

# State of play: Local governments and city networks accelerating climate action in Australia

Status Report

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Ironbark Sustainability's mission is to achieve real action on climate for councils and their communities. Ironbark has been operating since 2005 and brings together a wealth of technical, strategic and financial analysis, project management and implementation experience in the areas of energy, climate, buildings, public lighting and data management. We pride ourselves on supporting our clients to achieve real action on climate and sustainability.

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The Connected Cities Lab is an experimental hub tackling the complexity underpinning urban governance with a focus on information and connectivity. Located within the University of Melbourne's Faculty of Architecture, Building and Planning (ABP), and the Melbourne School of Design (MSD), the Lab aims at research that is inherently impact-driven, interdisciplinary and collaborative to address pressing city leadership challenges in and between cities.

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# Executive Summary

Cities are Australia's secret weapon to achieving net zero well before 2050.

As we move into the critical decade for climate action, the ambition of local governments across Australia towards significant emissions reduction in their communities, make them the perfect partner, to deliver a national net zero target well before 2050 too.

It is not difficult to find projects or ambition to highlight the leadership of Australian councils on climate.

Projects the width and breadth of Australia – from larger metropolitan councils to small regional towns have demonstrated global leadership throughout local council operations and the broader community.

For example:

- Sunshine Coast Solar Farm: Sunshine Coast City Council, Queensland.
- Victorian Energy Collaboration (VECO): Darebin City Council, Victoria and 45 other councils.
- Cutting Waste Emissions: City of Hobart, Tasmania.
- The WA Renewables Powerhouse: City of Cockburn, WA.
- Leading the Electric Vehicle Charge: Moreland City Council, Victoria.
- Summerhill Waste Management Centre Solar Farm: City of Newcastle, NSW.
- Carbon Neutral Adelaide: City of Adelaide, SA.

These projects are detailed in this report prepared for the Global Covenant of Mayors for Climate and Energy (GCoM) and ICLEI Local Governments for Sustainability, Oceania, alongside new research that finds:

- If all of the targets set by Australian local governments were met an incredible **88,200 kt CO<sub>2</sub>e emissions would be reduced**.
- **This is equivalent to taking 20,511,627 petrol cars off the road per year**
- These commitments would bring Australia **96% of the way to meet its current target of 28% reduction by 2030<sup>1</sup>**
- 75% of Australian councils responding to the 2021 Local Government Climate Survey have set or are planning ambitious corporate climate action targets<sup>2</sup>
- 67% of Australian councils responding to the 2021 Local Government Climate Survey have set or are in the process of developing community emissions reductions targets, with an understanding that anything other than a net zero target is not acceptable from a climate risk or ambition perspective.<sup>3</sup>
- Globally 10,710 Global Covenant of Mayors for Climate and Energy cities, have set strong targets on emissions reductions which if realised would reduce **24 Billion Tonnes of GHG by 2030.<sup>3</sup>**

**This huge emissions reduction potential would be secured and delivered faster if there was a national program to help local governments deliver their ambition.**

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<sup>1</sup> These "accumulated targets" were calculated by looking at council emissions reduction targets from a variety of sources including the Ironbark, BZE and ICLEI local government survey from 2021, the Snapshot Climate tool, ClimateWorks, 100% Renewables, Climate Emergency Australia, CPP and Ironbark in-house data.

<sup>2</sup> Calculated using data from the Ironbark, BZE and ICLEI local government survey from 2021

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.globalcovenantofmayors.org/impact2019/>

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# 1. Cities and Climate Change

Central to the adoption of the Paris Agreement in 2015 are items of critical importance to local governments. The Paris Agreement explicitly recognizes and engages local and subnational governments, which is a significant success for cities and regions around the world. Cities can now set localised targets to align with the ambitious target of the Paris Agreement to limit the increase in global average temperature to 1.5 degrees. As a key non state contributor to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, our cities are increasingly relevant in global climate frameworks.

Urban populations are on the rise. Currently home to more than half of humanity, cities are projected to host more than 5 billion people by 2030. Urban dwellers produce 80 percent of global economic output and, relatedly, account for 75 percent of human-induced carbon emissions<sup>4</sup>.



