

The City of Newcastle

Policy

Strategic Climate Change

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Strategic Climate Change Policy



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1 Purpose

This Policy is known as the *City of Newcastle Strategic Climate Change Policy* ('**Policy**'). It sets out the City of Newcastle's policy position relating to climate change.

The Policy will provide the strategic framework for Council to manage its climate change vulnerability using a combination of adaptation and mitigation strategies.

This Policy has been developed as a response to the projected implications of climate change on Newcastle's social, environmental and economic sustainability.

2 Strategic Alignment

This Policy aligns with the *Environmental Enhancement* Key Focus Area which aims to position Newcastle to provide an environmentally sustainable future.

3 Objectives

- (a) To address Council's legislative responsibility to apply the precautionary principle in a risk management framework to strategic planning, operational and management decision making when considering the potential implications associated with climate change.
- (b) To comply with applicable legal requirements and implement any relevant State government policies, guidelines and/or directives.
- (c) To reduce the risk from natural hazards, including the projected effects of climate change, by avoiding areas with high exposure and establishing adaptation strategies to minimise vulnerability to climate change impacts.
- (d) To provide a commitment to being innovative, flexible and adaptive in our approach to climate change.
- (e) To provide effective and strong leadership to the Newcastle community to respond to climate change and build a sustainable city.
- (f) To provide timely, coordinated and balanced information to the community on climate change in order to create a more holistic response and build community resilience.
- (g) To develop and implement adaptation and mitigation actions as a response to climate change.
- (h) To contribute to achieving the climate change objectives from Newcastle 2030 including: protected and enhanced environment; connected city; smart and innovative city; open and collaborative leadership; and liveable and distinctive built environment.

4 Policy Commitment Statement

In meeting the challenges of climate change, Council will:

4.1 Risk assessment

- (a) Progressively undertake a comprehensive climate change risk assessment for the Newcastle Local Government Area, and Council, consistent with the Australian and New Zealand Standard for Risk Management ISO 31000: 2009.
- (b) Progressively undertake detailed risk assessments of natural hazards consistent with Federal and State Government guidelines, such as flooding and coastal hazards, bushfire and health risks.

4.2 Action plans

- (a) Develop a Climate Change Adaptation Action Plan for the City of Newcastle.
- (b) Develop a Climate Change Mitigation Action Plan for the City of Newcastle.

4.3 Carbon pollution targets

- (a) Develop, in consultation with the City of Newcastle community, rational carbon pollution reduction targets for both Council and the community, using evidence-based decision making.
- (b) Position Newcastle as a global centre for carbon management innovation.
- (c) Build upon Newcastle's carbon management assets and strategic regional partnerships.

4.4 Review of current plans

- (a) Regularly review its plans, strategies, policies and benchmarks, where their content may be affected by climate change, to ensure they remain current as the science of climate change develops.
- (b) Ensure that Council's actions, decisions and policy response to climate change remains current and reflects Council's operational capacity, community expectations and changes in climate change scenarios.

4.5 Integrated and collaborative approach

- (a) Complement, collaborate and establish strong partnerships with community, key stakeholders (such as Hunter Councils) and other tiers of government that strengthen the Council's adaptive capacity in response to climate change.
- (b) Engage the community in risk management processes and ensure transparency in communicating decisions on risk treatment options and the implementation of action plan/s to enhance the community's ability to cope with what may be considered severe measures.

4.6 Funding and resources

- (a) Pursue grant and other funding opportunities to further examine and respond to climate change issues as they affect Council and the community.
- (b) Ensure availability of appropriate resources for climate change initiatives.

5 Roles and Responsibilities

In support of this Policy, the following roles and responsibilities apply:

5.1 Council

- (a) Approve the Strategic Climate Change Policy and monitor its outcomes.
- (b) Adopt and support the Adaptation Action Plan and its outcomes.
- (c) Adopt and support the Mitigation Action Plan and its outcomes.

