of buildings in Japan in the next few years. The Japanese engineering company JGC Holdings plans to commercialize by 2026, bendable solar cells made of perovskite that can be installed on curved surfaces, such as chemical tanks, shop walls or domed buildings.

The next-generation solar cells are considered a potential game-changer. Weighing about a tenth of silicon solar cells, those made of perovskite can be installed in places not suited for existing solar panels.

The Japanese Government is also introducing a policy whereby it will be mandatory for all new houses built from 2025, to have roof top solar panels.

### **Pristine Seas Initiative (Enric Sala)**

The creation of Marine Protection Areas (MPAs) is an extremely important initiative given the surface area covered by oceans and the eco-systems they contain. The creation of these areas seeks to limit human activity and, in some cases, ban fishing. To date, the Pristine Seas initiative has helped drive the creation of 23 MPAs covering approximately 6 million square kilometres of ocean.

Studies have shown that MPAs have had a significant positive effect on the ocean’s eco-system protecting coral reef as well as replenishing existing fish stock. Furthermore, protecting the ocean is important as it helps regulate the climate and capture some of the carbon pollution put in the atmosphere as well as providing more than half of the world’s oxygen supply.

The example was given where the Dominican Republic which was initially against creating such a zone off its coast, is now extremely positive as it has created a new industry (tourism) because of the coral reef and associated increase in fish stock. The tourism it brings to the Dominican Republic has dwarfed the previous fishing industry economy.

The aim is to protect 30% of the oceans by 2030.

### **Indore Waste Management**

The Mayor of Indore (India) shared their journey in introducing sustainable waste management practices. Indore has a population over 3 million people and generates around 1000 tons of waste per day. Prior to 2026, the city struggled with waste management, leading to unhygienic conditions, increased pollution, and negative impacts on public health. Over the last 8 years, the municipality introduced a transformation of its waste management system. This included existing infrastructure, policies, and community engagement initiatives to create a more efficient and sustainable waste management system.



The problems needed to be overcome included:

- Lack of waste segregation at the source.
- Inefficient waste collection and transportation system.
- Limited public awareness and participation.
- Limited infrastructure for waste processing and disposal.

The solutions implemented:

- Introduction of a mandatory waste segregation policy requiring households to separate waste into wet (biodegradable) and dry (recyclable) categories. This allowed for more efficient collection of waste.
- Introduction of a daily door-to-door waste collection system using GPS enabled vehicles. This enables waste to be collected efficiently and reduced illegal littering / dumping of waste.
- Established a waste processing facility capable of handling 1,000 tons of waste, including a 15MW waste-to-energy plant and a 200 tons per day composting plant. These facilities enabled the city to process and dispose of waste more effectively.
- Introduced strong public awareness campaigns involving schools, religious institutions, and local celebrities to educate the public on the importance of waste segregation and cleanliness.
- Introduced a regime of strict monitoring and enforcement to ensure compliance with waste management rules.

The results:

- Over 90-% of households segregate their waste.
- The waste processing facility manages approximately 1000 tons of waste per day with a 95% recovery rate.
- Indore has consistently ranked as the cleanest city in India since 2017.
- There has been a 60% reduction of vector-borne diseases.
- Air quality has improved due to a reduction in open burning of waste.

Key Learnings:

- Political will and administrative commitment are crucial for the successful implementation of their waste management system.
- Public awareness and commitment are a key component to the success.
- Rules and an enforcement program are also required.

## Thanks, and acknowledgement

Cities are at the forefront of climate impacts and solutions; we thank Bloomberg Philanthropies and the COP28 Presidency for dedicating a space to local and regional climate efforts.

We set out to address the following:

- **Transforming Local Climate Finance:** Strengthen sustainable financial mechanisms to mobilize the trillions of dollars in public and private investment needed globally at the

subnational level to deliver real change.

