



**Municipal Association of Victoria**

**Submission:**  
**Climate Change Summit Discussion**  
**Paper**

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*While this paper aims to broadly reflect the views of local government in Victoria, it  
does not purport to reflect the exact views of individual councils.*

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## 1 Introduction

The Municipal Association of Victoria (MAV) welcomes the opportunity to provide a submission to the Victorian Government's Climate Change Summit Discussion Paper.

Climate change is the greatest social, economic and environmental challenge that Victoria, Australia and the world is facing. The MAV recognises that the implications of this will result in local government being at the 'coal face' of managing the impacts of climate change and providing leadership for the broader community. This responsibility will require councils to continue to implement mitigation strategies and adapt their activities and resource allocation to address challenges, potentially at a considerable cost to the sector. Victorian councils have recognised the importance of climate change, as the MAV's recent statewide strategic work plan consultation showed, climate change is one of the top three issues of concern for local government.

The local government sector also believes that with this crisis, comes opportunity. Opportunities may exist in the form of economic development within a "climate change economy", particularly in regional areas. This could be in the form of research and development, land management for carbon sequestration and biodiversity outcomes, and decentralised renewable energy production. Acting quickly and substantively on climate change will help to ensure these opportunities are not lost. Local government can help the State Government harness these opportunities, through its direct contact with communities, detailed local knowledge and an understanding of the need for practical change.

The MAV recognises that climate change is a global issue, and any successful response will need go well beyond the borders of Victoria. However, there are many reasons for Victoria to take a leadership position in cutting greenhouse gas emissions. Firstly, a leadership position will allow new industries to develop, facilitating economic development whilst adapting to climate change. Also, an earlier cut in greenhouse gas emissions will lessen the economic shock of carbon pricing and the effects of any future post-Kyoto global agreement, which will place obligations on Australia to reduce emissions. Secondly, Victoria's per capita emissions are amongst the highest in Australia and the world, and historically Victoria and Australia generally have contributed to the build up of carbon in the atmosphere more than any other country in our region. As such, Victoria has an obligation to lead responses to climate change.

While Victoria has adopted several innovative climate change policies, such as the Victorian Energy Efficiency Target (VEET) and the Victorian Renewable Energy Target (VRET), our emissions continue to grow rapidly, particularly in the energy and transport sectors. This highlights not only how much work remains to be done, but that we need to be aware of how difficult the task is, and that we must be prepared to make sacrifices as well as grasp opportunities to achieve a safe climate future.

The MAV believes the state and local government sectors will be able to work together to help achieve the goals and targets required to mitigate dangerous climate change and help our community and economy adapt and prosper under a changing climate. Victoria's communities are demanding action to address climate change, and

local government believes this action can be best taken in a coordinated approach across all levels of government.

This submission firstly contains some basic principles that the MAV considers to be important in the development of any climate change mitigation and adaptation response. The remainder of the submission covers the important areas of local government function, describes the current actions that local government is taking and where there is room for additional actions that could be achieved with State Government and local government cooperation.

## **1.1 Key Recommendations**

The following are the key recommendations in this submission. A number of other recommendations are included in Section 4.

### **Principles for Climate Change Action**

- That the State Government incorporate the following set of principles when developing climate change policy:
  - Incorporation of climate change policy across all government decisions
  - Science based targets
  - Equity
  - Recognition of urgency
  - Recognition of difficulty

### **Asset Management**

- The MAV believes that State and local government should work together to ensure the standard of infrastructure across the state is maintained as climate change impacts worsen. A start for this aim is the establishment of an infrastructure-climate change data model to measure impacts.

### **Economic Development**

- The State Government should work with local government to ensure that communities (particularly rural and regional) are not significantly disadvantaged in the development of industries within the “climate change economy”, through encouraging localised innovations and industries.
- That the State Government amend its proposed solar feed-in tariff to capture gross metering rather than net metering, and set a timetable for extending the feed-in tariff scheme to commercial scale systems, which will further drive investment and emissions reduction benefits.

### **Natural Resource Management (NRM)**

- Local government is willing to respond to statewide guidance on up-to-date climate change scenarios and regional climate change data. A statewide approach to climate change adaptation for biodiversity would be most effective, facilitated through strong partnerships on a regional level between municipal councils and other organisations. These partnerships could coordinate activities such as the establishment of biodiversity corridors. Capacity building within local government may be needed for councils to respond to State Government guidance.

### **Emergency Management**

- Partnerships between local and State Government, such as the DHS/council heatwave strategy, should be continued into the future, looking at developing local response plans for other aspects of emergency management that are affected by climate change such as pandemics, floods and bushfire.

### **Health and Aged Care**

- That the State Government work with (and support) local government to review all local public health plans to include climate change related health effects.

### **Community Education and Engagement**

- That local and State government seize the opportunity for working more closely together to provide information to communities on climate change initiatives and impacts. Initiatives that align with both state and local government priorities could be promoted jointly, with each level of government playing to its strengths and community contacts.
- The State Government should examine the climate change components of community plans, and incorporate this planning in its own climate change response, to improve policy coordination and increase community support for initiatives.

### **Water Use**

- As water prices rise and Victoria becomes drier, State Government should provide assistance to councils in order to enable them to implement water saving technology and keep their community infrastructure working for their residents.

