



# Regional Climate Change Adaptation Strategy Guidance Note 3

## Developing a vision, goals and change narrative

### Purpose

Developing a vision(s) of the region’s future, adaptation goals and change narrative will help to clarify the purpose of the adaptation strategy and can provide a central criterion against which potential adaptation options can be considered. These will be a reference point for further stages of planning but may well be revised and changed throughout the planning process.

Initially, the regional adaptation planning team and stakeholders will draft the vision/s, goals and change narrative. However, as the plan is developed over time, and more stakeholders are engaged, they will be revised and refined. At the end of the planning process, the regional climate change adaptation strategy should have a:

- Regional Adaptation Vision(s) – Why do we want to adapt?
- Adaptation Strategy Goals – What is adapting?
- Regional Adaptation Change Narrative – What is the path we think we will need to take to reach our vision and goals?

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## Important Considerations

It is important that these aspects of the plan/strategy are developed within the context of understanding the issues surrounding 'uncertainties'. There are number of interacting, complex, and cascading uncertainties that make the future essentially unknowable. It is common to aspire to conserve or maintain current conditions (often the focus of 'resilience' work), however a changing climate may make this increasingly infeasible if biophysical or social thresholds are reached.

The climate will continue to change for centuries or millennia, even if we stop all emissions tomorrow<sup>1</sup>. Therefore, the vision(s), goals and change narrative must consider multiple possible, potentially very different futures from today.

Investing time in developing the vision(s) is crucial to ensuring the Strategy is informed by an understanding of adaptation challenges from multiple perspectives<sup>1</sup>. Undertaking this process collaboratively will reveal different values, understandings and perspectives about the current situation and about what needs to happen in the future to enable sustainable and just adaptation. The process should challenge participants to go beyond established views and see with fresh eyes<sup>1</sup>.

## Suggested Methods

### Stakeholder engagement

When developing these aspects of the strategy it is important to start to engage people on both personal and professional levels.

This is because climate change may threaten the things that people care most about, for example their sense of stability, continuity, security and concern for nature; which will inform their hopes and fears for the future. These fundamental yet intangible aspects of people's lives may be the essential motivation and purpose of being involved in adaptation work. However, these aspects may not be surfaced in work-based environments when people are relating to each other on a professional level.

Tapping into the personal level will make the strategy more meaningful and relevant to people, which can increase the likelihood of its success over the long term. As with enabling a learning culture, enabling people to express these values, requires engagement approaches and methods that ensure a relaxed, emotionally and culturally safe space where people can express their feelings without judgement or critique.

This step should also refer to relevant stakeholder plans and strategy documents (e.g. Regional Catchment Strategies; local government health and well-being plans; Traditional Owner Country plans; Municipal Emergency Management Plans, etc.).

Significant time and stakeholder consultation may have gone into developing these, so it is not only more efficient, it will help ensure the adaptation strategy reflects 'known' values, identifies regional stakeholders, and draws on experience and work undertaken by various sectors, disciplines and institutions.

When analysing existing plans and strategies consider what they mean for the regional climate change adaptation strategy and its development process: is there a pattern emerging from the existing visions and objectives? Are there obvious areas of contention? What groups aren't represented in these plans (e.g. youth, the elderly, etc.)?

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## Vision(s)

The vision(s) is the highest-level guiding statement about the Strategy's desired outcome – what it might achieve and/or enable over the long-term.

The vision(s) which could consist of parallels between multiple visions, will provide a key anchor point for the adaptation strategy. Discussing the Strategy's vision(s) helps to keep people open to a wide range of possible futures and stops people getting fixated on the current situation, and on the negative (something that is easy to do in a climate change context).

Vision(s) should be a statement of hopes for the long term that answer the question 'Why do we want to adapt?', which should not be reliant upon any particular climate, but rather a changing climate. It should be a values-rich story that can be modified over time as situations change and people reprioritise their values .

The process should enable individuals to gain a sense of opportunity (and hope), as they imagine themselves playing an active role in the envisioned future<sup>2</sup>. It is worth encouraging people to work with a vision that does not have to be perfectly worded; it can be a collection of words, a diagram, a single word, or a statement, or used to create a narrative of change. Remembering again, that it will evolve and change throughout the planning process (and may well change in the next Strategy).

There are a range of facilitation techniques that will help to get people thinking about what it is that they value about the region and about their vision for the future of the region. Suggestions include: Photovoice; The Clairvoyant; or the Iceberg Diagram process.



