



# VICTORIANS' PERCEPTIONS OF CLIMATE CHANGE

## IN THE FOUR METRO GREENHOUSE ALLIANCES

KEY FINDINGS – SOCIAL RESEARCH ON CLIMATE CHANGE ATTITUDES AND BEHAVIOUR:

 Sustainability  
Victoria



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## 1.0 Introduction

In 2016/17 Sustainability Victoria (SV) engaged an external research provider, Wallis Market and Social Research, to conduct a state-wide survey to collect baseline quantitative data on Victorian residents' attitudes, beliefs and behaviours in relation to climate change. The data will be shared with stakeholders and used to inform policy and programs within SV and relevant Departments.

A Key Findings Report and separate reports for each region are available on the SV website, <http://www.sustainability.vic.gov.au/About-Us/Research>.

This report shows the survey results across the four metropolitan Greenhouse Alliances:

**Western Alliance** for Greenhouse Action (WAGA); **Northern Alliance** for Greenhouse Action (NAGA); **Eastern Alliance** for Greenhouse Action (EAGA) and **South East Councils Climate Change Alliance** (SECCCA).

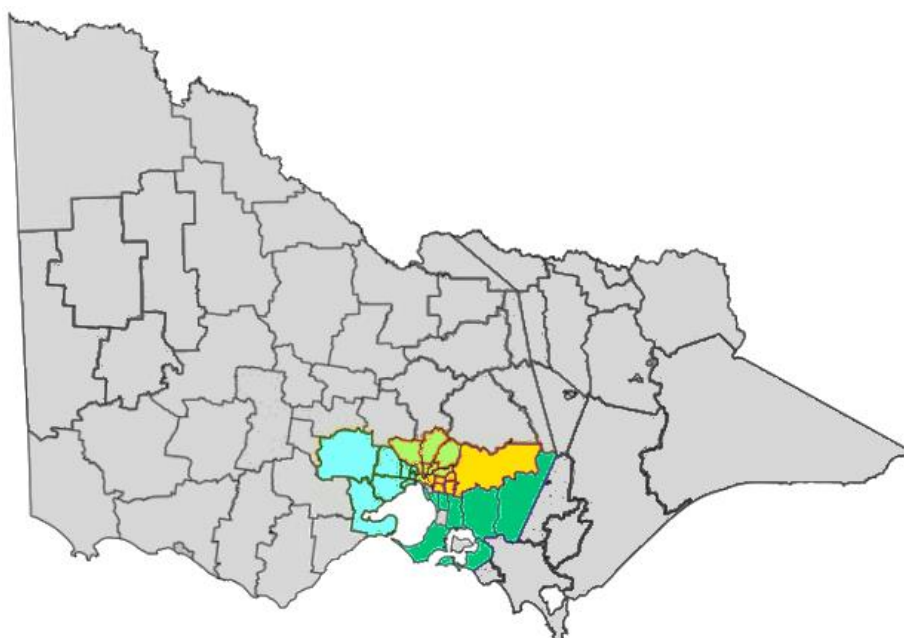


**Figure 1. Metropolitan Alliances Groupings**

| Western Alliance for Greenhouse Action (WAGA)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              | Northern Alliance for Greenhouse Action (NAGA)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          | Eastern Alliance for Greenhouse Action (EAGA)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           | South East Councils Climate Change Alliance (SECCCA)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Brimbank City Council</li> <li>• City of Greater Geelong</li> <li>• Hobsons Bay City Council</li> <li>• Maribyrnong City Council</li> <li>• City of Melton</li> <li>• City of Moonee Valley</li> <li>• Wyndham City</li> <li>• Moorabool Shire Council</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• City of Banyule</li> <li>• City of Darebin</li> <li>• Hume City Council</li> <li>• City of Manningham</li> <li>• City of Melbourne</li> <li>• City of Moreland</li> <li>• Shire of Nillumbik</li> <li>• City of Whittlesea</li> <li>• City of Yarra</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Borroondara City</li> <li>• Knox City Council</li> <li>• Maroondah City Council</li> <li>• City of Monash</li> <li>• City of Stonnington</li> <li>• City of Whitehorse</li> <li>• Yarra Ranges Council</li> <li>• City of Glen Eira</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bayside City Council</li> <li>• City of Kingston</li> <li>• Mornington Peninsula Shire</li> <li>• City of Port Phillip</li> <li>• Greater Dandenong</li> <li>• City of Casey</li> <li>• Cardinia</li> <li>• Baw Baw Shire Council</li> <li>• Bass Coast</li> </ul> |



## Methodology

The main survey was administered using a telephone interview methodology, with an online follow-up survey emailed to those respondents who agreed to take part in further research.

A total of 3,333 Victorians aged 15 years and over took part in the telephone survey; of these, 451 also completed the follow-up online survey. The total number of interviews conducted across the four Alliances was 1,607.

Telephone interviews were conducted from 17 November to 14 December 2016, following a pilot test among a small sample of Victorians. The online survey was conducted from 19 December 2016 to 20 January 2017, during which two reminders were emailed to non-responders.

## Sample Design

The sampling frames used for the telephone survey – randomly generated telephone numbers (probability sample) plus a list of existing phone numbers (regional booster sample) – ensured the widest possible coverage of the Victorian population. Landline telephone numbers as well as mobile numbers were used - (a 50/50 mix).

Figure 2 below shows the broad demographic characteristics of the survey respondents for each Alliance. (Blue text indicates that the figure is statistically significantly higher than the state average while red indicates that it is lower. So, from the table below we see that NAGA and EAGA have a higher-than-state- average proportion of residents who are university educated residents, while SECCA and WAGA have a slightly lower-than-average proportion.)

