

## BREAKOUT SESSION PAPER RESPONDING TO CLIMATE CHANGE

Climate change is altering rainfall patterns, reducing water availability in Australia and increasing the frequency of severe weather events such as bushfires and storms. It is one of the greatest economic, social, and environmental challenges of our time. The impacts of climate change will make some sectors and regions more vulnerable than others through their susceptibility to, and ability to cope with, the adverse effects of climate change.

By understanding the potential impacts and identifying ways to adapt to climate change, local government can reduce the economic and social cost to communities, seize emerging opportunities and build more sustainable and resilient communities. Many of the impacts of climate change can be reduced, delayed or avoided by reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

Discussions at the inaugural meeting of the Australian Council of Local Government identified the challenges local governments face in managing and planning for climate change. Policies that promote and support community resilience, and appropriate adaptation strategies, are key to addressing the rapidly changing environmental conditions and the increased frequency and intensity of extreme events expected in the future.

The fires, floods and heatwaves experienced this year have highlighted difficulties faced by councils in preparing for, managing and responding to the impact of extreme events, and the need for leadership in times of natural disaster to ensure the safety and health of our communities. Information and resource constraints may restrict councils' ability to effectively plan for, prepare and respond to, the challenges of climate change.

### **WE MUST WORK TOGETHER TO RESPOND AND ADAPT TO CLIMATE CHANGE TO BUILD SUSTAINABLE AND RESILIENT COMMUNITIES**

The Australian Government has invested over \$15 billion in climate change initiatives, including programs to build community resilience and adaptive capacity within our economy and natural environment and the Carbon Pollution Reduction Scheme (CPRS). The Climate Change Strategy provides the long-term framework and confidence required to create new jobs and businesses in a low pollution future. Australian governments, industry, businesses and communities need to work together to do our part in global efforts to address climate change through our ambitious emissions reduction targets and to support climate change science and adaptation initiatives.

The Government is developing a comprehensive adaptation policy to help Australia manage the serious social, economic and environmental risks from unavoidable climate change impacts, and will invest in research to support communities, industry and governments adaptation planning. The Local Adaptation Pathways Program (LAPP) is an initiative that directly assists local governments and their communities to undertake climate change risk assessment and strategic adaptation planning. The LAPP has already funded over 60 local governments to identify risks and outline adaptation strategies for the likely local impacts of climate change, and it is anticipated that a further 30 local governments will be supported under Round Two of the program.



To assist local government in meeting the key challenges of climate change, the Australian Government is working toward rural and urban water security through a \$1.5 billion investment in new urban water programs. The Government is also assisting local government to reduce carbon emissions through renewable energy development through the \$1.365 billion Solar Flagships Program and a \$4 billion suite of energy efficiency measures to improve building design for reduced energy consumption in communities.

**WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU:**

- What strategies and actions have you taken, alone or in partnership, to adapt and respond to the impacts of climate change and natural disasters?
- What do you see as the future role for local government in managing the impacts of climate change and natural disaster in a local and national context?



**An Australian Government Initiative**

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