

CLIMATE CHANGE

1. Purpose

This paper outlines activity on the issue of climate change since discussion at the Minister's State/Local Government Forum on 22 March 2007. It also proposes a number of joint State-Local Government actions for the Forum's consideration and endorsement.

2. Discussion

At the meeting of the Minister's State/Local Government Forum held on 22 March 2007, members agreed that the issue of climate change should be referred to the Forum for discussion, and the development of collaborative strategies that assist State and Local Government to respond to climate change challenges.

The Forum noted the significant work that had already been undertaken by State and Local Government to address climate change. In May 2007, the Premier released *Tackling Climate Change: South Australia's Greenhouse Strategy 2007-2020*. The *Climate Change and Greenhouse Emissions Reduction Act 2007* was passed by Parliament on 3 July 2007.

Tackling Climate Change outlines the challenges to South Australia relating to climate change, and sets out 27 objectives focused on reducing emissions, adapting to climate change and innovating solutions. Priority and supporting actions are identified in *Tackling Climate Change* to achieve these objectives.

While *Tackling Climate Change* acknowledges the need to broadly engage the whole of South Australia in order to meet the identified challenges, it also sets out a number of priority actions that will rely on joint State/Local Government activity, and are therefore of particular interest to the Minister's State/Local Government Forum. These include actions to:

- Establish sectoral agreements with Local Government that put in place measures to achieve agreed goals and targets to reduce emissions and adapt to climate change,
- Work with all levels of government and industry to assess the State's regional and sectoral vulnerabilities, and;
- Develop and implement a statewide climate change awareness raising and behaviour change program that incorporates the establishment of partnerships with community groups and Local Government to deliver these programs.

The *2007-08 Schedule of Priorities* appended to the *State/Local Government Relations Agreement* lists climate change as a priority issue for State and Local Government to progress in the next twelve months. The LGA Policy Manual has been revised to include an overarching policy position on climate change, stating Local Government support for the development and implementation of climate change mitigation and adaptation strategies (Attachment A).

Following the release of *Tackling Climate Change* and the *Climate Change and Greenhouse Emissions Reduction Act 2007*, officers from the Department of the Premier and Cabinet (DPC), the Local Government Association (LGA) and the Office for State/Local Government Relations (OSLGR) convened an informal workshop of key representatives from State and Local Government to share information on the way in which climate change was featuring on each sector's agenda. The discussion at the workshop held on 17 August 2007 suggested that while some councils have been dealing with a range of climate change risks and opportunities, others are less advanced in their risk assessment and response.

The workshop endorsed an on-line needs analysis survey of Local Government (currently underway) and also noted that DPC and the LGA would explore the potential for a climate change sector agreement for Local Government.

A meeting in October 2007 involving the state/territory Local Government Associations and the Australian Greenhouse Office (AGO) was advised that the AGO would like to see a greater emphasis on risk management planning by Local Government. The subsequent announcement by the Australian Government of an AGO funding opportunity to individual Councils confirmed this. Further to this announcement the state/territory associations agreed that a more efficient and coordinated delivery mechanism could be achieved with the associations working in collaboration with the respective Mutual Liability Schemes (MLS). A proposal, with input from all state/territory associations, coordinated by ALGA is currently being developed to be presented to the AGO.

The LGA has been working closely with Local Government Risk Services (LGRS) - the risk management arm of its MLS - on the climate change agenda and has submitted the joint proposal to ALGA for inclusion in a national proposal for discussion with the AGO.

The LGA with the support of its MLS has now completed the questionnaire survey of South Australian Local Government. The survey was designed to gain a clear understanding of the current status of the sector with respect to its awareness and preparedness for climate change. In addition to providing important information to enable better targeted support for SA councils, the information collected will feed into a national picture of Local Government climate change awareness and preparedness that will assist ALGA in shaping a national Local Government response to climate change. Results of the questionnaire will provide a valuable input to a climate change summit to be conducted by the LGA in 2008.

Earlier this year, the LGA wrote to the Premier, in his role as Minister for Sustainability and Climate Change, seeking an alliance to confront the climate change challenge and inviting the Premier to give the opening address at a climate change summit. A positive response was received, subject to the Premier's availability. It is anticipated that this summit will provide an opportunity to further raise councils' overall awareness of climate change, the impact that climate change will have on councils' operations and how State and Local Government can work more effectively together.

Discussions between the LGA, DPC and OSLGR on the development of a sector agreement between State and Local Government under the *Climate Change and Greenhouse Emissions Reduction Act 2007* have taken place. There is potential for a voluntary agreement to be negotiated between State and Local Government to

provide a statement of leadership at a high level complemented by specific agreements with individual councils or regions, tailored to meet local needs. The sorts of issues that could be addressed are use of land use planning to achieve better residential energy efficiency and rollout of renewables; design of infrastructure to protect communities from more severe weather events; more efficient street lighting; and generation of research to inform these decisions and to develop risk management frameworks.

Discussions in this area have been preliminary, pending results from the LGA needs analysis survey. It is suggested that the LGA, DPC and OSLGR continue work on this, and report developments to the next meeting of the Forum.

Recommendations

That the Minister's State/Local Government Forum:

- 1. Note the work undertaken by the LGA in conjunction with the Department of Premier and Cabinet to gather information on councils' awareness of and readiness for climate change, and receive a verbal update on the results of this survey; and,**
- 2. Request that progress in developing a sector agreement on climate change between State and Local Government be presented to the next meeting of the Forum.**
- 3. Note that the LGA is convening a climate change summit in order to assist Local Government to clarify its roles and responsibilities in addressing climate change issues in local communities.**

LGA POLICY MANUAL 2007

7.7 CLIMATE CHANGE AND FOSSIL FUEL VULNERABILITY

- 7.7.1 Local Government supports an integrated approach to the development and implementation of climate change mitigation and adaptation strategies, including shared responsibility and collaboration across all levels of government, industry and the community.
- 7.7.2 Local Government supports long term and strategic consideration of climate change issues across the range of Local Government functions and services.
- 7.7.3 Local Government will provide leadership to the community in understanding and acting upon climate change, and where appropriate will contribute to the investigation, development, application and/or use of alternative renewable energy technologies to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.
- 7.7.4 Local Government will incorporate a risk management and community viability approach to Council planning that accounts for the vulnerability of Councils and communities to diminishing global, liquid fossil fuel energy supplies.
- 7.7.5 Local Government will seek carbon offset accreditation of its greening/ planting/ revegetation programs by the Australian Greenhouse Office and other relevant authorities, as part of Local Government's contribution to reducing carbon emissions, and recognising its role as a significant open space and land manager where these programs occur.
- 7.7.6 State and Federal Governments should invest more in public transport and other infrastructure to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Local Government will work to promote the development of good access to public transport and the subsequent reduction of private car usage.