

City of Vincent Submission on WALGA Climate Change Policy Statement

Section	Climate Change Policy Statement Review Discussion Paper	City of Vincent Comment & Recommendation
1.	Climate Change and Local Governments	
	<p>Climate change is a key issue for Local Governments that impacts almost all aspects of operations and responsibilities.</p> <p>Local Governments are actively engaged in a range of climate change mitigation and adaptation activity, as well as encouraging behaviour change amongst residents.</p> <p>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.</p>	[no comment sought on this part of the discussion paper – information only]
2.	Policy Statement on Climate Change	
	<p>WALGA's Policy Statement on Climate Change is used to inform WALGA's advocacy position on climate change matters and to provide a template for Local Governments developing climate change policies.</p> <p>WALGA's existing Policy Statement on Climate Change was adopted in 2009. It is now outdated and needs to be brought into alignment with the current views of the Local Government sector as well as the latest scientific knowledge and technological and political developments.</p>	[no comment sought on this part of the discussion paper – information only]
2.1.	<p>Climate change submissions</p> <p>The Discussion Paper incorporates references to, and quotations from a number of WALGA submissions on climate change matters made to the Commonwealth Government in 2017.</p> <p>These submissions represent the most up-to-date WALGA State Council endorsed climate change advocacy positions and the submissions capture many of Local Governments' key priorities in relation to climate change.</p> <p>Key climate change issues outlined in these submissions are set out throughout the Discussion Paper.</p>	[no comment sought on this part of the discussion paper – information only]

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3.	Current uses for the existing Policy Statement	
	<p>WALGA has relied on the existing Policy Statement as a statement of climate change principles and priorities, broadly agreed upon by WA Local Governments, to inform its advocacy for climate change action.</p> <p>It is intended that the updated policy statement will serve the same purpose.</p> <p>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 going forward.</p> <p>The existing Policy Statement is currently made available on the WALGA website in a template form for Local Governments to use and adapt.</p> <p>Section 3 of the Discussion Paper asks the following questions:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <i>Have you made use of the existing Climate Change Policy Statement? How?</i> 2. <i>Have you used the Policy Statement template? How?</i> 3. <i>Is it useful to make the Policy Statement available in template format to assist in developing your own Local Government Climate Change Policy?</i> 	<p>The City has used WALGA's existing Climate Change Policy Statement to guide a climate change risk assessment and adaptation study undertaken in 2011-12.</p> <p>The City has not used the existing Policy Statement template, but would look to use such a template as a starting point in developing a climate change policy of its own.</p> <p>The City recommends that the updated Policy Statement be made available in template format for local governments to use.</p>
4.	Current climate change science	
	<p>Since the existing Climate Change Policy statement was adopted in 2009, scientific understanding and consensus has continued to increase.</p> <p>There is now overwhelming evidence that the climate is warming and that greenhouse gas emissions from human activities are the main factor in this warming.</p> <p>Uncertainty now remains only in relation to the exact effects of climate change in the longer term – the timing and degree of changes by the end of the current century and beyond. This uncertainty is partly due to lack of clarity about the world's future emissions trajectory.</p>	<p>The City accepts the scientific consensus on the causes and effects of global climate change and agrees that effective mitigation action is required.</p> <p>Based on the definition of "emergency" being a serious or dangerous situation that requires immediate action, the City agrees with the Municipal Association of Victoria in its characterisation of the current state of the global climate.</p> <p>The City recommends strengthening WALGA's Climate Change Policy Statement to more closely resemble that of the Municipal Association of Victoria.</p>

