



Linking local and global climate change action:

Local Government climate change policy paper

Initial draft to inform the National Roundtable to support collaborative climate action in Australia

**Ann Harding Conference Centre,
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SPIPA Strategic Partnerships
for the Implementation
of the Paris Agreement

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ICLEI Oceania is the regional lead for GCoM on behalf of city networks and partners including C40, UN Habitat, CDP, United Cities and Local Government (UCLG) and the European Commission. ICLEI Oceania has partnered with CURF at the University of Canberra to assist in research and delivery of the national consultation process.

Executive summary

1. Why is support for local action on climate change important?

Community and local government action is centrally important to achieving international and national commitments on climate change. There is growing recognition of the urgency of cities and local governments making ambitious, robust and transparent contributions to the global effort. Following the 2015 Paris Agreement the importance of non-State actors has increased with sub-national and private actors recognised as one of the keys to tackling the ‘emissions gap’ and, therefore, contributing to keeping global warming below dangerous levels.

2. What are the project and the roundtable about?

This Roundtable is the first step in national consultations on the Global Covenant of Mayors for Climate and Energy (GCoM). The project is consulting widely on this internationally recognised framework and is exploring options for its wider adoption to support and build recognition for local government climate action in Australia.

The project’s primary objective is to explore, with all levels of government and partner organisations, the feasibility of options for adopting the GCoM framework in Australia and developing an agreed pathway. Section 1 of the paper provides more detail on the project’s background.

3. What benefit does adopting an internationally agreed framework like the GCoM offer?

Currently, local government climate action in Australia is ambitious and gaining momentum. The adoption of an internationally recognised framework, like the GCoM, can enhance these current efforts, providing many benefits to communities, local governments and their partners in State and Commonwealth agencies.

The benefit of participating in GCoM is that it provides cities, local councils and subnational authorities with a standardised reporting and monitoring framework for

their climate mitigation and adaptation plans and actions. This facilitates support and recognition for their contributions to national commitments made to meet the Paris Climate Agreement.

The GCoM increases recognition and helps facilitate unifying community responses. It opens up or reinforces opportunities to promote sustainable development including building inclusive, climate-resilient, energy-efficient communities, enhancing quality of life. It can also stimulate investment and innovation, boost the local economy and create jobs, promoting a just transition to a low carbon economy, reinforcing stakeholder engagement and cooperation.

The GCoM provides a robust and comprehensive framework for cities and local governments of all sizes and capacities to simultaneously respond to their communities' ambitions for accelerated climate and energy action while also contributing to the national and international Paris Agreement targets. The approach enables the use of a transparent, consistent and agreed methodology with appropriate support resources.

The European Commission, through its Strengthening Partnerships for the Implementation of the Paris Agreement program, has identified the need to more formally recognise the role city and local government are playing in achieving national and state climate obligations. This project provides an opportunity to identify ways in which Australia's local climate actions can be aligned with and recognised within internationally agreed frameworks. Section 2 of the discussion paper outlines more detail on the GCoM.

4. How can Commonwealth and State governments support local government climate efforts?

This project is seeking to explore ways in which Commonwealth and State governments and local government networks can partner with and support local government climate efforts by bringing them into a consistent international framework, like those developed and used internationally by the GCoM. The

framework is not overly prescriptive because, by allowing for flexibility, it can accommodate the specific circumstances of different regions and localities.

The core requirements of membership of GCoM (targets and commitments, action plans, and reporting) are generally consistent with climate change policy in Australia at the state and national levels, even though there is some heterogeneity in approaches. The Australian Government has set a quantitative national target for emissions reduction, as have most State and Territory governments. Sections 3 and 4 outline how the GCoM's approach aligns with and supports the realisation of climate policies in Australia and with the internationally agreed UN Sustainable Development Goals.

The GCoM also recognises that national and state governments can contribute to climate action by cities and local governments through, for example, provision of data and relevant policy settings.

