

Your Council and Climate Change

UNDERSTANDING THE RISKS AND LEARNING TO ADAPT

Climate change action in local government

Training for Victorian councillors,
supported by DELWP and
developed in partnership with



Key messages



Climate change risk and response must be embedded in decision making

- Climate change is a cross council issue
- It's not just an environmental issue – everyone has a role at a strategic and an operational level



There are many opportunities to address climate change through service delivery

- Mitigation – for example, through purchasing renewable energy and helping the community do the same
- Adaptation – for example, through managing flood risk through local planning schemes



Collaboration can increase the scale of action and positive impact

- Both at the community level, across councils, and with other groups, governments and authorities
- Councils are part of a huge network addressing climate change, such as the Victorian Greenhouse Alliances



You are not alone

Climate change is not just a 'sustainability' issue. The impacts of climate change are already being observed in Victoria, and the risks of these impacts is projected to increase in the future, and will impact many aspects of our lives, communities and services.

In this section we will identify examples of action councils are already taking to tackle climate change



So, throughout this training, you've heard about what causes climate change and how councils and communities are impacted by it. We've covered actions that are happening in different communities and businesses and what governments are doing. The training has also covered your roles and responsibilities and how to look at climate risk.

This final topic will look at some of the innovative ways councils are tackling climate change. We'll start with a video showing some great case studies.

[Play video]

Integrate climate change into council decision making

- Strategic and operational decisions
- Community vision
- Council Plan
- Financial plan and financial management
- Strategic risk register and governance frameworks



As an overarching governance principle, the impacts of climate change need to be integrated into everything your council does. It is a whole of council responsibility, not just a role for the environment team.

While councils can take short term measures, you need to be planning for long-term climate impacts. It's vital to shift from a silo approach and to embed climate change actions into your strategic planning processes and frameworks.

Councils that are not adequately prepared could be caught out by changed expenditure, reduced rate bases and revenue streams and high future costs.

In the last section we looked at the Integrated Strategic Planning Framework – you can see some of the documents which make up this Framework in this slide. Councils looking to embed climate change would be looking to address it across all these areas.

Embedding climate change

- Leadership
- Policy
- Assessments
- Up-to-date knowledge
- Practical application
- Resources
- Working with uncertainty
- Partnerships
- Transparency
- Community engagement
- Innovation



There are a number of structures you could put in place to help you embed climate change across your council:

Do you have clear leadership?

- This includes visible and supported climate champions who understand and promote climate change
- Executives who actively set goals, advocate, and resources initiatives on climate change and lead by example
- Climate change performance indicators in the position description and performance plan of all Executives
- **Inner West council in Sydney** sees implementation of its Climate and Renewables Strategy and related objectives and targets as core council business like any other project or commitment. The CEO's performance plan is linked to climate and renewables objectives.

Do you have the right policies in place to guide your decision making?

- Do you have clearly stated climate change objectives corporate strategies?
- Are they regularly reviewed as part of the broader strategic framework within the council

Have you carried out adequate assessments?

- Do you undertake comprehensive risk and vulnerability assessments for priority activities at early stages of the business planning cycle?

Do you have up to date knowledge of climate change and its impacts?

- Do you access and disseminate scientifically-based guidance on climate change and translate this into training for operational staff?
- Have you got flexible structures and processes in place to assist organisational learning?

Does your council have procedures to help decision-making?

- Are climate change impacts and responses incorporated in all reports for decision making?
- Is climate change consideration a decision point in projects to ensure these impact are assessed before the project proceeds?
- **The City of Moreland's audit and risk committee** has a function within its charter to monitor work by the council to mitigate and plan for climate risk (www.moreland.vic.gov.au/contentassets/4159ebde75a847769ffa18075d752066/adopted-audit-and-risk-committee-charter---may-2020.pdf)

Does your council have committed resources (staff and budget) to achieve its goals?

- **The City of Melbourne** has included climate change in their financial planning, which allows them to consider investment priorities and consider the financial impacts that they need to prepare for and manage

Is your decision-making robust in the face of uncertainty?

- Decisions are guided by the precautionary principle to delivery solutions that are robust to uncertainty about all future climate change risks.
- This principle avoids delays in taking action by using the best scientific evidence and understanding projections.