**Figure 1. Nations can galvanize ambitious city climate commitments.**  
(<https://www.globalcovenantofmayors.org/impact2019/>)

The world's urban population will increase from 50 per cent to two thirds of the global population by 2050<sup>5</sup>, which will have a massive impact on infrastructure regardless of the impacts of climate change, nature loss and the current social and economic impacts from COVID-19. Rapid urbanisation has implications for resource distribution and access to essential services, as more livelihoods will rely on their ongoing supply.

Climate change exacerbates these issues and will cause disaster and displacement for billions. By 2050, 5 billion people living in cities will be exposed to food insecurity, extreme heat and/or sea-level rise<sup>6</sup>

Local governments provide basic services. With a direct responsibility for community wellbeing, local governments are often under pressure to deliver essential services – from water and sanitation to affordable housing – while urban populations rise.

However, there's an increasing awareness of the importance of cities as a potential solution, not just a problem. Given the current and future impacts cities will face, it is disingenuous *not* to have local government central to the climate challenge and the solutions.

<sup>4</sup> [https://unhabitat.org/sites/default/files/documents/2019-05/sdg\\_booklet\\_to\\_printer4.pdf](https://unhabitat.org/sites/default/files/documents/2019-05/sdg_booklet_to_printer4.pdf)

<sup>5</sup> <https://population.un.org/wup/Publications/Files/WUP2018-PressRelease.pdf>

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.ipcc.ch/sr15/chapter/chapter-3/>

It is local governments who have an obvious jurisdictional role to play in managing the urban agenda.

Local governments are well-networked organisations with more political flexibility than national governments, and thanks to their local proximity, they can directly engage with, and respond to, local community needs.

We know that national governments won't meet their Paris Agreement targets without climate action within cities. In some cases, cities have supported national efforts. In others, cities have led the way, exceeding national government targets.

There also remains an opportunity for cities to adopt new approaches, technologies, infrastructure, and other built forms that have low or net-zero emissions, are energy efficient, renewable and incorporate green infrastructure or nature-based solutions for the health and wellbeing of citizens and biodiversity alike.

In doing so, cities contribute to national targets for emissions reductions, global commitments to the Paris Agreement. In many jurisdictions, there is the opportunity not just to contribute but to lead.



**Figure 2 . Cities can lead the way on climate action.**  
(<https://www.globalcovenantofmayors.org/impact2019/>)

### **Top 5 Emissions Busting Projects for Australian Councils<sup>7</sup>**

- Facilitating the planning and construction of electric vehicle charging infrastructure by working with developers, owners of charging infrastructure and distribution businesses to remove the barrier of network availability.
- Deliver and facilitate Power Purchase Agreements (PPAs) across council and broader municipality, borrowing from models already successfully completed in most Australian states.
- Work with state government to ensure strict sustainability criteria is factored into planning processes accelerated by working regionally and through alliances or local government associations
- Work with waste management stakeholders to ensure organic waste diversion at municipal level
- Facilitate mode shift from private vehicles to alternative transport modes through installation of bike paths or public transit, incorporating education campaigns targeting key barriers to up take

<sup>7</sup> The list of "top 5 emission busting projects for councils" is based on data from the Ironbark, BZE and ICLEI local government survey from 2021 and the "Cities Activity Database" developed by Ironbark and the Connected Cities Lab containing over 13,000 council climate actions from around the world. As local governments are becoming more sophisticated with their climate action planning there's a recognition that there are no "one size fits all" projects. It depends on the council type (metropolitan, regional, rural), state or territory (which then impacts on how de-carbonised the electricity grid is) and a plethora of other important factors. This list here should be used as a guide only, recognising that every council is unique.

## 2. Cities in Australia

### 2.1 Australian Local Government

There are 537 local governments in Australia, with many of the same challenges and opportunities faced throughout the world. Australia is one of the most urbanised countries in the world with 89% of the population living in a handful of urban areas.

Cities drive economic growth, and urban areas in Australia are responsible for producing around 80 percent of national GDP. And like much of the developed world, the economic structure of Australia's cities is changing due to the shift from manufacturing to service and knowledge industries. In the two years before the Covid pandemic, the two major cities of Melbourne and Sydney contribute to nearly 70% of Australia's GDP growth<sup>8</sup>.

Unlike many cities globally, constitutional responsibility for local government lies with state and territory governments. Consequently, the roles and responsibilities of local government differ from state to state, and with the role of local governments not enshrined in the Australian constitution the direct links between national urban policy and cities themselves aren't always direct. Australian local governments have less control over revenue and taxation, and the role of the Mayor, with some exceptions, is somewhat less influential than that of cities in international jurisdictions.