### **Resource Recovery and Waste Management**

- The Victorian Government must contribute directly to the establishment of new technology to process wastes to minimise emissions and extract energy. The full burden of this cost must not be passed onto ratepayers.

### **Public Lighting**

- That the State Government work with local government and energy distributors to develop a plan to switch the state's public lighting to more energy efficient technology, including an agreement to share the cost of this upgrade between retailers, local and State Government.
- The Victorian Government establish an agreed framework that allows rapid testing, approvals and adoption of more efficient technologies as they are developed.

### **Land Use and Development**

- The State Government should undertake a risk assessment (for vulnerability to fire, flood, inundation, land slip, etc.) for the whole state, focusing on local scale impacts.
- Subsequently, the State Government should work with local government in developing adaptation responses to these risk assessments, with a focus on production and infrastructure. These responses should then be incorporated into strategic planning.
- State Government should develop an agreed State policy on sea level rise, storm surges (including coastal erosion), flooding and other impacts and

practice notes on these issues (necessary to guide councils planning responses).

- The State Government should assess whether the next generation 5 star policy is adequate, given current climate science and policy commitments. If it is not adequate, then the current policy should be reviewed. Building designs need to be adopted that consider passive cooling and heating requirements, building orientation, low energy consumption, energy generation, water harvesting and WSUD. Victoria is many years behind other jurisdictions such as the United Kingdom in this regard.
- The State Government needs to assess the adequacy of the VPPs to ensure that appropriate permit triggers exist to enable consideration of likely climate change implications and a required response.
- Prohibited or time limited development zones should be introduced, including particular zones and overlays to deal with climate change scenarios.
- The State Government should help councils to develop decision guidance frameworks, education tool kits for councillors, risk analysis and vulnerability maps for coastal councils to assist in planning decision making. These tools should integrate into the PLANET education program via some climate change modules.

### Transport

- All State transport management and transport infrastructure decisions should incorporate greenhouse gas emissions reduction goals as part of their evaluation process before they are made.
- The State Government should continue to invest in rail freight.

## 2 Principles for Climate Change Action

The MAV believes that a firm set of principles need to be in place to inform the development of Victoria's response to climate change via a climate change bill. These principles can be summarised as:

- Incorporation of climate change policy across all government decisions
- Science based targets
- Equity
- Recognition of urgency
- Recognition of difficulty

Apart from these basic principles, it is important that all actions carried out by the Government are tracked, and greenhouse gas emission reductions measured and audited on a regular basis to enable continuous improvement of policy.

### Incorporation of Climate Change Policy across all Government Decisions

*“Decisions made today – for example, in the creation of new infrastructure or other assets – need to occur in a way which ensures that the outcomes of those decisions are robust enough to cope with, or adapt to, changing climatic conditions in the future.”*

Victorian Greenhouse Strategy Action Plan Update, Victorian Government, 2005

Climate change is an issue that affects every area of the economy. Conversely, most sectors of the economy will provide input into the efforts of governments, business

and the community to mitigate the effects of climate change and adapt. Policy mechanisms need to be put into place that take climate change into consideration whenever a decision is made, in particular infrastructure decisions that have the greatest effect into the long-term due to their long life and high cost to rebuild. Incentives for climate friendly behaviour and disincentives for climate damaging behaviour must be implemented in the tax system, and must be one of the primary goals of any future tax reform.

### Science Based Targets

The most up-to-date science, which includes both observations of actual climate systems and predictive modelling, contain important information about the minimum levels of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere, necessary to avoid runaway climate change. Although there is always uncertainty, it is important that government policy is guided by robust science, and that greenhouse gas emissions targets are determined and supported by science. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) report released in 2007 has already been shown to be out of date by observations, particularly of the Arctic ice sheet, and more recent modelling. The MAV urges the State Government to base its policies on the most recent science.

### Equity

The State Government has in many previous statements already recognised the importance of equity in climate change policy. The Australian Local Government Association's *State of the Regions* report concluded that there were serious risks around the burden of adaptation and impacts of climate change falling disproportionately hardest on rural and regional communities. Poorer households are also going to be burdened disproportionately by the inevitable increases in energy prices caused by carbon pricing. This is despite urban areas and wealthier households being responsible for the majority of emissions. The MAV believes that the burden needs to be spread more evenly, not through reducing the price of energy, but through the supply of energy efficient technologies to exposed households, and/or through mechanisms within the tax system. This equity principle should also be recognised across generations, so that future generations are not forced to bear an inordinate cost to adapt to climate change generated by this and previous generations. The most fundamental response to this is to act promptly to limit the extent of climate change now.

### Recognition of Urgency

The most up-to-date climate science indicates that the world is already tracking beyond the worst case scenario predictions presented by the IPCC's 2007 report. Consequently, any climate change policy needs to incorporate objectives that address the urgency of the task at hand. From a policy perspective it is important to note that any emissions cuts achieved now are more valuable than cuts achieved in the future, due to the lag in effects of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere.

### Recognition of Difficulty

An acceptance of the primacy of climate science, and the recognition of the urgency of the task at hand, necessitates the realisation that achieving the massive cuts in greenhouse gas emissions that are necessary will not be an easy task.

