



## Supporting a local government role in the Paris Climate Agreement

### Roundtable on the Global Covenant of Mayors reporting framework

University of Canberra, 6 June 2019

#### *Summary of Roundtable 2 discussion and outcomes*



**SPIPA** Strategic Partnerships  
for the Implementation  
of the Paris Agreement

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On behalf of



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## **Goals for the Roundtable**

- Dialogue on collaborative national approaches for local climate change action with leading Australian stakeholders
- Conclusion of the national consultation and research process on issues and opportunities for wider adoption of the Global Covenant of Mayors for Climate and Energy (GCoM) in Australia
- Identification of next steps for an effective national framework for local climate action using the GCoM framework
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## **Roundtable participants**

The Roundtable involved over 50 participants from key organisations and stakeholders with strong interests, responsibilities and capabilities in climate change action. Representatives from all tiers of government participated, from the Australian Government Departments of Environment and Energy, Home Affairs, and Foreign Affairs and Trade, the Victorian State and New South Wales State Governments and the Australian Capital Territory (ACT) Government, and Regional Development Australia ACT. At the local level, participants included the elected Mayors and Councillor, and representatives from the Australian Local Government Association, the state Local Government Associations from Queensland and Victoria, and the Council of Capital City Lord Mayors.

Internationally, the European Union Ambassador to Australia, the Ambassador of Denmark to Australia, and an official from the Embassy of Germany, also participated in the Roundtable.

Senior representatives participated from a range of stakeholder organisations with strong links to local government and/or climate change action. These organisations included Doctors for the Environment ACT, the World Federation of Public Health Associations, the United Nations Association of Australia, the Australian Strategic Policy Institute, the Urban Synergies Group, Energy Estate and Electromotiv. Beyond Zero Emissions, the Climate Council, CDP, and Ironbark Sustainability also participated as organisations delivering tailored programs or technical capacities to cities and local governments, along with representatives from the University of Canberra, and the Australian National University.

## **Introduction and welcomes.**

The Roundtable began with a *Welcome to Country* and welcome to Canberra University by Professor Barbara Norman, CURF UC. Cr Cathy Oke as First Vice President ICLEI local governments for sustainability then provided the context for ICLEI's role as Global focal point for the LGMA constituency and its role as a membership organisation of over 1750 cities, towns and local government accelerating sustainability outcomes at the local level.



## Context setting presentations

### The international context for GCoM in Australia

**ICLEI Oceania Regional Director, Mr Steve Gawler** stressed that the Paris targets require accelerated action, and that bottom-up local action, appropriately capacitated, can be very effective.

ICLEI recognises that there is a lot going on at local levels, but that coordination is now needed with state and national governments to enable enhanced local action to feed into the national and international effort.

International interest is reflected in the much appreciated, support for this Roundtable provided through the EU and the EC (through SPIPA administered by GIZ).

**H.E. Michael Pulch, Ambassador European Union** emphasised that cities and local governments matter greatly for international climate change goals and targets. Cities are the source of around 70% of national emissions. Finding effective ways to move from vision to action is now key.

**H.E. Tom Nørring, Ambassador of Denmark** noted the importance of tailored approaches to climate change action, and that readiness to respond to opportunities in ways that build resilience as well as other social goals is beneficial.

He described the Danish transformation in sustainable transport since the 1970s, and pointed to the benefits of sharing stories and experiences noting that context matters.

**Ms Kim Farrant Assistant Secretary Dept E&E** outlined the Australian target under the Paris Agreement, and the operation of the national Emissions Reduction Fund which seeks abatement and to realise co-benefits.

Local Government emissions reduction action is ultimately reflected in the national greenhouse gas inventory.



Mr Steve Gawler, Regional Director, ICLEI Oceania



H.E. Michael Pulch, Ambassador European Union



H.E. Tom Nørring, Ambassador of Denmark



Ms Kim Farrant, Australian Government Department of Environment and Energy

## **The Paris Agreement and local climate action in Australia**

**Cr Cathy Oke, First Vice President ICLEI** noted that GCoM was the largest network of sub-national governments taking action on climate change, and that it now covered more than 10% of global population.

