

Embedding Action on Climate Change in Your Council Plan



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This guide is part of the Climate Ready Councils project led by WAGA and NAGA.

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1 Introduction – Council Plans must include action on climate change

There are now clear legislative and community expectations that Council Plans address climate change. Climate change is already impacting on your community's wellbeing, natural and built environments, and local economy.

Even if you already have plans and strategies in place for dealing with climate change, including climate change in your Council Plan is important. The Council Plan is a high profile platform for aligning the issue across council service areas, reaching out to your community and collaborators, and reporting on your progress over time.

The integrated strategic planning process outlined in the Local Government Act 2020 lends itself to the approach of embedding climate change across everything your council does, including your Council Plan.

Your Council Plan should consider actions for:

- **'mitigation'** – limiting global warming by reducing greenhouse gas emissions (also known as carbon emissions – CO₂ causing the most warming)
- **'adaptation'** – adapting to the negative impacts of the warming that has already occurred and is worsening.

This means creating a vision, developing strategies, and assigning resources to transform your operations, influence the Victorian and Australian Government decisions that affect your area, and support local residents and businesses to understand, take action on, and be resilient to climate change.

This guide aims to help you embed climate change action in your Council Plan. It is written for local government leaders and policy writers and describes what your council should consider. It includes examples of research and what others have done (purple boxes), and links to key resources to help you such as toolkits and training for councillors and staff (orange boxes). Click on the parts that are underlined for links to further information.

It is written in three parts:

- **Why** you must consider climate change
- **What** actions local government can take
- **How** to embed climate change action in your Council Plan.

This guide has been produced following consultation with nearly 20 councils and Greenhouse Alliances across Victoria. It is part of a research project on how councils are embedding climate change in their Council Plans.

Please let us know what you think of the guide and how you are using it. This will inform further work that looks more broadly at embedding climate change action across council strategies and operations.

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2 Why you must consider climate change

2.1 Local governments have a legal responsibility to act

Victorian legislation has made action on climate change a key responsibility of local government.

The *Climate Change Act 2017* sets a target of net zero carbon emissions by 2050 for Victoria and requires five yearly interim targets to be set by the Victorian Government.

It also provides guidance for Victorian and local government decision-making across a suite of legislation – including the *Public Health and Wellbeing Act* (and therefore your *Municipal Health and Wellbeing Plan*) – as well as enabling *pledges* on emissions reduction to be made by local government.

The Victorian Government’s guides on the roles and responsibilities of local government on climate change adaptation, and on tackling climate change in your health and wellbeing plan are **essential reading** for anyone preparing a Council Plan.

[SEE ORANGE BOX BELOW]

The Local Government Act 2020, now requires you to address climate change in your Council Plan as it is one of the key overarching governance principles. Every council must:

- promote the economic, social and environmental sustainability of the area, including **mitigation and planning for climate change risks**
- give priority to achieving the best outcomes for your community, including **future generations**.

Councils have a duty of care in the context of climate change adaptation that is recognised in law. The Victorian Government outlines how failure to act may leave your council open to claims of negligence. Acting on climate change is no longer optional.

RESOURCES : ESSENTIAL READING

1. Local government’s roles and responsibilities are detailed in the Victorian Government’s *Local Government Climate Change Adaptation Roles and Responsibilities under Victorian legislation: Guidance for local government decision-makers*.
2. The Victorian Government also provides guidance for *tackling climate change in your Municipal Health and Wellbeing Plan*.

2.2 The cost of doing nothing will far exceed the cost of action

In Victoria we are already experiencing the *impacts* of climate change, with a temperature increase of over 1° C since 1910, a decrease in average rainfall, and a significant increase in fire danger in spring. Victorian councils are facing more frequent climatic impacts, including:

- increasing temperatures and heatwaves
- more severe storms
- increased and more widespread flooding
- prolonged drought
- more frequent and severe bushfires
- rising sea levels and coastal inundation.

The changing climate will make it more expensive for councils to build and maintain infrastructure and deliver existing services due to:

- **damage to property and infrastructure:** roads/pavements, stormwater systems, buildings, coastal infrastructure, recreational infrastructure, etc;
- **rising insurance costs**, as risks and claims increase;
- **increasing energy and water costs** to cover the infrastructure needed for increased heating/cooling and water preservation;

- **demand for health and human services** to address heat stress, new microbial diseases, mental health issues and loss of properties and livelihoods;
- **demand for emergency management services** to prepare, prevent, respond and recover from the increasing frequency of extreme weather events
- **loss of vegetation, birds and wildlife;** and
- **impacts on economic development** such as tourism, events and recreational activities.

The costs of climate change are not evenly borne across our communities as those with the least resources are the most impacted. Monitoring who is vulnerable in your community is an important consideration in your deliberations about action. Babies, young people, older people and those with disabilities and chronic health issues are more vulnerable to heat. Those without adequate housing will also be adversely affected.

