



Mr Darren Cheeseman MP
Member for South Barwon
Environment and Planning Standing Committee (Chair)
Parliament of Victoria
Melbourne VIC 3000

24 August 2019

Dear Mr Cheeseman,

The Northern Alliance for Greenhouse Action (NAGA) is pleased to take this opportunity to submit a response to the Environment and Planning Standing Committee's inquiry into Tackling Climate Change in Victorian Communities.

NAGA is a network of nine northern metropolitan councils operates across metropolitan region of Melbourne working to achieve significant emissions abatement and energy cost savings by delivering effective programs and leveraging local government, community and business action. Our council members include Banyule City Council, Darebin City Council, Hume City Council, Manningham City Council, City of Melbourne, Moreland City Council, Nillumbik Shire Council, City of Whittlesea and the City of Yarra. NAGA formed in 2002 to share information, coordinate emission reduction activities and cooperate on research and develop innovative projects.

NAGA's position is that efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and increase the resilience of our communities to the impacts of climate change need to accelerate rapidly, in line with the latest science from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC). The IPCC has charted the drivers of climate change and the resultant shifting climatic patterns with increasing certainty. The most recent full report, the Fifth Assessment Report (AR5), states that if greenhouse gas emissions continue at their current rate, the global mean surface temperature increase is likely to exceed 1.5°C by the end of the 21st century, relative to an 1850 to 1900 baseline. Temperature increases are likely to exceed 2°C by 2100 for most future scenarios; this being the level at which global mean surface temperatures reach a dangerous level of climate change. While international climate change management and reduction negotiations have been based around the 2°C target, it has been argued that the cumulative effects of existing greenhouse gas emissions mean that this figure is less a step into dangerous impacts of climate change, but instead represents a threshold between 'dangerous' and 'extremely dangerous' climate change.



Victorian local governments and their communities are active in responding to climate change, through both mitigation and adaptation actions. Our member councils have set and are acting to implement some of the most ambitious corporate and community emissions reduction plans in Australia. These include councils that have set targets of becoming carbon neutral and others which have declared a climate emergency in order to accelerate their current rate of response. NAGA councils operate from a viewpoint that a business as usual approach to tackling climate change is insufficient in the face of the threats associated with rising global temperatures.

These strategies include a broad range of actions undertaken by NAGA councils, including:

- installing rooftop solar on council facilities, such as recreation centres, swimming pools, libraries and town halls;
- conducting and acting upon energy and water efficiency audits on local government facilities, including leisure facilities, sports pavilions, community halls and maternal and child health care centres;
- engaging and supporting local business to undertake energy efficiency improvements and install rooftop solar, in particular using energy upgrade agreements as a form of financing;
- investigating the feasibility of investing in solar farms on municipal land;
- supporting community energy groups;
- using special rates mechanisms to make rooftop solar available to previously neglected audiences, such as low-income pensioners;
- investing in renewable energy within Victoria, firstly through the Melbourne Renewable Energy Project and more recently through the larger Victorian Renewable Energy Project;
- shifting existing council vehicle fleets from internal combustion engine cars to electric vehicles;
- installation of electric vehicle charging infrastructure to be made available to the public;
- launching food and garden organics kerbside collection service as an enhancement to the fortnightly opt-in green waste service, to reduce household waste-based emissions;
- investing in the reduction of emissions from streetlights by shifting to more efficient alternatives;



- conducting community engagement initiatives to support local residents reduce household-based emissions, through the installation of rooftop solar and energy efficient appliances;
- funding for community efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions through environmental and sustainability grants;
- developing and implementing environmentally sustainable design amendments to local planning schemes;
- developing a web-based climate adaptation tool aimed at monitoring, evaluating and reporting on climate adaptation metrics to inform action and advocacy (How Well Are We Adapting);
- community tree planting; and
- upgrading stormwater management facilities to deal with flash-flooding.