GCoM brings new alliances, streamlining of reporting, and demonstration that collaboration can strengthen capacity and action. Working together can expand benefits from the cities with capacities, and accelerate ambition.

**Lord Mayor, Anna Reynolds, City of Hobart** noted community expectations for local leadership and care for place. She also stressed the challenges of progressing action in budget and time-constrained councils.

Clear “how to” guides, capacity building, links to research, ways to connect climate change to Council’s core business, and practical collaboration, are key to effective next steps.

**Cr Le Cerf ICLEI Oceania** outlined measures in the City Darebin, for example the Solar Saver program, which demonstrated how to deliver to climate change goals and also target the most vulnerable communities

Linking Councils that have declared a “climate emergency” could be an initial step to inform wider coordination efforts.

**Mr Bethune Carmichael, ALGA**, indicated that climate change is a key issue for ALGA, and that climate change action can deliver substantial economic and jobs benefits.

Support, however, is needed to realise these GDP and jobs benefits.

The alignment of measures for community protection from climate change and natural disasters also needs better recognition at all scales.

Climate change has the largest share of delegate motions for the 2019 ALGA General Assembly (almost 50 motions).



Cr Cathy Oke, First Vice President ICLEI



Lord Mayor, Anna Reynolds, City of Hobart



Cr Kim Le Cerf, Chair ICLEI Oceania Regional Executive Committee



Mr Bethune Carmichael, Australian Local Government Association (ALGA)

## Subnational government and capacities to align climate change with social and economic narratives



*Keynote presentation by Mr Simon Corbell, Chief Advisor Energy Estate, former ACT Deputy Chief Minister and Victorian Government Renewable Energy Advocate*

Cities have critical leadership roles in energy reform and climate change action, and can have a much wider influence than their size suggests. The actions of Canberra and the ACT demonstrated this with an initial 90% renewable energy target (and then 100%) and strong measures to rapidly enable which “rippled” across the national policy and investor environment.

Importantly, such government backing of renewable energy can deliver significant economic and social benefits including local jobs, community development, and re-invigoration of old manufacturing plant into new production.

Mr Corbell says we need hope; we don’t have the luxury of not having hope. Leaders must give hope to their communities through taking part in the action needed, which can more widely empower community perception of opportunities and capacity to take further action.

Resilience is also key for cities. Cities and urban spaces are exposed for example to heat impacts, and proactive and innovative ways to build resilience and look after vulnerable communities need to be embraced. There are many examples which can be learned from, such as the work of the City of Moreland in improving the liveability of public housing, city greening initiatives, and mini-grid and battery systems for local energy resilience.

Much more innovation is needed at sub-national scales, for example in public transport, adaptation and air quality in metro centres. Innovation can deliver multiple outcomes for climate change, renewable energy, and city social and economic goals. We now must shift from black and white conversations on energy, to a focus on cities as enabling quality of life, dignified work, and sustainable investment.

## **The Global Covenant of Mayors for Climate and Energy (GCoM) – opportunity for Australia**

In exploring the potential for wider uptake of GCoM in Australia, the Roundtable noted the leading role played by GCoM internationally with more than 9200 partner cities in over 130 countries.



Australian local participation in GCoM thus enables access to the major GCoM initiatives such as Innovate4Cities and Data4Cities, as well as new GCoM partners such as Google, and resources developed through technical committees on data standards, technology solutions and communication.

### **Summary of National Consultation and research outcomes**

Context was provided for the Roundtable discussions through short presentations on the national consultation process and inventory of state based programs, a scan of relevant international tools and resources available, and on data and measurement issues relevant to the wider adoption of GCoM in Australia.