- **Integrating Local Contributions to Enhance Global Action:** Incorporate local implementation into national and international climate policy design and determine how best to factor subnational action into future national and global climate goals, including for 2030.
- **Fast-tracking the Local Energy Transition:** Propel rapid advancements across pivotal sectors and surface new strategies to deliver ambitious results locally.
- **Strengthening Local Resilience and Adaptation:** Protect residents and infrastructure from immediate and future climate risks.

The best work happened behind the scenes. Future Local Government involvement in COP needs to learn how to effectively organise and contribute to such a huge process. Fortunately, Bloomberg booked most of the Local Government component in a nearby function centre in the heart of Dubai. The travel and entry into the blue area of COP28 on the first day took about four hours.

We were able to learn a lot from attending different countries' facilities.

## Outcomes

Multilevel action and cooperation is at the heart of the response to the climate emergency, and COP28 enabled this to occur.

Cities, regions, and other Local Governments welcomed the unprecedented inclusion in the COP28 proceedings and outcomes, which reflect their critical importance in tackling climate change and adapting to its impacts.

Upon the conclusion of COP28, the Local Governments and Municipal Authorities (LGMA) Constituency (consisting of the ICLEI regional groups worldwide), the Cities and regions in the UNFCCC Process, and the Global task of Local and Regional Governments were pleased to provide a joint commentary:

*"The LGMA commends the political commitment of nation-states and the COP28 Presidency to engage with local and other subnational governments on climate planning, financing and implementation as one of the most significant outcomes for local and other subnational governments since the Paris Agreement. As the [LGMA jointly advocated leading up to and throughout COP28](#), effective multilevel action and sustainable urbanization will be among the most important tools to support nations in delivering on their commitments adopted and announced here in Dubai.*

*Strong references of multilevel action in the UAE Consensus outcome, 70+ nations signing the COP28 [Coalition for High Ambition Multilevel Partnership \(CHAMP\) for Climate Action](#), strong support for multilevel cooperation at the Ministerial Meeting on Urbanization and Climate Change, [nearly USD \\$500 million in climate finance for urban infrastructure announced](#), [a host of important local and regional government network announcements](#), and unprecedented inclusion by the COP28 Presidency in the official COP agenda, including the first-ever Local Climate Action Summit, all*

*herald a new phase of collaboration between all levels of government.*

*The LGMA Constituency stands ready to continue the work with our national counterparts at COP29 in Azerbaijan and on to the submission of more ambitious Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) at COP30.*

*COP28 opens doors wide for a new era of climate action that is ready to respond to the climate emergency, with multilevel cooperation and action sitting at the heart of the response.”*

## Traffic problems and transport solutions

### Arrival in Dubai

The CEO and I arrived in Dubai at 5:40 am and on leaving the airport the ten-lane road was a traffic jam. I thought, what are we doing going to a COP28 to sort out carbon emissions? Were we coming to annoy oil producing United Arab Emirates?

On departure we were booked for 3 1/2 hours to travel to ensure we were at the airport to catch a 10:30 am flight home. The roads are simply massive - cars everywhere.

A sign of the things to come, with our first south freeway corridor, and we will probably need three of them to go to Mount Barker. In addition to three freeways there will be so much work on local roads as the traffic volume overwhelms their capacity. The existing Freeway has become busier causing congestion in Unley and major works along Cross Road, Fullarton Road, and Glen Osmond Road.



### Travelling around Dubai

On a Tuesday afternoon at 5.00 pm we made a mistake to accept a small bus ride back to our hotel for what would be a 20-minute trip. I arrived back at 8.15pm not 5.45 as was expected.

