

# Victorian Government: *A Climate of Opportunity Summit Paper* West Gippsland Catchment Management Authority (WGCMA) response

## Context

The following is a West Gippsland Catchment Management Authority organisational response to the Victorian Climate Change Summit Paper. Where applicable, the Authority has provided a response to the proposed 10 strategic directions for Climate Change Policy in Victoria and the associated discussion questions for each of the strategic directions.

## STRATEGIC DIRECTION #1

### Positioning Victorian industry to capitalise on the new jobs, new technologies and new markets that will flow from the transition to the low carbon economy

Q1: What are the international, national and local opportunities that may emerge from the transition to a low carbon economy?

#### Comments

There are possible CO<sup>2</sup> capture and geosequestration opportunities within the Latrobe Valley. The Latrobe Valley could possibly become a hub for 'clean coal' research and development.

The Department of Primary Industries in Ellinbank is an important research facility that is undertaking research and development activity which is investigating dietary and breeding requirements to reduce rumen methane generation in cattle.

As the climate changes to a hotter, drier and more volatile regime, the opportunities for solar and wind energy generation may also increase. There is still potential to be at the forefront of developments in these areas.

Q2: How can Victorian companies capitalise on Victoria's advantages in areas such as innovation, skills and infrastructure in the global shift to a low carbon economy?

#### Comments

See above

Q3: What are the barriers and what support will be required from government to access the opportunities arising from the global carbon market?

#### Comments

It is important that Government consider investing in research and development activities and in demonstration / pilot projects.

Q4: What are the current and emerging skill requirements and how might they be best addressed?

#### Comments

Nil comment

**STRATEGIC DIRECTION #2**

**Supporting an Emissions Trading Scheme (ETS) with complementary measures that smooth the transition for the Victorian economy (including the built environment and transport infrastructure)**

Q1: What opportunities exist for low-cost emissions reductions that may not be driven by a carbon price alone? How can the Victorian Government ensure that these are fully exploited?

**Comments**

Nil comment

Q2: The Victorian Government is committed to fostering science, technology and innovation in Victoria. Are there areas of the innovation system that need further support from the Victorian Government? How should this be delivered?

**Comments**

Nil comment

Q3: Are there innovative techniques for government and business to share risk in technology development that will accelerate the uptake of breakthrough technologies?

**Comments**

Nil comment

Q4: Are additional measures to reduce emissions justified in case an Emissions Trading Scheme fails to deliver its promised abatement?

**Comments**

Nil comment

Q5: What changes to how we live across our cities and towns are we willing to accept? (Urban form, building design, streetscapes, street layout, mix of densities, the way we deliver energy and water services, and where we can develop may all need to change.) What are the essential elements of what we want to maintain as we adapt our settlements to a low carbon profile?

**Comments**

Government need to articulate the level of climate change we can accept and plan around this.

Q6: How can we promote the growth and development of public transport, encourage a shift to low-emission transport forms and provide a flexible transport base for our community?

**Comments**

Increased access to public transport in rural Victoria would be most welcomed by the WGCMA community.

**STRATEGIC DIRECTION #3**

**Pursuing cost effective emissions reductions in sectors of the economy not covered by the Emissions Trading Scheme (ETS)**

Q1: What are the emission reduction opportunities that exist in the sectors that will not initially be included under the ETS? How can the Victorian Government help achieve these opportunities?

**Comments**

The agricultural sector could be included in an Emissions Trading Scheme.

Q2: What potential exists in Victoria to undertake projects in the forestry and agricultural sectors that reduce emissions or remove greenhouse gases from the atmosphere?

**Comments**

Nil comment

Q3: Should these sectors be incorporated into an ETS? If so, when?

**Comments**

Agricultural sectors could monitor their Carbon liabilities and offsets from 2010, and possibly participate in an Emission Trading Scheme a few years later.

**STRATEGIC DIRECTION #4**

**Ensuring the continued security, efficiency and affordability of Victoria’s energy supplies by encouraging low-emission and renewable energy options**

Q1: In the context of the Emissions Trading Scheme, how can the Victorian Government provide certainty to investors in both the energy sector and wider economy?

**Comments**

Nil comment

Q2: What are the key barriers that exist, which hinder the deployment of low emissions technology? Are there barriers unique to Victoria?

**Comments**

Nil comment

**STRATEGIC DIRECTION #5**

**Assisting households to adjust to the rising costs of electricity, fuel and other commodities**

Q1: What is stopping people from realising opportunities to reduce their energy use and save money?

**Comments**

Nil comment

Q2: How can the Victorian Government develop the capacity of individuals and households to reduce their energy bills through energy efficiency measures and behaviour change?

**Comments**

By supporting the provision of good information about what people can do / actions they can undertake to reduce their energy bills.

Q3: What mechanisms should the Victorian Government adopt and advocate at a national level to ensure that socially-disadvantaged communities and households are supported through the transition to the Emissions Trading Scheme?