**Figure 2. Sample distribution for the region (weighted)**

| <i>n=</i>                   | Victoria<br>3,331<br>% | NAGA<br>457<br>% | EAGA<br>376<br>% | SECCA<br>367<br>% | WAGA<br>407<br>% |
|-----------------------------|------------------------|------------------|------------------|-------------------|------------------|
| <b>GENDER</b>               |                        |                  |                  |                   |                  |
| Male                        | 48                     | 48               | 45               | 52                | 49               |
| Female                      | 52                     | 52               | 55               | 48                | 51               |
| <b>AGE</b>                  |                        |                  |                  |                   |                  |
| Under 40                    | 44                     | 50               | 46               | 44                | 44               |
| 40-64                       | 39                     | 35               | 37               | 38                | 42               |
| 65+                         | 17                     | 15               | 17               | 19                | 14               |
| <b>EDUCATION LEVEL</b>      |                        |                  |                  |                   |                  |
| University Degree or higher | 21                     | 27               | 28               | 17                | 18               |
| No University               | 79                     | 73               | 72               | 83                | 82               |
| <b>COUNTRY OF BIRTH</b>     |                        |                  |                  |                   |                  |
| Australia                   | 73                     | 70               | 64               | 71                | 69               |
| Elsewhere                   | 27                     | 30               | 36               | 29                | 31               |



## 2.0 Findings

### 2.1 Priority of climate change

Figure 3 below shows the proportion of residents who mentioned each issue as one of the top three issues facing the state.

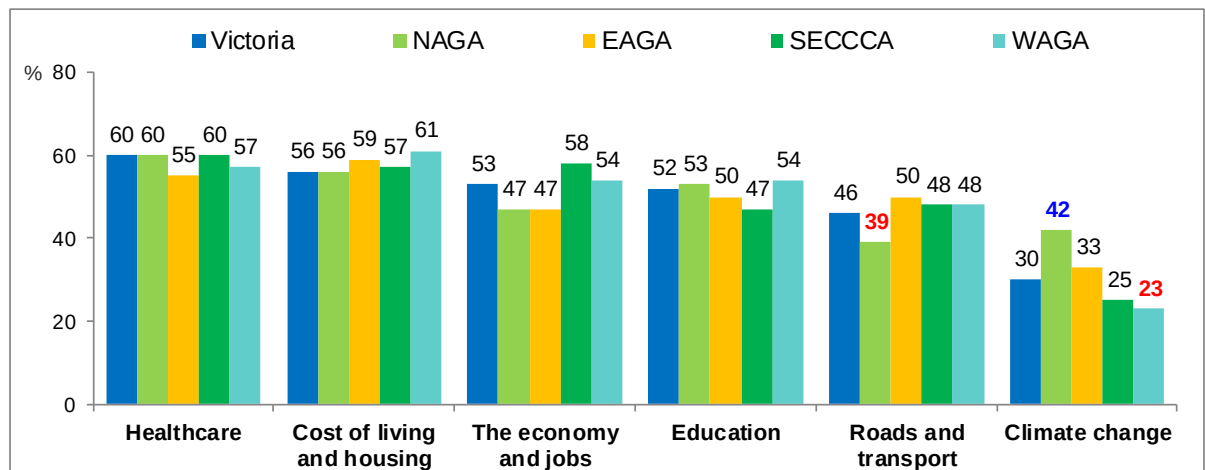
The proportion of residents ranking climate change as one of the top three most important issues facing the state varied across the Alliances, as follows:

- 30%, state average
- 42% NAGA
- 33% EAGA
- 25% SECCCA
- 23% WAGA

NAGA had the highest proportion of residents who ranked climate change as one of the top issues of importance, 42%. While we might expect higher percentages in NAGA (and EAGA) due to higher proportions of university educated residents living in these areas (university education people are more likely than others to be concerned about climate change), this figure is higher than the state average by over ten percentage points, (42% compared to 30% state average). For NAGA residents, climate change was ranked higher than *roads and transport* – all other Alliances ranked *roads and transport* above climate change.

Most Alliances ranked *healthcare* and *the cost of living and housing* as the two top issues of importance.

**Figure 3. Top 3 Priority mentions by location**



Source: A1a/b/c.

Sample Vic n=3,333; Metro Alliances: n=1,607

Given that healthcare is a priority issue among residents, it is important that people begin to understand how climate change will impact upon the health of individuals and the health of the community.



## 2.2 Causation of climate change

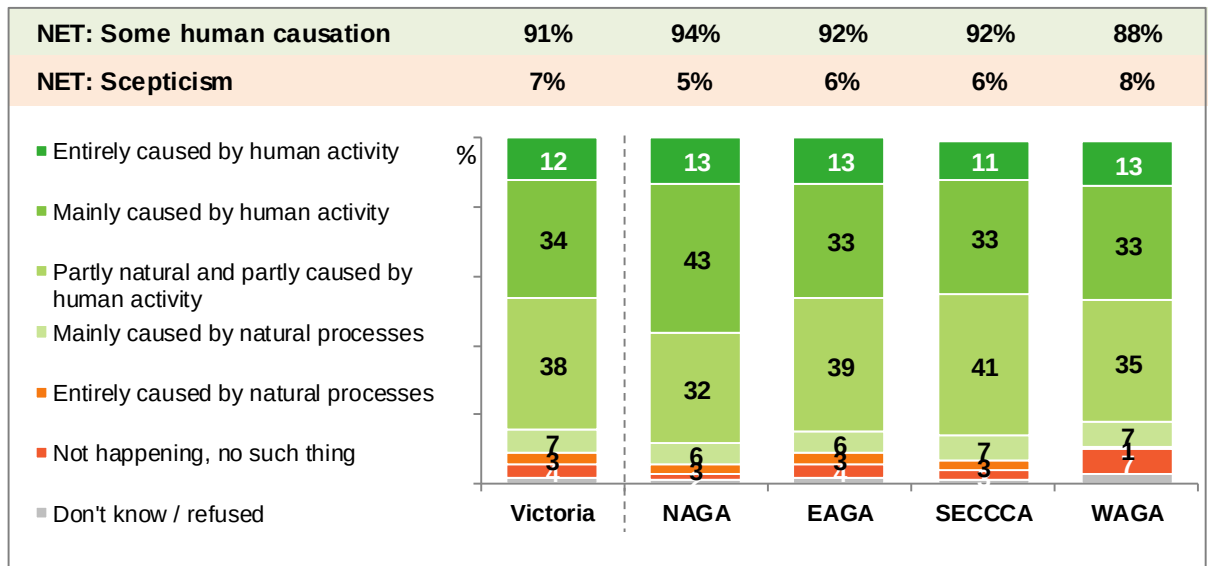
The clear majority of Victorians (91%) **accept some level of human causality** for climate change.