5.2 Community

- (a) Engage with climate change information to raise awareness and adopt behavioural change within the residential, educational and business sectors.
- (b) Assist Council and other stakeholders with the climate change actions identified in the Community Strategic Plan and other relevant plans that relate to climate action.

5.3 Executive Leadership Team (ELT)

- (a) Ensure Strategic Climate Change Policy direction meets Council and community aims.
- (b) Endorse the Adaptation and Mitigation Action Plan options to be presented to Council.
- (c) Support and monitor implementation of the climate change action plans.
- (d) Ensure availability of appropriate resources for climate change activities.

5.4 Strategic Environmental Advisory Committee (external)

The key functions of the Environmental Advisory Committee, as they relate to Climate Change, are:

- (a) To provide strategic advice and guidance on, and assist in the development of, environmental strategies for the City of Newcastle
- (b) Within the context of Council's environmental strategies, to identify, investigate and advise on environmental challenges and opportunities presented to the City of Newcastle, including in relation to:
 - (i) climate change
 - (ii) biodiversity
 - (iii) air
 - (iv) coast
 - (v) estuary
 - (vi) water and floodplain management
 - (vii) waste
- (c) This committee will investigate, consider and provide expert advice on strategic issues within the terms of reference set out in clause 4 of the Constitution (SAC004).
- (d) This committee provides a forum for expert stakeholder and community input into Council's decision making process, and is constituted to complement Council's other consultative mechanisms.

5.5 Climate Change Reference Group (internal)

- (a) Council will establish a Climate Change Reference Group, which shall comprise of multi-disciplinary and cross-functional membership
- (b) The key functions of the Climate Change Reference Group, as they relate to this Policy are to:
 - (i) Develop , monitor and review Council's Climate Change Policy.
 - (ii) Develop monitor and review Council's Climate Change Risk Assessment in accordance with the relevant Australian Standards.
 - (iii) Develop, monitor and review the Climate Change Adaptation Action Plan and other relevant plans relating to climate change adaptation.
 - (iv) Develop, monitor and review the Climate Change Mitigation Action Plan and other relevant plans relating to climate change mitigation.

- (v) Monitor and report the implementation progress and effectiveness of the action plan/s in achieving aims for each action plan.

6 Review

This policy shall be reviewed and evaluated annually with a comprehensive review after five years.

7 Definitions

Adaptation – Adjustment in natural or human systems in response to actual or expected climatic changes or their effects, which moderates harm or exploits beneficial opportunities. This is the primary means for maximising gains and minimising the losses associated with climate change.

Adaptive capacity – Reflects the ability of a system to change in a way that makes it better equipped to cope with external influences.

Climate change - Any change in the climate over time, due to either natural variability or human activities.

Climate prediction – An attempt to produce the most likely description or estimate of the actual evolution of climate into the future.

Climate projection - The response of the climate system typically based upon climate model simulations. These differ from climate predictions in that projections are based on assumptions that may or may not occur (e.g. technological and socio-economic developments) and are therefore subject to substantial uncertainty.

Climate scenarios – Simplified representations of the future climate, based on a set of assumptions. These can be derived from projections, but are usually based on additional information sources. A “climate change scenario” is the difference between a climate scenario and the current climate.

Exposure – relates to the influences or stimuli that impact on a system. Broadly, it is the changes to the climate conditions that a system will be exposed to.

Mitigation - Response strategies that reduce the sources of greenhouse gases or enhance their sinks, to reduce the probability of reaching a given level of climate change. Mitigation reduces the likelihood of exceeding the adaptive capacity of natural systems and human societies.

Sensitivity – Reflects the responsiveness of a system to climate and the degree to which changes in climate might affect a system in its current form (without adaptation). Sensitive systems are highly responsive to climate and can be significantly affected by climate change.

Vulnerability – The degree to which a system is susceptible to, or unable to cope with, adverse effects of climate change. Vulnerability is a function of the character, magnitude and rate of climatic variation to which a system is exposed, its sensitivity to those changes and its adaptive capacity.