

Local Government Engagement on *Victoria's Climate Change Adaptation Plan 2017 – 2020*

How your feedback informed development of the
Adaptation Plan



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Introduction

In May – August 2016, the Department of Environment Land Water and Planning (DELWP) held a series of workshops with local governments across Victoria to inform the development of the *Victorian Climate Change Adaptation Plan 2017-2020* ('the Adaptation Plan'). A Discussion Paper framed topics for these workshops outlining options for feedback across climate change adaptation. This included issues such as governance of the relationship between state and local governments, land-use planning, and infrastructure resilience. DELWP also accepted written submissions on the Discussion Paper.

Local governments play a vital role in helping Victorians to adapt to climate change. State and local governments must work together to build the community resilience. The perspectives shared by local government officers in these forums helped to build the Adaptation Plan.

The Adaptation Plan outlines priority commitments of the Victorian Government, and provides an enabling framework for adaptation action to 2020. The detailed information gathered through the engagement in 2016 will continue to be an important input in scoping and delivering on these initiatives over the life of the Adaptation Plan.

Local government officers highlighted key messages that are reflected in the Adaptation Plan. These include:

- A review of the Victorian planning system is needed to integrate climate change considerations.
- State government should provide updated climate science to the community and guidance on how to apply this science to decision-making.
- Local government officers want a rejuvenated partnership with state government on adaptation and mitigation.
- Sharing experience in implementing adaptation projects through peer-learning forums is important.

Officers also spoke about the different capabilities and resources across Victoria's 79 individual councils. Many officers expressed strong support for mandating climate change action by local governments. However, they also acknowledged the difficulty in this when resources and funding are not guaranteed. The majority of officers expressed support for 'embedding' climate change adaptation across 'business-as-usual' systems to ensure it is considered without imposing significant additional

work. This embedding or mainstreaming philosophy concerning climate change is integrated into the Adaptation Plan.

The Adaptation Plan will set up a partnership between the Victorian Government and local governments to recognise the shared challenges of adaptation and mitigation. Under the Adaptation Plan, DELWP and local governments will also build a community of practice through which local government and state government officers can continue to work together on implementing climate change adaptation. The community of practice is a forum where adaptation practitioners can communicate openly on climate change adaptation and share the experiences of peers. This work will also help identify where Victorian Government support can be used to build local government capacity and positive on-ground action. This community of practice will extend beyond sustainability officers working with professionals in different areas of councils to embed adaptation in their business. It will be based on existing forums where possible.

This brochure relates policy initiatives in the Adaptation Plan to local government officer feedback provided in 2016. Table 1 lists the initiatives that directly reflect officer feedback alongside a brief explanation. Table 2 outlines other points that are not directly reflected in the new initiatives but have been recognised in other ways.

Local government officers were also interested in other areas of adaptation including emergency management, the health sector, coastal management, agriculture, water, transport and biodiversity. Part Five of the Adaptation Plan outlines adaptation initiatives in these areas which will all deliver for Councils. These have not been covered in detail in this brochure. Policy options from the Discussion Paper that did not receive significant support are also not discussed.



Figure 1: Local government workshop for the Adaptation Plan in the Port Phillip region (June 2016).

Credit: DELWP 2016

Your feedback and the Adaptation Plan

Table 1: How feedback from local government in 2016 assisted in developing *Victoria's Climate Change Adaptation Plan 2017 - 2020*.

