



# **Policy Statement on CLIMATE CHANGE**

June 2009

### **Status of this Policy Statement**

This Policy Statement has been prepared by the Western Australian Local Government Association (the Association) for endorsement by the Western Australian Local Government Association State Council.

Policy Statements adopted by the Western Australian Local Government Association represent a consolidated viewpoint from Local Government and may differ from the positions adopted by individual member organisations. The Association will strive to promote this Policy Statement and to act consistently with its contents. Individual Local Governments and Regional Councils are encouraged to support but are not bound by the document.

Local Governments are encouraged to use this Policy Statement as template text to develop their own policy commitments and documents on Climate Change.

Policy Statements adopted by the WA Local Government Association are reviewed and new Policy Statements are developed regularly. The latest WA Local Government Association Policy Statements can be obtained from the website: [www.walga.asn.au](http://www.walga.asn.au)

In-line with standard WALGA policy, this policy statement will be reviewed 6-months after its endorsement by the State Council. It will be reviewed again at least every 2-years subsequent to this; with any significant developments acting to instigate an earlier review.

# Policy Statement on CLIMATE CHANGE

<b>Title:</b>	<b>WA Local Government Association Draft Policy Statement on Climate Change December 2008</b>
<p><b>Policy Objective:</b></p> <p><b>Background:</b></p>	<p>To ensure that Local Government understands and addresses climate change impacts in a local, regional and international context, evaluates the climate change implications of operational decisions and policy positions, and is committed to greenhouse emissions reductions and risk management through appropriate mitigation and adaptation strategies.</p> <p>The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC)'s Fourth Assessment Report (2007) asserts that "Global atmospheric concentrations of carbon dioxide, methane and nitrous oxide have increased markedly as a result of human activities since 1750 and now far exceed pre-industrial values", that "The global increases in carbon dioxide concentration are due primarily to fossil fuel use and land-use change, while those of methane and nitrous oxide primarily due to agriculture", and that "Warming of the climate system is unequivocal, as is now evident from observations of increases in global average air and ocean temperatures, widespread melting of snow and ice, and rising global average sea level."<sup>1</sup></p> <p>In the Fourth Assessment Report, the IPCC identified emissions pathways for wealthy and developed Annex I countries to limit global warming between 2.0° and 2.4°C. These pathways require emissions to be limited to 25 to 40 percent below 1990 levels and global concentrations of carbon dioxide equivalent ('CO<sub>2</sub>-e' ) in the atmosphere to be maintained at no more than 400ppm in order to ensure a temperature increase below 2°C.</p> <p>Both IPCC reports and CSIRO reports indicate that climate change has already resulted in observed increases in global temperature, sea level rise and in some cases significant changes to rainfall and weather patterns. Without immediate mitigation action being taken climate change is projected to cause further changes in global temperature and sea level rise, significant changes to rainfall and weather patterns and increased incidences of extreme and dangerous weather events including storms, cyclones, floods and droughts.</p> <p><b>Local Government support for Climate Change Management</b></p> <p>Climate change is an issue that Local Governments in Western Australia consistently express concern about. In 2007 the Western Australian Local Government Association conducted a survey of Local Governments to ascertain their knowledge of, and concern about climate change impacts. Of over 80 responses 100% of Councils expressed concern about climate change impacts and implications <a href="http://www.walga.asn.au/about/policy/environment_waste/env_sub_docs/climate_change_survey.pdf/view">http://www.walga.asn.au/about/policy/environment_waste/env_sub_docs/climate_change_survey.pdf/view</a>. From regionally specific concerns about sea level rise and its land use planning implications, to wide ranging environmental concerns about biodiversity loss and its effects on tourism, our communities expect Local Governments to manage climate change impacts. Councils are indicating their need for proactive leadership and adequate tools with which Local Government can assess their vulnerability and adapt to the climate change impacts that are now inevitable, while at the same time trying to mitigate their contribution to climate change impacts. Councils also have a leadership role to</p>

<sup>1</sup> Climate Change 2007 The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change Fourth Assessment Report (2007) <http://www.ipcc.ch/>

<b>Strategies</b>	<p>play in their communities.</p> <p>While it is the closest sphere of Government to the community, and could provide significant climate change information and assistance to the community, it is not the best resourced sphere of Government to do so. Local Government however is committed to working with the State and Commonwealth Governments to ensure adequate resourcing for Local Government climate change adaptation and mitigation actions and to using appropriate research frameworks and data to inform Local Government strategies and decision making.</p> <p><b>Legislative support for Climate Change Management</b> Section 1.3(3) of the Local Government Act 1995 states “In carrying out its functions a local government is to use its best endeavours to meet the needs of current and future generations through an integration of environmental protection, social advancement and economic prosperity”.</p> <p>In order to ‘meet the needs of current and future generations’, Local Government must address climate change impacts on its community. Climate change poses a growing threat to the community and to Local Government, environmentally, socially and financially, and a range of mitigation and adaptation strategies must be applied to ensure that both social and legal obligations are met and risks and future costs are reduced.</p> <p><b>Climate Change Strategies</b> The threats from climate change demand a range of responses that may be broadly classified as mitigation and adaptation strategies.</p> <p>Mitigation refers to the reduction of climate change impacts via broad scale behaviour change. Mitigation strategies principally rely on impacts of climate change being reducible via the contribution to collective global implementation of ‘greenhouse gas’ emissions reduction strategies. This may involve, amongst other things, improved energy efficiency, sequestration programs and educational or behaviour change programs.</p> <p>Adaptation strategies involve identifying the inevitable changes that climate change will cause, regardless of the success of any current or future mitigation strategies deployed, and managing these changes in the present and the future. Reducing the long term impact and severity of climate change relies on the success of international agreements to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. However due to historical greenhouse gas some changes are unavoidable, and these changes will have to be managed by all spheres of the community, including Local Government, who will feel the financial, infrastructure, water, land use planning, liability and social impacts of not addressing climate change most markedly.</p> <p>Adaptation strategies also aim to take advantage of any opportunities that climate change may offer with respect to development, infrastructure, technology or science, among other areas.</p> <p>These strategies are intimately dependent on each other: the more we contribute to global mitigation now, the greater is the likelihood that adaptation in the future will be less onerous. Neither concept is static and neither concept can be properly addressed without acknowledgement of its interrelationship with the other.</p>
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<b>Statement of Policy:</b>	<p><b>Climate Change Management for Local Government</b></p> <p>In order to properly assess and address climate change implications Local Government will need to address climate change in their strategic planning framework. Climate change has a range of legal, indemnity, budgetary, asset management, infrastructure, planning and environmental implications, all of which will need to be embedded in strategic frameworks and actioned at both a political and operational level in order to ensure climate change liability issues are adequately addressed.</p> <p><b>1. Acknowledging climate change impacts</b></p> <p>In order to ensure that Local Government understands the relevance of climate change impacts to their operational and strategic framework, Local Government adopts a series of acknowledgements on the impacts of climate change.</p> <p><u>1.1 Acknowledging Climate Change</u></p> <p>1.1.1 Local Government recognises that the global climate is changing as a consequence of increased concentrations of greenhouse gas emissions in the atmosphere, and that these increased concentrations are largely the result of human activities.</p> <p>1.1.2 Local Government considers climate change to be a serious current threat to our current way of life and the Earth's ecosystems.</p> <p>1.1.3 Local Government acknowledges that some human-induced climate change is already having an impact on human and natural communities and that further climate change will occur as a result of past, present and future emissions</p> <p><u>1.2 Costs of Delayed Action</u></p> <p>1.2.1 Local Government acknowledges that while uncertainty is present in the existing climate science, this does not present a reason for inaction or delay of action and that the 'Precautionary Principle' should be applied to the use of climate science.</p> <p>1.2.2 Local Government acknowledges that delayed action on climate change mitigation and adaptation strategies will increase costs and potential liabilities to Local Government in a range of areas, in particular planning and infrastructure management and risk management.</p> <p><u>1.3. Australia's Obligation to Act</u></p> <p>1.3.1 Local Government acknowledges that the Australian community has historically contributed, and continues to contribute, disproportionately to global greenhouse gas emissions. Australia has achieved considerable economic wealth in the process. It therefore has a responsibility for current climate change and an ethical obligation and opportunity to play a leadership role, commensurate with its capabilities, in contributing to the national and global greenhouse gas reductions necessary to avoid dangerous climate change.</p> <p>1.3.2 Local Government asserts that climate change, being a matter of national significance, is a direct responsibility of the State and Federal Governments and that as a result the State and Federal Governments have an obligation to address climate change in cooperation with Local Government, and in consultation with the Australian community as a whole.</p>
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#### 1.4 Mitigation – Emission Reductions

1.4.1 Local Government recognises that Australia has the capacity to contribute to global climate change mitigation, by reducing emissions now, in a way that creates positive opportunities for communities, industries and our economic sustainability.

1.4.2 Local Government acknowledges that the magnitude of the mitigation task ahead is substantial, and that planning, investment and infrastructure decisions made today will shape the carbon intensity of our future. It therefore considers that a successful response to the challenge of meeting appropriate emission reduction targets should begin immediately and will require cross-sectoral action by government, business and broader community at all levels. Local Government supports the establishment of institutions and regulations that ensure effective, integrated action by these stakeholders.

1.4.3 Local Government acknowledges that no single policy measure will provide a solution to climate change. Local Government considers a wide range of policy measures - from regulatory intervention and market-based mechanisms through to voluntary schemes, education and behaviour change programs - is required to successfully achieve appropriate and adequate emission reduction targets.

1.4.4 Local Government acknowledges that no single technology will provide a solution to climate change; and that all reasonable options need to be researched, explored and facilitated.

#### 1.5 Adaptation – Collaborative Action

1.5.1 Local Government acknowledges that the magnitude of the adaptation task ahead is substantial, and that planning, investment and infrastructure decisions made today will determine how successfully the community is able to adapt to the impacts of climate change, reduce its risks and vulnerabilities to these and take advantage of any opportunities. It therefore considers that a successful response to the challenge of adapting to climate change impacts should begin immediately and will require cross-sectoral action by government, business and broader community at all levels. Local Government supports the establishment of institutions and regulations that ensure effective, integrated action by these stakeholders as being crucial to cohesive and effective climate change management.

#### 1.6 Equity and Social Justice

1.6.1 Local Government acknowledges that both the impacts of climate change and the policy responses required to contribute to the avoidance of dangerous climate change have significant equity implications. These equity considerations have domestic and international dimensions, and implications for both present and future human generations, and for the survival of other species.

1.6.2 Local Government acknowledges that climate equity has both domestic and international impacts. It supports global equity and the right of developing countries to increase their share of global wealth in ways that remain within the ecological capacities of the planet.

1.6.3 Local Government acknowledges that the burden of reducing greenhouse emissions domestically must be equitably dispersed and that disadvantaged communities or cultural groups need access to State and Commonwealth support in order to enable them to adequately respond to and cope with the cost increases likely to arise from a variety of mitigation and adaptation schemes,

including the Carbon Pollution Reduction Scheme.

1.6.4 Local Government acknowledges that in order for standards of living to become globally equitable, culture shift towards sustainable standards of living in developed and prosperous countries, including Australia, will be required.

## **2. Committing to immediate climate change action**

In order to deliver appropriate climate change mitigation and adaptation strategies, Local Government adopts the following policy commitments:

### 2.1 Avoiding Dangerous Climate Change

2.1.1 Local Government is committed to preventing dangerous, human induced climate change by working towards the realisation of Article 2 of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). It recognises that increases in average global surface temperature have already occurred and that further warming is now inevitable.