## Photovoice

Bring or ask participants to bring a photo of something they love from the region. If brought in by the organiser, ask participants to each choose one.

Standing in a group, ask people to talk about why they chose that photo. What is it that matters to them? This tries to get at 'heart' rather than 'head' values – the things that really drive our responses to issues. Getting to heart values helps develop visions with which people feel connected.

## The Clairvoyant

Facilitators use the following questions to lead and encourage participant discussion:

- Imagine I am a clairvoyant and I can see everything in 2050: What questions do you feel inclined to ask me? Why is that an important question for you?
- Now imagine a utopian future: How would you answer those questions? What's happening? Who is doing what? How did it come about?
- Now imagine a dystopian future: How would you answer those three questions? What's happening or not happening?

## The Iceberg diagram process

See the Wayfinder [https://wayfinder.earth/wp-content/uploads/2018/08/activity-sheet\\_work-card-9-1.pdf](https://wayfinder.earth/wp-content/uploads/2018/08/activity-sheet_work-card-9-1.pdf)

## Goals

Goals should be broad aims and aspirations that answer the question of 'what': what is adapting, what will be adapted, what resilience will be supported or enhanced, and what will be supported to transition or even, transform?

They should focus on the process and give less emphasis to a predetermined outcome (although some of the adaptation actions may well focus on specific adaptation outcomes). That is, they should facilitate an active process of 'adapting' organisations, geographic areas, or sectors<sup>3</sup>. Goals do not have to be measurable.

For example, the City of Melbourne's Adaptation Strategy Goals are to:

- Enhance the natural environment and green spaces of our municipality.
- Shape our build form and urban renewal areas to withstand future climate change impacts.
- Strengthen the resilience of our inclusive family friendly and culturally diverse community.
- Protect and enhance our diverse economy.
- Continue to build the City of Melbourne's adaptation capabilities and expertise.

## Regional adaptation change narrative

Develop a coherent story of change that responds to regional needs and the purpose of adaptation work.

The development of future narratives or scenarios will focus on plausible futures and help in the process of identifying adaptation actions. However, at this stage, begin to build a narrative for the adaptation strategy by asking the question 'What is the story about adaptation and change that we want to have in the region?'

The process of developing a narrative of change can help groups to reveal assumptions, purposefully frame the strategy and link the intent of the work to broader issues. Narratives are usually values based stories, framed in ways which may tap into community sentiment, refer to its strengths and vitality, sense of pride, economic stability and diversity. Having a coherent and consistent narrative will help communicate the meaning of the strategy with both internal and external stakeholders.

A facilitation tool to help with creating a narrative is the Wayfinder Building Blocks to the Change Narrative [https://wayfinder.earth/wp-content/uploads/2018/08/activity-sheet\\_work-card-17-1.pdf](https://wayfinder.earth/wp-content/uploads/2018/08/activity-sheet_work-card-17-1.pdf)



## Reflection/learning process

After completing this process, the following reflection questions should be asked of participants:

- In what ways has this work addressed the minimum standards?
- What has been learned during this work about the planning process, the people, or region?
- Do insights from this work change what we know (or thought we knew) about the region or adaptation dilemmas?
- How have you documented what has been learned? For example, did the process identify stakeholders that have not yet been involved in the planning? Do these people need to be engaged or invited into the process? How might they be approached and engaged?
- What implications does any new knowledge developed during this work have for the previous work – including the strategy's vision, objectives, goals and description of the region or sub-region?
- Who has participated? Who was missing?
- What options did different stakeholders have for participation and did the targeted stakeholders think these methods were appropriate, considerate, safe, etc? (e.g. timing, language, resources, culture, ability, power asymmetries, organisational priorities)?
- Were stakeholders fully engaged in the process? If not, why not and what can be done?
- Were there any voices that dominated or voices that were not adequately heard? What can be done to (re)address this?
- What worked well and did not work well?
- Were there unexpected outcomes?

1. Kahane, A. (2012) Transformative scenario planning: Working together to change the future. Berrett-Koehler Publishers.
2. Meadows (1999). Leverage Points: Place to intervene in a system. Hartland VT., The Sustainability Institute.
3. Roorda, *et al.* (2014). Transition management in the urban context. Guidance manual. Drift, Erasmus University Rotterdam, Rotterdam.
4. Fünfgeld, H. (2012). Local climate change adaptation planning a guide for government policy and decision makers in Victoria. Melbourne: Victorian Centre for Climate Adaptation Research (VCCAR)

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