Initiative of <i>Victoria's Climate Change Adaptation Plan 2017 – 2020</i>	Feedback from Local Government
Part Three: Leading by Example	
<p><i>Advocacy and accountability (p26)</i></p> <p>Advocating for more effective national action and financial assistance from the Federal Government.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Improving consideration of climate change in national standards for infrastructure through the National Construction Code and the Australian Building Board. 	<p>Councils supported regulatory change and stronger standards to improve the resilience of infrastructure and buildings to climate change.</p> <p>Building regulation is primarily determined at the national level, through COAG mechanisms. The Victorian Government will seek opportunities to advocate for change in these forums. Opportunities to change legislative requirements in Victoria will also be considered in the context of the national system.</p>
Part Four: Helping Victorian communities adapt to climate change	
<p>4.1 Guidance and authoritative up-to-date information</p> <p><i>Better climate projections for Victoria (p27)</i></p> <p><i>Vulnerability assessment (p27)</i></p> <p><i>Publish authoritative climate change data and information and guidance on how to use this data (p28)</i></p>	<p>Council officers indicated their difficulty recognising climate change in decisions, and in implementing associated action, without clear information and guidance from the state government. Liability across all areas was also discussed as a major concern for local government officers.</p> <p>Councils also support a role for state government in raising community awareness on climate change through clear messaging and authoritative information that is released to the community and all organisations.</p> <p>The Victorian Government will release better climate projections, authoritative data, a vulnerability assessment for Victoria and guidance on how to use this information to support councils to take a strong, informed and consistent stance on climate change.</p> <p>This updated climate information and guidance will also feed directly into policy development at state level, including a review of the planning scheme (see Part 5.6.1 of the Adaptation Plan).</p> <p>The detailed feedback received in the workshops about data, products and guidance will continue to assist the scoping of these projects.</p>
<p>4.2 A partnership with local government</p> <p><i>Partnership Agreement (p29)</i></p>	<p>All local and state government officers acknowledged the importance of working together on climate change, and the need to refresh and rebuild a constructive relationship through the Adaptation Plan.</p> <p>Participants indicated that the Memorandum of Understanding developed under the first Adaptation Plan was not</p>

	<p>effective and the majority of councils expressed a desire to replace it with a more meaningful agreement.</p> <p>A participatory process was recommended to devise a framework for the relationship guided by common principles, agreed priorities, and that recognises the diversity of local governments across Victoria and the Greenhouse Alliances that also support their work. Councils officers also recommended that it encompasses both mitigation and adaptation.</p> <p>State and local governments will develop a partnership together. The detail within the submissions to the Discussion Paper in mid-late 2016 will continue to inform this work.</p>
<p><i>Community of practice for adaptation in local government (p29)</i></p>	<p>Council officers expressed strong support for peer-learning and information sharing between state and local governments. The community of practice will allow state and local governments to work together to target priority streams of work and learning. Based on participant feedback, the community of practice will also aim to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – share, capitalise on, and scale-up existing projects and experience; – recognise, support and build relationships to encourage peer-based learning and collaboration; – target non-sustainability professionals, ideally through existing forums, to ensure climate change is recognised outside of the environmental portfolio; and – consider the use of existing online platforms as a tool to aid information exchange. <p>Participants showed strong support for approaching climate change as a cross-cutting issue, and indicated they would welcome support to more effectively embed climate change across all council operations. Council officers also expressed that embedding climate change in existing governance and work is a successful approach. Though some councils supported mandating specific actions such as adaptation plans, it was considered better for state government to work with councils to embed considerations of climate change throughout their organisation. This will allow each council to tailor their own approach and create more sustainable change in the long term. This approach was also noted as more suitable for resource-constrained councils where there is limited funding for additional work.</p> <p>Based on this feedback, state government will work with council officers through the community of practice, to encourage embedding of climate change considerations across councils. The community of practice will be built through collaboration and will continue to evolve based on shared needs.</p>
<p><i>Training and Guidance needs for local governments (p29)</i></p> <p>> <i>List of the responsibilities of state and local government under legislation</i></p>	<p>Participants strongly supported a role for state government providing training and guidance to council staff, and to councillors. It was widely recommended that training be developed and delivered with peak industry bodies, particularly to access non-sustainability professionals. Peer-to-peer training is seen as more effective in specialised areas such as planning and asset management, rather than training labelled “sustainability” or “climate change”.</p> <p>State government will work with local governments through the community of practice to identify the most useful training and guidance and how this should be delivered.</p> <p>Council officers expressed strong desire for clarity about the respective roles and responsibilities of state and local governments in climate change adaptation. This will be a central consideration in the ongoing relationship between state and local governments and will be further explored through the community of practice and relationship discussions.</p> <p>The Productivity Commission Public Enquiry into Barriers to Effective Climate Change Adaptation (2013) recommended a list of existing legislative responsibilities to help clarify roles and responsibilities for local and state governments, and council officers expressed support for this as a first step.</p>