2.1.2 Local Government supports all local and global actions and targets intended to contribute to limiting the increase in average global surface temperature to within 2 degrees Celsius (above pre-industrial levels), in accordance with current scientific understanding that this is the threshold under which the worst consequences of climate change may be able to be avoided.

### 2.2 Costs of Delayed Action

2.2.1 Local Government is committed to immediate action on climate change mitigation and adaptation. Local Government notes that in addition to the irreversible environmental and social consequences of human-induced climate change, economic analysis indicates that delayed action has significant economic impacts, which would be more costly than early action.

2.2.2 In acknowledging that climate change has immediate impacts, and that any delay of action could have financial and social cost implications, Local Government is committed to identifying and addressing local and regional climate change impacts in a timely manner. Given that recent climate change science indicates that actual warming is tracking at the upper levels of the IPCC Report (2007) predictions and that in order to limit global warming to acceptable levels deep cuts will need to be made, immediate action must be taken to identify, prioritise and address climate change risks via a robust risk management process and setting appropriate targets.

### 2.3. Australia's Obligation to Act

2.3.1 Local Government is committed to actively promoting and supporting efforts to develop effective global, national and state strategies to reduce the severity of climate change by reducing greenhouse gas emissions in a manner consistent with the intention of Article 3.1 of the UNFCCC.

2.3.2 Local Government is committed to meeting its local, national and international obligations through participation in protocols and agreements established under the UNFCCC, including but not limited to the Kyoto Protocol and its successor international treaties, and supporting the Kyoto Protocol's further development and effective implementation.

2.3.3 Local Government is committed to actively addressing climate change in a way which reflects

Australia's disproportionate per capita contribution, as opposed to its global emissions ratio contribution.

#### 2.4 Mitigation – Emission Reductions

2.4.1 Local Government is committed to working towards agreed national emission reduction targets, with caps and timeframes that will ensure the achievement of Article 2 of the UNFCCC, while also taking into account Australia's status as a developed country party to the UNFCCC given its high level per capita emissions.

2.4.2 Local Government is committed to supporting the introduction of a well designed and equitable national emissions trading scheme and regards an effective price on greenhouse gas emissions as an important measure for achieving emissions reduction targets.

2.4.3 Local Government is committed to reducing its operational greenhouse gas emissions and supporting the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions in the community.

2.4.4 Local Government acknowledges the critical role that innovation will play in combating climate change and is committed to supporting and encouraging policies and measures that drive appropriate technological development and commercialisation.

2.4.5 Local Government acknowledges that technological solutions go only part way to helping meet the necessary reduction in greenhouse emissions and that citizens must be encouraged to adopt more sustainable lifestyles that reduce greenhouse impact. Local Government is committed to supporting community and business in the transition towards sustainable lifestyles.

#### 2.5 Adaptation – Collaborative Action

2.5.1 Local Government is committed to contributing to the common goal of ensuring that Western Australia's human communities and natural ecosystems have the resources and other assistance necessary to enable them to build maximum resilience and adapt to climate change impacts that are now understood to be unavoidable.

2.5.2 Local Government asserts that it is the responsibility of all spheres of Australian Government to inform individuals and communities about the likely impacts of climate change. Local Government is committed to working with the community to ensure a high level of understanding of climate change impacts and develop strategies to help adapt to these.

2.5.3 Local Government asserts that it is the responsibility of all spheres of Australian Government to ensure that all current regulation and policies take into consideration the likely impact of climate change on current and future human settlements, natural resources and ecosystems and facilitate adaptation to these. These policies should include but not be limited to those pertaining to disaster relief, national security, infrastructure, planning, water, energy, housing, health, transport, environment and energy.

#### 2.6 Equity and Social Justice

2.6.1 Local Government supports Australian participation in actions, strategies and agreements that



support and increase global climate justice. Local Government recognises the human rights dimension of climate change impacts and policy, and the necessity to address the disparity in resource use, emissions, wealth and vulnerability to the impacts of climate change between industrialised and non-industrialised countries and between different individuals and communities within countries.

2.6.2 In working towards the reduction of global and national emissions, Local Government is committed to working towards and supporting an equitable and fair framework for the international allocation of emission rights, which is then reflected in the commitments and actions of individual countries including Australia. This framework recognises:

- That all people have equal rights to the Earth's atmosphere;
- That climate change should be addressed globally with regard to relative per capita emissions;
- That climate change should be addressed globally with regard to differing historic responsibilities for man-made greenhouse gas emissions, and
- That climate change should be addressed with regard to differing ability or capacity to pay for mitigation and adaptation actions.

2.6.3 Local Government recognises that, domestically, certain individuals, households and communities, are particularly vulnerable to the impacts of climate change and to the impacts of some of the policies required to adapt to, and mitigate dangerous climate change. Examples include indigenous communities, those with low material wealth and/or access to services and communities dependant on adversely affected primary industries, resources industries or energy industries.

2.6.4 Local Government considers it essential to minimise the impacts of policy responses on, and provide additional assistance to, these vulnerable communities and individuals within Western Australian society and recognises that the Carbon Pollution Reduction Scheme has made some attempt to address the needs of vulnerable businesses and householders.

2.6.5 Local Government considers it essential that strategies are developed that identify the climate change risks and vulnerabilities of disadvantaged communities, measures are developed to reduce these and resources are allocated to enable adaptation and resilience building in these communities.

### **3. Reflecting appropriate priorities**

The management of climate change impacts must reflect the priorities of the individual Local Governments and their communities. These will be individually determined by each Local Government with regard to its environmental, social and economic opportunities and risks.

Local Governments acknowledge the need to identify regionally specific priorities and impacts, and the associated need to coordinate cooperative regional climate change management across the political and operational areas under their jurisdiction.

It is essential for Local Governments to identify climate change risks to their operations and their communities and work together with Commonwealth and State Governments and their communities to plan and implement appropriate adaptation strategies.

### **4. Setting clear objectives and targets**

In order to achieve outcomes and engage in 'best practice' climate change management processes it is essential for each Local Government to set and work towards a set of internal targets for

	<p>greenhouse gas emissions reduction. It is necessary to adopt these targets at Council and publicise the targets in order to achieve stakeholder and community support.</p> <p><b>5. Establishing clear roles and responsibilities</b> While climate change management is the responsibility of all Local Government Officers and Elected Members, there is an expectation that a primary 'team' will be established within individual Local Governments in order to ensure that outcomes are met within a reasonable timeframe. As a significant global concern, climate change must be addressed at all levels of Government. Local Government, in its turn, must address climate change at all levels of its own operations, with support from the Executive Management Team.</p> <p><b>6. Acknowledging resourcing barriers and constraints</b> Climate change management costs, while representing a relatively small financial commitment on a global scale, are likely to represent a larger proportion of Local Government spending. Local Government already has a wide range of responsibilities in the community and climate change is a new and additional aspect of environmental management that Local Governments will have to broaden their suite of services to include.</p> <p>The cost impacts of addressing climate change, exclusive of the Carbon Pollution Reduction Scheme direct costs, are likely to be proportionately high for Local Governments. Additionally Local Governments are likely to be expected to undertake projects and policy work in this area.</p> <p>Local Governments must be adequately resourced via Australian Government revenue avenues to meet these community and political obligations. Local Government asserts that funds from the Climate Change Action Fund (CCAF) or a similar funding mechanism should be made available to Local Governments to fund these costs and additional activities.</p> <p><b>7. Apportioning costs appropriately</b> Local Governments, in acknowledging the immediacy and importance of climate change management, must ensure that high priority climate change risks are directly resourced or externally funded so that impacts can be ameliorated and/or adapted to. This should decrease legal liability issues for Local Government in the long term.</p>
<b>Date of Adoption:</b>	Wednesday June 3, 2009.
<b>Associated Policies:</b>	None
<b>End of Policy Statement</b>	



# Climate Change Policy Statement Review

**Discussion Paper  
November 2017**

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## 1.0 Climate Change and Local Governments

Climate change is a key issue for Local Governments that impacts almost all aspects of their operations and responsibilities. As the level of government closest to the community, Local Governments manage and plan for a range of impacts of climate change, including on community assets, disruption of council services, unbudgeted financial impacts and adverse health impacts on residents. There continues to be significant uncertainty for Local Government around potential legal liability flowing from climate change effects, actions taken (or not taken) in relation to these effects, and how planning laws, schemes and policies mesh with climate change issues.

Local Governments have, for a number of years, been actively engaged in a range of climate change mitigation and adaptation activity, together with education and encouraging awareness and behaviour change amongst residents<sup>1</sup>. This action is seen to go hand in hand with Local Governments' responsibilities under the *Local Government Act 1995 (WA)*, in particular:

*In carrying out its functions a local government is to use its best endeavours to meet the needs of current and future generations through an integration of environmental protection, social advancement and economic prosperity. (Section 1.3(3))*

Many Local Governments have made voluntary commitments or pledges in relation to climate change, including the following:

Pledge	Description	Number of Local Government Participants
<b>Local Government Climate Change Declaration</b>	Developed by WALGA. A voluntary opportunity for Local Governments to demonstrate their political commitment to locally appropriate climate change adaptation and mitigation action. <sup>2</sup>	40 (representing 65% of the WA population)
<b>Divesting from fossil fuels</b>	Commitment to shift money out of banks that fund fossil fuels. <sup>3</sup>	12 (representing 30% of the WA population)
<b>Compact of Mayors</b>	A coalition of city leaders around the world committed to addressing climate change. <sup>4</sup>	4
<b>Cities Power Partnership</b>	Launched July 2017 by the Climate Council, aims to celebrate and accelerate emission reductions and clean energy in Australian towns and cities. <sup>5</sup>	4

<sup>1</sup> See for example WALGA's Local Government Climate Change Project Map: <http://walga.asn.au/Policy-Advice-and-Advocacy/Environment/Climate-Change/Local-Government-Project-Map.aspx>.

<sup>2</sup> For further information see here: <http://walga.asn.au/Policy-Advice-and-Advocacy/Environment/Climate-Change.aspx>.

<sup>3</sup> For a list of Australian Local Governments that have committed to divest see here: <http://gofossilfree.org.au/fossil-free-councils/>. Not listed are City of Bayswater, City of Subiaco and the Shire of Mundaring, which have also recently committed to divest.

<sup>4</sup> Cities of Joondalup, Perth, Melville and Mandurah. Further information about the Compact of Mayors available here: <https://www.compactofmayors.org/>.

<sup>5</sup> The Cities of Kalgoorlie-Boulder, Swan, Canning and Fremantle. Further information about the Cities Power Partnership is available here: <http://citiespowerpartnership.org.au/>.

In the past, Western Australian Local Governments have been key delivery agents of Commonwealth Government climate change mitigation programs, such as the Community Energy Efficiency Program (CEEP), the Local Government Energy Efficiency Program (LGEEP) and the Cities for Climate Protection (CCP) Program that was delivered by ICLEI with Commonwealth Government support.

Program	Program dates	WA Local Government participants
Cities for Climate Protection	1999-2006	30
Local Government Energy Efficiency Program (LGEEP)	2011-2014	50 (includes 1 WALGA grant)
Community Energy Efficiency Program (CEEP)	2011-2016	15 (includes 1 WALGA grant)

The LGEEP and CEEP grants assisted Local Governments in undertaking a wide range of building energy efficiency, LED street lighting and geothermal projects.