**Comments**

Nil comment

**STRATEGIC DIRECTION #6**

**Increasing our knowledge about climate change impacts and adaptive needs and possibilities**

Q1: Where are the largest gaps in our climate change knowledge in Victoria?

**Comments**

There is ample information on greenhouse gas emission reduction and adaptation options available at an urban level (e.g. energy efficiency, green energy, recycling, solar hot water rebates, etc) however we are still grappling with adaptation options at a larger rural scale. Climate change projections, mitigation and adaptation options need to be incorporated into regional planning (in the case of WGCMA this relates to our Regional Catchment Strategy and associated Action Plans).

Government needs to take a key role in disseminating good information (e.g. sea level rise and coastal impacts) and introduce coastal planning controls to minimise costs into the future. In some areas (e.g. Port Albert), 'strategic retreat' options for existing development need to be considered.

Q2: What are the sources of information on the impacts of climate change that you are aware of and use?

**Comments**

The WGCMA refers to the Department of Sustainability & Environment Climate Change Adaptation Program's regional climate change projection data for West Gippsland and those provided by the CSIRO. The Gippsland Coastal Board's work on sea-level rise and coastal geomorphology changes and CSIRO work on the projected increases in storm severity is also referred to by the Authority.

The Arthur Rylah Institute will be developing a native vegetation model to predict the "current" distribution of indigenous plants in Victoria's landscape in order to develop "Environmental Vegetation Class lists". This work is being undertaken for the state-wide VicVeg project. Once developed, this model may be able to be adapted to run climate change scenarios and to provide some prediction of the future distribution of vegetation.

Q3: What changes, limits or risks are we, as a community, prepared to accept to minimise future risks?

**Comments**

Planning rules need to be introduced to control coastal development (e.g. no new infrastructure below the 3.0 m AHD contour or within 200 m of the (current) coastline) in light of climate change projections.

Q4: What is needed in our community for people to change their everyday practices to reduce climate change impacts?

**Comments**

Nil comment

**STRATEGIC DIRECTION #7**

**Increasing the climate change resilience of Victoria's regions and communities**

Q1: Where are the State's most vulnerable regions, communities and individuals to climate change?

**Comments**

Regions in northern Victoria (e.g. North Central Victoria, Bendigo and surrounds) are currently vulnerable to the impacts of climate change, as a decline in rainfall and water availability is already impacting upon these Victorian communities.

The Victorian coastline, which will be subject to sea-level rise and changes in coastal geomorphology, is also highly vulnerable. The Gippsland coast is particularly vulnerable as it's largely comprised of thin dunes with highly erosive wind-blown sand (e.g. at locales such as Seaspray and The Honeysuckles). The Gippsland Lakes are likely to change dramatically to a coastal abeyance system, something like the present-day Corner Inlet, with resultant impacts on the environment and towns such as Lakes Entrance, Paynesville/Raymond Island and Loch Sport. Corner Inlet townships such as Port Albert, Port Franklin, Port Welshpool, McLoughlins Beach will also be badly affected.

Inland, already badly flood prone towns (such as Traralgon), will suffer from the increasing severity of storm events.

Q2: What groups and communities may need particular assistance in developing new skills?

**Comments**

Agricultural sectors in Gippsland would like ongoing updates about potential Emission Trading Scheme rules (and any implications of these) for decision making.

Q3: Beyond uncertainty of impacts, what are the factors in Victoria's vulnerable communities currently standing in the way of adaptation to climate change?

**Comments**

There is ample information on greenhouse gas emission reduction and adaptation options available at an urban level (e.g. energy efficiency, green energy, recycling, solar hot water rebates, etc) however we are still grappling with adaptation options at a larger rural scale. Government need to provide rural land managers with adaptation options (based on good science).

Q4: How can the Victorian Government effectively respond to the increase in the frequency of extreme events (such as drought and bushfire) that climate change will bring?

**Comments**

There is an urgent need for Government to develop a state-wide policy on coastal planning controls to address the impacts of sea-level rise; and for the provision of funding assistance to agencies (such as Catchment Management Authorities or Local Government) to undertake new flood studies for vulnerable towns.

Q5: How can the Victorian Government better assist our regions to make the link between better understanding of economic impacts and actions to address key impacts?

**Comments**

Nil comment

**STRATEGIC DIRECTION #8**

**Assisting out natural assets and ecosystems to deal with the pressures and challenges that climate change will bring**

Q1: What natural assets are most vulnerable to climate change?

**Comments**

Within the WGCMA region, ecosystems associated with the coastline which is likely to be inundated and subject to more extreme storm and weather events. Some of the most vulnerable and important ecosystems include those associated with the intertidal zones in the Gippsland Lakes system, along the 90 Mile Beach and its hinterland wetlands, Nooramunga and Corner Inlet shorelines and sand islands. The Gippsland Lakes and Corner Inlet regions are Ramsar listed due to the habitat they provide for migratory shorebirds.

