

Updating the Climate
Change Authority's advice
on meeting Australia's Paris
Agreement Commitment
Submission

Contact:

Laura Simes

Environment Policy Advisor

WALGA

ONE70, LV 1, 170 Railway Parade West Leederville

Phone: (08) 9213 2049

Email: lsimes@walga.asn.au

Website: www.walga.asn.au

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Attachment: WALGA Climate Change Policy Statement (2018)

1.0 About WALGA

The WA Local Government Association (WALGA) is working for Local Government in Western Australia. As the peak industry body, WALGA advocates on behalf of 138 Western Australian Local Governments. As the united voice of Local Government in Western Australia, WALGA is an independent, membership-based organisation representing and supporting the work and interests of Local Governments in Western Australia. WALGA provides an essential voice for 1,222 Elected Members, approximately 22,000 Local Government employees (16,500 Full Time Equivalents) as well as over 2.5 million constituents of Local Governments in Western Australia.

2.0 WALGA's comments

WALGA thanks the Climate Change Authority for the opportunity to comment on its consultation paper *Updating the Authority's advice on meeting Australia's Paris Agreement* (the **Consultation Paper**). This submission is made in accordance with the [WALGA Climate Change Policy Statement](#).

3.0 Climate change and Local Government

Climate change is a key issue for Local Governments that cuts across almost all aspects of operations and responsibilities. Western Australian Local Governments are proactively pursuing a range of emissions reduction and adaptation actions to address climate change. This includes, but is in no way limited to, ambitious corporate and community-wide energy efficiency, renewable energy and emissions reductions strategies, programs and policies to encourage residents to reduce their carbon footprint and adaptation planning. Local Governments are active on climate change, but all levels of Government must act.

The WALGA Climate Change Statement, endorsed by WALGA State Council in July 2018, represents the consolidated view of Western Australian Local Governments:

Local Government acknowledges:

- I. The science is clear: climate change is occurring and greenhouse gas emissions from human activities are the dominant cause.
- II. Climate change threatens human societies and the Earth's ecosystems.
- III. Urgent action is required to reduce emissions, and to adapt to the impacts from climate change that are now unavoidable.
- IV. A failure to adequately address this climate change emergency places an unacceptable burden on future generations.

Local Government is committed to addressing climate change.

Local Government is calling for:

- I. Strong climate change action, leadership and coordination at all levels of government.
- II. Effective and adequately funded Commonwealth and State Government climate change policies and programs.

WALGA Climate Change Policy Statement (2018), p3.

Along with above headline statement, the WALGA Climate Change Statement outlines priorities for mitigation, adaptation, emergency management and resilience.

4.0 The need for effective climate action by the Commonwealth Government

The WALGA Climate Change Statement outlines a range of key priorities for action, with a number relating directly to the Commonwealth Government. The relevant parts of the Statement are set out below, and the complete Statement is also provided as an attachment to this submission.

Priority	Context
<p>A more ambitious Paris commitment</p> <p>(noting that this is not directly in scope for this consultation)</p>	<p>Local Government is committed to contributing to national and international emissions reduction targets to achieve the Paris Agreement goal of limiting global temperature rise to well below 2° Celsius and to pursue efforts to limit the temperature increase even further to 1.5° Celsius.</p> <p>Local Government acknowledges that current worldwide commitments under the Paris Agreement are insufficient to achieve even the 2° Celsius goal¹. Australia is a developed country with among the highest per capita greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions in the world². Recognising this, Local Government calls on the Commonwealth Government show international leadership, by committing to a more ambitious Paris target.</p>
<p>The need for an equitable transition</p>	<p>Local Government supports an equitable transition to a carbon constrained world:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ globally, the right of developing countries to increase their share of global wealth in ways that remain within the ecological capacities of the planet; ➤ domestically, the need to equitably share the cost of climate change adaptation and mitigation and ensure disadvantaged and marginalised groups receive adequate support. This includes provision of support and incentives for communities impacted by the transition (eg, by fostering innovation, and supporting workforce adjustment packages and new employment opportunities). <p>Local Government supports the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, and supports climate change action as part of a broader sustainable development agenda.</p>
<p>Cooperation and coordination between all levels of government</p>	<p>For Australia to meet its international obligations, all levels of government must act.</p> <p>Local Government asserts that it is the responsibility of all spheres of Australian Government to ensure that their decisions, policies and programs 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 include but are not limited to disaster relief, national security, environment, energy, infrastructure and land use planning, water, housing, health and transport.</p>