WALGA seeks to provide information, resources and advocacy to assist Local Governments in this challenging area. An essential part of this is having an up-to-date, Local Government endorsed Policy Statement on Climate Change.

## 2.0 Policy Statement on Climate Change

The [WALGA Policy Statement on Climate Change](#) (the **existing Policy Statement**) was endorsed by State Council in June 2009 (521.3/2009). A summary of the existing Policy Statement is also included in WALGA's Advocacy Position Statement (Paragraph 4.1 available [here](#)). The existing Policy Statement is used to inform WALGA's advocacy position on climate change matters. For example, the existing Policy Statement is referenced in the following recent WALGA climate change submissions:

- [Interim Submission to the Climate Change Authority's Review of the Carbon Farming Initiative legislation and Emissions Reduction Fund](#) (September 2017);
- [Submission to the Australian Government inquiry into the impacts of climate change on housing, buildings and infrastructure](#) (August 2017; endorsed by State Council September 2017); and
- [Submission in response to the Australian Government's Review of Climate Change Policies](#) (May 2017; endorsed by State Council July 2017).

The statement is now showing its age and it is recommended that a new Policy Statement is developed to ensure it reflects the contemporary views of the sector and as a basis for WALGA's policy and advocacy activity. In particular it should be take account of contemporary scientific understanding of the extent and impacts of climate change and political developments domestically and internationally (including the Paris Agreement and the Sustainable Development Goals) since 2009.

At the July 2017 State Council, the South East Metropolitan Zone requested that WALGA review its existing Policy Statement on Climate Change, to include consideration of awareness and behaviour change strategies for climate change mitigation and energy efficiency.

**This Discussion Paper outlines key developments since the existing Position Statement was finalised in 2009, seeks input from Local Government on key advocacy priorities for Local Government, and on the preferred content of the Policy Statement.** After input has been received and incorporated, State Council's approval will be sought. The endorsed Policy Statement will provide the basis for WALGA's climate change advocacy plan, which will further detail how WALGA will promote and prosecute Local Governments' key climate change priorities over the next one to three years.

## 2.1 Climate change submissions

This paper incorporates references to, and quotations from the submissions referred to above (at 2.0). In particular, key climate change issues outlined in those submissions are set out throughout this paper. These submissions represent the most up-to-date State Council endorsed climate change advocacy positions and the submissions capture many of Local Governments' key priorities in relation to climate change. It should be noted however that these submissions were developed in response to particular inquiries and do not necessarily represent a comprehensive Local Government position.

## 3.0 Current uses for the existing Policy Statement

WALGA has relied on the State Council endorsed existing Policy Statement as a statement of climate change principles and priorities, broadly agreed upon by WA Local Government, to inform its advocacy for climate change action. It is intended that the updated policy statement will serve the same purpose. In addition, the Policy Statement will provide the basis for WALGA's climate change advocacy plan, which will detail how WALGA will promote and prosecute Local Governments' key climate change priorities over the next one to three years (subject to changes / developments in this area).

The existing Policy Statement is currently made available on the WALGA website as a generic/template form for Local Governments to use and adopt themselves.

**Question 1: Have you made use of the existing Climate Change Policy Statement?**

**How?**

**Question 2: Have you used the Policy Statement *template*? How?**

**Question 3: Is it useful to make the Policy Statement available in template format (eg, to assist in developing your own Local Government Climate Change Policy)?**

## 4.0 Current climate change science

Since the existing Climate Change Policy statement was finalised in 2009, scientific understanding and consensus has continued to increase. There is overwhelming scientific evidence that the climate is warming and that greenhouse gas emissions arising from human activities are the main factor in this warming.



The Fifth Assessment Report, the latest report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), states that “Warming of the climate system is unequivocal, and since the 1950s, many of the observed changes are unprecedented over decades to millennia. The atmosphere and ocean have warmed, the amounts of snow and ice have diminished, sea level has risen, and the concentrations of greenhouse gases have increased”<sup>6</sup>. The IPCC’s reports are consensus based, meaning that the above statements reflect international scientific consensus.

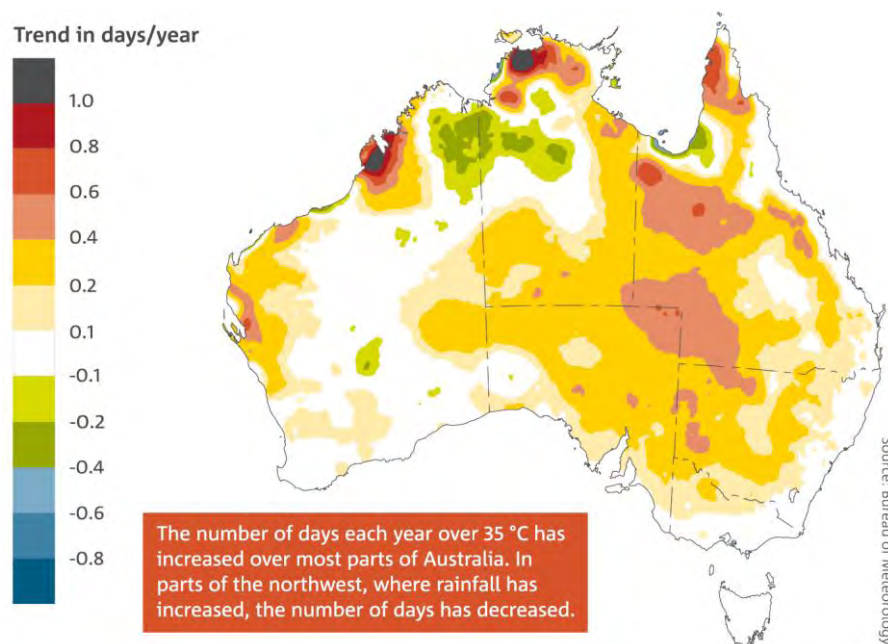


Figure 1: The trend in annual number of days per year above 35 °C from 1957–2015. An increase of 0.2 days/year since 1957 means, on average, that there are almost 12 more days per year over 35 °C.

In Australia, the climate has warmed in both mean surface air temperature and surrounding sea surface temperature by around 1°C since 1910. The duration, frequency and intensity of extreme heat events have increased across large parts of Australia. There has been an increase in extreme fire weather, and a longer fire season, across large parts of Australia since the 1970s. Sea levels have risen around Australia. The rise in mean sea level amplifies the effects of high tides and storm surges.<sup>7</sup>

In Western Australia, there has been significant drying across the south west land division, with the drying trend particularly strong between May and July, with rainfall since 1970 around 19 per cent less than the long-term average. Since 1996, the decline from the long-term average has increased to around 25 per cent. In the far south west, streamflow has declined

<sup>6</sup> IPCC, 2013: Summary for Policymakers. In: *Climate Change 2013: The Physical Science Basis. Contribution of Working Group I to the Fifth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, United Kingdom and New York, NY, USA at 4. Available at: <https://www.ipcc.ch/report/ar5/>.

<sup>7</sup> Australian Government (Bureau of Meteorology), *State of the Climate 2016*. Available at: <http://www.bom.gov.au/state-of-the-climate/>.

by more than 50 per cent since the mid-1970s. There has also been a reduction in the number of cold fronts impacting the southwest. In the north of Western Australia, there has been increased rainfall since the 1970s. In these parts, the number of hot days has decreased (while in the rest of Australia this has increased). There is strong evidence of a trend to higher stream flows in far northern Australia.<sup>8</sup>

Scientific modelling undertaken by the Australian Bureau of Meteorology shows that as Australia's climate evolves, a number of long-term changes, such as an increase in mean temperatures, will occur. The degree of change in temperature over the next few decades is relatively clear, while the extent to which the climate will change later in the century depends on the level of emissions now and into the future.<sup>9</sup>

A certain degree of climate change is now locked in, due to historical emissions. The IPCC's Fifth Assessment Report observes that *'Most aspects of climate change will persist for many centuries even if emissions of CO<sub>2</sub> are stopped'*, and goes on to say:

*Surface temperatures will remain approximately constant at elevated levels for many centuries after a complete cessation of net anthropogenic CO<sub>2</sub> emissions. Due to the long time scales of heat transfer from the ocean surface to depth, ocean warming will continue for centuries. Depending on the scenario, about 15 to 40% of emitted CO<sub>2</sub> will remain in the atmosphere longer than 1,000 years. It is virtually certain that global mean sea level rise will continue beyond 2100, with sea level rise due to thermal expansion to continue for many centuries.*<sup>10</sup>

The IPCC states *"it is extremely likely [95–100%] that human influence has been the dominant cause of the observed warming since the mid-20th century."*<sup>11</sup> A CSIRO study finds *"there is less than 1 chance in 100,000 that global average temperature over the past 60 years would have been as high without human-caused greenhouse gas emissions"*<sup>12</sup>.

Areas of remaining uncertainty relate to the exact effects of climate change, the timing of changes, and degree of changes. This uncertainty is due in no small part to lack of clarity regarding the world's future emissions trajectory (ie, how fast and how deeply greenhouse gas emissions will be cut). The Fifth Assessment Report states that *"There are multiple mitigation pathways that are likely to limit warming to below 2°C relative to pre-industrial levels. These*

<sup>8</sup> Australian Government (Bureau of Meteorology), 'Australia's Changing Climate', *State of the Climate 2016*. Available at: <http://www.bom.gov.au/state-of-the-climate/>.

<sup>9</sup> Australian Government (Bureau of Meteorology), 'Future Climate', *State of the Climate 2016*. Available at: <http://www.bom.gov.au/state-of-the-climate/future-climate.shtml>.

<sup>10</sup> IPCC, 2013: Summary for Policymakers. In: *Climate Change 2013: The Physical Science Basis. Contribution of Working Group I to the Fifth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, United Kingdom and New York, NY, USA at 27 -28. Available at: <https://www.ipcc.ch/report/ar5/>.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid at 17.

<sup>12</sup> P Kokic, M Howden & S Crimp (CSIRO), "99.999% certainty humans are driving global warming: new study", *The Conversation*, 4 September 2014. Available at: <https://theconversation.com/99-999-certainty-humans-are-driving-global-warming-new-study-29911>.

*pathways would require substantial emissions reductions over the next few decades and near zero emissions of CO<sub>2</sub> and other long-lived greenhouse gases by the end of the century.”<sup>13</sup>*

It is proposed that the Policy Statement incorporate up-to-date scientific research, in particular, the practical certainty that climate change is happening, and that humans caused it.

Climate scientist Stefan Rahmstorf, commenting in response to a spike in world temperatures in February 2016, recently stated that the world is now in a climate emergency.<sup>14</sup> Since this statement was made, it has been frequently cited. While considering WALGA’s *Interim Submission in response to the Australian Government’s review of Climate Change Policies*, the South Metropolitan Zone endorsed the submission and noted that the climate change issue is today at the point of climate emergency<sup>15</sup>. The climate change statement of the Municipal Association of Victoria (MAV, WALGA’s Victorian equivalent), includes the following:

The **MAV** recognises that:

- we are in a state of **climate emergency** that requires urgent action by all levels of government, including local councils
- human induced climate change stands in the first rank of threats to humans, civilisation and other species<sup>16</sup>

The Local Government Association of Queensland (LGAQ) also refers to the urgency of the issue, saying:

*Local government requires appropriate levels of funding and resourcing assistance to meet urgent climate change mitigation and adaptation requirements for the short and long term protection and benefit of communities.*<sup>17</sup>

The existing WALGA Policy Statement already includes a statement to the effect that Local Governments acknowledge that anthropogenic climate change is happening, and support immediate action in climate change adaptation and mitigation.