In summary the [consultation and program identification](#) in each state and territory aimed to map climate programs directed at Councils, discuss possible partnerships, and raise awareness of the GCoM reporting framework. ICLEI met with representatives from 30 organisations from March to June 2019, and key findings included that:

- While numerous current approaches have some alignment with GCoM, there is significant variability in state investments, and there is benefit in an intergovernmental agreement on climate change that can aggregate local action
- Reporting approaches are currently ad hoc, with few set standards, and more information on reporting standards and methods was sought by many groups
- There is experience in Councils in developing action plans for emissions reduction and adaptation which could be recognised and readily built on through wider adoption of GCoM
- While full GCoM framework alignment will take time, GCoM could readily be more visible and promoted in Australia and could facilitate progress in areas of common requirement with appropriate support for local governments

Internationally GCoM supports local action through provision of considerable [tools and resources](#). A scan of relevant tools found that there is an abundance of tools and resources available including:

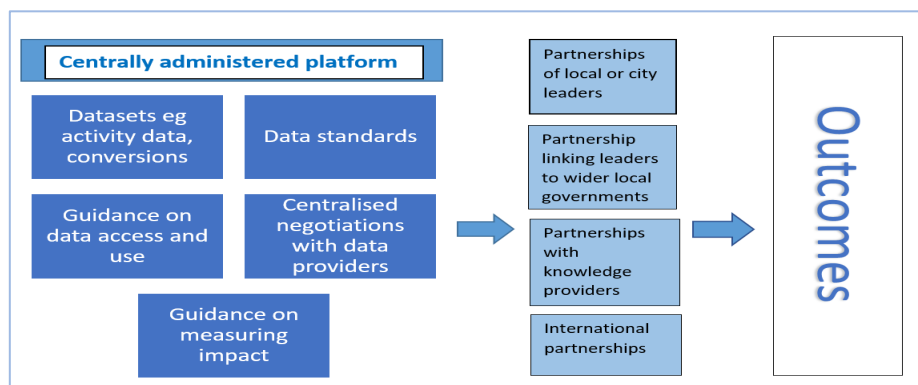
- Informative and motivational materials, for example case studies
- Assessment methods such as greenhouse gas (GHG) inventories
- Target setting and integrated action planning for adaptation and mitigation
- Reporting, using common and country-based reporting frameworks

The scan also identified that:

- The GCoM model is the pre-eminent international approach
- Australia has opportunities to ‘piggy back’ on this experience and use the GCoM model across Australia’s diverse LGAs
- The GCoM model enables approaches consistent with state and national policy objectives
- Realising these opportunities from the effective uptake of GCoM requires resources for promotion, coordination, capacity building and adoption.

**Data and measurement** for robust climate change action was recognised as critical to understanding baseline positioning, to developing clear and meaningful action plans and to tracking and reporting on progress. Key contextual points made were that:

- The GCoM Common Reporting Framework is uniquely positioned to provide a robust mechanism that aligns local with national and international reporting
- Currently there are gaps and challenges in data and measurement capacities and approaches at local scales for both emissions reduction and adaptation activities which impact on the ability of local governments to develop and implement action plans that can drive additional outcomes. One example of this is the lack of local granularity in the national inventory
- There are a range of programs and initiatives such as the Cities Power Partnership, the Victorian Coastal Monitoring Program, WALGA’s Greensense Emissions Reporting Platform and Tasmania’s ClimateAsyst tool that are generating robust insights into measurement approaches tailored to Australian and local needs
- A centrally administered platform on data and measurement (spanning commonly used datasets and data standards, guidance on accessing data and on estimating the impact of measures, and data provider negotiations) could meet local needs, deliver substantial efficiencies, and support achievement of outcomes (see Figure below)



Potential scope of platform for data and measurement to support GCoM in Australia

## **Roundtable summary and outcomes.**

### **Roundtable topic 1: Challenges and opportunities for effective climate action**

In discussing what are the most effective ways the local government sector can collectively contribute to exceeding our Paris targets and respond to climate change, participants considered that:

- local governments have key roles such as waste management, transport, energy supply and urban vegetation that have potential to contribute more to national targets and that would benefit from a sharing of approaches and knowledge
- aggregations of Councils can enhance voluntary leadership on climate change action, and drive innovation
- such sharing accompanied by monitoring (and KPIs) is important to enable an enhanced scale of action that can align with the recognised “climate emergency”
- there is a need to share insights from failures and things that didn’t work to ensure they are not repeated

The benefits, opportunities or challenges identified by participants for an Australia-wide program to support Councils using the GCoM framework included:

- that there are systemic and significant governance barriers to progressive local government action in Australia, and divergent views on climate change, are challenges that need to be addressed. National coordination is required
- key among these challenges is a need for financing of initiatives, and there may be opportunities from more creative funding sources such as Australian Finance Initiative Municipal Bonds, and business, NGOs as well as government
- Councils also need empowering and capacity building, including to access and use the GCoM tools and resources
- the opportunities that can arise from Local Government connections with community, and through engagement and awareness raising, can contribute to such empowering. There is power in sharing stories, for example in how to take action, transfer solutions or overcome inertia
- mechanisms that enable peer to peer learning and the aggregation of information are valuable and need to be established
- a new framing of climate change action needed, aligned with practical opportunities that arise from Council roles and support jobs, innovation and risk management
- improved reporting processes, so that information gathered once can be used to underpin reporting at multiple scales and independent evaluation, and that addresses inconsistencies, could deliver substantial benefits

### **Roundtable topic 2: Exploring a coordinated national approach**

Roundtable 2 explored the potential partners in a nationally coordinated approach, and participants views on the support needed by Councils in such an approach, including research and innovation.

Key points raised included:

- agreement to national coordination and recognition that GCoM provides a good framework, although likely challenging for some poorly resourced Councils



- potential partners for a nationally coordinated approach are wide, and include NGOs delivering local initiatives, states and Local Government Associations delivering programs, and adaptation partners such as in the health care sector
- an official channel in the governance structure was seen as important in targeting and engaging partners, including through framing the discussion on benefits and co-benefits that can be realised from collective action in medium term timeframes
- opportunities from alignment of interests with key NGOs and initiatives could be an initial step with capacity to demonstrate use of reporting frameworks and benefits from access to international tools and partnerships (for example the new GCoM partnership with Google)
- support will be needed by Councils in the adoption of the GCoM framework, including to recognise and build on effective current measures, drive wider uptake, and to connect Australian local governments to the international opportunities available
- Governance structure: Integrated governance framework for people involved
- Providing an opportunity for councils to work together under the GCoM's framework

Research and innovation issues were seen as important by Roundtable participants, including the need to address current barriers to research uptake and to demonstrate the value of research for communities and decision-making. Key points included that:

- research and innovation can lower risk and enable better decision-making, but for many Councils access to leading research is difficult and frameworks to enable access and learn from others would be welcomed
- further work is needed to really understand what R&D is needed by local governments, and how it can most effectively be mobilised
- high quality case studies with quantitative analysis of impacts were identified as useful, as well as narrative examples of monitoring, evaluation and reporting across local government functions (including costing and responsibilities)
- prioritisation will be important in new partnerships to support research uptake, and the health sector provides important opportunities as health has social and spatial dimensions and high sensitivities to climate change
- innovation needs to be explored across technical, finance and policy domains as part of a centrally coordinated approach, with benefits of adoption clear.