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	<p>Regardless of emissions trajectory, warming effects are locked in for centuries to come.</p> <p>Information from a number of IPCC¹, Bureau of Meteorology and CSIRO publications is used to make a case for strengthening the wording of WALGA's Policy Statement to reflect the increasing urgency for action on climate change. The climate change statement of the Municipal Association of Victoria² is used as an example of what may be included in WALGA's Policy Statement:</p> <p><i>"The MAV recognises that:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>we are in a state of climate emergency that requires urgent action by all levels of government, including local councils</i> • <i>human induced climate change stands in the first rank of threats to humans, civilisation and other species"</i> <p>Section 4 of the Discussion Paper asks the following question:</p> <p><i>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?</i></p>	
5.	Domestic developments	
5.1.	The role of State and Commonwealth Governments in climate change policy	
5.1.1	<p>Coordination, leadership and planning</p> <p>Climate change is a matter of national significance. Coordination, leadership and planning should therefore be the primary responsibility of State and Commonwealth Governments.</p>	<p>The City agrees with the Discussion Paper's characterisation of Commonwealth and Western Australian Government policy and leadership to date.</p> <p>The City also supports the proposed emphasis on the need for Commonwealth and State governments to play a stronger leadership and coordination role, and to engage in long-term planning on climate change.</p> <p>It is the City's view that long-term planning and coordination must be evidence-based and guided by the strongest scientific consensus. Without this guiding</p>

¹ Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change - the leading international body for the assessment of climate change.

² WALGA's Victorian equivalent.

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	<p>The Commonwealth Government’s climate change policy to date has been shifting, inconsistent and at times contradictory. It continues to lack certainty going forward.</p> <p>At a State level in Western Australia there has been a lack of substantive climate change policy or leadership.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>Section 5.1.1 of the Discussion Paper asks the following question:</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;"><i>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?</i></p>	<p>principle at its centre, leadership will be vulnerable to ideology and vested interests.</p> <p>The City recommends that, in calling for leadership, coordination and long-term planning from the Commonwealth and State governments, the Policy Statement make it explicit that such actions must be evidence-based and guided by the strongest scientific consensus.</p>
5.1.2	<p>Taking advantage of Local Government emissions reductions</p> <p>WA Local Governments have, in the past, been key delivery agents of Australian Government mitigation programs. However, current Commonwealth Government climate change policies offer little to enable Local Government mitigation action.</p> <p>It is proposed that WALGA’s Policy Statement call for climate change mitigation policy settings at the Federal level (and where possible also at the State level) to include measures that can take advantage of the substantial emissions reduction potential of Local Governments.</p> <p>Section 5.1.2 of the Discussion Paper asks the following questions:</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;"><i>6. Do you agree that Commonwealth (and State) Government climate change mitigation policy settings should include measures that can take advantage of</i></p>	<p>Local Governments have significant potential for delivering climate change mitigation actions, both directly through corporate emissions reductions and indirectly through community programs that address emissions by residents and businesses. The City of Vincent has implemented energy efficiency measures across a number of its facilities and its community, enabled by past Commonwealth and State Government mitigation programs CEEP³, LGEEP⁴ and SEDO⁵ grants. Such measures have included LED lighting retrofits, solar hot water system installations, real-time energy monitoring, and free home energy audits for our community.</p> <p>The City of Vincent and other WA Local Governments continue to proactively pursue carbon reduction projects and initiatives in the absence of Commonwealth and State Government incentives or guidance. In some cases local governments take such actions in the face of regulatory barriers imposed by higher levels of government.</p> <p>Examples of relevant projects include large scale renewable energy generation; geothermal heating/cooling; LED street lighting; planning and building policies requiring new developments to be low-carbon and to include tree canopy</p>

³ Community Energy Efficiency Program

⁴ Local Government Energy Efficiency Program

⁵ Sustainable Energy Development Office

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	<p><i>the substantial emissions reductions that can be achieved by Local Governments?</i></p> <p>7. <i>Do you have suggestions or examples of Local Government projects that could achieve significant emissions reductions?</i></p>	<p>planting; and programs providing community education and discounts on energy efficiency and renewable energy generation and storage.</p> <p>The City recommends that the Policy Statement call on Commonwealth and State Governments to adjust their climate change mitigation policy settings to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Remove existing barriers to climate mitigation actions by Local Governments; - Actively support Local Governments to take mitigation actions where appropriate, without placing undue responsibility for the delivery of such actions on Local Governments; - Take direct responsibility for the delivery of mitigation actions in areas that lend themselves to centralised coordination at State or Federal level; and - Partner with and resource Local Governments to deliver community emissions reduction programs that are most effectively implemented at the grass roots level. <p>Further, the City recommends that WALGA provide guidance and examples on practical climate mitigation steps and measures (both corporate and community-based) that are available to Local Governments. This will help Local Governments understand what other Local Governments have achieved and evaluate their options.</p>
5.2.	Climate change policy developments	
5.2.1	<p>Mitigation policy</p> <p>Section 5.2.1 explains that there have been many developments in the energy space over recent years, which were not envisaged at the time the existing WALGA Policy Statement was finalised. These include the rise of small scale renewable energy, reduced cost of renewables, availability of battery storage and growing concern about energy security.</p>	[no comment sought on this part of the discussion paper – information only]
5.2.2	<p>Mitigation in the Policy Statement</p> <p>The general points about mitigation policy in WALGA’s existing Policy Statement remain relevant. They stand as clear statements in support of appropriate and effective mitigation policies.</p>	<p>The City agrees that the existing general mitigation content within the Policy Statement continues to reflect the Local Government position. It essentially states that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The magnitude of the mitigation task ahead is substantial and that planning, investment and infrastructure decisions made today will shape the carbon intensity of the future;