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<sup>13</sup> IPCC, 2014: *Climate Change 2014: Synthesis Report*. Contribution of Working Groups I, II and III to the Fifth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change [Core Writing Team, R.K. Pachauri and L.A. Meyer (eds.)]. IPCC, Geneva, Switzerland at 20. Available at: <https://www.ipcc.ch/report/ar5/syr/>.

<sup>14</sup> Climate scientist Professor Stefan Rahmstorf stated in March 2016 that “we are in a kind of climate emergency now”. Reference: Peter Hannam, “‘True shocker’: February spike in global temperatures stuns scientists, Sydney Morning Herald, 14 March 2016. Available at <http://www.smh.com.au/environment/climate-change/true-shocker-spike-in-global-temperatures-stuns-scientists-20160313-gni10t.html>.

<sup>15</sup> *South Metropolitan Zone Minutes*. 26 June 2017 at 4. Available at: <http://walga.asn.au/getattachment/About-WALGA/Structure/Zones/South-Metropolitan-Zone/Minutes-South-Metropolitan-Zone-26-June-2017.pdf.aspx>.

<sup>16</sup> MAV, “Adapting to a Changing Climate”. Available at <http://www.mav.asn.au/policy-services/environment/Pages/climate-change.aspx>.

<sup>17</sup> LGAQ, *Policy Statement*, 2014 at 20. Available at <https://lgaq.asn.au/corporate-documents>.

**Question 4: In light of current observations of the effects of climate change, would you support the inclusion of a stronger statement, similar to that set out in the MAV climate change statement?**

## 5.0 Domestic developments

### 5.1 The role of State and Commonwealth Governments in climate change policy

#### 5.1.1 Coordination, leadership and planning

The existing Policy Statement states that climate change is a matter of national significance, and is therefore the primary responsibility of State and Commonwealth Governments, in cooperation with Local Governments and the Australian community as a whole. Given the shifting, inconsistent and sometimes contradictory climate change policy and program emphasis at a Federal level over the last eight years (including the continuing lack of certainty as to climate change policies into the future), and the lack of substantive climate change policy or leadership at a State level, it is proposed that this issue is emphasised in the Policy Statement.

This issue has been canvassed in WALGA's recent climate change submissions (see list of submissions above at 2.0). In its submission to the Climate Change Authority's *Review of the Carbon Farming Initiative legislation and Emissions Reduction Fund* the following statement was made about Commonwealth and State climate change policies:

*Unfortunately, there is currently little in the way of long-term State and Commonwealth plans or resources directed to climate change action. There is a particularly significant policy vacuum within the Western Australian Government, with negligible demonstrated and coordinated leadership and long-term planning across all areas. For example, the WA Government Climate Change Strategy which was released in October 2012 is inadequate and in need of an update and review.*<sup>18</sup>

In its submission to the Australian Government *Inquiry into the impacts of climate change on housing, buildings and infrastructure*, the following statement was made about Commonwealth and State climate change policies:

*Local Governments require effective and consistent legislation, policy and regulatory frameworks at the State and Commonwealth Government levels to support Local Government policy frameworks in order to deliver a coordinated approach to tackling the risks and impacts of climate change.*<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> WALGA, [Submission to the Climate Change Authority's Review of the Carbon Farming Initiative legislation and Emissions Reduction Fund](#). September 2017 at 5. Available at:

<sup>19</sup> WALGA, [Submission to the Australian Government inquiry into the impacts of climate change on housing, buildings and infrastructure](#). August 2017 at 8.

It should also be noted that the longer there continues to be a policy vacuum for climate change, the more significant the adaptation and mitigation task ahead will be.

Shortly after the change in government in Western Australia, the Environment Minister the Honourable Stephen Dawson MLC made the following statements in Parliament:

*Since becoming Minister for Environment, I have instigated what we call a stocktake of existing climate change–linked policies and programs and actions undertaken by the state government and state government agencies so that it can inform our future approach and priorities... I am also very keen to ensure that the aforementioned gutted climate change unit is enlarged because, as I said, there is a great deal more work to be done in this space... The Labor Party, as a new government, is keen to lead by example and we are certainly ensuring that climate change considerations and emissions reductions opportunities are incorporated into government policy, particularly into our priority infrastructure projects and commitments.*

...

*The state government has an important role to play, but, as I said, we will also require the collaboration of not only local government and national government but also business and industry if we are truly going to work with the community and all stakeholders in tackling the issues of climate change.*<sup>20</sup>

It is proposed that the Policy Statement emphasise the need for Commonwealth and State governments to play a stronger leadership and coordination role, and engage in long-term planning on climate change. Such an advocacy position would certainly be consistent with the Environment Minister's public statements on climate change.

**Question 5: Do you agree that the Policy Statement should emphasise the need for Commonwealth and State governments to play a stronger leadership and coordination role, and engage in long-term planning on climate change?**

### 5.1.2 Taking advantage of Local Government emissions reductions

As noted above (at 1.0), WA Local Governments have, in the past been key delivery agents of Australian Government mitigation programs such as the CEEP, LGEEP and the CCP Program delivered by ICLEI. In its submission to the Climate Change Authority's *Review of the Carbon Farming Initiative legislation and Emissions Reduction Fund*, the point was made that Local Governments have a very limited availability to contribute to current Commonwealth mitigation programs and policies:

*The Australian Government's climate change policies now offer very little in the way of enabling Local Government mitigation action. The ERF offers the potential for funding of*

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<sup>20</sup> Hansard at 1348, 21 June 2017. Available at [http://parliament.wa.gov.au/Hansard/hansard.nsf/0/2e9afbb5283875d8482581700018e93a/\\$FILE/C40+S1+20170621+p1348a-1363a.pdf](http://parliament.wa.gov.au/Hansard/hansard.nsf/0/2e9afbb5283875d8482581700018e93a/$FILE/C40+S1+20170621+p1348a-1363a.pdf).

*mitigation action by Local Governments. Unfortunately, key features of the ERF hamper participation by Western Australian Local Governments... To date, no Western Australian Local Government Project has successfully bid in the ERF. There are just two WA Local Government Projects which are part of the ERF, both of which were transitioned from the Carbon Farming Initiative.<sup>21</sup>*

This submission recommends that the Australian Government climate change mitigation policy settings include measures which can take advantage of the substantial emissions reductions that can be achieved by Local Governments. This position might also be extended to State Government measures, for example, encouraging/enabling widespread retrofit of LED energy efficient street lights.

**Question 6: Do you agree that Commonwealth (and State) Government climate change mitigation policy settings should include measures that can take advantage of the substantial emissions reductions that can be achieved by Local Governments?**

**Question 7: Do you have suggestions or examples of Local Government projects that could achieve significant emissions reductions?**

## 5.2 Climate change policy developments

### 5.2.1 Mitigation policy

There have been many developments in energy and climate change policy which were not envisaged at the time the existing Policy Statement was finalised, such as the rise of small scale renewable energy, the greatly reduced cost of renewables, availability of battery storage and increasing concerns about energy security and the need for coordinated energy planning and strategies (eg, as identified in the Finkel Review).

### 5.2.2 Mitigation in the Policy Statement

The existing Policy Statement refers to domestic mitigation measures generally, with a specific reference to an emissions trading scheme, including some references to the long defunct Carbon Pollution Reduction Scheme. There is no reference to current Commonwealth measures (eg, the Emissions Reduction Fund, funding mechanisms under the Clean Energy Finance Corporation etc.) nor other possible measures that might be considered in the near future (eg, the Commonwealth Government's recently announced National Energy Guarantee<sup>22</sup>).

Despite the many changes to mitigation-related policy in Australia, the general statements about mitigation policy in the existing Policy Statement (at 1.4 and 2.4 – set out below)

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<sup>21</sup> WALGA, [Submission to the Climate Change Authority's Review of the Carbon Farming Initiative legislation and Emissions Reduction Fund](#). September 2017 at 5-7.

<sup>22</sup> M Turnbull, "National Energy Guarantee to deliver affordable, reliable electricity". 17 October 2017. Available at :<https://www.pm.gov.au/media/2017-10-17/national-energy-guarantee-deliver-affordable-reliable-electricity>.

appear to stand up well as clear statements in support of appropriate and effective mitigation policies.

As noted above at 2.0, the South East Metropolitan Zone requested that the policy statement include consideration of awareness and behaviour change strategies for climate change mitigation and energy efficiency. It is acknowledged that Local Governments play a substantial role in raising awareness and encouraging behaviour change through the provision of resources, tools, information and training sessions, as well modelling best practice behaviours (ie 'demonstrating by doing'). This is currently included in the existing policy statement (see 1.4.3 below) and it is recommended that this theme is retained.

There is some repetition in the two parts excerpted below. It is proposed that a condensed version of the mitigation statements is included in the Policy Statement, consistent with the existing statements.

#### Existing Policy Statement

##### 1.4 Mitigation – Emission Reductions

1.4.1 Local Government recognises that Australia has the capacity to contribute to global climate change mitigation, by reducing emissions now, in a way that creates positive opportunities for communities, industries and our economic sustainability.

1.4.2 Local Government acknowledges that the magnitude of the mitigation task ahead is substantial, and that planning, investment and infrastructure decisions made today will shape the carbon intensity of our future. It therefore considers that a successful response to the challenge of meeting appropriate emission reduction targets should begin immediately and will require cross-sectoral action by government, business and broader community at all levels. Local Government supports the establishment of institutions and regulations that ensure effective, integrated action by these stakeholders.

1.4.3 Local Government acknowledges that no single policy measure will provide a solution to climate change. Local Government considers a wide range of policy measures - from regulatory intervention and market-based mechanisms through to voluntary schemes, education and behaviour change programs - is required to successfully achieve appropriate and adequate emission reduction targets.

1.4.4 Local Government acknowledges that no single technology will provide a solution to climate change; and that all reasonable options need to be researched, explored and facilitated.

...

##### 2.4 Mitigation – Emission Reductions

2.4.1 Local Government is committed to working towards agreed national emission reduction targets, with caps and timeframes that will ensure the achievement of Article 2 of the UNFCCC, while also taking into account Australia's status as a developed country party to the UNFCCC given its high level per capita emissions.

2.4.2 Local Government is committed to supporting the introduction of a well designed and equitable national emissions trading scheme and regards an effective price on greenhouse gas emissions as an important measure for achieving emissions reduction targets.

2.4.3 Local Government is committed to reducing its operational greenhouse gas emissions and supporting the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions in the community.

2.4.4 Local Government acknowledges the critical role that innovation will play in combating climate change and is committed to supporting and encouraging policies and measures that drive appropriate technological development and commercialisation.

2.4.5 Local Government acknowledges that technological solutions go only part way to helping meet the necessary reduction in greenhouse emissions and that citizens must be encouraged to adopt more sustainable lifestyles that reduce greenhouse impact. Local Government is committed to supporting community and business in the transition towards sustainable lifestyles.