Do you work in partnership with others to deliver best outcomes?

- Do your internal and external networks promote sharing information, pooling resources and complementary climate change goals across stakeholder groups

Are you transparent in your actions and outcomes?

- Climate change actions are monitored and publicly reported against clearly defined targets

Do you engage your community in the problems and solutions?

- Promote effective communication around risks and opportunities associated with

climate change?

- **East Gippsland Shire Council** produced a booklet for their community to provide property buyers and existing home owners practical and useable information on climate risks and adaptation options.
(https://www.eastgippsland.vic.gov.au/files/assets/public/documents/plancom_directorate/our_environment/bulding_climate_resilience_booklet_2020.pdf)

Are you willing to innovate to achieve best outcomes?

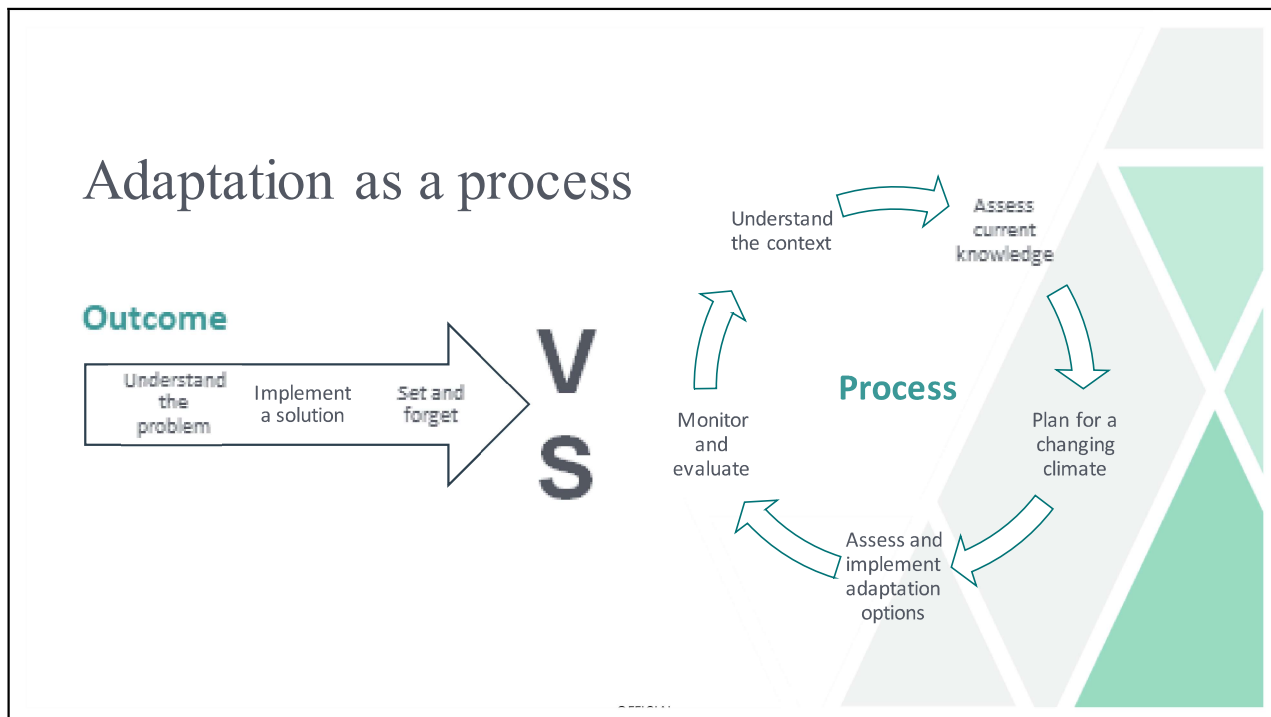
- Embed new ways of working across council service areas
- Promote innovation and demonstrate adaptation

Take a moment to reflect on what's happening at your council. Ask yourself:

- What do you currently do at your council?
- What could you do?

See also editable hand out – Embedding climate change across council.

(Adapted from Facilitating adaptation: Lessons learnt from engaging and supporting the primary health and community services sector in climate change adaptation Melbourne: Fünfgeld, H., Millin, S., Rance, A., Wallis, P., Bosomworth, K., and Lonsdale, K. (2014): RMIT University, Monash University, Victorian Centre for Climate Change Adaptation Research.)