Fewer than one in ten people are sceptical about climate change:

- 3% think climate change is '*entirely caused by natural processes*', and
- 4% of Victorians hold the opinion that '*there is no such thing as climate change*'.

Responses to this question were similar across all Alliances, with no statistically significant differences emerging.

**Figure 4. Opinions about climate change causality**



Source: A2

Sample Vic n=3,333; Metro Alliances: n=1,607



## 2.3 Level of concern

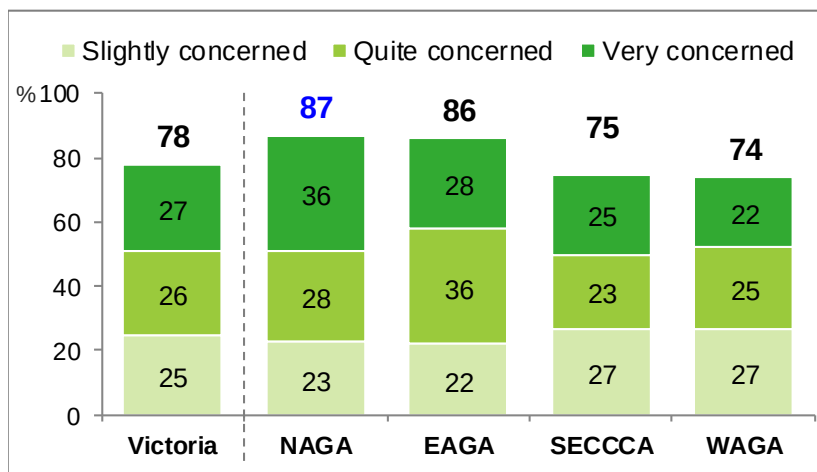
Almost four in five Victorians (78%) stated some level of **concern about climate change**.

Across the state, there were several variations among the demographic subgroups, with levels of concern being higher among:

- Younger age groups (82% among those aged under 40);
- Females (81%);
- Residents of Greater Melbourne (81%);
- Respondents with a university degree (39% are 'very concerned' compared to 27% average).

As shown in the chart below, residents living in the NAGA councils have higher-than-average levels of concern, (87% compared to 78% across the state). WAGA has the lowest, but this difference is not statistically significant, and remains high with three-quarters of the population registering some level of concern about climate change.

**Figure 5. Concern about climate change**



Source: B2

Sample Vic n=3,333; Metro Alliances: n=1,607

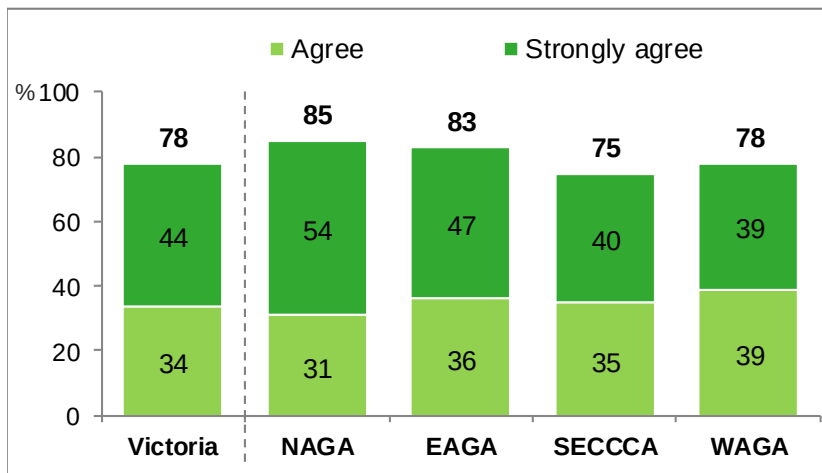


## Need for action now

Four out of five Victorians (78%) agree that ‘**climate change is an issue that requires urgent action now**’. As might be expected, the level of agreement with this statement was higher among those who stated a high level of concern about climate change (96% agreement among those ‘very’ or ‘quite’ concerned).

Again, NAGA figures are the highest among the Alliances and it also has more residents recording ‘strong’ agreement with the statement. However, the total scores show no statistically significant differences between Alliances.

**Figure 6. Agreement that climate change is an issue that requires urgent action now**



Source: D4e | Base: All who believe in some human causation of climate change



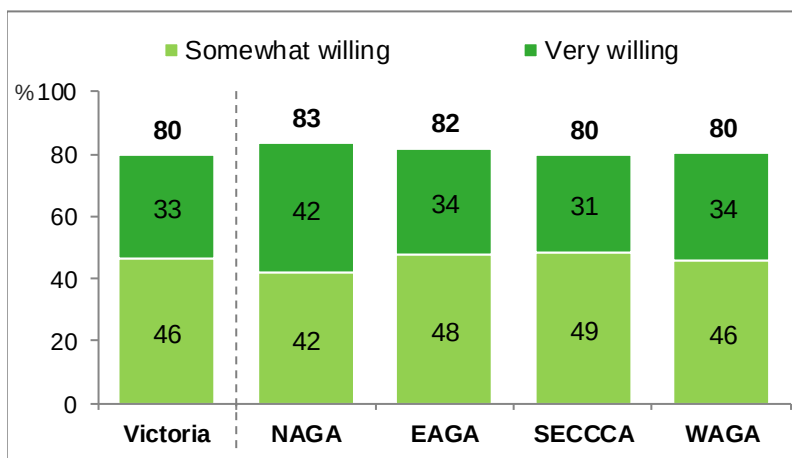
## 2.4 Willingness to act

The majority of Victorians (80%) are at least somewhat **willing to take action to tackle climate change** with a third (33%) stating they are “**very willing**”.

Willingness to act on climate change showed a very similar pattern to concern about climate change in terms of demographic variations; it is higher among the younger age groups (88% among those aged under 25, and 83% among those aged 25-49), and slightly higher among females (83% compared to 77% of males).

