



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

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

Title:	WA Local Government Association Draft Policy Statement on Climate Change December 2008
<p>Policy Objective:</p> <p>Background:</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."¹</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 ('CO₂-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>Local Government support for Climate Change Management</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 http://www.walga.asn.au/about/policy/environment_waste/env_sub_docs/climate_change_survey.pdf/iew. 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>

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

<p>Strategies</p>	<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>Legislative support for Climate Change Management 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>Climate Change Strategies 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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Statement of Policy:	<p>Climate Change Management for Local Government</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>1. Acknowledging climate change impacts</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>5. Establishing clear roles and responsibilities 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>6. Acknowledging resourcing barriers and constraints 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>7. Apportioning costs appropriately 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>
Date of Adoption:	Wednesday June 3, 2009.
Associated Policies:	None
End of Policy Statement	