One of the biggest hurdles will be managing community perceptions and expectations. The MAV is of the view that the public must be informed of any degree of structural change that may occur within the economy and that while there will be short and medium-term winners, there will also be short and medium term losers. If

the public is made aware of the implications of reducing emissions they will be more prepared to cooperate with all levels of government when the time comes to implement policy. This approach is more likely to achieve sustainable long-term prosperity and inter-generational quality of life.

### 3 The Role of Local Government

Local government is responsible for implementing many diverse programs, policies and regulations set down by state and Federal governments which directly or indirectly influence climate change mitigation and adaptation. Councils also have to respond to local community needs and have powers to set their own regulations and local laws, and provide a range of discretionary services within each geographically defined boundary.

There are several council functions, which will be discussed in this submission, these are:

- Asset Management
- Economic Development
- Natural resource management (NRM)
- Emergency management
- Health and aged care
- Community education/engagement
- Stormwater
- Water use
- Resource recovery and waste management
- Facilities management
- Public lighting
- Land use and development
- Transport

Local government is responsible for \$40 billion worth of assets and infrastructure including roads, bridges, community facilities and parks and is also responsible for land-use planning with influence over the design, standard and location of residential, commercial and industrial development and associated infrastructure.

It is important to recognise that the strategies required for bringing about a reduction in greenhouse gas emissions cannot be a 'one size fits all' approach. The differences created by the geographic location of metropolitan and rural communities in terms of transport, infrastructure and the built environment necessitates a response that will be equitable, feasible and practical for all Victorians. In this regard, local government can help other levels of government with information as to the particular characteristics of local communities.

### 4 Key challenges for councils

The challenges facing Victorian councils are varied. This is influenced by geographical location, revenue base and the expectations of the diverse communities they represent.

The disparate needs of metropolitan, rural and regional communities in Victoria must be considered when developing policies that will effectively reduce greenhouse gas emissions and help communities adapt to climate change effects. Councils also

have varied financial capacities to manage climate change adaptation. A lack of local level climate change impact data means that decision making by local government is made difficult, and the MAV recognises that projects like Future Coasts will help in this regard, but further work is needed.

Listed below are the main areas of local government function, with details about what local government is currently achieving on climate change and actions to be taken in the future. This is to show that local government is already heavily involved in mitigating and adapting to climate change, and that there is a willingness to continue to act in this regard. The recommendations under each function highlight areas that local government would seek agreement to work together with the State to cut greenhouse gas emissions and help local communities adapt to climate change.

#### **4.1 Asset Management**

Local government manages a wide range of assets, many of which are covered in the sections below. In some areas such as drainage and coastal infrastructure, local government shares a responsibility for management of infrastructure with the State Government. The Infrastructure and Climate Change Risk Assessment for Victoria report, released in March 2007 by the Victorian Government, showed that many areas of infrastructure, such as water, transport and buildings, are at risk due to climate change, and will need to be constructed differently and maintenance regimes adapted.

Poorly maintained and renewed infrastructure is the single largest financial challenge facing councils. As such, ensuring councils can manage this challenge will be an important component of their financial resilience during a time of climate change.

The MAV Asset Management Group has discussed the advantages in establishing an infrastructure-climate change data model to measure the impact of climate change on community infrastructure, with the view to using this to calculate maintenance and renewal needs into the future.

##### Recommendations

- The MAV believes that State and local government should work together to ensure the standard of infrastructure across the State is maintained as climate change impacts worsen. A start for this aim is the establishment of an infrastructure-climate change data model to measure impacts.

#### **4.2 Economic Development**

Currently, local government delivers an economic development function to work with businesses and the community to promote business vitality and attractiveness of a region. In turn business vitality promotes employment, facilities and services to benefit the community.

Councils are active in this area, including programs to support local action in the community (potential to remove disadvantage of place) or area wide programs, e.g. Solar Cities, to bring business together to reduce energy demand on traditional sources of energy and promote and source renewable energy. This is an attempt to

reduce the impact of energy costs on businesses. There are also considerable benefits for the local energy supply industry and services to support these entities.

Councils will need to understand which of their industries will be affected by climate change and those that may need to relocate, restructure, or shut down because they are no longer viable. These changes pose economic threats to the broader community due to the loss of economic activity and population.

An industry-by-industry assessment may be required particularly for agriculture, services to agriculture, manufacturing, services to manufacturing and transport. It is likely that these industries will be directly affected by climate change and associated mitigation strategies.

There is also potential benefits – to promote those industries e.g. energy (particularly renewables), water and waste, which may need to be established or moved to provide more localised solutions in the mix and the opportunity for innovation close to communities. The MAV predicts that smaller, localised solutions will be part of the energy supply mix. Working with those businesses as well as the traditional businesses and communities to aggregate supply/demand solutions will be a role that local government could play, in cooperation with State Government. The photovoltaic solar industry is one that should be encouraged to grow within Victoria, and this is why local government is an advocate for a gross metering solar feed-in tariff.

Another opportunity for encouraging economic development (by increasing energy efficiency) is for local councils to utilise the Victorian Energy Efficiency Target Scheme (VEET). By helping households become more efficient, councils can benefit by selling the certificates generated to electricity retailers. Currently, there is a lack of awareness amongst local government on the VEET scheme, which needs to be rectified by the State Government. Expansion of the VEET to other sectors of the economy should be explored and the target strengthened according to the level of greenhouse gas abatement scientific modelling shows is needed.