5. What is needed for an effective pan-Australia approach?

Australia ratified the Paris Agreement on 9 November 2016 and the current Australian Prime Minister has recently confirmed the Government's commitment to that Agreement. The opposition has also committed to ambitious emissions reduction targets.

Climate and clean energy action at the local or city level in Australia are not specified in Australia's Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs), but local actions are both significant and have great potential for further contributions. However, there is as yet no encompassing pan-Australian framework to link these initiatives to the international climate action framework or to compile/measure what Australian cities and local governments are contributing.

The GCoM is active in Australia through the C40 cities of Sydney and Melbourne. ICLEI Oceania supports another 28 local governments in its capacity as Oceania Regional Global Covenant of Mayors Secretariat, yet there is great potential for the

development of a larger, more cohesive and better-supported network working across Australia. Therefore, the project is exploring what is needed for an effective pan-Australia approach, through consulting with and drawing on the expertise and experience of those involved in climate policy and action programs and in delivering aligned initiatives through local government networks.

The consultation processes will explore the potential for the wider adoption of the new GCoM framework. It will explore the synergies with established local climate initiatives and examine supportive arrangements and future partnerships with governments and other groups. There are benefits for governments in supporting increased engagement in a robust, clearly understood and well-supported national approach (like GCoM), but to mobilise more local governments they must see the relevance and value in such initiatives. In short these must align with their priorities, be useful, enabling and supportive. Section 5 of this paper outlines some examples of leading local government practice in responding to climate change. This demonstrates the range of ambitious mitigation and adaptation initiatives occurring in Australia and therefore the need for flexible approaches that can accommodate regional differences in context and priorities.

6. Who needs to be involved in building robust LGs partnerships, networks and advocacy approaches nationally?

The project is supporting national and sub national consultation processes on the new Global Covenant of Mayors framework for climate action as an enabling approach. It will explore the synergies with other established local climate initiatives and examine supportive arrangements and future partnerships with governments and other groups. This will benefit local governments seeking increased engagement in a robust, clearly understood and well-supported national GCoM approach and mobilise more local governments to see value in the initiative. Section 6 profiles some of the characteristics and benefits of linking local initiatives into national and international networks, such as the GCoM framework enables.

7. What are the opportunities for adopting a unified national approach?

The project seeks to draw on the collective expertise to identify the challenges and opportunities for adopting a unified national approach consistent with the GCoM framework.

The final section of this discussion paper outlines some initial ideas on the opportunities that ongoing Australian involvement in the GCoM could foster including:

- Developing regional or state scale networks that support local initiatives
- Developing strategies for green growth at the local and regional level
- Enabling greater collaboration on strategic planning that mainstreams climate action

It also identifies that involvement in the GCoM provides opportunities for skill development and capacity building of local governments through:

- knowledge sharing and developing R&D and education partnerships
- peer learning, secondment and exchange programs
- better practice guides, case studies and systematic evaluations.

However, these ideas are only indicative suggestions made at this early stage and are designed to prompt discussion at the initial round table and during the further consultations.

8. What are the next steps towards developing an agreed pathway?

The roundtable in March is the first step towards developing an agreed pathway.

This project will be undertaking national and regional consultations that will be used to gauge interest and opportunities and to develop clarity about a prospective pathway and the further steps needed to realise it. A national summit/forum is planned for June 2019.

1. Introduction

ICLEI Oceania and Canberra Urban and Regional Futures (CURF) are carrying out the project ‘National consultation on the new Global Covenant of Mayors framework for local government climate action in Australia’. The project will support Australia’s efforts to further reduce its emissions and to better adapt to climate change at city and local level by offering advice on this international framework and approach which identifies and builds on local action through consistency, transparency and advocacy.

This Roundtable is the first step in national consultations on the new Global Covenant of Mayors framework for local government climate action in Australia. It is part of a project that is exploring pathways for the wider adoption of the framework that enables local actions to be formally recognised nationally and internationally as contributing to the Paris Agreement targets.