It is important to think about adaptation as a process.

The climate has changed, and will continue to do so. We don't know the exact rate and magnitude of climate change as this will depend on the extent of our emissions. We don't know how well different interventions will work in addressing the impacts of climate change.

There are many uncertainties and complexities councils need to consider when planning for climate change. Decisions need to work for our communities under a range of possible futures, and not lock us into a particular path which might not meet the needs of future generations.

Adaptation should not be considered as an outcome, or an end-point at which we 'are adapted.'

Adaptation is an ongoing process of improvement and change. Climate change is not a one-off consideration, but needs to be embedded across council decision-making to allow for responsive decisions.

Decision-making principles for climate change adaptation

- Informed decision-making
- Integrated decision-making
- Risk Management
- Compatibility
- Equity
- Community Engagement



These six guiding principles for decision making are taken from the Victorian Climate Change Act 2017.

They provide criteria for ‘assessing the suitability of council decision-making’ and a way to demonstrate due process.

Informed decision-making: Responses should be based on the best available evidence in the context of uncertainty; and be flexible and iterative, allowing for adjustments as circumstance change and new information is made available.

Integrated decision-making: Decision-makers should give priority to responses that are most likely to provide the greatest net social, economic and environmental benefit for Victoria; and consider the cost of climate change, including externalities and long-term costs.

Risk Management: Responses should ensure that risks are addressed by those who are best-placed to manage them; avoid unintended consequences; not undermine our ability to adapt to climate change over the long-term and consider the trade-offs, and understand and recognise the costs of and limits to adaptation.

Compatibility: Responses should: build on the experiences of regions sectors, communities and industry; complement existing and planned work; and contribute to and be compatible with efforts to reduce emissions as well as adapt to climate change.

Equity: Responses should: be equitable and fair; consider both the present and the short, medium and long-term future; and adhere to principles of intra and intergenerational equity.

Community Engagement: Responses should: actively involve the community in setting policy directions and priorities; and value and response the knowledge and perspectives of Traditional Owner groups and Aboriginal Victorians

The Local Government Roles and Responsibilities Guidance brief we looked at before provides a checklist based on these principles, to assist council decision-makers discharge their duties under the *Local Government Act 2020*

Review this checklist – See hand out.

Review:

***Climate change action by local
government - case studies***

© 2019 Pearson Education, Inc. or its affiliate(s). All rights reserved.

Climate change and your council

Next steps

- Ensure you have leadership from the top and have champions in every team in council
- Review all your policies for the impact in climate change
- Collaborate with other councils and teams within your council
- Talk to your community about climate change and what your council is doing
- Make a voluntary council pledge under the Climate Change Act
- Take strong action, for your council and your community

This training has looked at the science of climate change, some of the impacts that are likely at your council, and how to manage climate risk.

It outlined how governments, businesses and the community are addressing climate change.

It set out local government roles and responsibilities around climate change and showed you all the amazing action that is happening to address climate change at councils across Victoria and beyond.

Next steps you could work on now include:

- ensuring you have leadership from the top and have champions in every team in council;
- reviewing all your policies to identify the impact in climate change;
- collaborating with other councils and teams within your council;
- talking to your community about climate change and what your council is doing;
- being ambitious; and taking strong action, for your council and your community

Climate change is not just an environmental issue. It impacts areas as diverse as planning, economic development, health, building maintenance and more.

There are opportunities to ask how to tackle climate change in every decision you make at your council. Hopefully this training has helped you understand the kind of questions you can ask to embed climate change across your council.

Key messages



Climate change risk and response must be embedded in decision making

- Climate change is a cross council issue
- It's not just an environmental issue – everyone has a role at a strategic and an operational level



There are many opportunities to address climate change through service delivery

- Mitigation – for example, through purchasing renewable energy and helping the community do the same
- Adaptation – for example, through managing flood risk through local planning schemes



Collaboration can increase the scale of action and positive impact

- Both at the community level, across councils, and with other groups, governments and authorities
- Councils are part of a huge network addressing climate change, such as the Victorian Greenhouse Alliances



You are not alone