#### Recommendations

- The State Government should work with local government to ensure that communities (particularly rural and regional) are not significantly disadvantaged in the development of industries within the “climate change economy”, through encouraging localised innovations and industries.
- That the State Government explore extending the VEET to other sectors of the economy beyond households and strengthening the target.
- That the State Government amend its proposed solar feed-in tariff to capture gross metering rather than net metering, and set a timetable for extending the feed-in tariff scheme to commercial scale systems, which will further drive investment and emissions reduction benefits.

### **4.3 Natural Resource Management (NRM)**

Local government plays an active role in NRM. Councils are involved in the direct management of land such as bushland reserves and roadside vegetation in the areas of conservation, pest control and water quality. Councils are involved in committees of management for coastal and riparian reserves, and other areas of public land. They strengthen community capacity in NRM by providing information, education and

support to Landcare and friends groups. Some councils also offer a range of incentives to private landholders to preserve and manage biodiversity on their land, including financial benefits through the rating system and grants, equipment loans and plant stock for revegetation. Some coastal councils are also undertaking planning and management of coastal assets as sea levels rise.

Local government's strategic and statutory planning functions and development control powers also directly and indirectly influence NRM and the condition of natural assets.

Climate change threatens biodiversity by changing the climate variables which affect the ecosystem's function and resilience. Changes in rainfall, temperatures, soil moisture, bushfire frequency, sea levels and more frequent extreme weather events will put pressure on Victoria's biodiversity and impact on the ability for ecosystems to respond to other threats such as habitat fragmentation or pollution. The same processes that threaten our ecosystem services, also threaten our food security, and this should also be a consideration of the State Government.

Improved and informed protection and management of land, biodiversity and natural assets, will contribute to ecosystem resilience and the ability to adapt to the impacts of climate change.

#### Recommendations

- Local government is willing to respond to statewide guidance on up-to-date climate change scenarios and regional climate change data. A statewide approach to climate change adaptation for biodiversity would be most effective, facilitated through strong partnerships on a regional level between municipal councils and other organisations. These partnerships could coordinate activities such as the establishment of biodiversity corridors. Capacity building within local government may be needed for councils to respond to State Government guidance.
- The MAV recognises that much of this work has already been completed via the development of the Land Health and Biodiversity Green Paper and the White Paper which is due for release in 2009. Any climate change response to NRM within the Climate Change Bill needs to be consistent with the Biodiversity White Paper.
- Local government requires adequate support from Government and agencies to participate in activities that aim to increase the resilience of natural systems to climate change impacts. Importantly, access to useable information and improved alignment between planning processes will strengthen a coordinated approach.

#### **4.4 Emergency Management**

Local government has a number of functions across the emergency management area, including local implementation of statewide preventative strategies and local risk management and planning. In the case of an emergency, local government has a support role to the State's emergency services. Councils can also support and/or manage community recovery programs after an emergency.

It is likely that climate change is already having an effect on the frequency and severity of emergencies which will increase in the future. If this is the case, then emergency planning and strategies will need to be reviewed and adapted as scientific data becomes available. The Municipal Emergency Management Enhancement Group has recently held a forum on climate change and emergency management, to disseminate information on the issue. Approximately five councils have fully funded emergency management positions, with the rest taking on emergency management above and beyond their everyday roles. This means that councils are currently grappling with the implications of climate change, but struggling to specifically assess the effects they need to prepare for. On heatwaves, local government is working with DHS on 12 projects to develop innovative local response plans, focusing on vulnerable members of the community. This project has been seen as a positive model for further adaptation.

#### Recommendations

- Partnerships between local and State Government, such as the DHS / council one on the heatwave strategy, should be continued into the future, looking at developing local response plans for other aspects of emergency management that are affected by climate change such as pandemics, floods and bushfire.
- As the frequency and severity of emergencies increase due to climate change, local government will require increased resourcing to deal with the challenges they will face. This resourcing could be in the form of regional emergency planning coordinators, either through the SES or another program, who can work with a number of councils on a regional basis. CMAs could be funded to undertake regional flood planning preparedness.

#### **4.5 Health and Aged Care**

Local government has a role in health planning and implementing projects through the municipal health plan. They are in contact with many local residents, including those with some vulnerability, through their maternal and child health and other early years services, youth programs and aged and disability services. They also help organise and coordinate local projects funded by other levels of government.

Climate change is likely to affect the health of many of Victoria's communities through an increase in heat waves and the spreading of vector-borne diseases. Death and injuries from extreme weather events are covered in the emergency management section. Victoria's growing elderly population is particularly vulnerable.

Currently, local government is working with many groups to help the elderly adapt to climate change. The State Government has provided one-off funds to councils through the home and community care (HACC) home maintenance program to assist older people install devices to improve gas, electricity and water efficiency in their homes. Moreland City Council is also doing this through the Moreland Energy Foundation and the Baw Baw Shire Council provided garden makeovers for elderly residents to reduce the maintenance needs. Although this was not initially related to climate change, water is now an important factor in these retrofits.

Any future climate change action that local government takes on health and aged care needs to be well aligned with existing government programs at other levels, and

so communication needs to be maintained between local government and State and Federal Governments in this regard.

As each local government area has different demographics, vulnerability and existing health status, the MAV believes that local government is in a position to carry out a social analysis of community needs and incorporate climate change into public health plans. Local government can also inform the community on health issues that are specific to their communities. There should be information flow in both directions between local and state governments to ensure that the actions of both levels of government are maximised in their effectiveness.