Australia ratified the Paris Agreement on 9 November 2016 and the current Australian Prime Minister has recently confirmed the government’s commitment to that Agreement. The Federal Opposition has also committed to ambitious emissions reduction targets.

Climate and clean energy action at the city level in Australia are not mentioned in Australia’s Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs), but local action is ambitious and gaining momentum. There is as yet no encompassing pan-Australian framework to link these initiatives to the international climate action framework or to compile/measure what the common effort from Australian cities can contribute.

The GCoM has 9300 member cities and is active in Australia through the C40 cities of Sydney and Melbourne. ICLEI Oceania supports another 28 local governments in its capacity as Oceania Regional Global Covenant of Mayors Secretariat, yet there is great potential for the development of a larger, more cohesive and better-supported network working across Australia.

Globally, GCoM participant cities, local councils and subnational authorities report on their climate mitigation and adaptation efforts using an agreed and standardised framework. This includes reporting on setting and progress towards targets and progress in identifying climate risks, developing low carbon action plans, developing climate adaptation plans, identifying access to energy and reducing energy poverty, and their engagement, implementation and monitoring programs. This reporting provides the pathway to facilitate local governments participation in and reporting on contributions to national commitments made to meet the Paris Climate Agreement. The results of this collective effort are presented at the COPs and other events forcefully and influentially.

The benefits of more widely activating the GCoM framework in Australia are significant to both the global and local environment and to the community. Support for local community actions are recognised as essential to avoid catastrophic climate change where global warming will have a devastating impact upon the natural environment. Society is also directly exposed to devastating climate impacts with vulnerable communities expected to be most affected. There are many public benefits of establishing a comprehensive approach to greenhouse mitigation and of engaging communities in developing climate adaptation solutions that help build local resilience and prepare communities for adverse climate impacts. The ambition and effort of the diverse local responses to these challenges are detailed in various reports and documents.

Through support for the GCoM, as a unifying community response, new opportunities to promote sustainable local development can be promoted which are of significant public benefit. This includes building inclusive, climate-resilient, energy-efficient communities; enhancing people's quality of life; stimulating investment and innovation; boosting the local economy and creating jobs; and reinforcing stakeholder engagement and cooperation. Local solutions to climate challenges help provide secure, sustainable and affordable energy for businesses and citizens and, therefore, contributes to reducing energy dependence, protecting vulnerable communities.

The GCoM provides a robust and comprehensive framework for cities and local governments of all sizes and capacities to simultaneously respond to their communities' ambitions for accelerated climate and energy action while responding and contributing nationally and internationally to the Paris Agreement through following a transparent, consistent and agreed methodology with appropriate support resources.

The primary objective of this national consultation is to build support from all levels of government and partner organisations, to support the GCoM as an effective framework for local government climate action in Australia.

Recognising that international effort is required the European Commission, through its Strengthening Partnerships for the Implementation of the Paris Agreement program, has identified critical projects targeting G20 economies. In Australia more formally recognising the significant roles of city and local government are playing in achieving national and state climate obligations, has been identified as a priority.

The project will, therefore, support national and sub national consultation processes on the new Global Covenant of Mayors framework for city and local level climate action as an enabling approach. It will explore the synergies with other established local climate initiatives and examine supportive arrangements and future partnerships with governments and other groups. This will benefit local governments seeking increased engagement in a robust, clearly understood national GCoM approach and mobilise more local governments to see value in the initiative.

2. What is the Global Covenant of Mayors for Climate and Energy

Municipal and subnational climate action is a well-recognized phenomenon in global environmental governance. The 1992 UN Local Agenda 21 identified local authorities as important stakeholders in global action, and in 1993, the international alliance Local Governments for Sustainability (ICLEI) initiated the Cities for Climate Protection program (CCP), which rapidly grew to involve hundreds of cities (Betsill and Bulkeley 2004). The importance of cities arises because cities are both part of the problem and the solution to climate change (Kamal-Chaoui and Roberts 2009). By

some accounts, cities account for around 70% of global greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions and use 80 % of global energy supply (UN-HABITAT 2011; UNEP 2015). Cities can also drive innovation and social change (Hoornweg et al. 2011) and can ‘bring forward genuinely new ideas and solutions that in the end can have an impact on a larger scale’ (Gustavsson et al. 2009, 21).