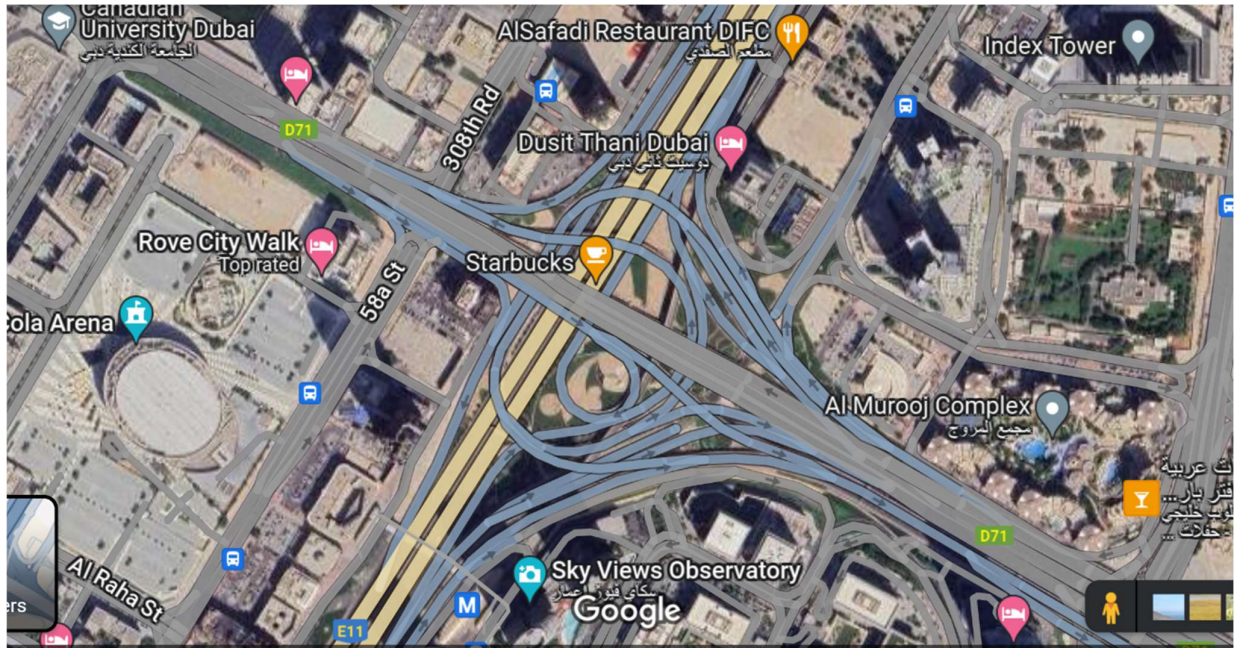
Cars are not a solution for cities. Fortunately for the UAE they are now building fast rail access across the UAE and a 71-minute trip is promised between Abu Dhabi and Dubai.



## Transport lessons

1. Cars are not a transport solution in large cities.

2. Road infrastructure does not ensure roads work for transport.
3. Rail and active transport solutions are essential for large livable cities.



## COP28, Dubai

### Three takeaways For the City of Unley From the sessions we contributed to....

1. Internationally credible, and hence bankable carbon offsets are essential to enable carbon offsets to be supported by private money. This money is needed to keep global warming down to 2.5°C. increase
2. Cities across the globe are heating our planet and are failing to achieve tree planting on private property. Mayors across four continents named this as their major concern, whilst their Governments accelerate the planting of trees on public land.
3. It is globally important that our City of Unley trials our plan for automatic incentives for developers to achieve a minimum 15% tree canopy on private property.

[Inner suburban tree canopy, Let's get real!](#)

### Some References

1. Global Stocktake [https://unfccc.int/sites/default/files/resource/cma2023\\_L17\\_adv.pdf](https://unfccc.int/sites/default/files/resource/cma2023_L17_adv.pdf)
2. Global Goal on Adaptation - [https://unfccc.int/sites/default/files/resource/cma2023\\_L18\\_adv.pdf](https://unfccc.int/sites/default/files/resource/cma2023_L18_adv.pdf)
3. [Global Goal on Adaptation](#)
4. At COP28, [more than 70 countries pledged to join the COP28 Coalition for High Ambition Multilevel Partnership \(CHAMP\) for Climate Action](#)