#### **When is a City not a City?**

While the term "city" is used internationally to mean a "local government", in Australia it is a little more nuanced. It is common to use the term "council" to refer to one of the 537 local government areas in Australia. A "council" can mean a city, shire, district council, rural city, rural town, town, Aboriginal shire, Aboriginal council, rural city or regional city. There is even one Borough (Queenscliffe in Victoria). All up, they represent the 537 local governments in Australia, and for the purpose of this report, Australian "councils" or "local governments" can be interchanged with Australian "cities" for simplicity.



**Figure 3. City of Melbourne** (photo by Cathy Oke).

<sup>8</sup> *State of Australian Cities Report 2014-2015*

## 3. Action on Climate in Australia

### 3.1 Australian Local Government Climate Action

For decades, Australian local governments have been at the forefront of climate action, even in the face of challenging federal and state policy environments. Councils have implemented energy efficiency and renewable energy projects on their assets and with their communities that have resulted in millions of tonnes of greenhouse gas abatement and have worked with and mobilised communities to join the challenge at the grass roots level. Fast forward to 2015 and the successful Paris Agreement represents a historic turning point in the international fight against climate change.

As a signatory to the Paris Agreement, Australia has committed to implementing an economy-wide target to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. The strength of this target can and should be debated, but it is a national target and Australia has signed the Paris Agreement. This means Australian councils now have a critically important role to play – and indeed a more powerful advocacy position than ever – in ensuring that national targets are met and giving the world the best chance of meeting the overarching 1.5-degree target.

While the Federal Government’s target of a 26-28% emissions reduction by 2030 is still considered insufficient by all major scientific organisations, business groups and state governments, the last few decades local government action on climate change has flourished regardless.

Local governments have long been energy and climate trailblazers, surging ahead with emissions reduction plans, switching to cleaner energy and building greener, efficient and more resilient communities. Local government can shape how land is used, investments are made, and renewable energy infrastructure is rolled out. They can influence how new homes and businesses are built, determine the ways in which hundreds of thousands of residents will travel each day and band together to lobby for much needed state and federal policy change.



**Figure 4. Solar panels in the City of Moreland** (photo by Alexi Lynch).

Flagship projects like the [Melbourne Renewable Energy Program \(MREP\)](#), the [Sunshine Coast Solar Farm](#) and the [Western Sydney Energy Program](#) have all been developed and implemented by or with local government and are the tip of the iceberg.

There are a few thousand other projects. Solar, biogas, community renewables, active transport, electric vehicle charging stations, solar power purchasing agreements, energy efficiency everywhere, organic waste diversion, heating and cooling upgrades, environmental education, environmental upgrade agreements, community solar bulk buys, sustainability criteria into planning processes, the list goes on and on. Figures 5 & 6 on the following page shows the range of corporate and community wide actions and projects Australian councils have taken on, as reported to the 2018 Local Government Climate Review.