The importance of non-State actors in global climate change governance has increased following the 2015 Paris Agreement, with sub-national and private actors now being looked upon as one of the keys to tackling the ‘emissions gap’ to and therefore contributing to keeping global warming below dangerous levels. There is growing urgency for cities and local governments to make ambitious, robust and transparent contributions to the global effort.

Vision, mission and principles

The Global Covenant of Mayors for Climate & Energy (GCoM) is an international alliance of cities and local governments with a shared long-term vision of promoting and supporting voluntary action to combat climate change and move to a low emission, resilient society. It is the broadest global alliance committed to climate leadership, involving commitments from over 9,300 cities and local governments, representing 800 million people from more than 125 countries over six continents. Membership is growing as more cities and local governments are responding to the urgent call for action articulated in the Paris Climate Agreement.

The core principles of the GCoM are:

- *Local Governments are Key Contributors:* The GCoM works to organise and mobilise cities and local governments to be active contributors to a global climate solution.
- *City Networks as Critical Partners:* Local, regional, national and global city networks are core partners, serving as the primary support for participating cities and local governments.
- *A Robust Solution Agenda:* Focusing on those sectors where cities and local governments have the greatest impact, the GCoM supports ambitious, just,

locally relevant solutions, captured through strategic action plans that are registered, implemented and monitored and publicly available.

- *Reducing Greenhouse Gas Emissions and Fostering Local Climate Resilience:*
The GCoM emphasises the importance of climate change mitigation and adaptation to a changing climate, as well as increased access to sustainable energy.

Origins of GCoM – a merger of two key global initiatives

The Global Covenant of Mayors for Climate & Energy was launched in 2017. It formally brings together the world's two primary initiatives of cities and local governments that support transitions to low emission and climate resilient societies and enhances their impact. The Covenant of Mayors was created in 2008 to implement the European Union (EU) 2020 climate and energy targets, and extended in 2015 to progress adaptation actions. The Compact of Mayors, launched in 2014 by the UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon and Michael Bloomberg his Special Envoy for Cities and Climate Change, is a global initiative supporting pledges from mayors and city officials to reduce local greenhouse gas emissions, enhance resilience to climate change, and track their progress transparently. The Compact was activated under the leadership of the global city networks — C40, ICLEI, and UCLG — and with support from UN-Habitat, the UN's lead agency on urban issues.

Aligning efforts under a shared vision and common principles enables a united voice on the crucial nature of city and regional action, and allows for greater collaboration between cities and regions across the world, including to bridge gaps and build connections for solutions. It also improves access to resources for individual local governments such as tools, guidance and technical assistance to support ambitious and measurable plans for action.

Requirements of GCoM membership

There are three core requirements of GCoM membership – establishing targets and commitments (on greenhouse gas emissions, adaptation and clean energy), developing and implementing a strategic action plan, and implementing and reporting on

progress. Active consultation and engagement processes and transparency of information are central to all of these requirements and are compulsory.

- *GCoM seeks targets and commitments* from cities and local governments that are preferably more ambitious than their respective government's Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC) under the Paris Agreement. They further need to align with National Adaptation Plans and be consistent with Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).
- GCoM members need a *robust action plan* to meet their stated targets, informed by thorough analysis of the local context including risks, challenges and opportunities. Data and plans will be made publicly available and the impact of their actions will be measured and monitored over time.
- *Reporting of progress* against commitments is required regularly. Objective-driven, simple and robust reporting is key to effective implementation of planned actions. Guidance is available to support signatories throughout the reporting process, and the reporting requirements take into account different capacities, resources and circumstances of cities and local governments.