Willingness to act scores were similar across the Alliances, however NAGA has a higher proportion of residents stating they are ‘very’ willing to act. This is consistent with scores on other measures, reflecting stronger pro-action attitudes among NAGA residents.

**Figure 7. Willingness to act on climate change**



Source: A3 | Base: All who believe in some human causation of climate change

### **Motivators for action**

Reasons for a willingness to act included:

- the desire to protect the environment for future generations, and /or
- to do their part to ensure the health of the planet.

### **Barriers to action**

Reasons for not being willing to act were mostly related to:

- denial that humans are causing climate change;
- the attitude that there is nothing they can do about it personally; or
- lack of knowledge about what to do.



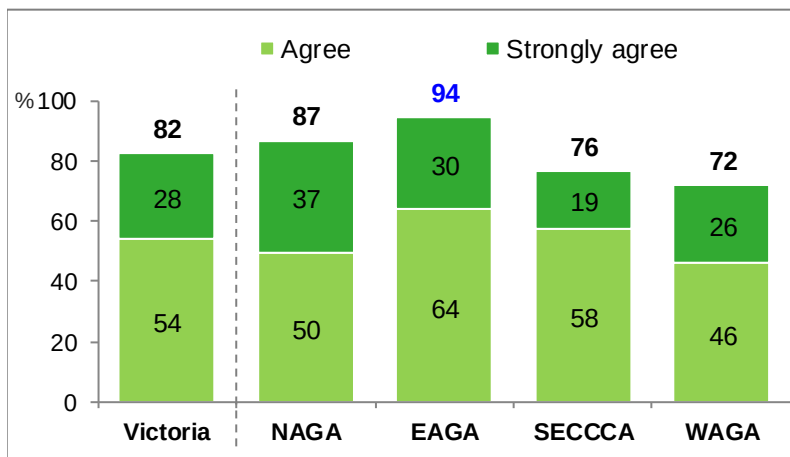
## Willingness to act - other measures

Willingness to act is strongly related to self-efficacy, that is, the belief that there are meaningful things one can do to reduce the impact of climate change. Analysis revealed that the *more concerned* someone is about climate change, and *the more they believe they can make an impact*, the *more likely they are to state a willingness to take action* on climate change.

The Figures below show the results from two measures; self-efficacy and feeling positive about being part of a community-wide movement to help tackle climate change.

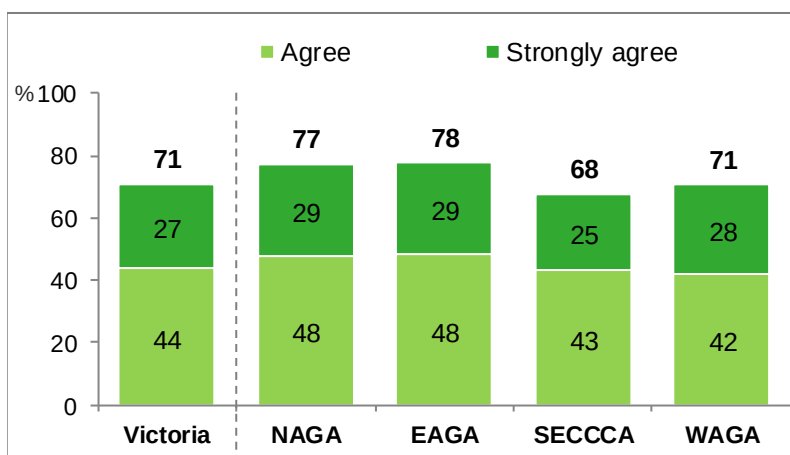
Belief that they can do meaningful things to help reduce the impact of climate change was significantly higher in EAGA than other Alliances with more than nine in ten residents agreeing with the statement, 94%. EAGA also had the highest proportion of respondents saying they would feel positive about being part of a community movement to help tackle climate change, however, the difference on this measure wasn't as marked.

**Figure 8. Self-efficacy**



Source: D4g | Base: Module 2

**Figure 9. Feeling positive about being part of community action**



Source: D4b | Base: All who believe in some human causation

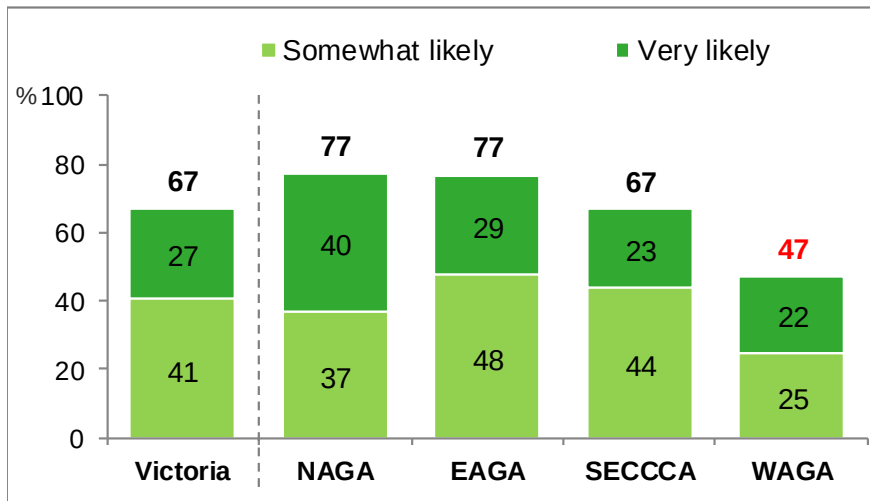


## Pledge to TAKE2

Although awareness of the TAKE2 program is relatively low, the results regarding likelihood of making a pledge indicate potential for a good level of support for the program, with 67% of Victorians saying they are 'very' or 'somewhat likely' to pledge to TAKE2.

Potential take-up was higher in NAGA and EAGA (77% each), which is consistent with the higher scores these areas received for self-efficacy and feeling positive about being part of a community movement to help tackle climate change. Willingness to pledge however was significantly lower in the WAGA Alliance and below the state average, (47%).