#### Recommendations

- That the State Government work with (and support) local government to review all local public health plans to include climate change related health effects.

### **4.6 Community Education and Engagement**

Local government, being the closest level of government to the community, has an important role to play in community engagement. Local government has the capacity to inform the community on the effects of climate change and how to prepare and manage risks. It also plays a part in mobilising community action.

The majority of Victorian councils are already engaging with their community on climate change issues. The MAV Climate Change Needs Survey (2007)<sup>1</sup>, showed that almost 80 per cent of councils were engaging with their community in some way, while around 45 per cent had run workshops or information sessions with external stakeholders and another 38 per cent were planning on doing this in the future. Many councils around the state are providing financial or in-kind support to local climate change action groups, and are also engaging the community via the greenhouse alliances, which run community engagement projects.

Councils have also been helping the community and business to reduce their energy and other resource use in their activities. For example, Moyne Shire has run the Energise Business Program (with ICLEI), which has been extended to other councils and Port Phillip City has run the Sustainable Living at Home Program. Moreland has sought to engage Real Estate agents as a way of educating home buyers and landlords about the benefits of 'Energy Smart Homes'. Some councils are supporting local climate change action groups through monetary and/or in kind resources, as these groups are becoming more widespread and influential. Many have reported that these relationships are fruitful and it is worth exploring further cooperation.

The MAV is managing the biggest community engagement program in Australia with the Lighthouse Program. Seventy councils are involved and are busy facilitating 'bottom up' community plans. These plans are 'owned' by the community and not the council. Climate change is already playing a role in these plans. These plans can

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<sup>1</sup> See:

[http://www.mav.asn.au/CA256C320013CB4B/Lookup/Victorian%5fLocal%5fGovernment%5fClimate%5fChange%5fNeeds%5fSurvey%5fReport/\\$file/MAV%20Climate%20Change%20Needs%20Survey%20Report%5fFinal%5fNov%202007.pdf](http://www.mav.asn.au/CA256C320013CB4B/Lookup/Victorian%5fLocal%5fGovernment%5fClimate%5fChange%5fNeeds%5fSurvey%5fReport/$file/MAV%20Climate%20Change%20Needs%20Survey%20Report%5fFinal%5fNov%202007.pdf)

become a central plank in a sector-wide initiative, which will engage the community and help them to develop their own climate change mitigation and adaptation initiatives.

#### Recommendations

- That local government and State Government seize the opportunity for working more closely together, in providing information to communities on climate change initiatives and impacts. Initiatives that align with both state and local government priorities could be promoted jointly, with each level of government playing to its strengths and community contacts.
- The State Government should examine the climate change components of community plans, and incorporate this planning in its own climate change response, to improve policy coordination and increase community support for initiatives.

#### **4.7 Stormwater**

Local government is the owner and manager of stormwater infrastructure. In the Melbourne Metropolitan Area, local government manages all stormwater drainage with a catchment area of less than 60ha, whereas outside of this area it generally manages any drains that are not considered a natural waterway.

Stormwater is important to climate change as an adaptation tool. Climate change is reducing rainfall, which has reduced potable water availability. It is also likely that severe storms will become more common, with the subsequent flash flooding causing property damage and safety risks. Lower flows and higher temperatures also creates the risk that water quality will be reduced in rivers, streams and bays. Badly maintained septic tanks may also pose a risk to water quality and public health if extreme rainfall events cause them to overflow.

Many local councils are adopting water sensitive urban design for their streetscapes and implementing clause 56 of the Victorian Planning Provisions. There is also work being done with developers where Clause 56 does not apply. Water sensitive urban design has the multiple purpose of cleaning stormwater and reducing the risk of flood.

Councils are also investing money in capturing stormwater for reuse. This is usually in the form of tanks on council buildings and in parks and gardens. This reduces the need for potable water and also maintains community infrastructure.

Many councils are concerned that there is not a clear delineation of responsibilities with regards to harvesting stormwater. With greater support from water authorities, more stormwater harvesting could be achieved.

#### Recommendations

- The State Government should include water sensitive urban design obligations on developers beyond the Greenfield residential sites covered under Clause 56, which would then enable greater uptake of water sensitive urban design (WSUD) technologies across Victoria.

- The State Government should consider funding of phase 2 of the Onsite Domestic Wastewater Management Policy and Regulatory Review project, to improve management and maintenance of septic tanks.

#### 4.8 Water Use

Local government's responsibilities require the use of water, for the maintenance of community parks, gardens and sporting fields.

The vast majority of councils are adapting to a drier climate, by reducing their water use. This generally involves implementing water saving technology in parks, gardens and sports fields, such as moisture sensors and automatic drip feed watering systems and retrofitting council buildings with water saving devices. Thirty-five Victorian councils are now participating in ICLEI's Water Campaign. However, as the dry conditions continue, alternative activities or facilities may need to be provided where it is not possible to maintain facilities such as sports grounds at a safe and useable level. Local government is limited in its ability to provide these alternatives and will required State Government resourcing.

##### Recommendations

- As water prices rise and Victoria becomes drier, State Government should provide assistance to councils to enable them to implement water saving technology and keep their community infrastructure working for their residents.
- Funding for recycling fit-for-purpose water needs to be increased, and this water made available to local government.