Small businesses and organisations are likely to be disproportionately impacted by climate change along with sectors such as construction and others employing outdoor workers, manufacturing, primary producers, health and social services, tourism and hospitality.

ECONOMIC COSTS TO AUSTRALIA

The University of Melbourne estimates *the total cumulative losses from climate change for Australia* would be \$2.7 trillion (a quarter of its total wealth) if we continue with current policy settings. The cost of Australia meeting its share of international emission reduction targets for 2050 was estimated at \$122 billion. **The cost of inaction would be around 20 times more than the cost of a robust emissions reduction response.**

2.3 There is benefit in acting now

Climate change is a risk to your council but tackling climate change can have economic as well as environmental benefits.

According to a recent survey of over 200 top economists from G20 countries, renewable-energy, energy-efficiency, and climate-resilience projects tend to create more jobs than projects that are environmentally neutral or harmful.

The Clean Jobs Plan, written in 2020 by economic consultants AlphaBeta and the Climate Council, found that supporting large-scale wind and solar could create up to 4,000 jobs in Victoria.

VALUE OF GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE

DELWP Economics undertook an assessment estimating the monetary value of the additional cooling effect in Melbourne that could arise from enhanced tree coverage and vegetation delivered through amendments to Victoria's planning policy. They estimated the (partial) value of the additional cooling effect that could be delivered by enhanced green infrastructure to be between ~\$530million and ~\$1.1billion per year (in present value terms) for the Melbourne Metropolitan Region in 2051.

2.4 The community want action on climate change

In addition to your legislative obligations and economic drivers, your community increasingly wants action. Given the opportunity, many communities raise climate change as one of their top concerns.

Over a third of councils across Victoria have declared a climate emergency, mostly in response to their community demanding action on climate change.

COMMUNITY VISION PRIORITY

During the consultation on their Community Vision in 2020, Glen Eira City Council found that being "green, sustainable and environmentally conscious" is the top priority for their community.

ATTITUDES TO CLIMATE CHANGE

In 2017, a Victorian Government survey found 78% of Victorians were already concerned about climate change and believed urgent action is needed. Australians in 2020 were worried about the impacts of fire, drought, floods and heatwaves on food security, health, species extinction, water shortages, energy blackouts, and damage to natural environments. In the middle of the COVID-19 pandemic, Australians expected their government to make protection of our environment a priority when planning for recovery.

The majority of Victorians think local government should lead or contribute to action on climate change.

3 What action can councils take?

3.1 Councils have developed effective solutions

Most councils tackle climate change as part of their work and many have made strong climate action statements, including statements about incorporating their climate declarations into their 2021-25 Council Plans.

These statements acknowledge that climate needs to be considered as a fundamental socio-economic challenge that impacts all aspects of council operations, in much the same way population growth or decline have been in previous Plans. Climate change is not an 'environmental issue' to be relegated to the 'green' section of your Council Plan.

RESOURCES

The [Local Government Climate Emergency Toolkit](#) is relevant for all councils, not just those who have declared a climate emergency. Written by a former councillor, it has recommendations for action across a wide range of areas including example statements and notices of motion.

Victoria has a target to get to zero net emissions by 2050. We need action sooner rather than later as there will be a high cost of leaving it until later. [Expert advice for the Victorian Government](#) indicates that to do our share of keeping global warming below 1.5°C, Victoria needs to reduce its emissions by at least 67% by 2030. [University of Melbourne modelling](#) shows Victoria could realistically achieve an emissions reduction of 75% from its 2005 level by 2030. Some councils have set zero net emissions targets for 2030 or 2040 and/or have interim targets for before then.

The following examples are designed to give you an idea of the scope of local government action on climate change mitigation, adaptation and advocacy. There is a huge amount of activity you can build on, depending on your local circumstances.

Examples are dotted through this guide in purple and councillors can learn more about climate change at free [training being delivered during April 2021](#) by the Victorian government.

3.2 What local government levers are there for mitigation?

LOCAL GOVERNMENT CAN REDUCE CARBON EMISSIONS BY:



Running all council operations and events on renewable energy (for example, through rooftop solar on council buildings, buying of renewable electricity, removing gas from council buildings etc).

SEE *POWER PURCHASING AGREEMENTS* ON PAGE 10.

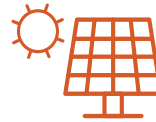


Ensuring your planning schemes enable zero emission homes and developments

SEE *PLANNING SCHEME AMENDMENTS FOR ZERO CARBON DEVELOPMENTS* IN IN ADVOCACY ON PAGE 13.



Divesting from fossil fuels by reviewing who you do business with, ensuring the businesses you buy goods and services from are also reducing emissions.



Supporting community and business led initiatives and advocacy to reduce emissions (for example solar bulk buys, energy efficiency programs, community energy projects).