**Figure 10. Likelihood of making a pledge to TAKE2**



Source: C10a | Base: Module 3

## 2.5 Impacts of climate change

All survey respondents were asked to state if they have noticed any change in the occurrence of extreme weather and/or environmental events in Victoria over the past 10 years, and if so, whether or not they think that climate change is influencing these changes.

For the most part, the majority perceive that there has been an increase in each event. Among those who have noticed an increase in the occurrence of such events, the vast majority believed climate change was influencing this change.

**Figure 11. Observations of the impacts of climate change – the proportion who see an increase in occurrence**

| Noticed an increase in the occurrence of...                                                                                  | Victoria<br>% | NAGA<br>% | EAGA<br>% | SECCCA<br>% | WAGA<br>% |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------|-----------|-----------|-------------|-----------|
|  Severe bushfires                           | <b>61</b>     | 61        | <b>52</b> | 63          | 63        |
|  Severe storms and floods                   | <b>58</b>     | 60        | 59        | 59          | 53        |
|  Air pollution                              | <b>55</b>     | 61        | 50        | 56          | 57        |
|  Coastal erosion and changes to sea levels | <b>52</b>     | 53        | 52        | 51          | 53        |
|  Crop failures or declining agriculture   | <b>50</b>     | 47        | 51        | 45          | 53        |
|  Heatwaves                                | <b>49</b>     | 53        | 51        | 49          | 48        |
|  Water shortage and drought               | <b>47</b>     | 48        | 42        | 41          | 48        |

**Figure 12. Is climate change influencing? The proportion who say 'yes'**

| Climate change is influencing the observed increase in this?                                                                  | Victoria<br>% | NAGA<br>% | EAGA<br>% | SECCCA<br>% | WAGA<br>% |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------|-----------|-----------|-------------|-----------|
|  Heatwaves                                 | <b>90</b>     | 92        | 87        | 95          | 89        |
|  Coastal erosion and changes to sea levels | <b>89</b>     | 93        | 91        | 88          | 84        |
|  Water shortage and drought                | <b>84</b>     | 90        | 85        | 86          | 83        |
|  Severe storms and floods                  | <b>83</b>     | 83        | 84        | 84          | 83        |
|  Crop failures or declining agriculture    | <b>82</b>     | 85        | 83        | 78          | 86        |
|  Severe bushfires                          | <b>71</b>     | 73        | 74        | 74          | 75        |

Source: B5/B6 | Base: Total sample



## 2.5.1 Concern about the impacts

For each of the extreme weather and/or environmental events, all respondents were asked to state how concerned they are about each one *directly affecting their local area* in the foreseeable future.

As shown in the Table below, levels of concern are quite high across the board, with water shortage and declining agriculture topping the list of state concerns. Across the Metropolitan Alliances, however, air pollution consistently rated as the highest or second highest concern in relation to climate change, particularly in NAGA (78% concerned).

**Figure 13. Proportion who are concerned about each environmental event**

| Concerned about being affected in the near future                                                                             | Victoria % | NAGA % | EAGA % | SECCCA % | WAGA % |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------|--------|--------|----------|--------|
|  Water shortage and drought                  | 72         | 75     | 71     | 67       | 70     |
|  Crop failures or declining agriculture      | 71         | 69     | 68     | 69       | 73     |
|  Severe bushfires                            | 68         | 65     | 61     | 65       | 62     |
|  Air pollution                               | 68         | 78     | 71     | 67       | 71     |
|  Heatwaves                                 | 67         | 74     | 71     | 62       | 64     |
|  Severe storms and floods                  | 65         | 69     | 64     | 62       | 64     |
|  Coastal erosion and changes to sea levels | 51         | 52     | 52     | 56       | 54     |