	<p>The State and Commonwealth Governments have an obligation to address climate change in partnership with Local Government, and in consultation with the community.</p> <p>Local Government calls on the Commonwealth Government to develop a formalised coordinated approach, such as in the form of a Commonwealth/State/Local Government partnership agreement or Intergovernmental Agreement, establishing consistent and coordinated principles, objectives and actions across Australia that provides for long-term planning to address climate change.</p>
<p>A range of domestic policy measures are required:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A national plan • A cross sectoral response 	<p>Local Government calls on the Commonwealth Government to develop and implement a national plan for action to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • meet Australia’s international obligations; • ensure Australia is prepared to adapt to the impacts of climate change; and • navigate the pathway to a low carbon economy, fostering innovation, new employment opportunities and economic growth. <p>Local Government acknowledges a successful response to the challenge of climate change requires cross-sectoral action by government, business and the community.</p> <p>However, there are insufficient long-term Commonwealth Government plans or resources directed to climate change action. Australia and the world is seeing a shift away from fossil fuels towards energy efficient and renewable technologies that includes widespread uptake of rooftop solar³, battery storage⁴, energy trading⁵, virtual power plants⁶,electric vehicles⁷, energy efficiency and energy productivity⁸. The market, business, insurers, many Local Governments, communities and (other) State Governments are moving in this direction. Local Governments are calling on the Commonwealth Government to accelerate action and remove barriers to transition to a low carbon, energy efficient economy.</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Efficient, effective and equitable • A range of policy measures • Strategic, long term planning 	<p>As part of the required national plan for action, Local Government calls on the Commonwealth Government to put in place efficient, effective and equitable measures to drive national emissions reductions.</p> <p>Local Government considers a wide range of policy measures - from regulatory intervention and market-based mechanisms (such as an emissions trading scheme) through to voluntary schemes, education and behaviour change programs - are required to successfully achieve emissions reduction targets.</p> <p>The strategic, long-term planning that Local Government seeks from the Commonwealth Government includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ adequate ongoing funding for essential research, science and innovation to underpin climate change policy initiatives and program design⁹ ➤ taking direct responsibility for the delivery of mitigation actions, adaptation and resilience planning in areas that lend themselves to centralised coordination at Commonwealth Government level; ➤ embedding climate change mitigation and adaptation considerations in Government projects and policies (government procurement, land management, development, investment strategies that move away from fossil fuels etc.); ➤ partnering with and resourcing Local Government to deliver community emissions reduction programs that are most effectively implemented at the Local Government level; ➤ removing existing barriers to climate mitigation and adaptation actions by Local Government; and ➤ ensuring all decisions are guided by the precautionary principle.
<p>Leveraging off Local Governments' connection with community</p>	<p>Local Government is in a unique position to drive and implement mitigation programs, foster innovation and support sustainability at the community level, and has had successful collaborations and partnerships to implement such programs in the past¹⁰.</p>

	<p>Local Government calls on the Commonwealth Government to partner with Local Government in its efforts to further reduce GHG emissions, including through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ renewable energy projects (small scale and large scale); ➤ energy efficiency projects (eg, mass LED public lighting retrofits); ➤ waste management; ➤ enabling take-up of new renewable and sustainable technologies; and ➤ accelerating the take up of low or zero emissions vehicles (eg, Local Government electric vehicle fleets, installation of electric vehicle charging stations).
<p>Mitigation policy needs to occur in concert with effective adaptation and resilience building</p> <p>(noting that this is not directly in scope for this consultation)</p>	<p>Effective adaptation and resilience planning by the Commonwealth Government includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ a strategic approach to progressing and funding action for climate change adaptation and building resilience; ➤ adequate assistance, including funding, for Local Governments and Commonwealth and State agencies engaged in adaptation action; ➤ recognising and planning for the impacts of climate change on biodiversity and agricultural productivity, particularly in relation to biosecurity; ➤ sustainable management of water resources; <p>Local Government is calling for national and state emergency management and disaster relief policies that adequately incorporate climate change in their planning and implementation. Western Australia Natural Disaster Relief and Recovery Arrangements (WANDRRA) financial measures need to provide funding to reinstate a damaged or destroyed asset to a more disaster resilient standard, where this is an appropriate and cost effective response based on likely recurrence of the disaster event.</p>

5.0 Comments in response to key areas of investigation

The Climate Change Authority's consultation paper includes some specific areas for which input is sought. WALGA's specific comments on those areas are set out below.