### Roundtable topic 3 outcomes: Developing the GCoM future action strategy

The Roundtable provided general support for the wider adoption of the GCoM framework in Australia, and participants welcomed ICLEI taking the next steps to clarify and consolidate an effective way forward. The major issues identified through the Roundtable for progress, for example in a 2-3 year time horizon, are:

- (i) **Implementation arrangements and funding.** Further dialogue is needed on the optimum governance arrangements in Australia, and mechanisms for its funding. This needs to reflect that local governments are established by state governments in Australia, as well as recognise the diversity of interests and capacities. A funding strategy also needs to be innovative and explore roles of businesses, NGOs and philanthropic organisations, as well as governments.
- (ii) **Communication.** Implementation needs to be supported by effective and tailored communication that clarifies the value proposition for local government participation, and the opportunities and benefits of collective action. One priority issue raised by the Roundtable was the need for clear messaging around how to align climate change action with the core functions of local government, and specifically also with risk management, jobs, and regional economies. The importance of cross pollination of ideas about what is possible and feasible in terms of local responses and leadership was also noted.
- (iii) **Partnerships.** Numerous opportunities for partnerships were identified throughout the Roundtable, and included between leading Councils with the capacity to more widely share experience, Councils that are pledged to act on the “climate emergency”, Councils with shared interests in partnerships with knowledge providers to tackle a priority issue such as health, and Councils that can generate and share knowledge on successful measures. Clarity is needed on priority partnerships that can demonstrate value in the near-term.
- (iv) **Data and measurement.** A clear approach is needed to move to align existing approaches with the GCoM, particularly from key initiatives that need continued recognition such as successful state government measures and those from NGOs such as the Cities Power Partnerships and BZE. Finding ways to overcome key gaps in current datasets is also critical, and to drive the efficiencies that can be realised from a centrally managed platform. The potential to add value to the national inventory with further and aggregated local action was also noted, and could be explored and articulated.
- (v) **Tools and resources.** The Roundtable noted the diversity of relevant tools available, and recognised that many local governments appreciate support and guidance on preferred tools that have been shown to be regionally suitable. The potential to access and apply relevant international resources was also noted, and the opportunities needs clarification. In civil society “Ironbark Sustainability” has initiated a discussion forum on data, measurement and targets and provides an initial platform for further work.

The Roundtable supported ICLEI Oceania establishing an interim advice and reference group to progress consideration of the wider adoption of GCoM in Australia, including of mobilising an integrated approach to the five priority issues above that could deliver benefits in a near-term horizon.

In establishing an advice and reference group, the Roundtable recognised the roles of the three levels of government in Australia, and of NGOs/private sector and knowledge providers as they relate to GCoM. The following table summarises the relevant roles of governments and NGOs in Australia.

<p><b>State government roles</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Capacity for GCoM to better align to legislation and programs</li> <li>• Value in unifying data, measures and indicators and reporting frameworks</li> <li>• Coordinate responses and engage in national processes</li> <li>• Share information, tools, resources, case studies across boundaries</li> <li>• Provide direct support to councils meeting GCoM commitments</li> <li>• Work with regional organisations of councils (and similar) to create scale and exemplars</li> </ul>	<p><b>Local government associations</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure climate responses link to critical local issues including transport, health, quality of life and jobs</li> <li>• Facilitate coordinated approaches among councils and across states</li> <li>• Pursue strategic goals with the Australian Local Government Association and other spheres of government (eg efficiencies of common reporting framework)</li> <li>• Develop, document and promote case studies</li> </ul>
<p><b>Australian Government roles</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• National accounts and targets, including reporting on progress to include local government action</li> <li>• Data provision and research of national importance of local government contribution</li> <li>• National coordination regarding climate disaster risk management and reporting</li> <li>• Coordination through CoAG of approach and resourcing for long term strategy (eg linking climate change to liveability, health)</li> <li>• International engagement, narratives and reporting that recognise local government action</li> </ul>	<p><b>NGO /civil society/private sector roles</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Delivery of support programs that can drive ambition beyond state targets</li> <li>• Potential to align key programs elements or initiatives with GCoM</li> <li>• Community engagement and mobilisation capacity</li> <li>• Link to philanthropic support</li> <li>• Direct support to councils as service provider ensuring agreed standards and reporting requirements are met</li> </ul>



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