#### 4.9 Resource Recovery and Waste Management

Councils have a responsibility under the *Health Act 1958* to maintain their municipal area in a 'clean and sanitary condition'. Therefore they provide household and street waste collection and other cleaning services. Local government spends over \$351 million providing recycling, waste, litter and street sweeping services across Victoria.

Resource recovery and waste management are relevant to climate change in two important ways. Firstly, resource recovery reduces resource use, including energy, through reducing the need to extract and process virgin materials. Secondly, methane, a highly potent greenhouse gas is produced in landfills from the rotting of organic materials.

Councils have worked hard on establishing a nation-leading system of kerbside recycling and transfer stations to recover used materials. The kerbside recycling in 2005/06 saved over 277,000 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub>e emissions through energy savings in recycling materials<sup>2</sup>. Councils have also been progressively closing smaller landfills, in favour of constructing larger landfills with modern design and greenhouse gas capture or using a third party's facility. Recycling of garden organics is quite common, with over 645,000 tonnes of garden organics were diverted from landfill for reprocessing into mulch and compost in Victoria in 2005/06<sup>3</sup>. Currently, Nillumbik

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<sup>2</sup> Sustainability Victoria (2007) *Victorian Local Government Data Collection 2005–06*,

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid*

Shire Council is the only council offering regular recycling of food organics, a significant source of methane generation in landfill, although a number of councils are trialling collections. Sixty Victorian councils are members of ECO-Buy, which displays broad commitment across the sector for the purchase of goods which, among other things, contain recycled content and lower embodied energy than the mainstream equivalent product.

Processing of the organic component in waste, whether separated food organics or a mixed municipal stream is the single biggest contribution that councils can make to reducing their community's emissions. However, large scale anaerobic treatment of organic waste is expensive and will require significant investment. Economies of scale assist with this infrastructure, as can be seen with the Metropolitan Waste Management Group. Local government will continue to work on ensuring that its landfills are best-practice when it comes to capturing the methane produced, which can then be used for energy generation.

#### Recommendations

- The Victorian Government must contribute directly to the establishment of new technology to process wastes to minimise emissions and extract energy. The full burden of this cost must not be passed onto ratepayers.
- The Australian and Victorian Government should move quickly to support and establish extended producer responsibility schemes, to ensure the embodied energy in these products is not lost in landfill.

#### **4.10 Facilities management**

Local government manages a range of facilities for community services, as well as for their own operations. These include leisure and aquatic centres, libraries, maternal and child health centres, civic centres, town halls and council offices. These facilities use significant amounts of energy, contributing to climate change.

Councils have recognised the importance of reducing the energy their facilities use and are taking action. The ICLEI Cities for Climate Protection Program (CCP) has been the primary method for Victorian councils to measure their emissions, set targets and implement action plans for reduction. CCP has 69 Victorian local government members, including councils of varying degrees of adaptation, from the political declaration stage, through to councils extending their reach beyond their own operations. The Victorian local government sector is probably the most advanced in the country in this regard.

The many councils that have already measured their emissions and are implementing their action plan have: moved to high-efficiency lighting, optimised heating and cooling of spaces, and incorporated good environmental design in their new and refurbished buildings. For example, the Cities of Melbourne and Hume with new council office buildings, 6 and 5 GreenStar rated respectively.

Some councils, such as Maribyrnong and Maroondah use cogeneration technology at their aquatic centres, creating hot water for the pool and electricity for the facility. Many councils are already purchasing a proportion of their energy from 'green power' sources and others have installed solar photo-voltaic energy generation or ground source heating and cooling. Councils are always looking for ways to improving the efficiency of their energy use.

Future investment in improving the performance of council facilities could include co-generation (or tri-generation) which generates heat and electricity, renewable energy generation.

#### Recommendations

- The Victorian Government should continue to provide technical advice and funding assistance to further increase the efficiency of energy use and renewable energy generation in Victorian local government. This should extend beyond innovative or demonstration projects to the widespread roll-out of already proven zero emissions technology.

### **4.11 Public Lighting**

Local government is solely responsible for paying for the operation, maintenance and replacement of street lighting on local roads, pathways and public areas. Local government also pays 40 per cent of the cost of street lighting VicRoads' arterial roads. Victorian local government spends around \$40 million per annum on public lighting services. The electricity use contributes to between 30 and 70 per cent of councils' corporate greenhouse gas emissions.

Many councils are purchasing GreenPower for their public lighting, which is a significant cost. A number of metropolitan councils and some regional councils, due for bulk lamp changeovers are likely to upgrade to high efficiency twin fluorescent light fittings. This involves a major capital outlay and is therefore restricted to councils that have a strong greenhouse emissions target and have sufficient budgetary capacity. Councils have been very active in trialling new low energy lighting technology on public roads, public open spaces such as parks and carparks and using innovative ground lighting, such as LED technology.

Switching the state to more efficient public lighting is an easy win for the environment and a good step forward towards increasing Victoria's energy efficiency and reducing greenhouse gas emissions. It is in both local and State governments' interest that this be done as soon as possible.

#### Recommendations

- That the State Government work with local government and energy distributors to develop a plan to switch the state's public lighting to more energy efficient technology, including an agreement to share the cost of this upgrade between retailers, local and State government.
- The Victorian Government establish an agreed framework that allows rapid testing, approvals and adoption of more efficient technologies as they are developed.