Discouraging fossil fuel car use (for example by turning your own fleet electric, providing public infrastructure for electric vehicle charging, discouraging cars from city centres, improving infrastructure for non-car travel, encouraging car sharing).



Reducing waste to landfill, especially food waste.

POWER PURCHASING AGREEMENTS

Power Purchasing Agreements (PPAs) create electricity “buyers groups” to purchase renewable energy, reducing emissions and costs, and creating the investment to develop renewable industries.

The City of Melbourne has brokered two *PPAs*, with other councils, cultural and educational institutions and large businesses, investing in new wind farms.

Darebin City Council, supported by the Victorian Greenhouse Alliances, is leading Australia's largest ever *buying group switching to renewable energy*.

47 councils are pooling 239 GWh of electricity that would be the equivalent to powering 44,500 homes with renewable energy or taking 82,800 cars off of the road each year.

ENVIRONMENTAL UPGRADE FINANCE

Over *30 councils in Victoria* facilitate *Environmental Upgrade Finance* for their local businesses. This finance provides capital for upgrade projects that reduce emissions or adapt to climate change, along with saving energy bill costs for the business. In many cases they can be cash flow positive, where the savings from the upgrade exceed loan repayments. By engaging local councils as the third party in the agreement, businesses can access affordable terms, including repayment terms of up to 20 years. The finance is linked to the building rather than the building owner. This means that loan repayments can be made through a property charge, just as council rates are paid.

RESOURCES

1. You can see the contribution of electricity, gas, transport and waste to emissions in your municipality in the *CO₂ Emissions Snapshots for Municipalities in Australia*.
2. Yarra City Council's *Quadruple Bottom Line Tool* can be used by your council to assess the environmental, social, economic and climate change adaptation costs and benefits of proposed new projects and policies.

3.3 What local government levers are there for adaptation?

LOCAL GOVERNMENT CAN STRENGTHEN RESILIENCE AND REDUCE VULNERABILITY TO CLIMATE IMPACTS BY:



Adding climate risks (for example, flooding, storm surge and bushfire risks) to local land use plans and urban development policies to ensure development doesn't happen in high-risk areas.



Protecting and enhancing green open space and tree canopy cover and planting urban forests to create a cooler city, protect biodiversity, retain water in soils or for reuse, reduce flood risks, and increase water and air quality.

SEE COOL STREETS ON PAGE 12



Building climate sensitive environments, including policies for new developments, retrofitting buildings/housing, changing road and other materials, and “building back better” after emergencies.



Supporting the local community to act by providing information about risks and supporting individuals, communities, businesses and community organisations to be resilient to climate change.



Resourcing emergency management to prepare, prevent, respond and recover from local impacts (for example, bushfires, floods, storms, etc)

EMBEDDING CLIMATE CHANGE ADAPTATION

The Victorian Government is embedding climate change adaptation across its operations through legally mandated adaptation action plans across seven sectors. This is to ensure climate change is viewed as a cross-departmental responsibility.

The sectors are: Built Environment; Education and Training; Health and Human Services; Natural Environment; Primary Production; Transport; Water. Action plans are due to be published in October 2021.

COOL STREETS

Hobson's Bay's *Cool Streets* program creates partnerships between residents and Council staff to help local communities cool their area. Streets that are vulnerable to heat are chosen, and sessions are held with the community to design the layout and planting of trees. The aim is to increase tree canopy, from 7% – one of the lowest levels of tree canopy coverage in greater Melbourne – to 30%, by 2040 (recommended in *Infrastructure Victoria's draft 30 Year Strategy*).

RESOURCES

The *Western Alliance for Greenhouse Action* has developed *How Well Are We Adapting* – an adaptation monitoring, evaluation and reporting tool for Victorian councils. The website contains data and maps about impacts across Victoria and subscribers can use its internal reporting section to track impacts on council services and assets and evaluate responses over time.

The website includes information across the key local government activities of:

- strengthening the community (including raising awareness of local climate change impacts and how to address them)
- local parks and sports fields
- planning, building and regulation
- assets and infrastructure.

3.4 What should local government be asking for in its advocacy?

Actions by councils alone won't be enough to tackle climate change and meet the vision of your community, but advocacy by local government can influence action by other levels of government.

Advocacy could be around a range of issues that directly affect your local area, such as better public transport, or a planning scheme amendment for zero carbon developments.

Whilst the Council Plan is mainly focused on the Council's role within its jurisdictional footprint, when advocacy is outlined in the Plan, the scope is permitted to be much wider.

ZERO CARBON DEVELOPMENTS

Zero carbon developments are new buildings with no net carbon emissions; designed and built to be highly energy efficient and run on renewables. Yarra City Council has committed to [progress a planning scheme amendment to implement a Zero Carbon Local Policy for new developments](#) working with the Council Alliance for a Sustainable Built Environment ([CASBE](#)) and other councils. In the meantime Yarra is attracting leaders in the development industry who want to respond to a growing demand in the community for zero carbon, healthy and climate resilient homes and workplaces.

