

LOCAL GOVERNMENT WORKING FOR OUR COMMUNITIES

FACT SHEET 6

ENVIRONMENT - CLIMATE CHANGE

Nationally, local government immediate priorities are:

- *the inclusion of the waste sector in the Carbon Pollution Reduction Scheme (CPRS) only after significant issues such as the measurement of methane emissions, legacy and threshold issues are resolved;*
- *assistance to assess the risks associated with climate change and review existing plans, in particular, disaster mitigation and infrastructure plans; and*
- *legislative certainty for base land use planning and infrastructure decisions on behalf of their communities*

Local government is at the cutting edge of mitigation and adaptation to climate change. Climate change is one of the greatest threats to Australia's economic prosperity, environment and way of life. Action to address climate change requires a commitment by all spheres of government, industry and the community to work collaboratively.

Local government supports the Australian Government's three pillars of climate change policy:

- Reducing Australia's greenhouse emissions;
- Adapting to climate change we cannot avoid; and
- Helping to shape a global solution that both protects the planet and advances Australia's long-term interests.

Local Government involvement in the Carbon Pollution Reduction Scheme (CPRS).

Over the past decade, local governments throughout Australia have demonstrated a real commitment to innovate and proactively reduce their carbon emissions. Initiatives include, for example, participation in the Cities for Climate Protection (CCP) program, green purchasing, and methane capture and flaring on waste facilities.

The CPRS will have a number of significant cost implications for local government that must be considered in the final design of Australia's carbon emissions scheme.

The Australia Institute Ltd has estimated that the CPRS at \$20 per tonne could add an additional \$344 million annually to the operating cost of local government. It is important to note that these costs do not account for the additional costs of future adaptation or disaster mitigation measure that will be required to cope with climate change. These costs will be passed on to ratepayers in the absence of Australian Government financial support.

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ALGA is concerned with the inclusion of the waste sector in the initial design of the CPRS while there are significant issues that remain unresolved such as:

- Measurement of methane emissions;
- Assignment of costs and responsibility for legacy emissions, including from closed landfills; and
- Threshold questions around the size of landfills that are to be covered under the CPRS, for example 25kt CO₂ equivalent threshold or 10 25kt CO₂ equivalent.

ALGA supports the inclusion of the waste sector in the Carbon Pollution Reduction Scheme (CPRS) no sooner than 2015, in line with the likely inclusion of the agricultural sector, to allow issues with measurement to be overcome through focussed research on modelling and direct estimation of emissions, and through the audit of waste streams to better quantify waste stream composition.

Adapting to climate change we cannot avoid

Local government is increasingly aware of the risks and potential implications of climate change on its own business enterprises and local communities and is keen to establish a strong working partnership with the Federal Government to address climate change.

Local government has a major responsibility to plan for local communities. However, plans are not useful unless they are current, well-informed and capable of being implemented. Local government seeks assistance to systematically assess the risks associated with climate change and then review existing plans, in particular land use, disaster mitigation and infrastructure plans to take account of these risks.

Local government seeks Australian Government support to conduct risk assessment plans. The implementation of climate change adaptation plans will require resources. Some plans will identify a range of initiatives and changes to existing practices and the cost of implementation might be expected to be met within councils' normal operating budgets over time. However, it is expected that there will be a number of urgent and capital intensive adaptations that will be required. For example, recent coastal storm activity has demonstrated the vulnerability of areas of high population along the coastline. Hardening of infrastructure and implementation of long-term strategies including, for example, re-location of assets at risk, are likely to be required. ALGA acknowledges and supports the Government's election commitment to \$100 million for a five-year Community CoastCare Program to help coastal communities protect the Australian coastline and prepare for the impacts of climate change. However, more needs to be done and local government seeks to work with the Australian Government and with state governments to quantify the real demand and resources required to undertake this massive task.

Local government seeks legislative certainty for planning and infrastructure decisions on behalf of its communities. As scientific knowledge is developed through organizations such as the CSIRO and BOM, State and Australian Government legislation must be amended to provide guidelines to support council decisions-making. Vague requirements such as requiring councils to 'take-into-account' the impacts of climate change which are subject to administrative appeal creates legal uncertainty for councils and the community.