It is important to note that in Australia guidance and support is currently unfunded from any government source and that ICLEI is supporting this work as an NGO.

Success of GCoM

The GCoM has the widest reach of transnational municipal networks (TMNs) relevant to climate change, with high and growing levels of participation. The GCoM is now almost universally adopted as a framework for measurement and guidance. The new framework reinforces quantitative targets and transparent reporting, enabling improved transparency and coordination between local and national governments which has been recognised as critical to realising the potential of the urban mitigation of climate change (Kona et al 2016).

3. How does the GCOM align with current policies in Australia?

The core requirements of voluntary compliance to GCoM (targets and commitments, action plans, and reporting) are generally consistent with climate change policy in Australia at the state and national levels.

The Australian Government has set a quantitative national target for emissions reduction during the international climate change negotiation processes, and as at March 2019, the Queensland, New South Wales, Victorian, South Australian, Tasmanian and Australian Capital Territory governments have emissions reduction targets which exceed the national target. Table 1 below shows Australia's emissions reduction targets.

Table 1, Australia's Emissions Reduction Targets, converted to a 2005 base year (year announced/committed in brackets)

	2020	2030	2050
Australia	14 per cent below 2005 levels (2010)	26-28 per cent below 2005 levels (2015)	
States and Territories			
Queensland		30 per cent below 2005 levels (2017)	Net zero (2017)
New South Wales			Net zero (2016)
Victoria	15-20 per cent below 2005 levels (2017)		Net zero (2017)
South Australia			60 per cent below 2005 levels (2007) Net zero (2015)
Australian Capital Territory	40 per cent below 2005 levels (2010)	65-75 per cent below 2005 levels (2018)	Net zero by 2045 (2018)
Tasmania			64 per cent below 2005 levels (2008) Net zero (2017)

Source: Climate Change Authority 2019, p.5

The Australian Government and most states also have targets to increase the proportion of renewable energy in the energy supply mix. At March 2019, Australia's national target is 33,000 GWh by 2020 (committed in 2015) (Climate Change Authority 2019). State targets are:

- Queensland 50% by 2030 (announced in 2015), with an additional 3,000 MW from small-scale projects by 2020
- Victoria 25% by 2020, and 40% by 2025 (committed in 2016)
- South Australia 33% by 2020 (announced in 2009) and 50% by 2025 (announced in 2014)
- Northern Territory 50% by 2030 (announced in 2017)
- Australian Capital Territory 100% by 2020 (committed in 2016),
- Tasmania 100% by 2022 (announced in 2017)

The Australian and state and territory governments have each created strategies for adapting to climate change or are addressing risks through broader planning and resource management legislation and policy. The Australian Capital Territory, Queensland, South Australian, Tasmanian and Victorian governments have specific policies on climate adaptation. For example, the Victorian Climate Change Act 2017 specifically requires the development of five-yearly sector-based Adaptation Action Plans in sectors such as health and human services, primary production, water, transport and the natural environment while New South Wales and Western Australia are addressing climate risks through broader planning policies and resource management legislation.

Adaptation strategies in Australia are variable, with some articulating general statements of intent rather than clear commitments for reform. Recent research has identified the essential requirements for successful adaptation in the frame of the GCoM, and highlight the need for measures to address current and future climatic hazards, risks to critical infrastructure, active stakeholder and citizen participation, maladaptation, and to build understanding of adaptation action costs relative to inaction (e.g. Hernandez et al 2017).

Overall while there are little formal attempts at alignment between GCoM approaches and the current policy settings there is great potential because much of the current action being undertaken at the sub national scale in Australia could align easily with the GCoM framework.

4. The GCoM and the UN Sustainable Development Goals

Australia is a signature to both the SDGs and the Paris Climate Agreement and is also a signatory to the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction. Some local governments can find the overlap between these agreement confusing so this section is included to demonstrate the alignment and complementarity between these broader settings and the GCoM framework. Importantly they should be considered as competing but are complementary.