Reducing greenhouse gas emissions requires a collective effort, and councils across Victoria are advocating for Victorian and Australian governments to introduce:

- A national Renewable Energy Target of 100% by 2030 and a national zero net emissions target in line with keeping the global temperature below 1.5° C
- A pathway to zero carbon buildings through the National Construction Code
- Strengthened environmentally sustainable design policies in the state-wide planning scheme to create a zero carbon buildings standard
- Mandatory minimum standards for energy performance of properties at point of sale and lease
- Support to transition away from gas in buildings
- Stringent minimum vehicle emissions standards
- An electric vehicle strategy.

INQUIRY SUBMISSIONS

The report from the 2020 [Parliamentary Inquiry into tackling climate change in Victorian communities](#) demonstrates the important role that advocacy from local government can play in shaping priorities across councils and the Victorian Government.

A number of submissions from councils called for more support into home energy efficiency as upgrade programs have health, comfort and wellbeing benefits in addition to lowering the cost of energy bills and reducing carbon dioxide emissions. A resulting recommendation from the Inquiry was that the Victorian Government significantly increase the scale of programs to upgrade the energy efficiency of the homes of low income Victorians.

Councils also highlighted the important role of their collaboration through Greenhouse Alliances and the committee subsequently recommended more support for local government to strengthen Alliances.

4 How to embed climate change action in your Council Plan

The first part of this guide described why you should take action, and the second outlined the types of action you can consider.

This final part outlines what you could do to embed climate change action in your Council Plan. It looks at the **process** you go through to develop the Council Plan as well as the type of **content** your Plan could have.

4.1 Principles of climate governance

In addressing climate change through your Council Plan, it is important to consider the following key principles

- **Shared understanding and knowledge of climate change issues, impacts and local vulnerabilities.**
You will need to know your local area, so you can frame issues in ways that get buy-in from local leaders, the community and staff. You will need this information to make effective decisions.
- **Actions and policies that stick.**
Effective climate governance is characterised by policies and programs that establish and reinforce a pathway that achieves rapid, significant reductions in emissions and ensures maximum protection for communities, in a way that can't be easily reversed in the future.

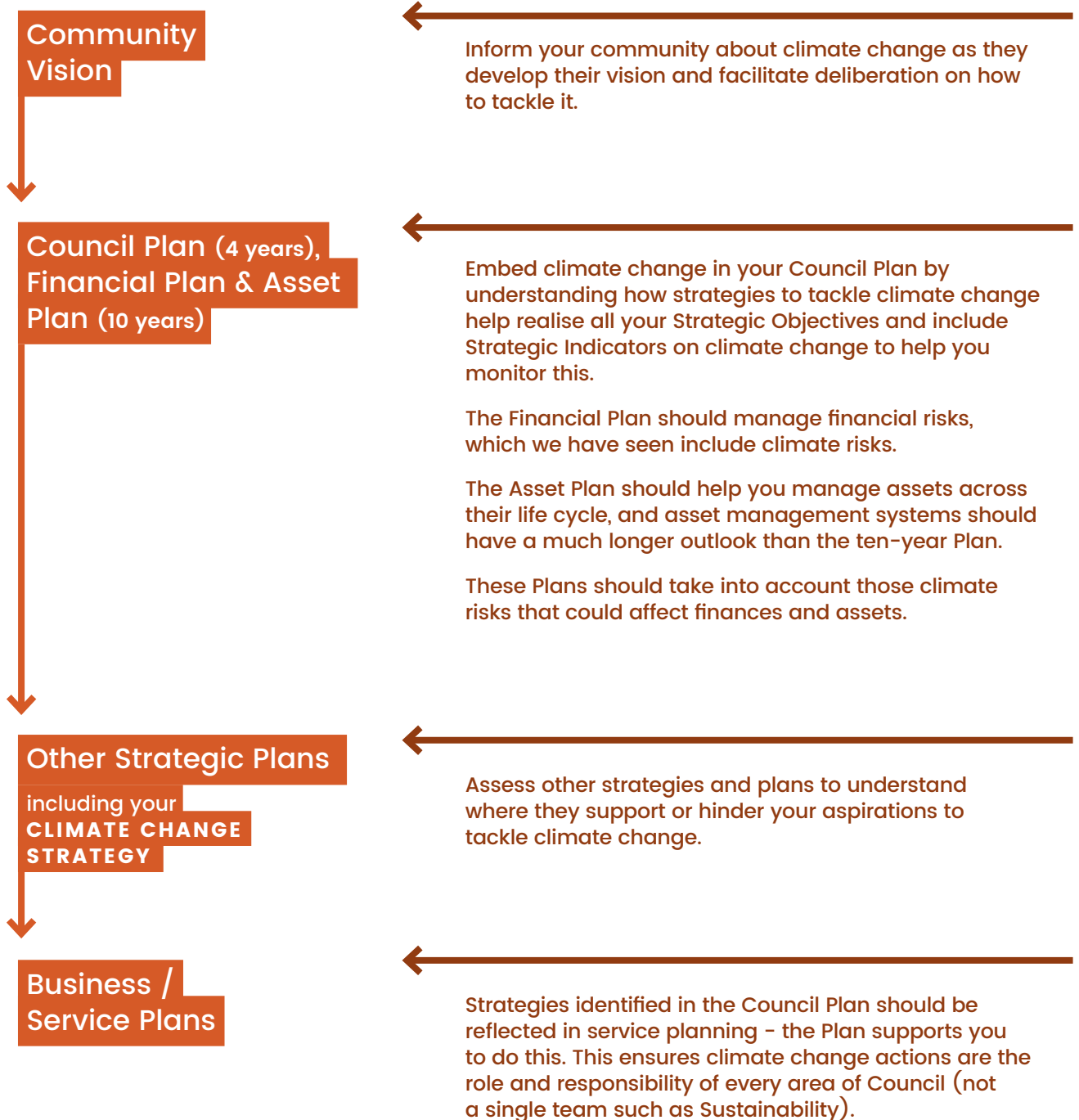
- **Leadership by council decision-makers.**
Councillors in particular can influence the community and other decision-makers who do not want to act or are waiting for others to take the lead. When councillors champion an issue, more resources are made available, information needs are addressed, and a more coordinated approach across council can be developed.
- **Accountability and integration across council.**
Councils can lead by example by addressing things they control, and work with others to address the broader community emissions and local adaptation challenge, including equity issues. Both require intra-organisation coordination, and that can start with the group that oversees the strategic planning in your Council Plan. The most critical barrier is relegating climate action planning to the environment section of your council instead of there being accountability for it from teams across the organisation.
- **The importance of a partnership with the community.**
Local government on its own cannot create the magnitude of change necessary. You will need to influence, and work with, others in government and across the community to protect your municipality.
- **Collaborations with others to maximise impact.**
For the past 21 years, councils in Victoria have been leading the way on climate action through working together through their regional Greenhouse Alliance. The alliance model allows councils to work with each other to scale up action and create economies of scale, and leverage greater advocacy potential.