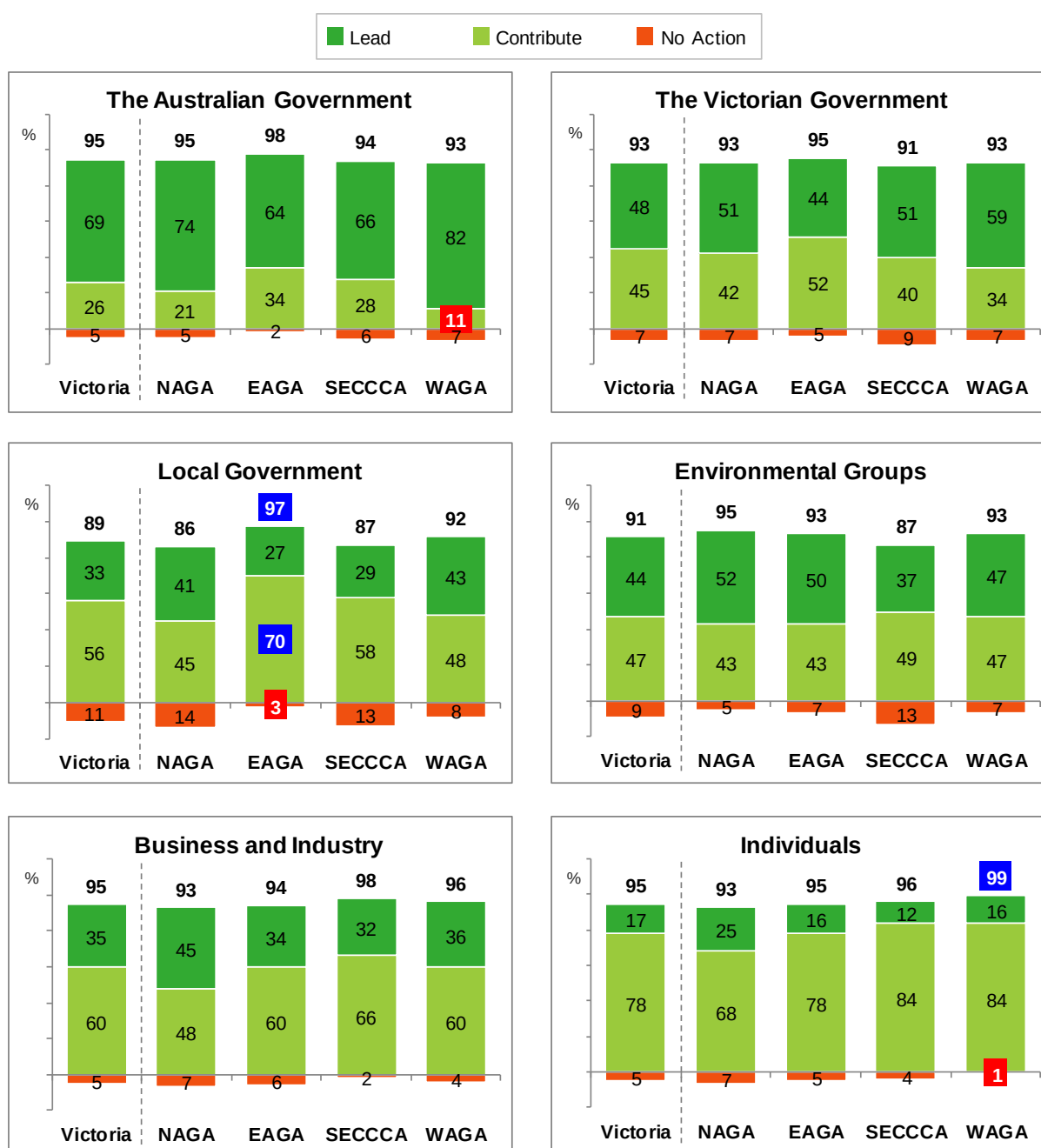
Source: B5/B6 | Base: Total sample

## 2.6 Leadership and responsibility

The Victorian community believes that government, individuals, and business and industry should all be taking action on climate change.

Scores across Alliances show WAGA residents are particularly strong on expecting leadership from the Australian Government (82% expecting leadership compared to 69% state average); EAGA residents are nearly all in agreement that the local councils should be acting on climate change (either in a leading or contributing role); and, although all Alliance areas are strong in their belief that individuals should also act on climate change, WAGA had the highest score at 99%.

**Figure 14. Leadership on climate change**



Source: C1 | Base: Module 3 (VIC: n=1,000 | Barwon n=61) | results exclude DK/REF



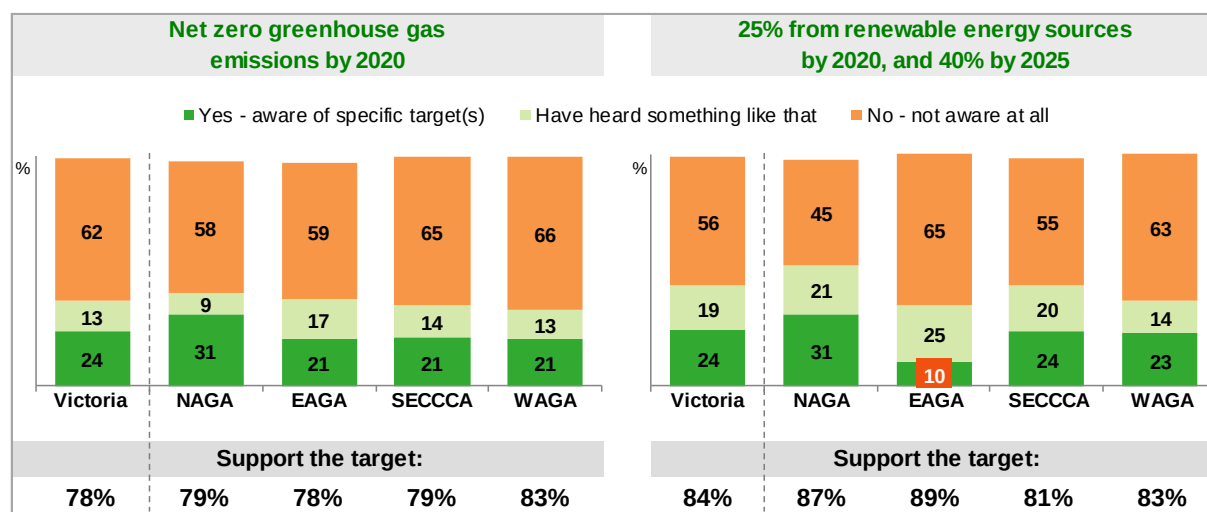
## 2.7 Government climate change targets

Awareness of the state's net zero emission target and renewable energy targets ranged between 21% and 31% across the Alliances, with scores highest in NAGA for both targets.

When the targets were explained to respondents, support for each was consistently high in all Alliances.

As shown in the line of percentages under the charts below, support for the net zero emissions by 2050 was approximately four in five respondents, and was even higher for the renewable energy targets, topping 89% in EAGA

**Figure 15. Awareness of and support for Victorian Government targets**



Source: C4a/C4b/C5a/C6a | Base: Module 2

### Reasons for supporting the targets:

The survey asked respondents their reasons for supporting the targets. A sample of direct quotes from respondents is shown below.

"Because I've got grandchildren. I think renewable energy is the way of the future and I am glad they would be in a position to exploit it. It's the eventual way forward."

"They are trying to do what needs to be done."

"It goes towards air quality, therefore the health of the community, they are all linked, and a healthier community is a happier one."

"I would like it sooner, it is important for the future of the world."