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	<p>However the Policy Statement is outdated in its reference to mitigation measures that no longer exist and lacks reference to current mitigation measures.</p> <p>Further, an energy transformation is now taking place: people, the market, business and Local Governments are moving in the direction of renewables, and more recently battery storage. It is proposed that the Policy Statement pick up on this changed landscape and call on State and Commonwealth Governments to catch up and encourage, accelerate and support what is already occurring.</p> <p>Section 5.2.2 of the Discussion Paper asks the following questions:</p> <p>8. <i>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?</i></p> <p>9. <i>Do you agree that that the Policy Statement should incorporate reference to broad scale shift that is already occurring in Australia?</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - It considers a successful response to the challenge of emission reduction should begin immediately and will require cross-sectoral action by government, business and broader community at all levels; and - Local Government supports the establishment of institutions and regulations that ensure effective, integrated action by these stakeholders. <p>The City is supportive of bringing the Policy Statement up to date with regard to current and potential future mitigation measures (such as funding mechanisms under the Clean Energy Finance Corporation and the National Energy Guarantee).</p> <p>The City also agrees that the Policy Statement should incorporate reference to the broad scale shift toward renewable energy and energy storage already occurring in Australia.</p>
5.2.3	<p>Adaptation</p> <p>Section 5.2.3 discusses climate change adaptation and asserts that the existing content on adaptation within the Policy Statement remains current. It calls for appropriate and effective adaptation policies, including the need to bring together all levels of Government, business and the broader community.</p> <p>One significant change since the adoption of the existing Policy Statement is that the impacts of climate change are now clearly being felt. Businesses are now incorporating climate change into their corporate risk assessment and planning, and Local Governments are already undertaking adaptation action. The Discussion paper identifies the following key areas for Local Government:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The need for climate change to be adequately incorporated into the State planning system; 	<p>The City agrees that the nominated areas are key issues for Local Government and recommends that these issues be included in the Policy Statement.</p> <p>The City also agrees that a formalised coordinated approach between different levels of government is needed. This may take the form of a State/Local Government partnership or a Commonwealth/State/Local Government partnership. Regardless of form, it is essential that the roles and responsibilities of all levels of government are clearly defined in any such agreement.</p>

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The need for greater certainty for Local Governments in knowing what action is necessary to manage their own climate change risk and liability; • The need for coastal management legislation in Western Australia, including clear roles and responsibilities; 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. <p>Section 5.2.3 of the Discussion Paper asks the following questions:</p> <p><i>10. Do you agree that the above areas are key issues for Local Government? Are there other key adaptation priorities/issues for Local Governments?</i></p> <p><i>11. Do you agree that reference to these issues should be included in the Policy Statement?</i></p> <p><i>12. Do you agree that one element of an effective approach to climate change adaptation would include a State/Local Government partnership agreement?</i></p>	
5.2.4	<p>Adaptation in the Policy Statement</p> <p>Following on from the discussion in section 5.2.3, section 5.2.4 proposes that WALGA's Policy Statement be amended to include an acknowledgement of the impacts of climate change now being felt and of the efforts already being made by Local Governments to plan for the future and undertake adaptation action.</p> <p>It is also proposed that the Policy Statement call for effective long term policy instruments, legislation, strategies and/or policies, along with adequate resourcing for climate change adaptation and planning.</p> <p>Section 5.2.4 of the Discussion Paper asks the following questions:</p> <p><i>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?</i></p>	<p>The City supports the inclusion in the Policy Statement of an acknowledgment that climate change impacts are already being felt, and of the work Local Governments are currently undertaking to plan and adapt for the future.</p> <p>The City also supports the inclusion of a call for effective long term policy instruments, legislation and/or policies, along with adequate resourcing for climate change adaptation and planning.</p>