4.2 Integrated Strategic Planning and Reporting Framework

As part of your Integrated Strategic Planning and Reporting Framework, there is an opportunity to embed climate change across all your plans by viewing your plans and actions through a climate change lens.

The Adaptative Capacity Checklist for local government [SEE ORANGE BOX ON PAGE 19] can help you do this.

If you have a Climate Change Action Plan or Strategy, you will already have done in-depth community consultation on this issue, so your work on the Council Plan is an opportunity to build on this as you ensure linkages are made from your Council Plan to adopted strategies, policies, and plans.



4.3 Five activities to embed climate change action in your Council Plan – Process

The following section outlines five concrete activities as part of normal council planning activities, that will help you embed climate action in your Council Plan.

4.3.1

Write a compelling, evidence-based ‘case for action’ for your Plan

4.3.2

Gain leadership support for climate change as an overarching driver of your Plan

4.3.3

Assess your level of readiness to tackle climate change

4.3.4

Ensure the Council Plan collaboration & engagement processes include climate change

4.3.5

Secure ongoing, internal coordination to embed climate change across services

4.3.1 Write a compelling, evidence-based ‘case for action’ for your Plan

Do you have processes in place to access the best information on climate impacts and identify and monitor the vulnerabilities of your community?

Planning and influencing rely on credible up-to-date information to inform and provide a rationale for your decision-making. You will already be producing background papers for councillors and the community. The case for action is a compelling policy story about why the

Council Plan needs to address climate change and justifies your chosen actions. It can help:

- **Inform deliberation with staff, community and stakeholders** to provide considered input to decisions or prioritisation for action or budget spending.
- **Give councillors the information they need to explain decisions** to and provide leadership in the community.
- **Support your advocacy for resources and policy changes** from the Victorian and Australian Governments and behaviour change in communities.

Your case for action should include:

- **The legislative and community context** outlined in the first section of this guide and any additional community attitudes information collected by your council (e.g. in satisfaction or community surveys)
- **A local profile of impacts and vulnerabilities (risks) for your local area** covering:
 - **emissions** that come from electricity, gas, transport and waste.
 - **local impacts and vulnerabilities** you have identified are issues in your area for both council and community operations and assets.
- **Information about interventions that have worked elsewhere**, and about what might work in the local context from deliberation with the community, experts, organisations and businesses.
- **A science-based approach** to setting targets and tackling climate change.

You can summarise your case for action in the challenges section of your Council Plan.