In 2015, United Nations adopted the seventeen Sustainable Development Goals. This provided a landmark foundation for implementing a more sustainable future for all. In 2016 the Paris Agreement entered into force to provide the platform for reducing the global greenhouse gas emissions to a level that would minimise the rise in global temperature to 2 degrees, and hopefully tracking towards 1.5 degrees.

While the SDGs should be read as a whole and are purposefully integrated, clearly the most relevant SDG is goal 13 (climate) but highly relevant and connected to local action on climate change are Goals 11 (Cities), Goal 7 (Energy), and Goal 17 (Partnerships).

SDG goal 13 commits to strengthen resilience and adaptive capacity to climate-related hazards and natural disasters (13.1) and integrate climate change measures into national policies, strategies and planning (13.2).

Importantly the SDGs align with the GCoM in committing to improving institutional capacity on climate change mitigation and adaptation. Further guidance on implementing both the UN SDGs and the Paris Agreement can be found in the recent IPCC Report 'Global Warming of 1.5 C'. The conclusions highlight the important role of integrating sustainable development and sub national action to achieve a 1.5 C emissions target.

5. Examples of current leading practice in local government on climate change

Australia's local governments are active in delivering climate adaptation and mitigation being involved in a diverse array of initiatives focused on reducing emissions, increasing sequestration and equipping and mobilising communities (Climate Council 2018).

While there are clearly benefits for local governments being involved in a robust, clearly understood and well-supported international approach (like GCoM), but local governments must be able to see the relevance and value in such initiatives. In short these must align with their priorities, be useful, enabling and supportive. This section outlines some examples of leading local government practice in responding to climate change. It demonstrates the wide range of ambitious mitigation and adaptation initiatives occurring and therefore the need for flexible approaches, like those enabled by GCoM, which can accommodate regional differences in context and priorities.

The *Australian Local Government Climate Review 2018* reported on a comprehensive assessment of local councils' actions tackling climate change (Beyond Zero Emissions 2018). Key findings about Australia's councils are that:

- Over half provide public information on climate change;
- Many have emission reduction targets (20%) and baseline inventories;
- About 80% intend to develop corporate emission targets.

Since that review was published there has been rapid progress with ICLEI estimating that about 40% of councils have a community-based greenhouse gas profile that are consistent and therefore potentially aligned to UNFCCC national reporting.

In their report *'Local Leadership: Tracking Local Government Progress on Climate Change'* the Climate Council (2017) stated that Australia's local councils have been leading climate action "*despite periods of instability and inaction at the state and federal climate policy level.*" They found councils escalating their efforts, responding to the climate imperatives by:

- Shifting to renewable energy sources for electricity generation;

- Increasing the energy efficiency of buildings; and
- Supporting more sustainable transport measures.

Other important findings are that:

- Australia’s councils are important information hubs on climate change;
- Urban areas are major contributors to emissions, 70% of emission reductions required to meet the Paris agreement can be achieved by changing energy use and production;
- Of the councils surveyed 20% are aiming for “100% renewable energy” or “zero emissions”. Prominent examples include Adelaide, Canberra, Melbourne and Sydney along with smaller councils, like Byron Shire, Lismore, Yackandandah and Uralla Shire.
- Local councils and community groups are investing millions in renewable energy. Examples include the Lismore and Sunshine Coast solar farms, and Alice Spring’s solar city initiative.

The Australian Capital Territory (ACT) provides a useful example of an integrated approach to adaptation and mitigation. It is on track to achieve its legislated targets of 100% renewable electricity by 2020 and carbon neutrality by 2045 (ACT 2016). The ACT plans to meet this latter commitment through ‘nature-based’ solutions such as waterway re-engineering, landscape restoration and urban reforestation, including developing a living infrastructure strategy with tree canopy cover targets (ACT 2016). Living infrastructure is synergistic and complementary to initiatives such as rapid transit and urban renewal and can be incorporated at scales from individual gardens through to metropolitan wide strategies (Alexandra et al 2017).

