

May 2, 2019

As per addressee

The South East Councils Climate Change Alliance (SECCCA) is one of seven Victorian Greenhouse Alliances, formal partnerships of local governments driving climate change action across 70 of Victoria's 79 municipalities. Greenhouse Alliances work across our networks, communities and partners to deliver regional mitigation and adaptation programs. This includes the implementation of joint initiatives that provide economies of scale and enable projects typically beyond the reach of individual councils. Our project work is complemented by targeted advocacy, capacity building activities and regional partnerships.

SECCCA's 9 member councils are the Baw Baw Shire Council, Bass Coast Shire Council, Cardinia Shire Council, City of Casey, City of Greater Dandenong, Mornington Peninsula Shire Council, Bayside City Council, City of Kingston and City of Port Phillip. These councils span the metropolitan, peri urban and rural divide and they have some of the fastest growing residential developments on the fringe of the metropolitan Melbourne. Some SECCCA councils have high levels of manufacturing activity, others feature extensive agricultural areas bounded by the forests of the Great Dividing Range or across the South Gippsland hills. Together, these councils serve over one million residents.

This correspondence tables three fundamental issues of concern to SECCCA and seeks feedback from political parties about these issues. The following comments and recommendations are informed by views of SECCCA members but do not necessarily represent the views of any member council.

Impact of Climate Change on local government and the community

Climate change presents a multitude of challenges including significant financial, infrastructure and reputational risks to local government, and socio-economic wellbeing of their communities. Climate change is much more than an environmental issue, it poses risks for every part of council business.

Climate change is already impacting local governments and their communities across the country in a myriad of ways. Local government must reduce the greenhouse gas footprint of its own business as well as ensure its assets and operations are resilient to climate change impacts.

Local governments also support the community to address climate change. They play a key role in leading and helping communities to reduce emissions and strengthen climate resilience.

Local governments are also becoming increasingly aware of the obligations they have as key decisions makers to ensure they address climate change.

Australia's emissions reduction target

For all levels of government and sectors in the Australian economy to be able to address the challenges, Australia needs to have an overarching appropriate greenhouse gas emissions reduction target. This should be science-based and in accordance with our commitments pursuant to the United Nations Conference of the Parties 21 (COP21) - the Paris Agreement. It should therefore be set to limit global temperature increase to well below 1.5 degrees above pre-industrial levels.

Accordingly, a 65% emissions reduction target by 2030, as recommended by the Climate Change Authority, and zero net emissions, well before 2050, is needed.

Financial assistance for local government

Local government requires support to ensure it has the capacity to understand and address the wide-ranging impacts of climate change on their business and communities at a local level. It has been estimated¹ that a \$10 billion fund is required to support local government to address climate change, both in terms of improving the resilience of local communities and reducing emissions.

This federal assistance could help to deliver:

- Infrastructure upgrades to improve resilience to extreme weather events and hotter and drier conditions (e.g. critical community building assets, drainage improvements, streetscape upgrades and greening initiatives)
- Capacity building in planning systems to ensure communities are safe
- Community and social resilience programs to ensure communities are informed, empowered and have capacity to respond to climate change.
- Local initiatives to decarbonise all sectors of the economy, whether energy, transport, agriculture etc.
- Support for local and regional governance to improve service delivery and decision-making processes. This could include establishment of regional networks to promote collaboration and best practice (e.g. Victorian greenhouse alliances), and or internal resources to embed climate change across council service areas
- Improved service delivery capacity in the face of extreme weather events as well as longer term chronic issues associated with climate change.

The role of local government in addressing climate change is hard to overstate. A partnership with local government could help to accelerate and achieve the climate change commitments of the Federal Government. The Paris Agreement acknowledged the importance of sub-national governments, including local governments, in addressing and responding to climate change.

¹ 2019 ALGA National General Assembly Motion: Climate Emergency

Many local governments have responded to the climate change challenge by adopting proactive strategies to reduce emissions and to adapt to unavoidable climate change impacts through climate change risk assessments and adaptation plans. Having identified potential solutions to the range of challenges, many councils need additional help to implement local projects and innovative solutions.

As we are in the midst of an election, we would appreciate your advice on what support your party is promising to provide local government with to enable it to deliver on these criteria?

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you require further information or would like to discuss any of these issues. We look forward to your response.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Dominique La Fontaine".

Dominique La Fontaine
Executive Officer
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