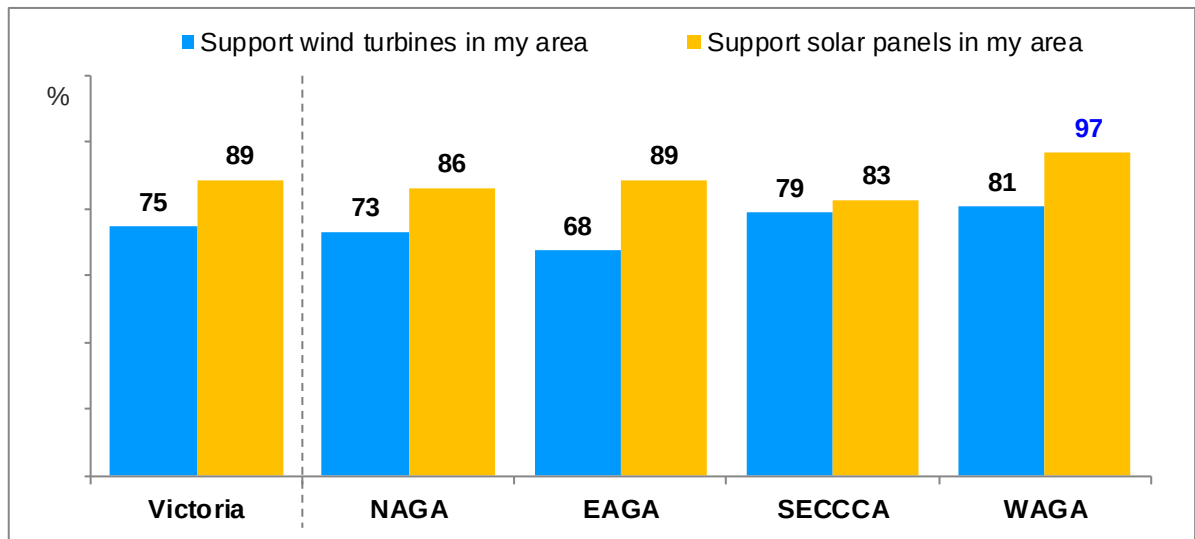


## 2.8 Support for renewable energy

As well as supporting the targets, the majority of Victorians are supportive of renewable energy infrastructure in their local area with 75% saying they would support wind turbines in their local area, and 89% saying they would support solar panels in their local area, providing access to renewable energy.

Support is consistently higher for solar panels than for wind turbines, and is particularly high in WAGA (97%)

**Figure 16. Support for wind turbines and solar panels in their local area**

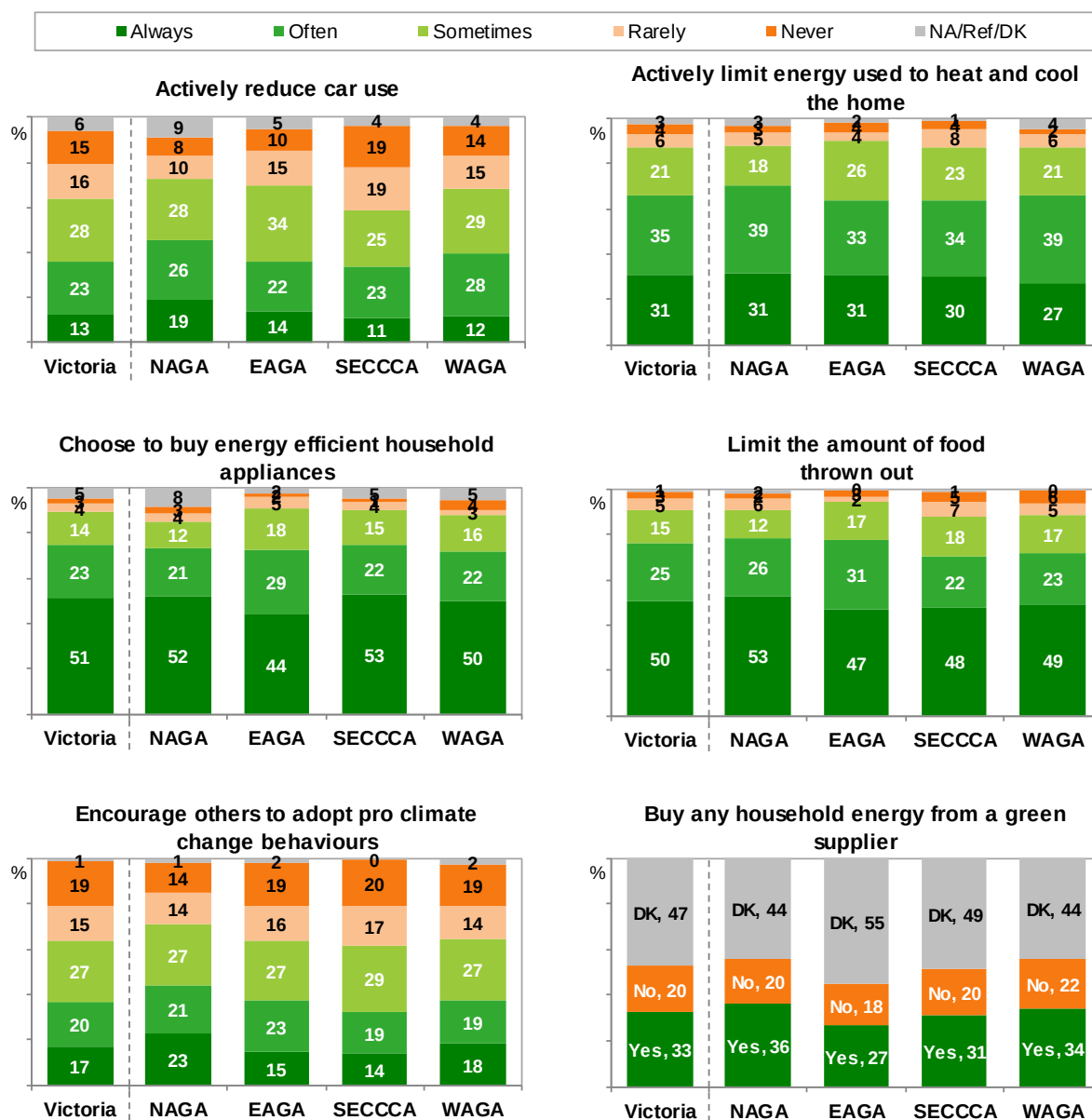


Source: D4d | Base: Module 1 (wind turbines) Module 2 (solar panels)

## 2.9 Everyday behaviours

The majority of Victorians are **already taking positive action to reduce energy use**. The Charts below show the everyday actions that people can do now but may need some encouragement to do. Actions that most people said they **always** do included **buying energy efficient appliances**, 51%, and **limit the amount of food thrown out**, 50%.