The final examples profiled here involve coastal protection and sea level rise. Lake Macquarie City Council is a city of almost 200,000 people which is managing population growth and rising sea levels (NCCARF 2019). In 2008, the Council adopted Australia’s first policies preparing for sea level rise. Since then the Council has been active in:

- Engaging communities in developing climate change adaptation plans;

- Developing planning guidelines and revising its Local Environmental Plan and Development Control Plan;
- Placing sea-level rise notifications on land certificates in areas that will be affected.

The City of Mandurah is a member of the GCoM and is transparently reporting on its commitments to reduce GHG emissions through the GCoM website (<https://www.globalcovenantofmayors.org/cities/mandurah/>). As a vulnerable coast council, it is also active in the Peron Naturaliste Partnership (PNP) that involves nine local councils in southwest Australia collaborating on innovative approaches to coastal protection (PNP 2019). Recognising the region's vulnerability to climate change the group formed to develop integrated and flexible adaptive pathways in partnership with coastal communities. These councils are working to protect small towns and coastal villages from coastal flooding using 'soft barriers', such as replanting dunes with native flora, although coastal retreat and buyback of coastal lands are also recognised as likely to be necessary for some areas in the longer term (PNO 2019).

Sub national action linked to GCoM at the local and State/Territory level has been steadily increasing across Australia. Beginning with capital cities like Melbourne, Sydney, Adelaide, Perth and Canberra it is now spreading through medium-sized cities such as Wollongong and Newcastle and some smaller rural councils. The recent 'farmers for climate action' highlights the non-metropolitan interest in local action on climate change. A search of the GCoM website using Australia, located 26 councils that have reported on their progress (see https://www.globalcovenantofmayors.org/global-covenant-cities-data/?s=australia&page=0&is_v=1)

6. Related programs to GCOM in Australia and overseas

Globally local governments are centrally important in responding to climate mitigation and adaptation. Not only are they mobilising a wide range of creative responses to these challenges, but they have also established some highly effective, linked and influential global networks. These 'cities networks' enhance local

governments' capacity for climate initiatives by providing support, advocacy, and sharing inspiration and information.

There are many examples where Governments and/or city networks already support Paris Agreement outcomes or the outcomes of the GCOM. The International Urban Cooperation (IUC) programme funded by the European Union supports bilateral policy objectives and major international agreements on urban development and climate change, such as the Urban Agenda, the Sustainable Development Goals, and the Paris Agreement. The IUC's GCOM support is active in 9 of the 10 GCOM regions.

The Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM) administers the Municipalities for Climate Innovation Program with a five-year \$75 million (CAN) Canadian Government, funded program supporting 600 municipalities, the US Climate Mayors is a bipartisan, peer-to-peer network of U.S. mayors working together to demonstrate leadership on climate change, the Under2 Coalition is a coalition of subnational governments that aims to achieve greenhouse gases emissions mitigation and so on.

In addition, the GCOM Global Secretariat supports programs already underway that engage with national and state governments such Innovate4cities, Data4cities, financing options for cities, and refinement in reporting to ensure alignment with and accurate reporting to the UNFCCC.

ICLEI is a global network of over 1,500 cities, towns and regions committed to building a sustainable future. ICLEI is active across 124 countries and has 22 offices, including in Melbourne. Through providing linkage and support services ICLEI enhances local and regional governments efforts to build sustainable, equitable futures and people-centred communities. ICLEI promotes adoption of integrated transformative solutions, including low emission strategies and nature-based development solutions. It does this through profiling better practice models and linking active governments. ICLEI advocates and promotes transformative approaches through numerous global and regional initiatives and networks. An example of a regional network is the 28 local governments involved in the Oceania

Regional Global Covenant of Mayors. ICLEI Oceania supports this in its capacity as the Secretariat of network.