**Question 8: Do you agree that the existing mitigation content reflects the Local Government position on mitigation action? Are there any issues in particular you would like to see highlighted? Do you have any suggestions for other content that should be included?**

There is perhaps an aspect of this part of the existing Policy Statement that has dated. It is more of an overarching feature of mitigation action, that since 2009, the energy transformation has begun to take place: people, the market, business, Local Governments etc. are all moving in the direction of renewables, and more recently battery storage. For example, a project was recently announced to power the steelworks in Whyalla, South Australia with solar, battery and pumped hydro.<sup>23</sup> The market is moving in this direction, and what is needed is for the State and Commonwealth Governments to catch up, and encourage, accelerate and support what is already occurring. It is proposed that the Policy Statement pick up on this changed landscape.

**Question 9: Do you agree that that the Policy Statement should incorporate reference to broad scale shift that is already occurring in Australia?**

### 5.2.3 Adaptation

Since 2009, adaptation has grown in prominence as an issue for Local Government, particularly as the effects of climate change are now unequivocally being felt, and Local Governments are in a position where they need to be planning for further effects of climate change in the future. WALGA's submission to the Australian Government *Inquiry into the impacts of Climate Change on housing, buildings and infrastructure* notes:

*Local Government is in many ways at the forefront of climate change adaptation. As the closest sphere of Government to the community, Local Governments are expected to manage the impacts of climate change such as reduced rainfall, increased fire risk, increased risk of heat stress in the community, extreme weather events and sea level*

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<sup>23</sup> The Guardian, "Whyalla steelworks to be powered by \$700m solar, battery and pumped hydro project". 31 October 2017. Available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2017/oct/31/whyalla-steelworks-to-be-powered-by-700m-solar-battery-and-pumped-hydro-project>.



*rise that increases the potential for erosion and inundation in coastal and estuarine areas.*

*The effects of climate change are already being felt throughout Western Australia, and Local Governments are already devoting significant resources to adaptation planning and response, such as through the expensive and complex process of developing and implementing CHRMAPs [Coastal Hazard Risk Management and Adaptation Plans].*

...

*Whilst there are policies, programs and limited funding (particularly given the extent of the Western Australian coast) available to address coastal climate change, there is minimal capacity or resourcing to address other current and expected issues arising from changes in temperature, rainfall, and extreme weather events, including floods, heatwaves and bushfires. This will directly impact local government infrastructure and service provision in many areas including; social services infrastructure, local roads, public facilities, recreation and tourism facilities and insurance arrangements for buildings and infrastructure.*

*There will be other indirect consequences for Local Governments as a result of potential impacts to private properties, energy, telecommunications and water infrastructure, transport networks and health and education facilities. These impacts will be felt by local communities who will seek support and assistance from Local Government.*

..

*WALGA is deeply concerned that the current approach adopted by State Government in WA is one which seeks to reduce its resource commitments and legal liabilities relating to climate change, rather than undertaking a collaborative approach to tackle the issue effectively. This is perhaps most prevalent in relation to the management of coastal inundation, where despite the statutory mechanisms available to the State Government which allow it to manage coastal hazards most effectively at a regional level, a considered response has yet to have been adopted. Furthermore, the State Government is responsible for approving all subdivision applications and endorsing Local Planning Schemes. However the Western Australian State Government appears to be seeking to distance itself from these responsibilities and the guidance provided to Local Government to dealing with the issue is, at best, limited.<sup>24</sup>*

It should also be noted that in addition to CHRMAPs, a number of Local Governments are now undertaking Climate Change Risk Assessments and Adaptation Plans which look at *all* climate change risks, not just coastal risks.

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<sup>24</sup> WALGA, [Submission to the Australian Government inquiry into the impacts of climate change on housing, buildings and infrastructure](#). August 2017 at 5, 8 and 9.

The above submission highlighted the following areas where climate change adaptation is a key issue for local governments:<sup>25</sup>

- **Western Australian state planning system:** has not been altered sufficiently to take into account climate change issues. Recent changes include:
  - Sea Level Rise Position Statement (2010);
  - State Planning Policy 2.6 State Coastal Planning Policy (2013);
  - Coastal Hazard Risk Management and Adaptation Plans (2014);
  - Bush Fire Planning provisions (2015); and
  - WA Coastal Zone Strategy (2017)<sup>26</sup>.

In September this year the Department of Planning, Lands and Heritage (DPLH) also released a draft *Planned or Managed Retreat Guidelines* for public comment by 1 December.<sup>27</sup> The focus to date has been on coastal planning, a key area for Western Australia, but adaptation planning needs to be expanded to deal with other current and expected issues such as changes in temperature, rainfall and extreme weather events (including floods), heatwaves and bushfires.

- **Coastal adaptation:** as noted above, there are State government policies, programs and limited funding available in relation to coastal adaptation. A number of Local Governments have completed, or are in the process of completing, CHRMAPs. Unlike other states such as New South Wales, South Australia, Victoria and Queensland there is currently no coastal management legislation in Western Australia that defines and establishes the principles, objectives and actions, including roles and responsibilities for integrated coastal zone management. The adoption of legislation in Western Australia could support a consistent and coordinated approach to the development and implementation of CHRMAPs, which has been (and continues to be) an issue in Western Australia. Legislation would provide the head of power needed to effectively undertake adaptation work.

A State Government policy framework could potentially be supported by State/Local Government partnership agreement to collaboratively deal with the issue, and/or an Intergovernmental Agreement on the Coastal Zone, National Coastal Policy and National Coastal Management Strategy that would define the roles and responsibilities of all levels of government and would establish consistent and coordinated principles, objectives and actions across Australia.

Other State Governments, such as New South Wales and Queensland, have provided substantial assistance to Local Governments for coastal hazard mapping,

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<sup>25</sup> As above, at 5-7.

<sup>26</sup> DPLH, WA Coastal Zone Strategy (2017). Available at: <https://www.planning.wa.gov.au/10223.aspx>.

<sup>27</sup> Not available on DPLH website, but accessible through WALGA's *EnviroNews* here: [http://walga.asn.au/getattachment/News,-Events-and-Publications/Publications/EnviroNews/201709\\_EnviroNews-Issue-9.html.aspx#Retreat Guidelines](http://walga.asn.au/getattachment/News,-Events-and-Publications/Publications/EnviroNews/201709_EnviroNews-Issue-9.html.aspx#Retreat%20Guidelines).

risk assessment and adaptation planning. The New South Wales State Government is providing \$63 million over five years “to support councils in implementing equitable and cost effective actions that reduce exposure to coastal hazards, such as beach erosion, coastal inundation or cliff instability.”<sup>28</sup> The Queensland State Government’s QCoast<sub>2100</sub> program provides four million dollars a year for three years “to enable all Queensland coastal local governments to progress the preparation of plans and strategies to address climate change related coastal hazard risks over the long-term.”<sup>29</sup> By contrast, the Western Australian State Government provides around \$1.3 million funding per year under the CoastWest, Coastal Management Plan Assistance Program and Coastal Adaptation and Protection programs<sup>30</sup>.

- **Extreme weather events:** extreme weather events in isolation, or when combined with rising sea levels, will potentially result in coastal erosion and increased risk of inundation in coastal and non-coastal areas. In at risk areas, extreme weather events such as floods, bushfires and storms can result in damage or loss of infrastructure such as roads, social services infrastructure, public, recreation and tourism facilities and can have impacts on the cost and acquisition of insurance for buildings and infrastructure. Challenges for Local Governments seeking to address these risks include lack of access to adequate funding, relevant information and tools, and overarching (State and Federal level) policies and strategies.
- **Local government infrastructure and assets:** Australian Local Governments are responsible for the management of a range of assets (eg, roads, footpaths, parks, stormwater drainage systems, coastal retaining walls, water supply and waste water systems, buildings and other structures) valued at approximately \$212 billion.<sup>31</sup> Many of these assets have a life span greater than 50 years and will be affected by climate change, including increasing frequency and intensity of heat waves, bushfires and storms: To date there has been very little information and no available tools to translate these impacts into Local Government financial and asset management plans.

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<sup>28</sup> NSW Government, Media Release: NSW Budget: Biggest Funding Boost to Coastal Management since the 1970s. 7 May 2016. Available at:

<https://www.treasury.nsw.gov.au/sites/default/files/mediarelease/20160507---Media-Release---Berejiklian---NSW-Budget--biggest-funding-boost-to-coastal-management-since-1970s.pdf>.

<sup>29</sup> QCoast100, Program Purpose. Available at: <http://www.qcoast2100.com.au/>

<sup>30</sup> Coastwest: <https://www.planning.wa.gov.au/coastwest.aspx>, CMPAP:

<https://www.planning.wa.gov.au/6857.aspx> and CAP:

<https://www.transport.wa.gov.au/inline/coastal-adaptation-and-protection-cap-grants.asp>.

<sup>31</sup> Balston, JM, Kellett, J, Wells, G, Li, S, Gray, A & Iankov, I, “Quantifying the costs of climate change on local government assets”. 2013. National Climate Change Adaptation Research Facility at 5.

Available at:

[https://www.nccarf.edu.au/sites/default/files/attached\\_files\\_publications/Balston\\_2013\\_Quantifying\\_cost\\_of\\_climate\\_change\\_impacts.pdf](https://www.nccarf.edu.au/sites/default/files/attached_files_publications/Balston_2013_Quantifying_cost_of_climate_change_impacts.pdf).

- **Green infrastructure:** the loss of tree canopy cover, often as a result of pressure to meet urban infill targets and for greenfield development, is a significant issue for Local Governments and impacts adaptation planning (the urban heat island effect compounds heat waves and extreme heat weather events) and the mitigation of carbon emissions. In the absence of appropriate planning mechanisms, many Local Governments in Western Australian are seeking to address this issue by developing Urban Forest Plans and amending their Local Planning Schemes, but are facing a number of challenges including inconsistent Western Australian Government policies, inadequate protection for existing trees, lack of a requirement for revegetation in new developments; lack of funding in support of urban forest measures; and a lack of knowledge regarding the benefits of an urban forest.

Of the range of issues outlined, perhaps the most pressing issues for Local Governments in this area could be identified as:

- the need for climate change to be adequately incorporated into the State planning system (in particular, expanding beyond coastal planning, into current and expected effects of changes in temperature, extreme weather events etc.);
- the need for greater certainty for Local Governments in knowing what action is necessary to manage their own risk and liability flowing from adaptation planning decisions;
- the need for coastal management legislation in Western Australia that defines and establishes the principles, objectives and actions, including roles and responsibilities for integrated coastal zone management; and
- the need for a formalised coordinated approach, potentially via State/Local Government partnership agreement, or Intergovernmental Agreement defining the roles and responsibilities of all levels of government, establishing consistent and coordinated principles, objectives and actions across Australia.

**Question 10: Do you agree that the above areas are key issues for Local Government? Are there other key adaptation priorities/issues for Local Governments?**

**Question 11: Do you agree that reference to these issues should be included in the Policy Statement?**

**Question 12: Do you agree that one element of an effective approach to climate change adaptation would include a State/Local Government partnership agreement?**

### 5.2.4 Adaptation in the Policy Statement

In a general sense, the content covering adaptation policy (at 1.5 and 2.4 – set out below) in the existing Policy Statement stands up fairly well as a clear call to ensure appropriate and effective adaptation policies, including the need to bring together all levels of Government, business and the broader community on climate change adaptation.