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	<p>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?</p>	
5.2.5	<p>Emergency management</p> <p>WALGA’s existing Policy Statement makes no reference to emergency management and how climate change is, and will, affect planning and implementation for the management of emergencies.</p> <p>Section 5.2.5 of the Discussion Paper asks the following question:</p> <p>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?</p>	<p>Existing disaster relief funding in WA only allows 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.”</p> <p>Given the increasing frequency and severity of disaster events driven by climate change, it is the City’s view that disaster relief funding should allow for the upgrading of assets to a higher standard of resilience.</p> <p>The City therefore supports the 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.</p>
6.	International developments	
6.1.	The Paris Agreement	
	<p>The Paris Agreement was negotiated at the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change in 2015. It was adopted by consensus of 196 countries including Australia. Its key outcomes included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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; • Robust transparency and accountability rules; • Promoting action to adapt and build resilience to climate impacts; and • Financial, technological and capacity building support for developing countries. 	<p>Australia has set a target to reduce emissions by five per cent below 2000 levels by 2020 and 26-28 per cent below 2005 levels by 2030.</p> <p>The Australian Climate Change Authority recommends strengthening the 2020 target to a minimum of 15 per cent below 2000 levels, which it considers to be the minimum consistent with the scientific evidence.⁶</p> <p>The City therefore agrees that the Policy Statement should incorporate the Paris Agreement and use Australia’s commitment to urge or support more ambitious targets, and effective adaptation action.</p>

⁶ Climate Change Authority *Targets and Progress Review*. Available at <http://climatechangeauthority.gov.au/reviews/targets-and-progress-review/part-c/chapter-9-australia%E2%80%99s-2020-and-2030-goals>

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	<p>As the current worldwide mitigation commitments are insufficient to limit global temperature rise to well below 2°C, signatories will need to increase their ambition over time if this goal is to be met.</p> <p>WALGA’s existing Policy Statement does not include reference to the Paris Agreement.</p> <p>Section 6.1 of the Discussion Paper asks the following question:</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;"><i>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?</i></p>	
6.2.	Sustainable Development Goals	
	<p>In September 2015, 193 countries (including Australia) agreed to the United Nations’ 17 Sustainable Development Goals. These Goals guide global action on sustainable development and apply to all developed and emerging countries, as well as developing countries.</p> <p>WALGA has identified four Goals that are specifically relevant to Local Government:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Climate action (Goal 13); 2. Affordable and clean energy (Goal 7); 3. Responsible consumption and production (Goal 12); and 4. Sustainable cities and communities (Goal 11). <p>Issues outlined in WALGA’s existing Policy Statement already share some similarities with the Sustainable Development Goals, specifically equity and social justice issues arising from emissions mitigation measures.</p> <p>Given the existing alignment, it is proposed that the Sustainable Development Goals are incorporated into WALGA’s Policy Statement, along with an express statement in support.</p>	<p>The United Nations Sustainable Development Goals are in alignment with the attitudes of our City’s community, as reflected by community feedback during the recent engagement process for the City’s Strategic Community Plan.</p> <p>The City is already taking action in the areas related to the four Sustainable Development Goals specific to Local Government and therefore agrees that the Policy Statement should incorporate both reference to and support of the Sustainable Development Goals.</p>

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	<p>Section 6.2 of the Discussion Paper asks the following question:</p> <p><i>17. Do you agree with incorporating reference to the Sustainable Development Goals in the Policy Statement, including an express statement in support?</i></p>	
7.	Conclusion	
	<p>WALGA encourages Councillors, CEOs and Local Government Officers to provide input in response to this discussion paper.</p> <p>After input has been received and incorporated, a draft Policy Statement will be submitted to State Council for its approval or comment.</p>	<p>[no comment sought on this part of the discussion paper – information only]</p>