Figure 17. Take-up of everyday behaviours



Source: D1a/b/c/d/e/f | Base: Total sample

## Motivations and barriers for everyday behaviours

The most commonly stated motivations for undertaking everyday basic included cost, convenience, and comfort. Concern for the environment was a reasonably strong motivator, but not the highest.

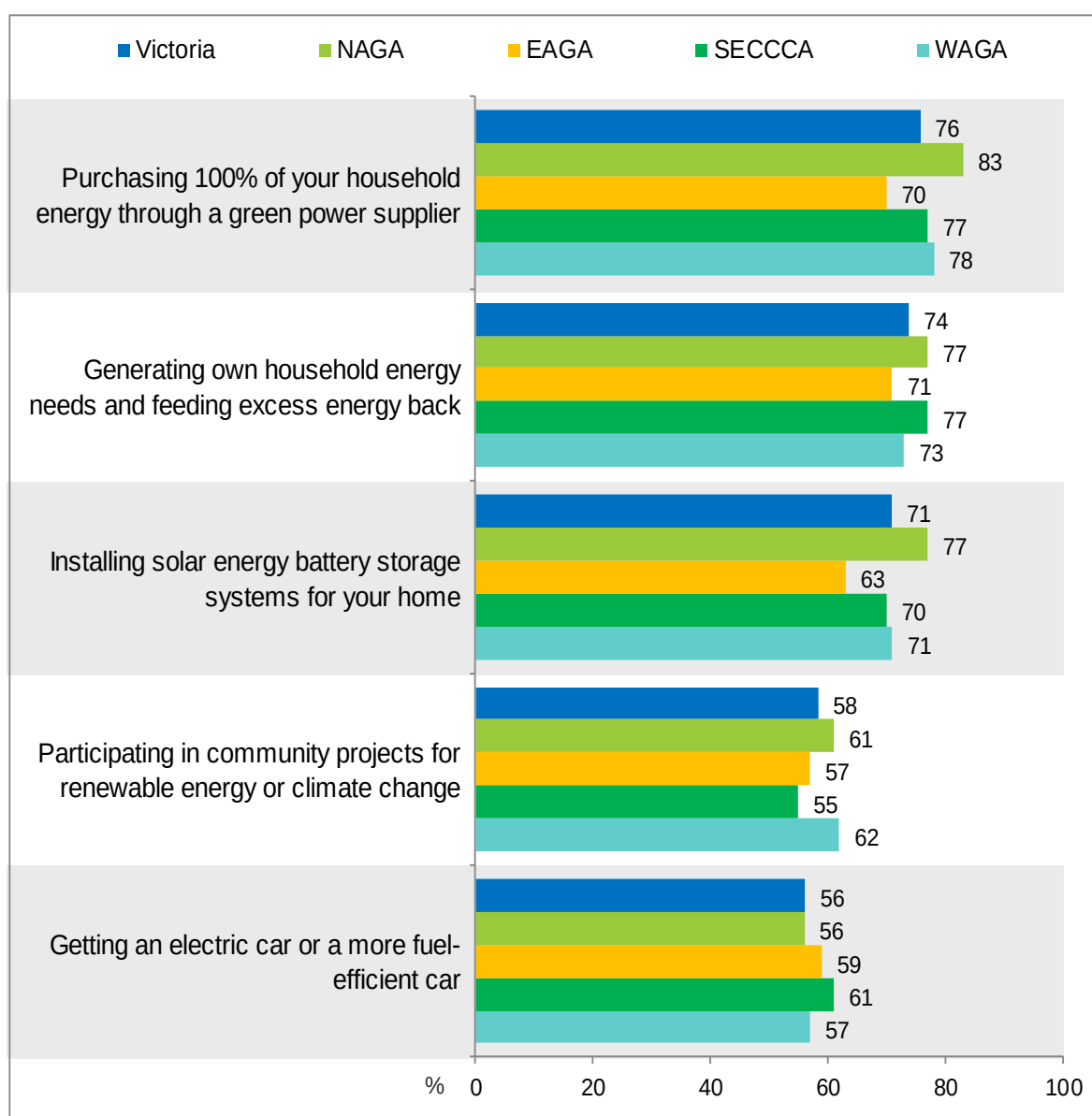


## 2.10 Advanced actions

To better understand the actions that Sustainability Victoria might support in the future, it is important to gauge the level of interest (framed within a five year period) in a selection of 'advanced' behaviours. They are considered 'advanced' because they have high upfront costs and require a level of planning by those who wish to adopt them.

Respondents were presented with the five advanced behaviours shown below, and asked to state their level of interest in each one. As seen in the chart below, interest in a variety of renewable energy options was high, and over half of respondents in each Alliance was interested in participating in community energy projects.

**Figure 18. Interest in advanced behaviours**



Source: D3a/b/c/d/e.Base: Module 1 and accept some human causation | Results exclude "already doing this"

## 2.11 How the Victorian Government can support individuals

The follow-up online survey asked respondents what they thought the Government could do to support individual action on climate change. Respondent comments were coded into themes as shown in the Table below. (Given the smaller sample size for the online survey this data has not been reported by Alliance.)

Across Victoria, the majority of comments related to:

- Education - providing information on what people can do to tackle climate change;
- Incentives and/or subsidising solar and other renewable energy sources; and
- Funding for community programs.

**Figure 19. Suggestions for how the Victorian Government can support individual action**

| Suggestions for how to support individual action           | ALL VIC<br>(n=523)<br>% |
|------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------|
| Education / promotion of climate change issues             | 30                      |
| Support / promote / subsidise solar power                  | 23                      |
| Support / promote renewable energy                         | 18                      |
| Reduce waste and pollution                                 | 16                      |
| Provide funding / financial incentives                     | 13                      |
| Improved public transport / cycle tracks                   | 9                       |
| Increase legislation / regulation of business and industry | 4                       |
| Better recycling / waste reduction                         | 3                       |
| More schemes such as the Green Energy Lighting scheme      | 3                       |
| Support / promote green cars                               | 3                       |
| Reduce / ban plastic bags                                  | 2                       |
| Plant more trees / re-vegetation                           | 1                       |
| Other                                                      | 10                      |

### Further Information

For more information contact  
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