Existing Policy Statement

## 1.5 Adaptation – Collaborative Action

1.5.1 Local Government acknowledges that the magnitude of the adaptation task ahead is substantial, and that planning, investment and infrastructure decisions made today will determine how successfully the community is able to adapt to the impacts of climate change, reduce its risks and vulnerabilities to these and take advantage of any opportunities. It therefore considers that a successful response to the challenge of adapting to climate change impacts should begin immediately and will require cross-sectoral action by government, business and broader community at all levels. Local Government supports the establishment of institutions and regulations that ensure effective, integrated action by these stakeholders as being crucial to cohesive and effective climate change management.

...

## 2.5 Adaptation – Collaborative Action

2.5.1 Local Government is committed to contributing to the common goal of ensuring that Western Australia's human communities and natural ecosystems have the resources and other assistance necessary to enable them to build maximum resilience and adapt to climate change impacts that are now understood to be unavoidable.

2.5.2 Local Government asserts that it is the responsibility of all spheres of Australian Government to inform individuals and communities about the likely impacts of climate change. Local Government is committed to working with the community to ensure a high level of understanding of climate change impacts and develop strategies to help adapt to these.

2.5.3 Local Government asserts that it is the responsibility of all spheres of Australian Government to ensure that all current regulation and policies take into consideration the likely impact of climate change on current and future human settlements, natural resources and ecosystems and facilitate adaptation to these. These policies should include but not be limited to those pertaining to disaster relief, national security, infrastructure, planning, water, energy, housing, health, transport, environment and energy.

One key way in which this content now appears dated is due to the fact that the impacts of climate change are now clearly being felt. Businesses are incorporating climate change into their corporate risk assessment and planning; Local Governments are *currently* undertaking adaptation action, and planning for future adaptation action. For example, the Australian Business Roundtable (members include company CEOs of insurance companies, banks and the Red Cross) has stated that given the expected increase in frequency and severity of natural disasters due to climate change, it is essential that the resilience of Australia's infrastructure to natural disasters is improved.<sup>32</sup>

It is proposed that the adaptation content in the Policy Statement include an acknowledgement that the impacts of climate change are now clearly being felt, that in many ways Local Governments are at the forefront of adaptation action, and are *currently* already undertaking adaptation work and planning for the future. It is also proposed that the Policy

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<sup>32</sup> Australian Business Roundtable, *Building Resilient infrastructure*, March 2016 at 19-21. Available at: <http://australianbusinessroundtable.com.au/our-papers>.

Statement call for effective long term policy instruments, legislation, strategies and/or policies, along with adequate resourcing for climate change adaptation and planning.

**Question 13: Do you support an acknowledgment that the impacts of climate change are already being felt, and that Local Governments are currently undertaking adaptation work, as well as planning for the future?**

**Question 14: Do you support a call for effective long term policy instruments, legislation and/or policies, along with adequate resourcing for climate change adaptation and planning?**

### 5.2.5 Emergency management

There is currently no reference to emergency management and how climate change is, and will, affect planning and implementation (eg, planning for the increasing risk of extreme weather events, spending required to increase resilience and ameliorate damages in the event of a flood, bushfire etc.). WALGA's submission to the Australian Government *Inquiry into the impacts of climate change on housing, buildings and infrastructure* raised this as an issue:

*The Western Australia Natural Disaster Relief and Recovery Arrangements (WANDARRA) funding program, jointly funded by the Western Australian and Australian Governments, makes funding available to Local Governments for the restoration and replacement of essential public assets owned by a local government to the extent necessary "to restore the asset to the equivalent of its pre-disaster standard." WA Local Government supports the betterment of assets, that is, ensuring that funding to reinstate a damaged or destroyed asset allows it to be reinstated to a more disaster resilient standard. This is to prevent a situation where, for example, valuable infrastructure is washed away and then identically replaced every few years.*

...

*Disaster relief funding of course remains an essential part of an adequate response to climate change, but of equal importance is ensuring an adequate focus on building resilience, to ameliorate the effects of disasters.*

**Question 15: Do you support inclusion in the Policy Statement of the need for emergency management and disaster relief policies to adequately incorporate climate change in their planning and implementation? Are there other related issues you would like included?**

## 6.0 International developments

### 6.1 The Paris agreement

The Paris agreement was negotiated at the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) Conference of Parties in December 2015. It was adopted by

consensus of 196 countries,<sup>33</sup> with post-2020 emissions targets nominated by almost all countries, representing 96 per cent of global emissions.<sup>34</sup> Key outcomes of the Paris climate agreement include:

- A global goal to hold the average temperature increase to well below 2°C and pursue efforts to keep warming below 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels.
- All countries setting mitigation targets from 2020, with a review of targets every 5 years to build ambition over time, informed by a global stocktake.
- Robust transparency and accountability rules to provide confidence in countries' actions and track progress towards targets.
- Promoting action to adapt and build resilience to climate impacts.
- Financial, technological and capacity building support to help developing countries implement the Agreement.<sup>35</sup>

As a signatory to the Paris Agreement, Australia has committed to taking action on climate change. Importantly, this expressly includes adaptation and resilience building, as well as mitigation action. Current worldwide commitments are insufficient to limit global temperature rise to well below 2°C, and countries will need to increase their ambition over time if this goal is to be met.

#### Existing Policy Statement

##### 2.3. Australia's Obligation to Act

2.3.1 Local Government is committed to actively promoting and supporting efforts to develop effective global, national and state strategies to reduce the severity of climate change by reducing greenhouse gas emissions in a manner consistent with the intention of Article 3.1 of the UNFCCC.

2.3.2 Local Government is committed to meeting its local, national and international obligations through participation in protocols and agreements established under the UNFCCC, including but not limited to the Kyoto Protocol and its successor international treaties, and supporting the Kyoto Protocol's further development and effective implementation.

2.3.3 Local Government is committed to actively addressing climate change in a way which reflects Australia's disproportionate per capita contribution, as opposed to its global emissions ratio contribution.

It is proposed that the Policy Statement reflect the position outlined in the existing policy statement, but incorporate the Paris Agreement and Australia's mitigation commitments (current and future). It is also proposed that the Policy Statement:

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<sup>33</sup> Nicaragua and Syria are the only countries not to sign the Paris climate agreement. The US has indicated its intention to leave the Paris Agreement.

<sup>34</sup> World Resources Institute, "Paris Contributions Map" *CAIT Climate Data Tracker*. Available at <http://cait.wri.org/indc/>.

<sup>35</sup> Full text of the Paris Agreement is available here: [http://unfccc.int/files/home/application/pdf/paris\\_agreement.pdf](http://unfccc.int/files/home/application/pdf/paris_agreement.pdf).

- support / urge setting of more ambitious nationwide targets at the five yearly Paris agreement reviews; and
- support / urge adequate action to adapt and build resilience to climate impacts.

**Question 16: Do you agree the Policy Statement should incorporate the Paris Agreement and Australia’s commitment, and urge or support a more ambitious target, and effective adaptation action?**

## 6.2 Sustainable Development Goals



In September 2015, 193 countries (including Australia) agreed to the United Nations 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and 169 targets.<sup>36</sup> The SDGs guide global action on sustainable development until their completion in 2030. The SDGs are a successor to the Millennium Development Goals, but unlike the Millennium Development Goals, relate to all developed and emerging countries, as well as developing countries.

WALGA ran a Sustainability Officers Network Group meeting on the SDGs in July 2016, which considered the SDGs and their application to the work of Local Government. The goals include climate action (Goal 13), affordable and clean energy (Goal 7), responsible consumption and production (Goal 12) and of particular relevance to Local Governments, sustainable cities and communities (Goal 11).<sup>37</sup>

<sup>36</sup> Detailed information on the SDG Goals and Targets is available here:

<http://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/sustainable-development-goals/>.

<sup>37</sup> For further information on how the SDGs are relevant to Local Governments, see the Global Network of Cities, Local and Regional Government (UCLG) publication “The Sustainable Development Goals: What Local governments need to know”, available here:

<https://www.uclg.org/en/media/news/sustainable-development-goals-what-local-governments-need-know>.



The existing Policy Statement includes a statement on equity and social justice, outlining issues that arise from mitigation measures, and relating to the need for developing countries to increase their share of global wealth in ways that remain within the ecological capacities of the planet. Issues raised in this part of the existing Policy Statement have some similarities with the aims of the SDGs.

#### Existing Policy Statement

##### 1.6 Equity and Social Justice

1.6.1 Local Government acknowledges that both the impacts of climate change and the policy responses required to contribute to the avoidance of dangerous climate change have significant equity implications. These equity considerations have domestic and international dimensions, and implications for both present and future human generations, and for the survival of other species.

1.6.2 Local Government acknowledges that climate equity has both domestic and international impacts. It supports global equity and the right of developing countries to increase their share of global wealth in ways that remain within the ecological capacities of the planet.

1.6.3 Local Government acknowledges that the burden of reducing greenhouse emissions domestically must be equitably dispersed and that disadvantaged communities or cultural groups need access to State and Commonwealth support in order to enable them to adequately respond to and cope with the cost increases likely to arise from a variety of mitigation and adaptation schemes, including the Carbon Pollution Reduction Scheme.

1.6.4 Local Government acknowledges that in order for standards of living to become globally equitable, culture shift towards sustainable standards of living in developed and prosperous countries, including Australia, will be required.

Given that the aims of the SDGs have similarities with existing aims set out in the existing Policy Statement, it is proposed that the SDGs are incorporated into the Policy Statement, including an express statement in support of them.

**Question 17: Do you agree with incorporating reference to the Sustainable Development Goals in the Policy Statement, including an express statement in support?**

## 7.0 Conclusion

WALGA encourages Councillors, CEOs and Local Government Officers to provide input in response to this discussion paper. The more comments WALGA receives, the more effective the Policy Statement can be, as a document reflecting key Local Government climate change priorities.

Please provide any comments by **Friday, 15 December 2017** to [environment@walga.asn.au](mailto:environment@walga.asn.au) (subject line: Climate Change Policy Statement).

After input has been received and incorporated, a draft Policy Statement will be submitted to State Council for its approval or comment. Once the Policy Statement has been endorsed by State Council, it will provide the basis for WALGA's climate change advocacy plan, which will

be developed in consultation with the sector and will further detail how WALGA will promote and prosecute Local Governments' key climate change priorities over the next one to three years.

## Appendix – List of questions

- Question 1: Have you made use of the existing Climate Change Policy Statement? How?
- Question 2: Have you used the Policy Statement *template*? How?
- Question 3: Is it useful to make the Policy Statement available in template format (eg, to assist in developing your own Local Government Climate Change Policy)?
- Question 4: In light of current observations of the effects of climate change, would you support the inclusion of a stronger statement, similar to that set out in the MAV climate change statement?
- Question 5: Do you agree that the Policy Statement should emphasise the need for Commonwealth and State governments to play a stronger leadership and coordination role, and engage in long-term planning on climate change?
- Question 6: Do you agree that Commonwealth (and State) Government climate change mitigation policy settings should include measures that can take advantage of the substantial emissions reductions that can be achieved by Local Governments?
- Question 7: Do you have suggestions or examples of Local Government projects that could achieve significant emissions reductions?
- Question 8: Do you agree that the existing mitigation content reflects the Local Government position on mitigation action? Are there any issues in particular you would like to see highlighted? Do you have any suggestions for other content that should be included?
- Question 9: Do you agree that that the Policy Statement should incorporate reference to broad scale shift that is already occurring in Australia?
- Question 10: Do you agree that the above areas are key issues for Local Government? Are there other key adaptation priorities/issues for Local Governments?
- Question 11: Do you agree that reference to these issues should be included in the Policy Statement?
- Question 12: Do you agree that one element of an effective approach to climate change adaptation would include a State/Local Government partnership agreement?
- Question 13: Do you support an acknowledgment that the impacts of climate change are already being felt, and that Local Governments are currently undertaking adaptation work, as well as planning for the future?
- Question 14: Do you support a call for effective long term policy instruments, legislation and/or policies, along with adequate resourcing for climate change adaptation and planning?
- Question 15: Do you support inclusion in the Policy Statement of the need for emergency management and disaster relief policies to adequately incorporate climate change in their planning and implementation? Are there other related issues you would like included?
- Question 16: Do you agree the Policy Statement should incorporate the Paris Agreement and Australia's commitment, and urge or support a more ambitious target, and effective adaptation action?
- Question 17: Do you agree with incorporating reference to the Sustainable Development Goals in the Policy Statement, including an express statement in support?