Another global peer network for cities committed to delivering climate action is C40. C40 connects cities, linking them in their efforts towards healthier and more sustainable futures. Despite the name, C40 links 94 major cities, with over 700 million citizens and one quarter of the global economy. It supports collaboration and knowledge sharing on ways to deliver and drive meaningful, measurable and sustainable action. C40 convenes 17 global networks covering mitigation, adaptation and sustainability topics based on its members' priority. These focus on generating global climate impacts whilst also providing integrated solutions that address local problems. For example, many cities are focusing on reducing greenhouse gas emission whilst also improving urban air quality through reducing air pollution.

The C40 Networks focus on:

- *Connecting* cities' elected representatives and officials with peers;
- *Inspiring* innovation by showcasing solutions;
- *Advising* on options based on experience with similar projects and policies; and
- *Influencing* national and international policy agendas and driving the market responses by leveraging cities' collective voices.

Local government networks can be influential by collecting and reporting data. For example, 70% of C40 member cities report they have already experienced negative impacts of climate change. However, due to participating in C40 networks, the same percentage report implementing better, bolder or faster climate responses.

In addition to networks outlined above, UN-Habitat is the United Nations programme focused on urban futures, with a mission to promote socially and environmentally sustainable human settlements and development. UN-Habitat has been active for over 40 years and is currently active in over 70 countries (UN 2019).

Peer networks of local governments are effective because they share knowledge and experience about climate mitigation and adaptation initiatives. By providing these linkages, peer networks are powerful, demonstrating that solutions are possible, feasible and effective. Through the productive power of networks, they ‘racket up’ capacity for adoption of transformative solutions and ensure that critical lessons are transferred.

These initiatives and more will be explored during the preparation of the final policy paper to ascertain what learnings can be made for implementing the GCOM in Australia and more broadly in Oceania.

7. Opportunities for Australia

This national consultation on the Global Covenant of Mayors for Climate and Energy provides an excellent opportunity for all levels of government, business and civil society to explore pathways for local action on climate change.

There are many opportunities that ongoing involvement in the GCoM could foster including:

- Developing regional or state scale networks and supporting local initiative by one or more councils working together, for example on renewable energy or smart infrastructure
- Developing strategies for green growth at the local and regional level that provide for skill development and new jobs.
- Collaboration on strategic planning that mainstreams climate action into day to day decision- making at the local and sub national levels of government (Norman, 2018)

Involvement in the GCoM also provides many opportunities for skill development and capacity building including through:

- Sharing of knowledge and developing R&D and education partnerships with tertiary institutions to build knowledge and capacity on pathways for adapting to the impacts of climate change

- Development of peer learning, secondment and exchange programs between councils, government agencies and R&D institutions
- Preparation and publishing of better practice guides, case studies and evaluations that provide evidence and assist in the scaled adoption of effective initiatives

The GCOM framework enables councils to engage in context specific priorities across mitigation, adaptation and community engagement. This enables flexibility in development of specific initiatives that may include, for example:

- Exploring specific initiatives that will work well within specific contexts, bioregions or socio-demographic regions
- Working with specific industries and communities to develop specific adaptation or transition plans
- Develop and use of scenario planning methodologies for exploring adaptation options (O'Donnell and Alexandra 2018).

Other important issues that we hope to identify through the consultation process include:

- Ways to embed GCoM framework into National reporting and State targets/obligations and identification of other opportunities to get national and State Governments to embrace and count local climate action
- Potential pathways for greater national networking and coordination of efforts to link local, national and global action on climate change, including though establish intergovernmental coordination mechanisms in Australia, link COG and appropriate ministerial councils and their working groups
- Ways to engage with state governments and develop state and national agency departmental alignment and support,
- Identification of mechanism for further involving civil society, NGOs and the private sector
- Prospects for driving progress via the ALGA
- Opportunities for specific projects that would further enables networks and connections

The above are just a few suggestions at this early stage and designed to prompt discussion at the initial round table and beyond. Through the consultation we will document the opportunities identified.

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