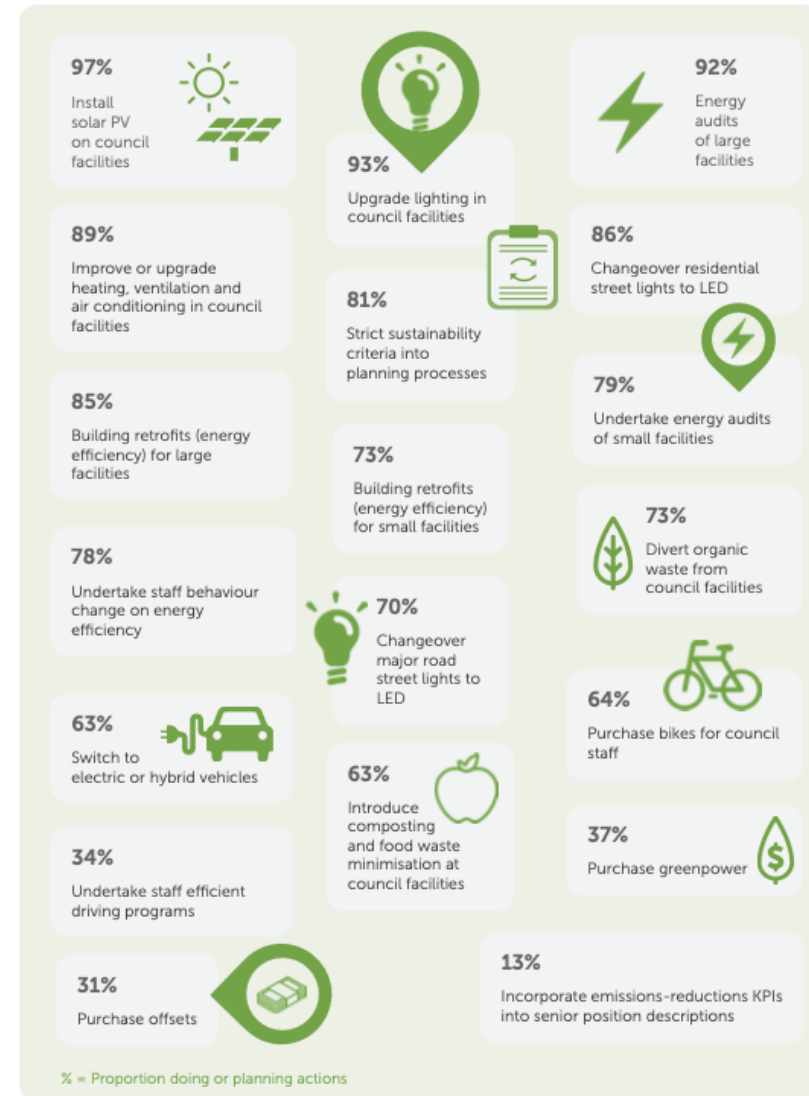


## Community Climate Action Projects



**Figure 5. Proportion of Australian councils already undertaking or planning community climate action projects** (from Australian Local Government Climate Review, Ironbark Sustainability, BZE and ICLEI Oceania, 2018).

## Corporate Climate Action Projects



**Figure 6. Proportion of Australian councils already undertaking or planning "corporate" climate action projects, i.e., within their own operations** (from Australian Local Government Climate Review, Ironbark Sustainability, BZE and ICLEI Oceania, 2018).

## 4. Raising Climate Ambition

Comprehensive climate action, to reduce Australia’s fair share of emissions in line with the Paris Agreement, cannot be achieved without support from – and indeed, collaboration with – state and national governments.

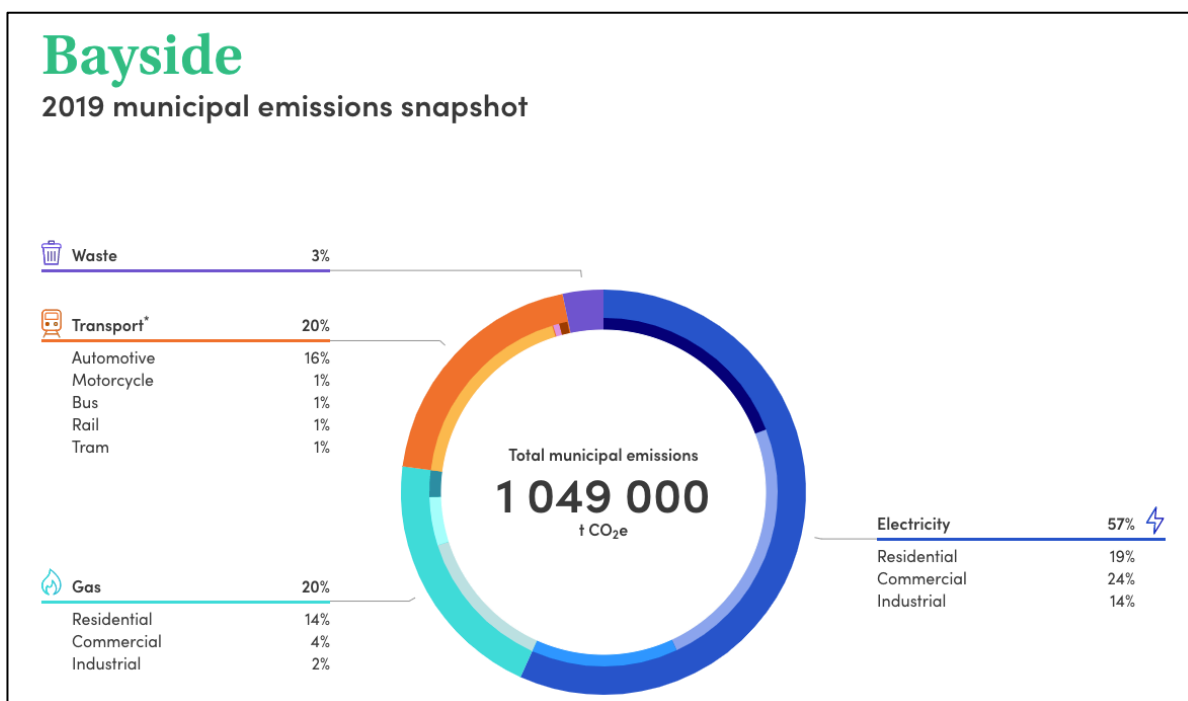
Internationally 10,710 cities are part of the Global Covenant of Mayors for Climate and Energy (GCoM), many partnering with national governments to achieve Paris targets well before 2050. If fully realised these city and local government actions globally could account for **24 billion tonnes CO2e of emissions reduction by 2030.**