DISCUSSION PAPERS

If you have a Climate Change Strategy at your council you will likely have a lot of this work to get you started. Councils like [Moreland City Council](#) and [Hobsons Bay City Council](#) are producing discussion / research papers on climate change as well as trying to embed climate change impacts across all information papers they produce.

RESOURCES

1. The Victorian Government produces user-friendly data on climate change projections for the [ten regions](#) across the state including [Greater Melbourne](#).
2. The Victorian Government guidance [for tackling climate change in your Municipal Health and Wellbeing Plan](#), referenced in Section 2, breaks down many of the issues around climate change and health.

4.3.2 Gain leadership support for climate change as an overarching driver of your Plan

Do your leadership understand the impacts of climate change and how to tackle it?

Is your leadership willing to resource action on climate change?

Research has shown that leadership support and accountability is fundamental to effective action, providing a strong signal to staff and the community. Your case for action should outline why it is necessary to commit to making climate change an overarching driver of the Council Plan.

Your leadership, like your community and staff, may need information to be able to understand climate change and its impacts on your council. The Victorian Government will have training for councillors and Executive teams available in April. [SEE ORANGE BOX TO THE RIGHT]

CLIMATE CHANGE AND COUNCIL PLANS

Councillors at both *Kingston City Council* and *Cardinia City Council* upon declaring a climate emergency, stated they would ensure climate change “is emphasised as a key priority in the next Council Plan.” while *Ballarat City Council* councillors sought to ensure this declaration was “embedded into the.. council plan review”.

RESOURCES

Victorian Government training on climate change for all councillors and Executives will be delivered in April 2021. Register your attendance for this [online training](#).

4.3.3 Assess your level of readiness to tackle climate change

Has your council conducted an organisation-wide risk or vulnerability assessment?

Does your council identify climate change risks in their risk management framework?

Review what work your council has done already on tackling climate change and understand if there are any gaps that could be filled over the next four years to make your council ready to tackle climate change and where you should commit more resources.

GAPS AND OPPORTUNITIES ASSESSMENT

Bayside City Council commissioned a Gaps and Opportunities assessment that reviewed more than 80 strategies, plans, policies and local laws that relate to climate change, extracted the key actions and categorised them as to whether they were making a meaningful contribution to climate action, could be adapted in order to do so, or have a negative impact so need to be reviewed.

RESOURCES

1. Yarra City Council's award winning *Climate Adaptation Tool* is available for use and modification by other local councils. It identifies a process for mapping the areas in your business that will be impacted by climate change. It includes training, a guidance tool, a climate vulnerability screening tool, a quadruple bottom line reporting tool, and a case study about how they have applied it.
2. The Western Alliance of Greenhouse Action has developed a high level, research based Adaptive Capacity Checklist to assess your level of readiness to tackle climate change at a governance level. The final version will be available for all councils to use after 30 June 2021, but if you would like a copy of the draft checklist that is currently being trialled with councils, please contact **Fran MacDonald** e. franm@brimbank.vic.gov.au
3. The Victorian Government's risk and insurance adviser VMIA provides a *set of resources* to help organisations address climate change risk within their current risk management framework.

4.3.4 Ensure Council Plan collaboration and engagement processes include climate change

Are you making information on climate change and expected climate impacts available to the community?

Are you providing opportunities for expert and community involvement in decision-making, especially members of communities most at risk from climate change impacts?

You will be providing a lot of information to your community to inform them and build their capacity to contribute to the Community Vision and Council Plan development process. Your case for action on climate change and potential solutions can be deliberated with community, collaborators and experts. Information on climate change impacts will need to be included in your community vision engagement so that the community understands the magnitude of local impacts.

You will have consulted with people who are very knowledgeable about climate change when you developed your climate change strategy. You now have the opportunity to talk about climate change with a broader audience in the context of other responsibilities of council that will be addressed in the Plan.

Collaboration will bring information, expertise, financial resources, ideas and larger scale action. This is likely to include:

- Using internal or external experts to help summarise evidence on your risks for your “case for action” and targets
- Ensuring your community vision includes deliberation on climate change
- Undertaking readiness assessments with staff to determine where action sits across your Plan
- Running activities with staff, experts and the community to consider solutions that will work in your area.

HEARING FROM THE COMMUNITY

1. A third of the Borough of Queenscliffe’s residents signed a petition asking the council to declare a climate emergency. It did, and is *deliberating with the community* to write a long-term vision. A group of thirty residents has been established to confront the difficult questions with staff and councillors, seeking to balance significant environmental, social and economic challenges and opportunities, and develop a *community-led response plan*.
2. Mount Alexander Shire Council ran an *all-day forum* so councillors could better understand the broader community’s view on making a climate emergency declaration. The 49 speakers included health practitioners, farmers, local scientists, school students, artists, a church group, psychologists, businesses and peak bodies and housing specialists. The result was a resolution to declare a climate emergency.