These activities are, in many instances, underpinned with the legislative and resourcing support of the Victorian government. However, to meet the accelerated challenges posed by climate change, we recommend the following actions that could be undertaken by the Victorian government to better support local governments and their communities:

1. Research and develop an immediate pathway to increase the state renewable energy target to 100% by 2030.
2. Accelerate the RIT-T process for north west Victoria, including Kerang Link, to enable the connection of more renewable energy in the north west of Victoria.
3. Conduct additional reverse auctions to increase investment in new renewable energy production for state government operations.
4. Streamline grid connection regulations to reduce costs for new renewable energy projects.
5. Support changes to energy market regulations to support peer-to-peer trading and distributed generation and storage.
6. Develop mechanisms to apply small technology certificates or other solar rebates to community solar models such as solar gardens.
7. Support community energy organisations groups with resources and training.
8. Rule out any new fossil fuel developments and extend the ban on unconventional onshore gas development to a complete ban of onshore and offshore gas.
9. Develop timely and well thought out plans for the closure of coal fired power plants to ensure the closure date is appropriate and well communicated.



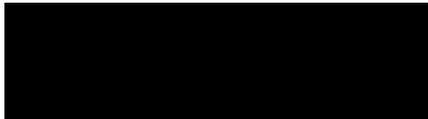
10. Invest in extensive and connected walking and cycling paths to support sustainable forms of transport.
11. Introduce mandatory disclosure of energy performance for residential buildings at point of sale or lease.
12. Introduce periodic disclosure for non- residential buildings at point of sale or lease.
13. Mandate minimum energy efficiency performance standards for rental properties.
14. Introduce minimum energy performance standards to at least a 7-star NATHERS equivalent and the introduction of an energy usage budget (whole-of-building) for new builds and major renovations of homes.
15. Increase the resources that the Victorian Building Authority has to address noncompliance.
16. Provide additional funding to ensure all new social housing complies with minimum energy performance standards and that the thermal comfort and performance of existing social housing is improved.
17. Development and encouragement of a single reputable, scoring mechanism for energy efficiency encourage increased properties purchased based on energy footprints and ongoing energy costs.
18. Improve the implementation of the Solar Homes program to make sure the program is administered sustainably, and that the current issues are addressed, such as capacity and demand issues, and impacts to solar providers left without work.
19. Reduce the urban heat effect by funding and developing enabling policies to increase the amount of urban vegetation, including green roofs and walls.
20. Develop investment models whereby state government pays upfront for stormwater harvesting / flood mitigation infrastructure and councils pay it off at around the same price they would've been purchasing potable water.
21. Provide increased investment for access public access to open space and incentives/programs for increased canopy (public and private)
22. Create multi-year partnerships with local government with seed funding available for initiatives like developing community-owned zero carbon action plans
23. Work with councils and other levels of government to pre-emptively understand key economic costs and impacts and take responsibility to address these.
24. Set science-based emissions reduction targets for Victoria to achieve a 40–45 per cent reduction on 2005 emissions levels by 2025, and 65–75 per cent reduction on 2005 levels by 2030.
25. Support communities to prepare for the next closure of a coal-fired power station in the Latrobe Valley as early as 2023 with industry and place-based (urban and regional) transition plans.



26. Actively support the accelerated transition to electric vehicles by developing a state-wide vision, strategy and plans, coordinated with both Federal and Local Governments, to address the barriers to electric vehicle uptake including, but not limited to, vehicle costs and incentives, public charging infrastructure and planning provisions for new developments;
27. Transition diesel public transport buses to electric buses and establish renewable energy power supply for buses and trains.
28. Ensure new buildings and urban renewal precincts are not locked into natural gas infrastructure and support communities to prepare for the transition away from natural gas.
29. Provide up-to-date climate change data and information to better inform local government policies and programs.

Finally, climate change is the biggest governance challenge of our time. NAGA calls on the Victorian government to consider local government as a partner responding to climate change, in the development of policies, by collaborating with the Victorian greenhouse alliances, individual councils or groups of councils to add value to programs and more effectively protect and support the community in the transition to a low-carbon future. We are happy to supply any additional information required by the committee.

Yours sincerely,



David Meiklejohn
Executive Officer