5.1 Previous recommendations

The Authority's principles for assessing the merits of emissions reductions policies are broadly consistent with the principles outlined in the Climate Change Statement. The final principle that the Authority has regard to, that climate change policies are to "be consistent with Australia's foreign policy and trade objectives" is not a policy priority outlined in the WALGA Climate Change Statement, and WALGA makes no comment on this.

The Authority's recommendation that climate policy take a sectoral and diverse approach, building on existing approaches (including strengthening the Emissions Reduction Fund and the Safeguard Mechanism) appears to be a sensible one, and is also consistent with the position in the WALGA Climate Change Statement that a broad range of policy tools are necessary to achieve the necessary emissions reductions.

Since the Authority's previous recommendations the case for urgent climate action has grown stronger. There have been numerous reports and studies that demonstrate the need for urgent action, and that show Australia is not on track to achieve its Paris Commitment, for example:

- IPCC's [Global Warming of 1.5°C \(2018\)](#) and [Climate Change and Land \(2019\)](#) outlined the scope of the task and the urgent and comprehensive action required.
- The Australian Government's own [Emissions Projections 2018](#) show that Australia is not on track to meet the Paris Commitment.
- UN Environment [Emissions Gap Report 2018](#) notes that Australia's emissions trajectory falls short of achieving the Paris commitment.
- [Climate Action Tracker – Australia](#) which includes analysis of current Australian policies as being insufficient to meet the Paris commitment.
- In Western Australia, the EPA's [Background paper on greenhouse gas assessment guidance](#) noted "the national framework for emissions reductions no longer imposes effective limitations on emissions".

WALGA considers that the Authority should, as a minimum, undertake an analysis to determine if the Authority's proposed policy changes would be sufficient to enable Australia to meet its Paris target without the 'Kyoto carryover'. Given the increasingly urgent need to action, it may be necessary to put in place additional or stronger policies than have been previously recommended by the Authority.

In assessing the 'environmental effectiveness' of the policies, it is recommended that the Authority incorporate the latest climate science (for example the reports noted above), establish an 'ideal' emissions budget that is consistent with this and ensure that recommended policy measures are consistent with this.

5.2 Achieving a net zero emissions economy

As outlined in the WALGA Climate Change Statement, the Commonwealth Government is best placed to develop and implement a national plan of action to:

- meet Australia's international obligations;
- ensure Australia is prepared to adapt to the impacts of climate change; and
- navigate the pathway to a low carbon economy, fostering innovation, new employment opportunities and economic growth.

It is acknowledged that a transition to a zero carbon economy will disproportionately impact some communities and regions. WA Local Governments support an equitable transition to a carbon constrained world, and acknowledge the need to equitably share the cost of climate change adaptation and mitigation and ensure disadvantaged and marginalised groups receive adequate support. This includes provision of support and incentives for communities impacted by the transition (eg, by supporting workforce adjustment packages and fostering new industries and employment opportunities).

To provide a local example, the Western Australian Government has established the Collie Futures Fund¹¹, which seeks to drive economic diversity in a region that is currently heavily dependent on coal for jobs. WALGA's *Economic Development Framework Project* (2019) made a number of recommendations for policy priorities and reform to encourage economic development, including providing support and encouragement for new and emerging industries.¹²

The Commonwealth Government can play a valuable role in fostering new and emerging low carbon industries that offer a wide range of employment opportunities. For example, mining commodities needed for the growing battery industry, large and small scale renewable energy projects and green hydrogen. As outlined in our Climate Change Statement, the Government could foster these industries via a wide range of policy measures - from regulatory intervention and market-based mechanisms (such as an emissions trading scheme) through to voluntary schemes, education and behaviour change programs.

The potential for a carbon offsets market has not been well realised under the current Emissions Reduction fund, but a well-designed policy (including a transition to private sector purchase of offsets, as the Authority previously recommended) could be well utilised particularly in regional areas (eg, carbon farming, crop and livestock efficiencies and vegetation management).

5.3 Sectoral and economy-wide policies

Local Government is in a unique position to reduce emissions resulting from their own operations and drive and implement mitigation programs, foster innovation and support sustainability at the community level. Successful collaborations and partnerships to implement such programs in the past have included as delivery agents of the Commonwealth

Government's Community Energy Efficiency Program (CEEP), the Local Government Energy Efficiency Program (LGEEP) and Cities for Climate Protection.

5.4 Supporting innovation, finance and new industries

As noted above at 5.2, WALGA's Climate Change Statement recognises the wide ranging opportunities offered by the shift to zero carbon economy, and supports Commonwealth policy that fosters these new industries, particularly in areas transitioning out of fossil fuel dependant employment

5.5 International context

The Consultation paper asks what role carryover from earlier commitments should play.