# Climate Change Policy Statement

***Draft – March 2018***

### Version tracking

Version number	Date	Author	Comments / Modifications
1	February 2018	Laura Simes	Major revision of 2009 Climate Change Policy Statement.

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## 1.0 Policy Statement

### Local Government acknowledges:

- I. The science is clear: climate change is occurring now, and human activities are the dominant cause.
- II. Climate change threatens human societies and the Earth's ecosystems.
- III. Climate change requires urgent action to mitigate against catastrophic climate change and to adapt to the climate change that is now unavoidable.
- IV. Mitigation and adaptation strategies must be efficient, effective and equitable.
- V. A failure to adequately address this climate change emergency places an unacceptable burden on future generations.

**Local Government is committed** to acting on climate change, and are already active in climate change mitigation and adaptation, but an effective response to climate change requires strong action, leadership and coordination at all levels of government.

**Local Government is calling for** adequate Commonwealth and State policies, programs and funding to underpin climate change action, in particular, for climate change adaptation.

## 2.0 Rationale

### 2.1 The science is clear

**Local Government supports the scientific consensus that climate change is happening now, and human activities are the dominant cause.**

Local Government cites the *Fifth Assessment Report*, the latest report of the consensus-based Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), which finds:

*Warming of the climate system is unequivocal, and since the 1950s, many of the observed changes are unprecedented over decades to millennia. The atmosphere and ocean have warmed, the amounts of snow and ice have diminished, sea level has risen, and the concentrations of greenhouse gases have increased<sup>1</sup>.*

*Most aspects of climate change will persist for many centuries even if emissions of CO<sub>2</sub> are stopped<sup>2</sup>.*

*Surface temperatures will remain approximately constant at elevated levels for many centuries after a complete cessation of net anthropogenic CO<sub>2</sub> emissions. Due to the long time scales of heat transfer from the ocean surface to depth, ocean warming will continue for centuries. Depending on the scenario, about 15 to 40% of emitted CO<sub>2</sub> will remain in the atmosphere longer than 1,000 years. It is virtually certain that global*

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<sup>1</sup> IPCC (2013). Summary for Policymakers. In: Climate Change 2013: The Physical Science Basis. Contribution of Working Group I to the Fifth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, United Kingdom and New York, NY, USA at 4. Available at: <https://www.ipcc.ch/report/ar5/>.

<sup>2</sup> As above, at 27.

*mean sea level rise will continue beyond 2100, with sea level rise due to thermal expansion to continue for many centuries<sup>3</sup>.*

Local Government also cites a recent CSIRO study which determined “*there is less than 1 chance in 100,000 that global average temperature over the past 60 years would have been as high without human-caused greenhouse gas emissions*”, that is, a certainty of 99.999% that humans are driving climate change<sup>4</sup>.

## 2.2 Climate change is a global threat, and Australia has committed to being part of the solution

As a signatory to the Paris Agreement and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), Australia has committed to taking action on climate change and to ensuring that mitigation and adaptation action is equitable and consistent with the aims of the SDGs.

**Local Government is committed to meeting international obligations through Australia’s participation in protocols and agreements established under the UNFCCC, including but not limited to the Paris Agreement and successor international treaties.**

**Local Government notes** the Paris Agreement expressly recognises the importance of engagement at all levels of government<sup>5</sup>, and **are committed** to contributing to national and international emissions reduction targets to achieve the Paris Agreement goal of limiting global temperature rise to well below 2° Celsius and to pursue efforts to limit the temperature increase even further to 1.5° Celsius.

However, **Local Government acknowledges** that current worldwide commitments under the Paris Agreement are insufficient to achieve even the 2° Celsius goal<sup>6</sup>. Australia is a developed country with amongst the highest per capita emissions in the world<sup>7</sup>. Recognising this, **Local Government demands the Federal Government commit to a more ambitious target.**

**Local Government recognises** that both the impacts of climate change and the policy responses required to contribute to the avoidance of dangerous climate change have significant equity implications. These equity considerations have domestic and international

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<sup>3</sup> As above, at 28.

<sup>4</sup> P Kovic, M Howden & S Crimp (CSIRO) (2014). “99.999% certainty humans are driving global warming: new study”, *The Conversation*, 4 September 2014. Available at: <https://theconversation.com/99-999-certainty-humans-are-driving-global-warming-new-study-29911>.

<sup>5</sup> United Nations / Framework Convention on Climate Change (2015) *Adoption of the Paris Agreement*, 21<sup>st</sup> Conference of the Parties, Paris: United Nations at 2. Available at: [http://unfccc.int/files/home/application/pdf/paris\\_agreement.pdf](http://unfccc.int/files/home/application/pdf/paris_agreement.pdf).

<sup>6</sup> Climate Action Tracker (Climate Analytics, Ecofys & NewClimate Institute) (2018). “Improvement in warming outlook as India and China move ahead, but Paris Agreement gap still looms large”. 13 November 2017. Available at: <http://climateactiontracker.org/publications/briefing/288/Improvement-in-warming-outlook-as-India-and-China-move-ahead-but-Paris-Agreement-gap-still-looms-large.html>.

<sup>7</sup> Australia has the highest per capita emissions of the OECD countries, and is seventh in the world after Kuwait, Brunei, Qatar, Belize, Oman and Bahrain: CAIT Climate Data Explorer (World Resources Institute) (2018). *GHG Emissions Totals Excluding Land Use Change and Forestry Per Capita 2014*. Available at: <http://cait.wri.org/historical>.

dimensions, implications for both present and future generations, and for the survival of other species.

**Local Government supports an equitable transition to a carbon constrained world:**

- **globally**, the right of developing countries to increase their share of global wealth in ways that remain within the ecological capacities of the planet;
- **domestically**, the need to equitably share the cost of climate change adaptation and mitigation and ensure socioeconomically disadvantaged groups receive adequate support.

**Local Government supports the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, and support climate change action as part of a broader sustainable development agenda.**

### **2.3 Local Government is already acting on climate change, but all levels of Government must act**

Climate change is a key issue for Local Governments that impacts almost all aspects of their operations and responsibilities. Local Government has, for a number of years, been actively engaged in a range of climate change mitigation and adaptation activities, together with education and encouraging awareness and behaviour change amongst residents.

**Local Government stresses that climate change is a matter of national significance, and is a direct responsibility of both the State and Federal Governments. The State and Federal Governments have an obligation to address climate change in cooperation with Local Governments, and in consultation with the Australian community as a whole.**

There is currently little in the way of long-term State and Commonwealth plans or resources directed to climate change action. There is a particularly significant policy vacuum within the Western Australian Government, with negligible demonstrated or coordinated leadership or long-term planning.

Australia and the world is already seeing a broad scale shift away from fossil fuels towards energy efficient and renewable technologies that includes widespread uptake of rooftop



solar<sup>8</sup>, battery storage<sup>9</sup>, energy trading<sup>10</sup>, virtual power plants<sup>11</sup> and electric vehicles.<sup>12</sup> The market, business, insurers, many Local Governments, and (other) State Governments are moving in this direction. Local Governments are calling on the Western Australian and Federal Governments to catch up, to remove regulatory barriers, to support and accelerate the movement towards a low carbon, energy efficient and sustainable society.

#### **Local Government calls on the State and Federal Governments to:**

- **take a strong leadership and coordination role;**
- **engage in long-term planning on climate change;**
- **ensure all action is evidence-based, and guided by the scientific consensus on climate change;**
- **consider amending their investment strategies and /or policies to invest in financial institutions which do not fund fossil fuel, directly or indirectly, subject to minimum credit risk and portfolio exposure limits; and**
- **embed climate change mitigation and adaptation in the Government projects and policies** (including procurement, land management, development etc.).

#### **Local Government seeks State and Federal Government cooperation in:**

- removing existing barriers to climate mitigation actions by Local Governments;
- actively supporting Local Governments to take mitigation and adaptation actions where appropriate, without placing undue liability for the delivery of such actions on Local Governments;
- taking direct responsibility for the delivery of mitigation actions, adaptation and resilience planning in areas that lend themselves to centralised coordination at State or Federal level; and
- partnering with and resourcing Local Governments to deliver community emissions reduction programs that are most effectively implemented at the Local Government level.

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<sup>8</sup> See for example: A Bruce & I MacGill. "FactCheck Q&A: is Australia the world leader in household solar power?" The Conversation. 28 March 2016. Available at: <https://theconversation.com/factcheck-qanda-is-australia-the-world-leader-in-household-solar-power-56670>.

<sup>9</sup> See for example: N Harmsen. "Elon Musk's giant lithium ion battery completed by Tesla in SA's Mid North". ABC News. 24 November 2017. Available at: <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2017-11-23/worlds-most-powerful-lithium-ion-battery-finished-in-sa/9183868>; Climate Council. *Renewables and Storage Powering Australia*. 2018. Available at: <https://www.climatecouncil.org.au/uploads/d4a4f17c09c83d03f13234051e3e77d8.pdf>.

<sup>10</sup> See for example: K Diss. "Blockchain technology fuels peer-to-peer solar energy trading in Perth start-up". ABC News. 11 October 2017. Available at: <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2017-10-11/blockchain-technology-fuels-peer-to-peer-energy-trading-start-up/9035616>.

<sup>11</sup> See for example: C Chang. "South Australian government strikes deal with Tesla to install free batteries to 50,000 homes". *News.com.au*. 5 February 2018. Available at: <http://www.news.com.au/technology/innovation/south-australian-government-strikes-deal-with-tesla-to-install-free-batteries-to-50000-homes/news-story/fd04731350da176c374383f3fb25e947/>.

<sup>12</sup>A Gray. "Countries are announcing plans to phase out petrol and diesel cars. Is yours on the list?" *World Economic Forum*. 26 September 2017. Available at: <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2017/09/countries-are-announcing-plans-to-phase-out-petrol-and-diesel-cars-is-yours-on-the-list/>.

State Government leadership is required in the following areas:

- a **‘joined up government’ approach to climate change**, so that climate change action is coordinated and cohesive throughout State Government, with clear lines of responsibility, and accountability for required actions;
- **climate change adaptation and building resilience**, which requires an overarching strategic view, and a strategic approach to progressing and funding action (eg, actions arising from Local Government coastal hazard mapping and adaptation planning);
- **driving mass LED public lighting retrofits**, which is an area where regulatory hurdles and unaligned incentives continue to hinder action by Local Governments;
- undertaking a major revision and update to the **Western Australian Government’s Climate Change Strategy**<sup>13</sup>;
- ensuring that **statutory planning policies** are consistent with climate change mitigation priorities (eg, maintaining urban forest to reduce heat island effect, best practice building energy efficiency etc); and
- in the absence of effective State-level climate change policy, the **Environmental Protection Authority must take a greater regulatory role** in assessing and recommending conditions to mitigate the greenhouse gas emissions associated with major projects within the Environment Impact Assessment process.<sup>14</sup>

Local Government has, in the past, been key delivery agents of Australian Government mitigation programs. **Local Government calls on the State and Federal Governments to implement climate change policy and programs that take advantage of the substantial emissions reductions that can be achieved by Local Governments and their communities.**

## 2.4 Local Government urges effective mitigation action

**Local government recognises that we are in a state of climate emergency which requires urgent action.**

**Local Government is committed** to reducing operational GHG emissions and supporting the reduction of GHG emissions in the community.