### **4.12 Land Use and Development**

The land use planning system is the primary mechanism for controlling land use and development in Victoria. The relevant legislation is the Planning and Environment Act 1987 as amended in 2000.

The system prescribed in the Act relies heavily on local government. Land use planning forms a critical part of council activities and contributes actively to sustainability objectives, economic development, heritage and environmental conservation, as well as guiding development for long-term community benefit.

All councils and land in Victoria are covered by land use planning controls which are prepared and administered by the State and local government. In many planning matters councils require support, resources and collaboration with the State to effectively implement, responsibly administer and address issues for a sustainable future.

The MAV currently provides assistance and support to councils and councillors on a range of land use planning issues and programs relevant to local government, particularly in relation to the planning system, urban planning, rural planning and the built environment.

Under the planning system, councils have two key roles:

1. As the 'planning authority', a council sets strategic policy framework for its municipality and initiates change to the planning scheme
2. As the responsible authority, a council administers the planning scheme for its municipality and makes decisions on individual applications for a planning permit.

Urban Planning deals with the design of the built environment from the municipal and metropolitan perspective. It encompasses a range of matters associated with urban areas – land use, transportation, housing, open space and recreation, physical and community infrastructure, as well as the conservation of environmental and heritage resources.

Rural planning and land management involves land use planning but also natural resource management, economic and regional development, transport planning and local community based planning, facilitation, mediation and conflict resolution. Many of these issues have been touched on in other sections of this submission.

The built environment contributes to the urban fabric, design and built form of Victoria's cities and towns and is a tangible product of our planning and building policy and approvals systems. The built environment affects people's health, access to work, transport and services, and quality of life. In order to mitigate and adapt to climate change, our cities need to decentralise, and housing density needs to increase in areas with good access to public transport, shops and jobs.

There are a number of initiatives that councils are currently carrying out with regards to climate change in planning area, these are described below.

### **Planning Systems and Tools**

The STEPS (Sustainable Tools for Environmental Performance Strategy) and SDS (Sustainability Design Scorecard) tools were designed by the City of Port Phillip and the City of Moreland to help builders, architects, developers and local government staff to assess the sustainability of building designs, and are used by some councils in the planning permit assessment process. STEPS and SDS have been piloted and

are working in eight metropolitan Melbourne councils and other councils are now considering the use of the tools.

Councils are concerned about a lack of clarity about the relative roles of both building regulations (minimum standards) and planning permit conditions or scheme requirements (performance objectives) in contributing to Ecologically Sustainable Development (ESD) outcomes. Recent VCAT determinations provide support to councils seeking to improve performance in this area.

Aspects considered include environmental performance across energy, water, materials and other factors.

### **Strategic Planning**

Councils develop the local section (LPPF – Clause 21 and clause 22) of their planning schemes, consistent with State policy and approved by the Minister for Planning. A number of councils are including sustainability objectives in their MSS (Municipal Strategic Statement – Clause 21) or as local policy in Clause 22 such as the ESD requirements for Doncaster Hill in the City of Manningham or for office developments in the City of Melbourne.

Other councils seeking to amend their scheme to change local requirements have been frustrated in the process.

In the VPP, clause 56 and clause 12 seek to improve subdivision design and increase the range and level of activity in centres and encourage more diverse housing choices. These strategies can lead to the reduced need for trips by car, better access to services, open space and employment and other 'place making' objectives, with associated benefits in terms of emissions and solar orientation and WSUD in new larger scale subdivisions.

Councils also contribute, through strategic studies to the knowledge and thinking about emerging issues associated with climate change.

### **Vulnerability assessments – climate change impacts and adaptations studies**

Importantly, the MAV is participating in the *Future Coasts* project led by DSE. This will provide consistent methodology and data regarding coastal geomorphology and in future will overlay CSIRO data regarding prevalent weather conditions to identify coastal areas subject to erosion or flooding risk from climate change and storm surge. However, apart from coastal areas, there remain large gaps in knowledge on local level risk assessments on the impacts of climate change.

### **Buildings and Infrastructure**

The Local Government ESD Advocacy Group established in response to frustrations among councils in integrating ESD considerations into planning permit assessment processes, and the lack of progress by DSE with their Sustainability in the Built Environment project. The group is seeking a comprehensive statewide approach to achieving ESD outcomes integrated into both the planning and building frameworks and wants to work with government to achieve this. The group comprises councillors and council officers as well as industry and government representatives.

There are a number of opportunities for local government to further use its functions within the land use and development area to further its and the State Government's objectives related to climate change. There is strong support in the local government

sector for actions and incentives to improve the sustainability of buildings, and these are reflected in some of the recommendations below.