One hundred Australian councils have declared a climate emergency, globally this is over 1800 councils. 145 are members of Cities Power Partnership and 31 signatories of GCoM. With 67% of respondents to the latest Local Government Climate Review (2021), having set or are in the process of developing community emissions reductions targets, understanding that anything other than a net zero target is not acceptable from a climate risk or ambition perspective is only but raising climate ambition for local government<sup>10</sup>.

If all local governments in Australia were to meet their current emissions reduction targets, an incredible 88,200 thousand tonnes CO2e emissions reductions could be realised.

Additionally, through increased reporting to verifiable, credible data platforms such as GCoM, and through tools such as Snapshot councils are making informed decisions on future climate actions in line with science based targets.

Snapshot allows councils and community groups around Australia the ability to understand and analyse their emissions profiles. Combined with city climate programs via ICLEI Oceania, GCoM, Climate Emergency Network Australia and Cities Power Partnership, cities are building capacity to plan broader but more precise actions to mitigation and adapt to climate change.



**Figure 9. City of Bayside Victoria Snapshot – 2019 Municipal Emissions Snapshot.** Every Australian council can see their own community emissions profile, through Snapshot’s pooling of resources, and data.

## 4.1 Where Are We now?

The 2021 Australian Local Government Review survey, developed by Ironbark Sustainability, Beyond Zero Emissions and ICLEI Oceania, demonstrates how the level of ambition at the local level dwarfs that of other levels of government<sup>9</sup>. Presented here is some preliminary data from participating councils from the recently closed survey.

Nearly 90% of Australian councils reported have a corporate emissions inventory, with most updating it annually to track and target action.

Nearly 75% of respondents have or are developing a corporate greenhouse gas emissions reduction target and 67% have or are developing a community-wide greenhouse gas emissions target. This jump to two-in-three councils having developed or developing a community wide target is a massive jump from the survey completed in 2018 where only 37% of respondents had (or were planning) a community target.

The scale of ambition from Australian councils can't be understated. Nearly every target set in the last few years by cities, has been a net zero target by 2030, 2040 or 2050, see figure 8 for examples.

Australian councils understand they do not have complete control to reach these targets. It will take investment, ambition, cooperation and policy from other levels of Government.

Every Australian State and Territory now has a net zero target by 2050 or earlier. The state governments of Tasmania and South Australia have targets of 200% and 500% renewable energy generation by 2030 and 2050 respectively.



**Figure 10. A selection of recently set council community targets. All net zero**

<sup>9</sup> Recent data from the Australian Local Government Climate Survey 2021. This survey closed in April 2021 and the development of the updated Local Government Review is underway.

## 4.2 Real Action on Climate

It is not difficult to find projects or ambition to highlight the leadership of Australian councils on climate. The challenge is what to leave out. Projects the width and bread of Australia – from larger metropolitan councils to small regional towns have been demonstrated time again throughout council operations and the broader community.



**Sunshine Coast Solar Farm:** Sunshine Coast City Council, Queensland. Completed in 2017, the Sunshine Coast Solar Farm has to date saved Council \$1.85 million and 75,000 tonnes CO<sub>2</sub> since generation began. Other councils are following in Sunshine Coast's footsteps and Council is looking at connecting batteries in the future as costs decline.