**Local Government recognises** that Australia has the capacity to contribute to global climate change mitigation, by reducing emissions now, in a way that creates positive opportunities for communities, industries and our economic sustainability.

**Local Government acknowledges** a successful response to the challenge of climate change requires cross-sectoral action by government, business and the community.

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<sup>13</sup> Western Australian Government (2012). *Adapting to our Changing Climate*. Available at: <https://www.der.wa.gov.au/images/documents/your-environment/climate-change/adapting-to-our-changing-climate-october-2012.pdf>.

<sup>14</sup> See commentary on State climate change in the EPA’s *Annual Report 2016-2017* at 38-40. Available here: [http://www.epa.wa.gov.au/sites/default/files/Annual\\_reports/EPA%20Annual%20Report%202016-2017.pdf](http://www.epa.wa.gov.au/sites/default/files/Annual_reports/EPA%20Annual%20Report%202016-2017.pdf).

**Local Government considers** a wide range of policy measures - from regulatory intervention and market-based mechanisms (such as an emissions trading scheme) through to voluntary schemes, education and behaviour change programs - are required to successfully achieve appropriate and adequate emission reduction targets.

In the absence of an effective market-based mechanism at the Federal level, **Local Government calls on the Federal Government** to introduce an interim greenhouse trigger under the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation legislation.<sup>15</sup>

Local Governments can be key delivery agents for mitigation projects, including, but not limited to:

- renewable energy projects (small scale and large scale);
- energy efficiency projects (eg, mass LED public lighting retrofits);
- waste management;
- enabling take-up of new renewable and sustainable technologies; and
- accelerating the take up of low or zero emissions vehicles (within Local Government fleets, but also more broadly, eg, through the installation of more electric vehicle charging stations).

## 2.5 Local Government urges effective adaptation and resilience planning

**Local Government stresses** that the effects of climate change are now unequivocally being felt, as they respond to current effects of climate change, and plan for a changed climate into the future.

**Local Government is committed** to contributing to the common goal of ensuring that Western Australia's human communities and natural ecosystems have the resources and other assistance necessary to enable them to build maximum resilience and adapt to climate change impacts that are now understood to be unavoidable.

**Local Government asserts** that it is the responsibility of all spheres of Australian Government to ensure that all current regulation and policies take into consideration the likely impact of climate change on current and future human settlements, natural resources and ecosystems and facilitate adaptation to these. These policies should include but not be limited to those pertaining to disaster relief, national security, infrastructure and land use planning, water, energy, housing, health, transport, environment and energy.

**Local Government notes** there are few policies, programs and limited funding for coastal adaptation in Western Australia, but this is not sufficient, and there is currently only *minimal* capacity and resourcing to adapt to other effects of climate change, such as changes in

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<sup>15</sup> As recommended in the A Hawke *Independent review of the EPBC Act 1999*, at 12. Available here: <http://www.environment.gov.au/system/files/resources/5f3fdad6-30ba-48f7-ab17-c99e8bcc8d78/files/fact-sheet-5-climate-change.pdf>.

temperature and rainfall, extreme weather events such as heatwaves, bushfires and floods, along with flow-on effects such as the health impacts of climate change<sup>16</sup>.

Local Governments simply do not have the financial capacity to shoulder the financial cost of protection measures required in response to rising sea levels and more frequent extreme weather events. This must be a shared responsibility. **Local Government demands** that adequate funding be provided by the State Government for hazard and risk mapping, together with the priority adaptation measures identified through this process. The State Government should follow the examples of other States, such as New South Wales and Queensland, who have devoted substantially more resources for this purpose (noting both States have significantly less coastline than Western Australia<sup>17</sup>).

**Local Government is calling for effective adaptation and resilience planning, by all levels of government, including:**

- ensuring the Western Australian planning system adequately incorporates consideration of climate change effects and adaptation issues;
- hazard identification and planning beyond coastal planning, into current and expected effects of changes change on extreme weather events, bushfires, biodiversity, health etc.;
- sustainable management of water resources;
- providing greater certainty for Local Governments in knowing what action is necessary to manage their own risk and liability flowing from adaptation planning decisions;
- a State-Wide Coastal Hazard Map, and coastal management legislation in Western Australia to define and establish principles, objects, actions, roles and responsibilities for integrated coastal zone management;
- a formalised coordinated approach, potentially in the form of a State/Local Government partnership agreement or an Intergovernmental Agreement taking in all levels of government, establishing consistent and coordinated principles, objectives and actions across Australia;
- adequate assistance, including funding, for Local Governments engaged in adaptation action.

**Local Government is calling for emergency management and disaster relief policies that adequately incorporate climate change in their planning and implementation.**

Western Australia Natural Disaster Relief and Recovery Arrangements (WANDRRA) financial measures need to provide funding to reinstate a damaged or destroyed asset to a more disaster resilient standard, where this is an appropriate and cost effective response based on likely recurrence of the disaster event.

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<sup>16</sup> For a summary of Western Australian adaptation policies, refer to 'Western Australian Local Government action on climate change' in Appendix - Background Information below.

<sup>17</sup> As above.

## Appendix

### Background Information

**Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC):** is the international body for assessing the science related to climate change. IPCC assessments provide a scientific basis for governments at all levels to develop climate related policies, and they underlie negotiations at the UN Climate Conferences. IPCC reports undergo multiple rounds of drafting and review to ensure they are comprehensive and objective and produced in an open and transparent way. Thousands of other experts contribute to the reports by acting as reviewers, ensuring the reports reflect the full range of views in the scientific community.

**Paris Agreement:** The first-ever universal, legally binding global climate deal, adopted by 195 countries at the UNFCCC Conference of Parties in Paris, December 2015. It aims to respond to the global climate change threat by keeping a global temperature rise this century well below 2°C above pre-industrial levels and to pursue efforts to limit the temperature increase even further to 1.5°C. It aims for global greenhouse gases to peak as soon as possible, and seeks to foster resilience and climate adaptation. Full text of the Paris Agreement is available [here](#). As of November 2017, all 195 countries have signed on to the Paris Agreement. The United States of America has indicated an intention to withdraw (it is unable to withdraw until November 2020). Further information tracking country ratifications and targets is available [here](#).

**Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs):** In September 2015, 193 countries (including Australia) agreed to the United Nations 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and 169 targets. The SDGs are a successor to the Millennium Development Goals, but unlike the Millennium Development Goals, relate to all developed and emerging countries, as well as developing countries. They aim to end poverty, hunger and inequality, take action on climate change and the environment, improve access to health and education, build strong institutions and partnerships, and more. Aims include climate action (Goal 13), affordable and clean energy (Goal 7), responsible consumption and production (Goal 12) and sustainable cities and communities (Goal 11). For further information on how the SDGs are relevant to Local Governments, see the Global Network of Cities, Local and Regional Government (UCLG) publication “The Sustainable Development Goals: What Local governments need to know”, available [here](#).

**United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC):** an international environmental treaty adopted on 9 May 1992. The UNFCCC objective is to “stabilise greenhouse gas concentrations in the atmosphere at a level that would prevent dangerous anthropogenic interference with the climate system”.

**Western Australia Natural Disaster Relief and Recovery Arrangements (WANDRRA):** provides a range of financial relief measures to assist communities to recover from an eligible natural disaster event, jointly funded by the Western Australian and Australian Governments, which reimburses Local Governments for the restoration and replacement of

essential public assets owned by a local government to the extent necessary to restore the asset to the equivalent of its pre-disaster standard.

**Western Australian Local Government action on climate change:** WA Local Governments have, for a number of years, been actively engaged in a range of climate change mitigation and adaptation activity, together with education and encouraging awareness and behaviour change amongst residents. Many Local Governments have made voluntary commitments or pledges in relation to climate change, including the following:

Pledge	Description	Number of Local Government Participants
<b>Local Government Climate Change Declaration</b>	Developed by WALGA. A voluntary opportunity for Local Governments to demonstrate their political commitment to locally appropriate climate change adaptation and mitigation action. <sup>18</sup>	40 (representing 65% of the WA population)
<b>Divesting from fossil fuels</b>	Commitment to shift money out of banks that fund fossil fuels. <sup>19</sup>	12 (representing 30% of the WA population)
<b>Compact of Mayors</b>	A coalition of city leaders around the world committed to addressing climate change. <sup>20</sup>	4
<b>Cities Power Partnership</b>	Launched July 2017 by the Climate Council, aims to celebrate and accelerate emission reductions and clean energy in Australian towns and cities. <sup>21</sup>	10

In the past, Western Australian Local Governments have been key delivery agents of Commonwealth Government climate change mitigation programs, such as the Community Energy Efficiency Program (CEEP), the Local Government Energy Efficiency Program (LGEEP) and the Cities for Climate Protection (CCP) Program that was delivered by ICLEI with Commonwealth Government support. The LGEEP and CEEP grants assisted Local Governments in undertaking a wide range of building energy efficiency, LED public lighting and geothermal projects.

<sup>18</sup> For further information see here: <http://walga.asn.au/Policy-Advice-and-Advocacy/Environment/Climate-Change.aspx>.

<sup>19</sup> For a list of Australian Local Governments that have committed to divest see here: <http://gofossilfree.org.au/fossil-free-councils/>. Not listed are City of Bayswater, City of Subiaco and the Shire of Mundaring, which have also recently committed to divest.

<sup>20</sup> Cities of Joondalup, Perth, Melville and Mandurah. Further information about the Compact of Mayors available here: <https://www.compactofmayors.org/>.

<sup>21</sup> Local Governments participating in the Cities Power Partnership are shown on the map here: <http://citiespowerpartnership.org.au/power-partners/>.

Program	Program dates	WA Local Government participants
Cities for Climate Protection	1999-2006	30
Local Government Energy Efficiency Program (LGEEP)	2011-2014	50 (includes 1 WALGA grant)
Community Energy Efficiency Program (CEEP)	2011-2016	15 (includes 1 WALGA grant)
Emissions Reduction Fund (ERF)	2014-present	2 (both transitioned from the Carbon Farming Initiative)

Adaptation is a current issue for Local Government, particularly as the effects of climate change are now unequivocally being felt, and Local Governments are in a position where they need to be planning for further effects of climate change in the future. The Western Australian State Government provides around \$1.3 million funding per year under the CoastWest, Coastal Management Plan Assistance Program and Coastal Adaptation and Protection programs. In contrast, the New South Wales State Government (with a coastline one sixth the length of Western Australia), is providing \$63 million over five years. The Queensland State Government (with a coastline a little over half the length of Western Australia) provides \$12 million dollars over three years. The Western Australian state planning system has encompassed coastal adaptation planning, this has not yet been expanded to deal with other current and expected issues such as changes in temperature, rainfall and extreme weather events (including floods), heatwaves and bushfires.