<i>Targeted support for local government adaptation projects (p29)</i>	<p>Local government participants strongly reiterated that funding deficiencies and competing pressures affect their ability to commit resources to climate change adaptation.</p> <p>Officers expressed strong interest in developing innovative finance mechanisms to support local government adaptation, including working with state government to incentivise adaptation and unlock private finance.</p> <p>Councils raised concerns about project-based grants and the difficulty they create for long-term planning, however many also indicated that grants for projects play a critical role increasing the capacity of councils to adapt.</p> <p>Many participants expressed that funding and support should be reflective of the effort and resources required by individual councils, allowing for resource-constrained councils to access more support.</p> <p>State government will continue to explore a suite of financial and non-financial means of targeted support for local governments.</p>
<i>Collaborate with and support local government Greenhouse Alliances (p30)</i>	<p>Local officers strongly supported the Greenhouse Alliances and the role they play in supporting climate change action and cross-boundary collaboration in councils.</p> <p>The state government will work with existing Greenhouse Alliances and regionally-based state officers to look at options for positive regional collaboration for those areas not supported by a functioning Greenhouse Alliance.</p> <p>State government will continue to explore a suite of financial and non-financial means of targeted support for Greenhouse Alliances.</p>
<i>Forum on managing climate-related insurance risks (p30)</i>	<p>The Inner Melbourne Climate Action Network (IMCAN) and DELWP co-hosted a workshop with the insurance sector in August 2016. Councils, state government and the insurance sector have a mutual interest in building community resilience. State government can bring these actors together with a view to state-wide change. Participants from local and state governments and the industry expressed a strong desire to continue working together on effective adaptation. DELWP will hold a forum in late 2017 building on the IMCAN insurance sector workshop.</p>
4.3 A regional approach to adaptation planning <i>Regional gap analysis (p30)</i> <i>Support regional projects and planning (p30)</i>	<p>There was general support from local government officers for tackling climate change issues on a regional scale including through the Regional Partnerships.</p> <p>Local governments expressed support for adaptation planning that is guided by community needs. They indicated that existing work should not be duplicated, but should be integrated into region-wide planning.</p>