**Image source:**

<https://www.sunshinecoast.qld.gov.au/Environment/Sunshine-Coast-Solar-Farm/Solar-Farm-Overview>.

**Victorian Energy Collaboration (VECO):** Darebin City Council, Victoria and 45 other councils. An astonishing 46 of Victoria's 79 councils are part of this program which will mean by 1<sup>st</sup> July 2021, all operational electricity use will be sourced by renewables. Once all councils are on board, 45 per cent of Victorian council electricity will be sourced from wind energy – the equivalent of removing emissions from 90,000 cars every year. This changes the game and the strategy for these councils. The focus now turns to electrification of vehicles, getting off gas and waste to get to net zero emissions.

**Image source:** <http://www.darebin.vic.gov.au/en/Darebin-Living/Caring-for-the-environment/EnergyClimate>.



**Cutting Waste Emissions:** City of Hobart, Tasmania.

Reducing emissions from waste has long been a challenge for councils around Australia but as councils start setting waste targets that are higher than relevant state targets it's worth learning on the local success stories. The City of Hobart has diverted over 74,000 tonnes of green waste from landfill over the last decade, cutting thousands of tonnes of methane through airing the organic matter. The processing facility also creates a high value compost product that is sold to the public with the support of City of Hobart staff.

**Image source:** <https://www.hobartcity.com.au/Residents/Recycling-and-rubbish/Bin-collection/Food-Organics-Garden-Organics-FOGO-collection>.

**The WA Renewables Powerhouse:** City of Cockburn, WA. After hitting their 2020 target of generating 20% of electricity from renewables, Cockburn has a new target to source 100% from renewable energy by 2030. Cockburn has the largest inventory of renewable energy systems of any local government in Western Australia including solar, wind turbines, geothermal heating and methane gas capture and are now seeking to overcome the regulatory barriers that make it hard for Power Purchase Agreements (PPAs) to be undertaken in WA. Cockburn's ARC (Activity and Recreation Centre) is home to one of WA's largest rooftop solar installations, with a massive 1MW system made up of 3,592 solar panels.

**Image source:** <https://www.cockburn.wa.gov.au/Environment-and-Waste/Climate-Change/Renewable-Energy>.





**Leading the Electric Vehicle Charge:** Moreland City Council, Victoria. Moreland has been a leader in encouraging the uptake of zero emissions vehicles and the promotion of zero emissions transportation since 2012, when Council participated in the Victorian Government’s Electric Vehicle (EV) Trial. This included the installation of Victoria’s first EV fast charge station in 2013. Council now has 23 electric vehicles in its fleet, making it the largest EV fleet in Victoria, and a network of 16 publicly available electric vehicle charging stations which are powered by 100% zero emissions renewable energy from the Crowlands Wind Farm.

**Image source:** <https://www.moreland.vic.gov.au/parking-roads/transport/electric-vehicles/>

**Summerhill Waste Management Centre Solar Farm:** City of Newcastle, NSW. Newcastle has been a leader on climate action in Australian since the late 1990s, involved in one of the first and most successful revolving energy funds and helping push the transition of the region from coal and steel to renewables. Newcastle is reinventing itself as a renewable energy powerhouse, with the local council driving the community’s clean energy uptake highlighted by the 5MW Summerhill Waste Management Centre Solar Farm. Newcastle has moved to 100% renewable energy with the Summerhill project saving ratepayers around \$1.8 million over the 10-year contract.



**Image source:**

<https://www.newcastle.nsw.gov.au/council/news/latest-news/solar-farm-powering-city-operations-and-revenue>.

**Carbon Neutral Adelaide:** City of Adelaide, SA.

South Australia is already making the transition to a low carbon economy with an aim for the state to have net zero emissions by 2050 and up to 500% renewable energy generation by 2050. Carbon Neutral Adelaide demonstrates the capacity and capabilities of the South Australian community to adapt and prosper in a low carbon economy. It is the community’s shared ambition to work together and make the City of Adelaide a carbon neutral city – with a partner program across business, government and community sectors



demonstrating a level of ambition across sectors.

**Image source:** <https://www.cityofadelaide.com.au/about-adelaide/our-sustainable-city/carbon-neutral-adelaide/>

## 5. Programmatic Approach

Australian councils have traditionally worked together to share knowledge, pool resources, implement projects together and advocate to other levels of government and the wider community. Since the success of programs such as ICLEI Oceania's Cities for Climate Protection from the late 1990s, there has been a broad and rich landscape of councils working collaboratively.