The WALGA Climate Change Statement acknowledges that current worldwide commitments under the Paris Commitment are insufficient to achieve even the 2°C goal, and calls on the Commonwealth Government to commit to a more ambitious Paris target. The practical effect of applying the 'Kyoto carryover' would be to dramatically decrease Australia's emission reduction commitment. Given that it WA Local Governments' position that Australia needs a stronger rather than a weaker emissions target, the use of the 'Kyoto carryover' is not supported.

6.0 Concluding comments

As key contributors to climate change mitigation, and as the level of government that is already proactively managing and planning for a range of impacts of climate change, WALGA's members have a keen interest in seeing efficient, effective and equitable climate change policy at all levels of government. There is a current lack of strong and effective climate policy at the Commonwealth level, and since the time of the Authority's previous recommendations, the case for urgent action has only grown stronger.

An effective national plan for action is required from the Commonwealth, with comprehensive, effective frameworks and mechanisms to reduce Australia's rising greenhouse gas emissions, if Australia is to achieve its international commitments and play its part in addressing climate change.

¹ The Climate Action Tracker (Climate Analytics, Ecofys & NewClimate Institute) calculates the gap in current policies, Paris Commitments and the emissions reductions required to keep the world at a 1.5°C and a 2.0 °C increase. Available here: <https://climateactiontracker.org/global/cat-emissions-gaps/>.

² Australia has the highest per capita emissions of the OECD countries, and the seventh highest per capita in the world after Kuwait, Brunei, Qatar, Belize, Oman and Bahrain: CAIT Climate Data Explorer (World Resources Institute) (2018). *GHG Emissions Totals Excluding Land Use Change and Forestry Per Capita 2014*. Available at: <http://cait.wri.org/historical>.

³ See for example: A Bruce & I MacGill. "FactCheck Q&A: is Australia the world leader in household solar power?" *The Conversation*. 28 March 2016. Available at: <https://theconversation.com/factcheck-ganda-is-australia-the-world-leader-in-household-solar-power-56670>.

⁴ See for example: N Harmsen. "Elon Musk's giant lithium ion battery completed by Tesla in SA's Mid North". *ABC News*. 24 November 2017. Available at: <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2017-11-23/worlds-most-powerful-lithium-ion-battery-finished-in-sa/9183868>; Climate Council. *Fully Charged: Renewables and Storage Powering Australia*. 2018. Available at: <https://www.climatecouncil.org.au/resources/battery-storage-2018/>.

⁵ See for example: K Diss, "Blockchain technology fuels peer-to-peer solar energy trading in Perth start-up". *ABC News*. 11 October 2017. Available at: <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2017-10-11/blockchain-technology-fuels-peer-to-peer-energy-trading-start-up/9035616>.

⁶ See for example: C Chang. "South Australian government strikes deal with Tesla to install free batteries to 50,000 homes". *News.com.au*. 5 February 2018. Available at: <http://www.news.com.au/technology/innovation/south-australian-government-strikes-deal-with-tesla-to-install-free-batteries-to-50000-homes/news-story/fd04731350da176c374383f3fb25e947/>.

⁷A Gray. "Countries are announcing plans to phase out petrol and diesel cars. Is yours on the list?" *World Economic Forum*. 26 September 2017. Available at: <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2017/09/countries-are-announcing-plans-to-phase-out-petrol-and-diesel-cars-is-yours-on-the-list/>.

⁸ Energy productivity is an indicator of the amount of economic output that is derived from each unit of energy consumed. See, for example, the Australian Alliance for Energy Productivity project to double productivity by 2030: <https://www.2xep.org.au/>.

⁹ For example, BOM and CSIRO's Climate Change in Australia: <https://www.climatechangeinaustralia.gov.au/>, Western Australian Marine Science Institution: <https://www.wamsi.org.au/>, National Climate Change Adaptation Research Facility: <https://www.nccarf.edu.au/> and CoastAdapt: <https://coastadapt.com.au/>.

¹⁰ For example as delivery agents of the Commonwealth Government's Community Energy Efficiency Program (CEEP) and Local Government Energy Efficiency Program (LGEEP) and the Cities for Climate Protection.

¹¹ Western Australian Government, Colle Futures Fund: <https://www.jtsi.wa.gov.au/economic-development/economy/collie-futures-fund>.

¹² WALGA, *Local Economic Development* (May 2019). Available here: <https://walga.asn.au/getattachment/Policy-Advice-and-Advocacy/Economic-Development/Economic-Development-Framework/Research-Findings-and-Future-Directions.pdf?lang=en-AU>.