Part Five: Embedding adaptation in core policy areas and sectors

5.3.2 Adapting on our coasts <i>Incorporate new climate change projections into existing coastal data (p43)</i> <i>Guidance for decision-makers about coastal adaptation (p43)</i> <i>Benchmarks for sea level rise (p43)</i>	<p>Participants, particularly coastal councils, expressed strong interest in ensuring land-use planning along the coast is based on up-to-date climate science.</p> <p>In addition to science and guidance products, a Local Coastal Hazard Assessment for Port Phillip will be conducted to provide a more detailed analysis of the risks on this highly developed and populated area of coastline.</p>
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5.6.1 Factoring climate change impacts into land-use planning	
<i>Environmentally sustainable outcomes for new buildings (p48)</i>	Councils strongly supported environmentally sustainable design (ESD) and the Sustainability Design Assessment in the Planning Process (SDAPP) provisions currently incorporated into some local planning schemes. Work to review Victorian's planning and building systems to support environmentally sustainable development outcomes is currently underway at DELWP.
<i>Review land use planning policies and provisions (p48)</i> <i>Authoritative data, information and guidance for local governments (p49)</i> <i>Standards for managing climate change risks in land-use planning (p49)</i>	Local governments have identified land-use planning as a key lever to improve adaptation outcomes, and emphasised that this depends on effectively applying the best available data. Council planners expressed strong support for regulatory change to allow climate change impacts to be better considered in land-use planning. DELWP will undertake a review of the planning system and its associated processes and policies. This review will take into account the detailed feedback from local government engagement in 2016. This work will be accompanied by authoritative data, standards and guidance to support planners to make decisions that take climate change into account. Legal liability was identified as a major concern for local government, particularly in relation to planning decisions. This work will be supported by and integrated with the science and guidance products in part 4.1. This work is aligned with the initiatives of Plan Melbourne.
<i>Forum on climate change and liability for land-use planning decisions (p49)</i>	Liability was discussed as a major concern for local government officers, particularly in relation to land-use planning decisions. Through actions such as clarifying roles and responsibilities, providing guidance endorsed by the state government, supporting councils to access data, facilitating information-sharing, state government will work with local government to improve understanding of legal liability of councils in relation to climate impacts. DELWP will hold a forum on legal liability in mid-late 2017.
5.6.2 Addressing heat in the urban environment	
<i>Work with City of Melbourne to build a publicly accessible green roof in Melbourne's CBD (p50)</i> <i>Support cooler, greener cities projects (p50)</i>	Councils officers expressed strong support for targeted mechanisms to increase tree cover and pursue cooling and greening infrastructure projects. DELWP is working directly with City of Melbourne to facilitate a flagship green roof project in the CBD. The land-use planning review and Plan Melbourne also supports cooling and greening of the urban environment. Ongoing work continues between VicRoads and the Metropolitan Planning Authority to improve metropolitan street tree canopy coverage in growth areas and existing road corridors (commenced 2011).
Part 5 also embeds climate change in the health and human services sector, emergency management, the natural environment, the agricultural sector, the water cycle system, the built environment, and the transport system. All these areas are relevant to the work of local government.	

Table 2 – Other issues raised by Local Government in 2016 engagement on *Victoria's Climate Change Adaptation Plan 2017 - 2020*.

Feedback from Local Government	How your feedback was considered
Mandatory climate change adaptation action and reporting for local governments.	<p>Some council officers supported mandated action on climate change adaptation, or obligatory reporting requirements, as a means to catalyse action. There were conflicting perspectives amongst participants which included discussion about:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – resourcing inequalities between councils affecting their ability to work on adaptation; – mandatory reporting requirements not always resulting in quality work; – the complexity and inappropriateness of existing reporting frameworks for such reporting; and – a desire to avoid creating additional reporting and reporting frameworks. <p>Other means to encourage climate change adaptation work at local governments are included in Part 4 of the Adaptation Plan. Mechanisms for reporting on climate change adaptation may be further explored through a project to identify how climate change is embedded in local government governance across Victoria, as part of the adaptation community of practice.</p>
A number of councils and Greenhouse Alliances expressed support for the Western Alliance for Greenhouse Action's (WAGA) monitoring and evaluation tool <i>How Well Are We Adapting?</i> noting that it could be expanded to incorporate a broader range of indicators, or be rolled-out across more Victorian councils.	<p>The expansion of the How Well Are We Adapting tool to councils outside the WAGA region or to incorporate additional indicators is the type of project that could be explored through the adaptation community of practice (p29).</p> <p>Further work and engagement is required to identify council priorities for building capacity in monitoring and evaluation and how best state government can provide support.</p> <p>DELWP has engaged a consultant to develop a monitoring and evaluation framework for the Adaptation Plan that will draw on best practice such as the How Well Are We Adapting tool.</p>
Integrate climate change considerations into infrastructure, building and asset management. Produce standards, tools and guidance on climate-ready infrastructure, buildings and assets.	<p>Council officers expressed support for guidance, methodologies and tools from state government to improve the resilience of infrastructure. Targeted support and guidance for infrastructure, buildings and asset resilience to climate change can be pursued through the community of practice.</p>
A climate change information hub	<p>Many officers supported a hub or database for climate change adaptation information and climate science. Both local and state officers agreed that this should build on, not duplicate, any existing websites. The community of practice will explore an approach for centralised housing of information – both practical adaptation experience and endorsed climate science.</p>

Feedback received in 2016 will continue to inform future work under the Adaptation Plan.