At a regional level, the greenhouse alliances in Victoria have led the way in advocacy, program design and delivery and knowledge-sharing, so much so that the model was highlighted at the Resilient Cities conference (now Daring Cities) in Bonn in 2018 and is now being duplicated in Queensland. Similar approaches are undertaken in NSW through Regional Organisations of Councils (or ROCs) and Regional Climate Partnerships in SA.

### 5.1 The Value of Global Programs for Australian Cities

City networks and programs in Australia are engaging and empowering local governments, responding to community drivers and successfully amplifying messages of inspiration through diverse communication and engagement opportunities and resources.

The Global Covenant of Mayors for Climate and Energy (GCoM) is an alliance that links international city movements on climate change with the ambition and actions of local governments. GCoM Oceania, as one of GCoM's regional and national convenor groups, amplifies these strengths of local partners, while supporting the emissions reduction and adaptation ambition of signatory cities through opportunities provided by its connections to global initiatives and networks, and a unified reporting platform.

#### The Value of GCOM Oceania

These are some opportunities for city networks, and their member councils, to collaborate on climate action under a unified program banner of GCoM Oceania:

- **Global network:** As the interface between Australian cities and the international community, GCoM provides the platform and global governance framework to think global, act local, linking climate action to the international response and advocacy for stronger national commitments.
- **Connecting councils:** GCoM is a global program that connects councils across the world for knowledge sharing, capacity building across areas of common interest and / or priority.
- **International benchmarking:** GCoM has a strong credible reporting component, linked into international platforms such as the ICLEI-CDP unified reporting system (with links to the UNFCCC), which is focused on community or city-wide emissions, and the UN's Global Climate Action platform (NAZCA).
- **Local aggregator of action:** GCoM can aggregate the action of other programs and individual councils and report through international frameworks. Reporting burden to individual councils could be streamlined through collaborating with tools like Snapshot, a collaboration between key climate stakeholders.
- **Comprehensive guidance and frameworks:** GCoM a comprehensive framework for integrated climate planning – mitigation, adaptation and access to energy – that is applicable to both council operations and community climate action.
- **Mobilisation initiatives:** GCoM operates Data4Cities, Finance4Cities and Innovate4Cities initiatives, which can drive local benefits from global networks around access to finance, research and innovation and data for and by cities.

## 5.2 Current National Programs

Across the Global Covenant of Mayors for Climate and Energy, Cities Power Partnership and Climate Emergency Australia, councils have the opportunity to collaborate, tie into local networks and also work on the global stage. Between them, these three programs cover nearly 90% of the Australian population and are leading the narrative and direction of collaborative climate action in Australia.

### Global Covenant of Mayors for Climate and Energy (GCoM)

The Global Covenant of Mayors for Climate and Energy (GCoM) is an international coalition of councils addressing climate change by pledging to cut greenhouse gas emissions and prepare for the impacts of climate change.



Formally known as the Compact of Mayors before merging with the Covenant of Mayors there are now 31 Australian councils who are signatories to GCoM. These 31 cities, plus another 10 in New Zealand and the Pacific Island are in a unique position on the global stage joining 10,710 local governments around the world, making it the largest global alliance for city climate leadership. GCoM cities share a long-term vision of supporting voluntary action to combat climate change while working towards a resilient and low-emission society.

### Cities Power Partnership (CPP)



The Cities Power Partnership is a national climate action program that is supporting local governments and communities all across Australia to transition to net zero emissions. The program is Australia's largest network of cities and towns tackling climate change, with over 145 partner councils that represent over half of the Australian population. CPP is made

up of councils of all shapes and sizes - from small regional towns to large cities. When councils sign up to the program, they pledge five actions to tackle climate change locally, from ramping up renewable energy through to planning sustainable transport systems.

