

# Climate Change Policy

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Responsible Division	Wellbeing
Related Documents	A2040 – Community Strategy Plan and A2040 Four Year Plan Environmental Action Plan Carbon Neutral Plan Resilient Hills & Coasts Climate Change Adaption Plan Coastal Adaption Study Coastal Adaption Plan 'Where We Build What We Build' Project Reports
Applicable Legislation	Climate Change and Greenhouse Emissions Reduction Act 2007 (South Australia) Environment Protection Act 1993 (South Australia) Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 (Commonwealth) Fire and Emergency Services Act 2005 (South Australia) Green Industries SA Act 2004 (South Australia) Landscape South Australia Act 2019 (South Australia) Local Government Act 1999 (South Australia) National Environment Protection Council Act 1994 (Commonwealth) National Greenhouse and Energy Reporting Act 2007 (Commonwealth) Planning, Development and Infrastructure Act 2016 (South Australia)

## Purpose

The purpose of this Policy is to establish Alexandrina Council's position on climate change and to embed consideration of climate change risks and opportunities into Council's strategic decision-making, processes and operations.

## Policy Principles

Alexandrina Council declared a climate emergency at its meeting held on 16 December 2019. Consistent with this climate emergency declaration, Alexandrina Council acknowledges:

- the reality of climate change as being induced primarily by human activity;
- that climate change is impacting and will continue to impact both current and future generations of the Alexandrina community and our natural and built environment;
- that climate change projections measuring or estimating its future effects are not static but will change over time as the science of climate change develops and the amount of greenhouse gas varies;
- that local governments share a responsibility with state and federal governments and wider community to respond immediately, vigorously and systematically to address climate change causes, threats and effects;

- that significant efforts must be made by Council and the Alexandrina community to both mitigate and adapt to climate change;
- that local climate change mitigation and adaptation measures may also present opportunities for additional environmental, community and economic benefits consistent with the Council's broader policy and goals; and
- the need for Alexandrina Council to promote and provide resources for these efforts.

## **Scope**

This Policy sets Council's response to climate change and applies to all Council strategic and operational activities and plans. This includes, but is not limited to, the management and procurement of Council assets and infrastructure, biodiversity conservation, urban greening and tree management, urban planning and development, community support, economic development, and in addition, climate change adaptation governance of Council's corporate processes, frameworks and strategic plans.

## **Policy Commitments**

Alexandrina Council will strive to leading by example in its response to climate change. In meeting the challenges of climate change, Council commits to the following Policy principles and strategies:

### **1. Evidenced based strategy and operational activity**

Council will strive to:

- Ensure climate change mitigation and adaptation is a key consideration into Council's strategic planning frameworks, policies and operational processes and decision-making;
- Regularly review its climate change strategies, plans, policies and benchmarks to ensure they remain current as the science of climate change develops and that they exemplify best practice in line with new developments;
- Ensure Council contracts incorporate climate change initiatives and standards in line with Council policies and practices;
- Consider climate change impacts and identify and implement opportunities to improve practices when exercising statutory responsibilities and regulatory powers;
- Appropriately resource Council's climate change initiatives and pursue grant and other external funding opportunities as they arise; and
- Support Council subsidiaries to also improve practices and contribute to Council's climate change goals, ensuring standards are in line with Council policies and practices.

### **2. Mitigation and Adaptation**

Council will strive to develop and implement climate change mitigation and adaptation strategies to:

- Systematically reduce Council's carbon footprint to a net zero position;
- Encourage and promote actions that mitigate and reduce the Alexandrina community's contribution to climate change;
- Build the collective resilience of Council operations, the Alexandrina community and the wider region to the impacts of a changing climate; and
- Protect local ecosystems and improve their sustainability.

### 3. Partnerships

Alexandrina Council will strive to build key partnerships with local and regional stakeholders, and all levels of government to ensure a collaborative and complementary approach to climate change initiatives, including:

- Walking together with First Nations Peoples to allow for positive contributions of knowledge and action to contribute to improved landscapes and practices;
- Working in collaboration with regional partners and the Alexandrina community to mitigate against and adapt to climate change;
- Proactively seeking and responding to opportunities to reinforce the urgency for Local, State and Federal Governments to develop and implement policy for a safe climate future;
- Building networks with all levels of government as appropriate to collaborate on climate change initiatives and ideas, utilising these networks to help drive opportunity and change;
- Working with state government to develop appropriate sustainable development controls on land predicted to be adversely affected by climate change; to take into account the effects of climate change when development applications are assessed by relevant authorities; and
- Promote climate friendly and resilient housing to developers and home builders to inform and support better choices that contribute to climate change initiatives and build better communities.

### Definitions

**Alexandrina community** means the community in the Alexandrina Council area that includes all residents, owners of land, and businesses operating within the Alexandrina Council area.

**Climate change** means any change in climate over time, whether due to natural variability or as a result of human activity.

**Climate change adaptation** means taking actions to avoid, reduce, and withstand current and projected climate changes and impacts while taking advantage of new opportunities.

**Climate change mitigation** means taking action to reduce or prevent emission of greenhouse gases in order to stabilise the levels of heat-trapping greenhouse gases in the atmosphere.

**Climate resilience** means the “capacity of social, economic, and environmental systems to cope with a hazardous event or trend or disturbance, responding or reorganising in ways that maintain their essential function, identity, and structure, while also maintaining the capacity for adaptation, learning, and transformation” (Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change). It also means strengthening the ability of human and non-human systems to withstand and respond to changes in the earth’s climate. Resilience breaks impacts of climate change into locally manageable tasks, such as reducing increased coastal erosion risk due to sea level rise; or encouraging the build of climate-ready houses in our region.

**Greenhouse gas** means a gas in the earth's atmosphere that absorbs and emits radiation (heat) that causes the greenhouse effect. The primary greenhouse gases in the earth's atmosphere are water vapour, carbon dioxide, methane, nitrous oxide, and ozone.

**Low carbon economy** means an economy based on low carbon power sources that therefore has a minimal output of greenhouse gas emissions into the environment; also referred to as 'low-fossil-fuel economy' or 'decarbonised economy'.

**Sustainable development** means sustainable development as the overarching paradigm of the United Nations. It refers to the "development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs".

### **Availability of Policy**

This Policy will be available for inspection on the Council's website [www.alexandrina.sa.gov.au](http://www.alexandrina.sa.gov.au). Copies can also be provided upon payment of a fee in accordance with Council's Schedule of Fees and Charges.