RESOURCES

There are many sources of information you can provide for your community and collaborators – below are a few of them:

- Leading climate scientists, health, renewable energy and policy expert advice from the *Climate Council*
- Communicate climate change in your neighbourhood with *Fight for Planet A*
- Projections on Victoria’s future climate, by region, from the *Victorian Government*
- Local climate change impacts and how to address them from *How Well Are We Adapting*
- Information on the *role of local government* in tackling climate change
- Your own topic paper on climate change

4.3.5 Secure ongoing, internal coordination to embed climate change across services

Are accountabilities for managing these climate risks across council clearly assigned and understood?

Coordinating planning across the organisation, instead of in silos, will ensure climate action is seen as the role and responsibility of every area of council and create better, more systematic policy proposals. Ideally you will have executive-sponsored strategic and collaboration panels that allow deliberation on solutions together. These panels should be ongoing.

Your Strategic Panel should be made up of key policy makers from each council service area to guide and inform the Plan. It is likely the Council Plan will already have such a group, so make sure everyone on the group understands climate change and its impacts.

Your Collaboration Panel should be made up of staff champions in each service area and is an opportunity to build your organisation's capacity across the board. It is a chance for staff to hear from experts about the issues and the strategic panel about key policy proposals, as well as share good practice amongst each other. It is a way to inspire staff to consider their role in this public sector challenge and give them the knowledge and confidence to contribute.

Once staff in service units understand what the impacts of climate change will be on their area, as specialists in what they do they are best placed to understand and deliver outcomes that address climate risk.

EMBEDDING ACROSS BUSINESS AREAS

Moreland City Council has undertaken learning and capacity building in all service units, so every unit will develop specific climate emergency actions in their service and then unit plans. This means the impacts of climate change have been considered and documented for every business area.

Incorporating climate change into your risk assessment procedures is another way to manage this risk and mainstream action.

MANAGING RISK

Audit and Risk Committees established under the *Local Government Act 2020* have a role to play in managing climate risk. Committees from councils as diverse as Moreland to Greater Shepparton, have identified monitoring climate risk as part of their role as described in their Charter.

SENIOR MANAGEMENT WORKING GROUP

As part of Greater Dandenong City Council's internal audit program, an audit of their climate change response was undertaken. A range of recommendations were made, including establishment of a senior management working group to oversee implementation of their climate emergency strategy.

4.4 Putting it all together – the contents of your Council Plan

Whatever the structure of your plan, below are some considerations for the content to embed climate change in your Council Plan. Whatever you decide to include, work closely with your Environment / Sustainability / Climate Change team on what are the best opportunities for your council.



4.4.1 A statement of commitment to climate change action

Your Mayor's statement at the start of the Plan should include a strong commitment to tackling climate change and noting why it is critical for this issue to be embedded throughout your council's priorities by looking at all plans and strategies through a "climate change lens". This could involve:

- Acknowledging the climate change challenge and the urgent need for action
- Committing to taking a science-based approach to setting targets and tackling climate change
- Committing to actions across council service areas, recognising it is an overarching socio-economic driver

The statement could include a commitment to review all plans and strategies – existing and new - against your climate change goals and targets.

4.4.2 Context, opportunities and challenges

Note the Victorian legislative and policy context that action on climate change sits in, as outlined in Section 2.

Outline the issues raised by your community derived from your consultation.

Include a local profile of impacts and risks for your local area covering:

- **emissions** that come from electricity, gas, transport and waste (using the Snapshots tool identified in the orange box on page 10)
- **local impacts and vulnerabilities** that you have identified are issues in your area including increasing heat; flooding; water shortage; bushfire; coastal erosion.

RESEARCH

1. In 2020 the City of Stonnington councillors declared a climate emergency: "We are clearly in a state of climate emergency. This summer we've seen devastation across the country through bushfires, floods and unprecedented weather events. At a local level we've seen climate-driven extreme weather events that have had a significant impact on our environment, the local economy and human health such as major storms, poor air quality and contaminated rain. Our climate is changing and our community deserves an immediate and urgent response".
2. When Mount Alexander Shire Council declared a climate emergency, they committed to "Integrating a climate change lens into Council's design and construction of infrastructure, the planning and implementation of services and the development of policies and strategies."

4.4.3 Strategic objectives in your plan and the strategies to deliver them

Many Council Plans are split into themes and strategic objectives, and climate change is often featured as a strategy in the environment or sustainability theme.

However, climate change is likely to be a risk across **all** your themes. Identifying these impacts will enable you to embed strategies to tackle climate change across your service areas.

Below are examples of strategic objectives/themes that typically feature in a Council Plan and strategies related to climate change that can be included in each.

Create conditions to support businesses and create local jobs / A prosperous community

- Support and encourage new and expanded businesses in renewable energy, energy efficiency, and climate resilience to create more jobs in your municipality.
- Increase the resilience of the local economy by supporting businesses to reduce emissions and save money by reducing energy use, especially as they recover from the impact of COVID-19
- Encourage the uptake of local rooftop solar through bulk buy or rates-based loan schemes that can also mean large savings in bills at a time when energy costs are increasing.
- Offer household energy efficiency programs to increase local demand for tradespeople.

