

Draft EPA Climate Change Policy and Action Plan – Opportunities for Councils

Councils have an important role in supporting the EPA to protect the environment from the threat of climate change, and in supporting the NSW Government's commitment to net zero by 2050.

What are the EPA's draft Climate Change Policy and Action Plan?

The EPA's draft *Climate Change Policy* and draft *Climate Change Action Plan 2022–25* adopt, support and build on foundations set by the NSW Government. These foundations include the NSW Climate Change Policy Framework, the Net Zero Plan, Climate Change Adaptation Strategy, the NSW Electricity Infrastructure Roadmap, and supporting policies and strategies.

The EPA's draft **policy** and draft **action plan** set a clear path towards a strengthened regulatory approach to address climate change.

The draft **action plan** sets out new and continuing actions that will be staged over the next three years and beyond. This will help achieve the best environment and human health outcomes. We'll work together with our regulated community, giving our licensees and industry time to consider new information and to meet any new targets or requirements.

What is the role of local government?

Councils play many roles: they can be consent authorities, co-regulators of environmental legislation, community leaders and advocates, and licensees (for example, as operators of waste facilities and sewage treatment plants). Many actions in the EPA's draft action plan are relevant to these roles. The EPA will support councils in implementing these actions.

What are the opportunities for local government?

Councils as consent authorities and co-regulators of environmental legislation

The EPA will develop new guidance that may help councils. It will include guidance to:

- support EPA officers in making climate-related decisions (action **N1** in the draft action plan)
- support the development of climate change mitigation and adaptation plans (action **N2b**)
- inform planning processes (action **N2c**)
- lead to better pollution incident response management plans (action **N2d**)
- support additional emission reductions from the waste sector (action **C4**)
- support emission reductions from other key sectors (action **N8**)
- help councils reduce their own climate change risks and those of the premises they regulate (**numerous actions**).

The EPA will develop and implement behavioural change programs to encourage and enable activities that reduce greenhouse gas emissions (action **C6**).

The EPA will also work with councils and other partners to:

- support the whole-of-government streamlining of project approvals in renewable energy zones (action **C5**)
- help communities and other parties respond to, recover from and better prepare for climate-change-related disasters (action **C10**).

Councils as licensees

For all **licensed councils**, the EPA will:

- survey licensed council facilities, to understand councils' current actions and plans to reduce emissions, and support them to further decarbonise (actions **N2a** and **N8**)
- help licensed council facilities adapt and be more resilient to a changing climate (action **N13**)
- develop and provide user-friendly templates and guides to help licensed councils comply with new requirements (actions **N8** and **N13**)
- provide transitional arrangements to allow licensed councils to consider and respond to new information, and to plan for and adjust to new obligations (action **N2b**)
- continue to support councils in managing the clean-up from climate-change-induced disasters, such as floods and fires (action **C10**)
- develop sector-based initiatives to build climate resilience and protect the environment (action **N12**).

For **waste facility operators**, the EPA will:

- develop and implement programs to reduce emissions from the waste sector (action **C4**)
- continue researching the impacts of climate change on waste transportation, storage, processing, disposal and legacy sites (*NSW Waste and Sustainable Materials Strategy 2041*; **WaSM**)
- develop advice and guidance to ensure appropriate climate risk management protocols are in place (action **N13**)
- provide links and support to NSW Government-funded programs if councils face financial challenges in minimising their emissions or exposure to climate risks (**WaSM**)
- if requested, provide additional targeted assistance to reduce emissions or exposure to climate risks (actions **N8** and **N13**).

Councils as grant and funding recipients

Under the *NSW Waste and Sustainable Materials Strategy 2041*, the NSW Government will provide:

- \$65 million to support the rollout of new food and garden organics collection services and organics processing
- \$4 million for food donation infrastructure and equipment
- a \$37-million Carbon Recycling and Abatement Fund, to reduce NSW carbon emissions

through greater use of recycled materials in construction and manufacturing

- \$7.5 million to support the installation of gas-capture infrastructure at landfills.

What are the next steps?

The EPA's draft climate change policy and action plan are open for public comment. Councils are also invited to attend an online webinar.

We will look to incorporate all feedback and finalise the policy and action plan before the end of 2022.

We'll then work with councils and other stakeholders to implement the actions in the action plan.

How can I make a submission or get more information?

- You can view the draft climate change policy and action plan (and more information), register for the local government webinar, and also make a submission, at <https://yoursay.epa.nsw.gov.au/>.
- Submissions close **3 November 2022**.
- Councils contact the EPA via climatechange.review@epa.nsw.gov.au.

For more information about the opportunities under the Waste and Sustainable Materials Strategy (WaSM) and other EPA programs, you can:

- get updates as part of regular EPA-hosted Local Government Advisory Group forums
- view the grants information at <https://www.epa.nsw.gov.au/working-together/grants>
- contact the EPA at info@epa.nsw.gov.au.

NSW Environment Protection Authority

Email: info@epa.nsw.gov.au

Website: www.epa.nsw.gov.au

EPA 2022P4018

September 2022

The EPA [disclaimer](#) and [copyright](#) information is available on the EPA website.