



# Climate Change Policy Statement Review

**Discussion Paper**  
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## 1.0 Climate Change and Local Governments

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

## 2.0 Policy Statement on Climate Change

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

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

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

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

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

## 2.1 Climate change submissions

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

## 3.0 Current uses for the existing Policy Statement

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

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

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

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

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

## 4.0 Current climate change science

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

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

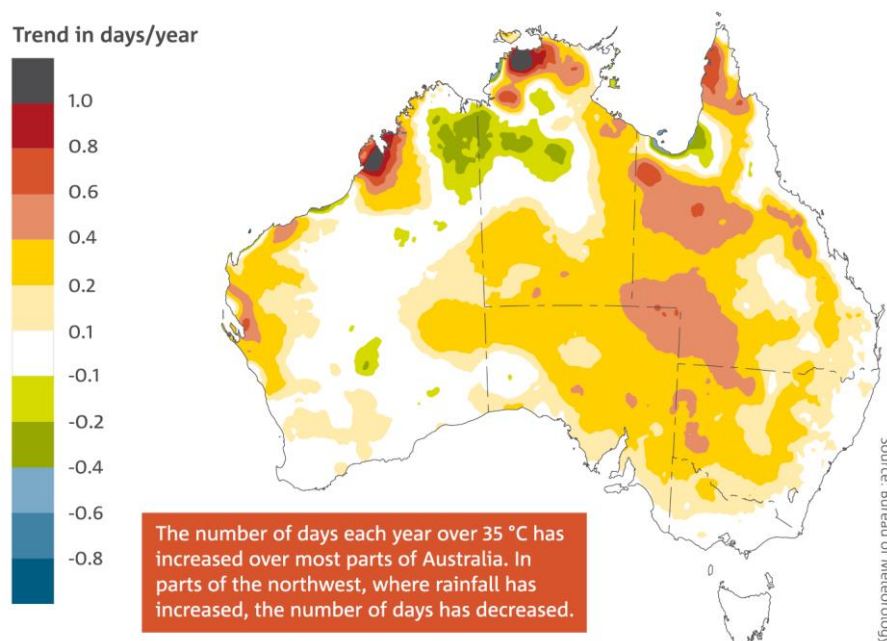


Figure 1: The trend in annual number of days per year above 35 °C from 1957–2015. An increase of 0.2 days/year since 1957 means, on average, that there are almost 12 more days per year over 35 °C.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

*The MAV recognises that:*

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

## 5.0 Domestic developments

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

#### 5.1.1 Coordination, leadership and planning

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

...

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

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

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

### 5.1.2 Taking advantage of Local Government emissions reductions

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

## 5.2 Climate change policy developments

### 5.2.1 Mitigation policy

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

### 5.2.2 Mitigation in the Policy Statement

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

#### Existing Policy Statement

##### 1.4 Mitigation – Emission Reductions

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

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

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

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

...

##### 2.4 Mitigation – Emission Reductions

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

### 5.2.3 Adaptation

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

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

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

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

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

...

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

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

..

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Available at:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

#### 5.2.4 Adaptation in the Policy Statement

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

Existing Policy Statement

## 1.5 Adaptation – Collaborative Action

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

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## 2.5 Adaptation – Collaborative Action

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

### 5.2.5 Emergency management

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

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

...

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

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

## 6.0 International developments

### 6.1 The Paris agreement

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

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

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

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

#### Existing Policy Statement

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

## 6.2 Sustainable Development Goals



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

#### Existing Policy Statement

##### 1.6 Equity and Social Justice

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

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

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

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

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

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

## 7.0 Conclusion

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

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

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

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



## Appendix – List of questions

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