Strengthen community health / A safe and healthy community

- The Victorian Government guidance on tackling climate change through your Municipal Health and Wellbeing Plan provides a lot of information on the relevance of climate change to this.
- Run energy efficiency upgrade programs for low-income households in your municipality have been shown to not only reduce bills but also make homes healthier for participants with health conditions.
- Urban cooling programs using canopy trees and other greening options will increase community resilience during longer, hotter summers, increasing urban amenity and encouraging use of attractive public spaces and streets.

Protect and enhance the environment / A sustainable community

- See ideas from Section 3, from urban greening, to going all electric, to purchase of renewable energy.

Support a community active in civic life / An engaged community

- A commitment to an ongoing deliberative panel could help you deliver your community climate change aspirations in balance with the other commitments of your council.

Facilitate appropriate urban development / A community with well managed development and growth

- Planning scheme amendments, local planning policy, and development tools for mitigation and adaptation.

Provide responsible and transparent governance / A well governed community

This guide has already covered the need to embed climate change action across your organisation, which could be done in a number of ways that you could commit to in your Plan.

- **Check your capacity** to deal with the changing climate with the Adaptive Capacity Checklist. [SEE PAGE 19]
- Set up **cross council senior level management group** overseeing and responsible for climate change action and targets. [SEE PAGE 21]
- At *Inner West Council* in Sydney, the **CEO's performance plan** is linked to climate and renewables objectives.
- Feature climate change in every service delivery plan like Moreland City Council, who are working with different service units and confirming the climate actions for their work. [SEE PAGE 21]
- Deliver climate change training for all staff like *Yarra City Council* where a short e-training module is compulsory for all staff.
- Commit to continuously reviewing this for the duration of your Plan, particularly for adaptation purposes.

4.4.4. Strategic indicators

There are a number of indicators that will help you monitor your action on climate change, which you could develop from the levers in Section 3. Indicators could include:

- greenhouse gas emissions from different sources
- energy usage in council buildings
- renewable energy as a percentage of council's own energy use
- percentage of trips taken by walking, cycling or public transport
- food waste diverted from landfill
- urban tree canopy coverage
- water usage across council assets
- assets that have undergone vulnerability assessments
- percentage of staff and councillors trained in climate change.

This list is **not** exhaustive. Subscribers to How well are we adapting [SEE PAGE 12] use a number of adaptation indicators to monitor their climate change action.

RESOURCES

Electricity, gas, transport and waste to emissions in your municipality will be updated annually in the *[CO₂ Emissions Snapshots for Municipalities in Australia](#)*.

4.4.5 Initiatives

Finally, your major initiatives could include climate change projects that could make a big impact to reduce your emissions, adapt to climate change and advocate for change. Your sustainability team will have many ideas for this that are relevant to your community, based on the levers identified in Section 3.

CLIMATE CHANGE INITIATIVES

Darebin City Council's 2017–21 Plan had some major initiatives or "big actions" to tackle climate change, including:

- Double solar power in Darebin
- Increasing tree canopy and urban forest to make Darebin a city in the trees
- Dramatically improve walking and cycling – with their largest ever single investment of \$6 million in the first year – to change local travel
- Create a new Darebin Energy Foundation – a climate emergency think tank and initiative innovator – to address climate change.

Further Information

The Northern Alliance for Greenhouse Action (NAGA) is a *network* of nine councils in Melbourne's north, working *together* to create a zero-carbon society and provide maximum protection against the impacts of climate change.

The *Victorian Greenhouse Alliances* are formal partnerships of local governments driving climate change action across most of Victoria's 79 municipalities. The Alliances work across their networks, communities and partners to deliver regional mitigation and adaptation programs. This includes the implementation of joint initiatives that provide economies of scale and enable projects typically beyond the reach of individual councils. Our project work is complemented by targeted advocacy, capacity building activities and regional partnerships. You can read about [*our work here*](#).

Please contact your Greenhouse Alliance for more information on climate change action in your region:

- [Barwon South West Climate Alliance](#) (in development)
- [Central Victorian Greenhouse Alliance \(CVGA\)](#)
- [Eastern Alliance for Greenhouse Action \(EAGA\)](#)
- [Gippsland Climate Change Network \(GCCN\)](#)
- [Goulburn Broken Greenhouse Alliance \(GBGA\)](#)
- [Northern Alliance for Greenhouse Action \(NAGA\)](#)
- [South East Councils Climate Change Alliance \(SECCCA\)](#)
- [Western Alliance for Greenhouse Action \(WAGA\)](#)
- [Wimmera Mallee Sustainability Alliance \(WMSA\)](#).

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