## Recommendations

### Strategic Planning

- The State Government should undertake a risk assessment (for vulnerability to fire, flood, inundation, land slip, etc.) for the whole state, focusing on local scale impacts.
- Subsequently, the State Government should work with local government in developing adaptation responses to these risk assessments, with a focus on production and infrastructure. These responses should then be incorporated into strategic planning.
- State Government should develop an agreed State policy on sea level rise, storm surges (including coastal erosion), flooding and other impacts and practice notes on these issues (necessary to guide councils planning responses).
- The State Government should provide clarity in the State Planning Provisions Framework (SPPF) for councils, with respect to climate change and its impacts, particularly for rural land.
- The State Government should develop clear statewide policies to protect against liability of past and future planning decisions when developments are affected by climate change impacts. These policies need to be equitable and consistent across the state.
- The State Government should assess whether the next generation 5 star policy is adequate, given current climate science and policy commitments. If it is not adequate, then the current policy should be reviewed. Building designs need to be adopted that consider passive cooling and heating requirements, building orientation, low energy consumption, energy generation, water harvesting and WSUD. Victoria is many years behind other jurisdictions such as the United Kingdom in this regard.
- The State Government should support programs for the retrofitting of existing stock, to improve built environment sustainability should be developed.
- The State Government should explore ways to ensure that the response to climate change also rewards what has already been done in this area.
- Canopy trees and green roofs should be encouraged. Space should be provided for trees in urban areas, and standards for green roofs developed, to combat the heat island effect, which is likely to worsen as climate change worsens.

### Statutory Planning

- The State should augment its standard conditions to include recommendations to deal with decisions on land use affected by climate change.
- The State Government needs to assess the adequacy of the VPPs to ensure that appropriate permit triggers exist to enable consideration of likely climate change implications and a required response.
- Prohibited or time limited development zones should be introduced, including particular zones and overlays to deal with climate change scenarios.
- The State Government should ensure planning processes and provisions enable an easy transition of rural land use where climate change makes this necessary.

- The State Government should ensure that applications for approvals for new technologies are dealt with in a timely manner. This is particularly relevant for energy-from-waste (EFW) facilities incorporating pyrolysis technology.

#### Education

- The State Government should help councils to develop decision guidance frameworks, education tool kits for councillors, risk analysis and vulnerability maps for coastal councils to assist in planning decision making. These tools should integrate into the PLANET education program via some climate change modules.
- The State Government should provide support for councils to provide comprehensive on-line and over the counter information that is tailored to the local situation and opportunities.

### **4.13 Transport**

Local government has taken an increasing interest in transport, and in particular linking transport issues to environmental and health outcomes for their communities. Local government has a role in providing community transport, as well as being the managers of all local roads and cycling and pedestrian infrastructure.

Councils have been big supporters of public transport and have consistently sought to increase funding for this vital community service. Local government across the state is involved with trying to reduce the demand for travel, through integration of their land use and transport planning, and promoting active transport such as cycling and walking.

Many councils do a great job of promoting cycling and walking as a sustainable form of 'journey to work' transport. According to 2006 Census data, Yarra City ranked second out of all Australian local government for the percentage (6.4 per cent) of its residents that travelled to work by bicycle (12.3 per cent walked and 24.1 per cent used public transport). Other Victorian councils that appeared in the Top 20 list include Moreland, Port Phillip and Darebin. Bendigo has recently introduced the 'Walk Bendigo' initiative to limit the number of cars within its CBD area and provide streets that are more amenable to walking. The State Government should also be vigorously promoting active transport in its policies and providing adequate infrastructure for take-up of this mode.

The City of Darebin's 'Transport Strategy' is based on principles of sustainable living and sustainable community growth. Moreland and Manningham are currently developing similar strategies.

In export-orientated municipalities such as Mildura and West Wimmera, coalitions of councils are lobbying for increased investment in Victoria's rail infrastructure network. Many of the arguments in favour of such investment are based around the transport industry's high emission of greenhouse gases and the rising volume of trucks required to handle the rising freight task to and from the Port of Melbourne.

When it comes to fleet management, Hume City Council is to become the first metropolitan Melbourne council to power its diesel vehicle fleet with greenhouse gas emission-saving biodiesel fuel. The council has so far converted about 20 vehicles, primarily in its garbage fleet, to run on biodiesel and plans to power all 64 of its diesel

fleet vehicles with biodiesel by March 2009. The Maribyrnong City Council has received funding to purchase electric vehicles and some councils have made bicycles available to their staff for short to medium distance business travel. Many councils are also reducing the size of their vehicles to improve fuel efficiency.

The MAV believes that councils are willing to work with the State Government on transport planning and initiatives such as road pricing that will help reduce the emissions coming from transport in Victoria. Local government can provide essential local information to state transport planners, in order to achieve the most effective transport system possible for a local area. There is also the potential for the joint promotion of active transport to the Victorian community, as an environmentally friendly and healthy way to get around.

#### Recommendations

- That the State Government develop a metropolitan-wide transport and land use plan that includes a reduction of Victoria's greenhouse gas emissions as a key aim.
- All State transport management and transport infrastructure decisions should incorporate greenhouse gas emissions reduction goals as part of their evaluation process before they are made.
- The State Government should continue to invest in rail freight.

## 5 Conclusion

The MAV welcomes the opportunity to provide a submission to the Victorian Government's Climate Change Summit Discussion Paper. Climate change is an urgent problem which is already having negative economic, social and ecological effects across the state. The effort necessary to solve this problem is not to be underestimated. We are currently seeing Victoria's emissions continue to rise, despite State Government recognition of climate change as a major issue.

The recommendations in this submission provide a firm basis from which to continue to build a cooperative relationship between state and local government for putting in place policies to mitigate and adapt to climate change. The MAV is happy to discuss any of these recommendations in more detail as the climate change green paper is developed.