With increased fire frequency, we are concerned about maintaining the integrity of areas of Cool Temperate Rainforest in the Strzelecki Ranges and in the foothills north of the Latrobe Valley. The effects of one fire in these regions would be devastating. However, a double burn within a short space of time would be catastrophic. Examples in Tasmania may be useful for comparison.

Alpine areas will be vulnerable due to altered climate and reduced snowfall. These areas in our region have evolved to comprise unique and endemic species.

Water dependant (ground and surface) ecosystems throughout the WGCMA region are incredibly vulnerable to climate change impacts, such as reduced average rainfall and climatic extremes (e.g. floods and drought).

Q2: What are the existing barriers (e.g. competing land use pressures) preventing us from building the resilience of these assets and ecosystems?

**Comments**

A lack of time, resources and funding are barriers to building the resilience of our natural assets and ecosystems in the face of a rapidly changing climate.

Q3: How do we ensure that no perverse environmental outcomes occur through encouraging emission reduction in areas such as forestry, agriculture and geosequestration?

**Comments**

Conservation plantings should be encouraged to sequester carbon. There is concern that the WGCMA region could see unregulated activities for sequestering carbon, including increased forestry (which may also impact on high quality agricultural land) taking place in the future. There is a requirement that the planning for these activities considers broader impacts such as water yield, landscape connectivity and the need for genetic and species diversity (e.g. not a monoculture).

Q4: How can we use increased awareness in climate change to build upon current initiatives such as BushTender, which encourage landholders to improve their management and protection of native vegetation?

**Comments**

In some cases an increased amount of vegetated land should be reserved and managed by agencies such as Parks Victoria for purely conservation purposes. This will require an increase in funding allocated to agencies such as Parks Victoria for this purpose.

In the WGCMA region, State Forest should receive a higher level of protection. For example, Mullungdung State Forest, Won Wron State Forest, Alberton West State Forest and Nooramunga Coastal Park are some of the areas of highest conservation significance in this part of Victoria and provide a good potential to link through the landscape from the coast to the Strzeleckis.

Q5: How will the role of Parks, Reserves and other protected areas change?

**Comments**

As mentioned above: In the WGCMA region, State Forest should receive a higher level of protection. For example, Mullungdung State Forest, Won Wron State Forest, Alberton West State Forest and Nooramunga Coastal Park are some of the areas of highest conservation significance in this part of Victoria and provide a good potential to link through the landscape from the coast to the Strzeleckis.

Q6: What opportunities are there to contribute to carbon sinks through enhancement of Melbourne's Green Wedges and establishment of bio-links throughout Victoria's rural landscapes?

**Comments**

See above

**STRATEGIC DIRECTION #9**

**Supporting Victorian individuals and communities to get active on climate change**

Q1: What are the most appropriate ways to provide further assistance for existing climate change action groups?

**Comments**

Perhaps a small grants scheme for community groups to run awareness raising events and support group activities & action that is delivered / administered via avenues such as Local Government would assist local climate change action groups.

Q2: What are the options to develop new networks to support places or regions to set their own agenda for tackling these future challenges?

**Comments**

There is a requirement for regional coordination, resources and a source of funding in order for it to progress.

Q3: What are the elements of community capability that most need strengthening to cope with climate change?

### Comments

There is ample information on greenhouse gas emission reduction and adaptation options available at an urban level (e.g. energy efficiency, green energy, recycling, solar hot water rebates, etc) however we are still grappling with adaptation options at a larger rural scale. Communities within the WGCMA region require information about the potential impacts of climate change and what this means for them (in terms of land use productivity, etc). Communities are seeking adaptation options that are based on good science and wish to be involved in decision making processes that will impact upon them and their livelihood.

Q4: How can the community contribute to infrastructure investment and decisions which impact on Victoria's carbon footprint?

### Comments

Nil comment

## **STRATEGIC DIRECTION #10**

### **Ensuring Victoria continues to play a proactive role in global efforts to address climate change**

Q1: What role would you like to see Victoria play in demonstrating global leadership?

### Comments

Nil comment

Q2: How can the Victorian Government expand its partnerships with other Governments to ensure that practical collaboration takes place and that lead to tangible climate change benefits?

### Comments

Nil comment

Q3: The Victorian Climate Change Bill will provide the Victorian Government with the opportunity to position Victoria as a leader in the national response to climate change. What should be the key elements of the Bill?

### Comments

Nil comment

## **Additional questions and comments**

Q1: Have all relevant strategic directions been canvassed by the Victorian Government?

### Comments

Food security is an issue that could be considered by Government in light of climate change projections.

A possible adverse outcome of an Emissions Trading Scheme could be that high quality agricultural land becomes replaced by Carbon sequestration plantings that have been established for Carbon offsets or biofuel production.

Regionalised food production, processing & distribution may become increasingly important as transport & input costs increase (particularly in an energy constrained future).

Q2: How can the Victorian Government move forward as a State in addressing these strategic directions?

**Comments**

Nil comment