### Climate Emergency Australia (CEA)

Australia is home to the birth of the Climate Emergency movement. Since Darebin Council first declared a climate emergency in 2016, nearly 100 councils across Australia and thousands across the world have declared or acknowledged a climate emergency. The Climate Emergency movement has grown in the last few years with support of grass-roots community groups, growing incredibly quickly around the world with a strong and clear message of urgency that is resonating with councils and the community and is true to the science and evidence of the scale of the challenge. In early 2020 the Climate Emergency Australia network was formed, based at the City of Melbourne and working closely with the Northern Alliance for Greenhouse Action (NAGA)

## 5.3 Other Programs

Research conducted by ICLEI Oceania for the Strategic Partnerships for the Implementation of the Paris Agreement (SPIPA) in 2019 found that there were at least 29 programs in Australia that have links to local government climate action and many more state-based programs exist which are directed at other sectors, communities or individuals. The Council of Capital City Lord Mayors (CCCLM) brings together the leading capital city stakeholders. The Australian Local Government Association (ALGA) doesn't have a climate program but works closely with climate city networks (like ICLEI Oceania). The WWF runs the One Planet City Challenge as a friendly competition where participating cities report emissions, goals, and targets on standardised reporting platforms. The Better Futures Australia (BFA) initiative is gaining traction as it brings together all sections of Australian civil society (including councils) to push for stronger ambition in the lead up to COP 26 in late 2021<sup>10</sup>.

<sup>10</sup> This is not intended to be an exhaustive list, but those who are involved in the facilitation or development of broader climate related programs or networks. For example, the Victorian alliances are working closely with the climate emergency movement; most NSW and SA ROCs have regional mitigation and adaptation/resilience programs; the Western Australian and Queensland LGAs (WALGA and LGAQ) facilitate climate and adaptation programs for regional groups. Other groups including industry, universities, consultants, distribution businesses could also be incorporated into this area.

## 6. Conclusion

Local governments and their communities are leading the way on climate action, acting locally to align with the latest climate science, while contributing globally to emissions reductions targets under the Paris agreement.

Cities with their increased level of understanding and commitment to emissions reductions, are critical to not only raise national emissions targets, but to help meet them. With investment and support there is an opportunity for all levels of government and key city stakeholders in private industry and the community, to collaborate to meet Australia's nationally determined commitment (NDC) to the Paris Agreement.

This report concludes by emphasising the case for further collaboration and alignment between and with Australian councils, to take advantage of this local leadership for global change.

### **Collaborate: Work Together and Join Forces**

The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated challenges for all levels of government and their citizens. Globally city networks are playing key roles in synthesising and distributing knowledge and insights from and for city practitioners, while convening and guiding city decision-makers, all of whom are under great pressure to respond to the global health crises. This peer to peer sharing and supporting process only but highlights the opportunity for city networks to work together across Australia to share ideas and collaborate to maximise efforts, whilst acknowledging that councils have joined various city networks for different reasons, with differing community expectations.

Collaboration and alignment of city focused climate programs in the region, through an umbrella like GCoM Oceania, could help in identifying knowledge and finance gaps, to provide the greatest value to cities. investment in such a collaborative entity and associated resources would provide targeting and streamlined support for councils identified priorities.

### **Align: with Broader Climate Movement**

City networks and their signatories should continue to work within other associations and programs to align climate action nationally. This ensures there is a local government focussed narrative within messages from the climate movement and climate science, and within climate policy.

In the near term there is a great opportunity to work alongside national initiatives such as Climate Action Network Australia's (CANA) Better Futures Australia (BFA) initiative, which is already working across Australian civil society to advocate for stronger national climate action, and the UNFCCC led Cities Race To Zero and Cities Race to Resilience campaigns, starting to be rolled out in the lead up to COP26 in November 2021.



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## ABOUT US

ICLEI – Local Governments for Sustainability is a global network working with more than 2,500 local and regional governments committed to sustainable urban development. Active in 125+ countries, we influence sustainability policy and drive local action for low emission, nature-based, equitable, resilient and circular development. In Australia, ICLEI Oceania is also the focal point for the Global Covenant of Mayors for Climate and Energy in Oceania (GCoM). Website link <http://www.icleioceania.org/>

Global Covenant of Mayors for Climate and Energy GCoM is the largest global alliance for city climate leadership, built upon the commitment of over 10,500 cities and local governments. These cities hail from six continents and 140 countries. In total, they represent more than one billion people. The cities and partners of GCoM share a long-term vision of supporting voluntary action to combat climate change while working towards a resilient and low-emission society. Support Funding has been provided by European Climate Foundation. Website [www.gcom-oceania.org](http://www.gcom-oceania.org)

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