

WALGA Climate Change Advocacy Position

Consultation Paper

January 2026

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1. Introduction

Climate change, and related legislation, policy and action, have implications for many aspects of Local Governments' operations and services. More frequent and severe droughts, heatwaves, bushfires, extreme rainfall events and warming, rising sea levels are increasing the costs and complexity of delivering critical services, infrastructure and ensuring community wellbeing.

The impacts and implications of climate change and opportunities for action differ depending on a Local Government's location, size and capacity. For example, coastal Local Governments are managing erosion and inundation risks, urban Local Governments are seeking to mitigate the impact of prolonged periods of heat on the liveability and health of their communities and in regional areas, water availability, heat stress and the transition to renewable energy are key concerns.

WALGA's policy and advocacy on climate change is longstanding, with the Association's first Climate Change Policy Statement adopted in 2009. In 2018 a new [Climate Change Policy Statement](#) and advocacy position were endorsed by WALGA State Council following extensive sector consultation. The 2018 Advocacy Position states:

Local Government acknowledges:

- 1. The science is clear: Climate change is occurring and greenhouse gas emissions from human activities are the dominant cause.*
- 2. Climate change threatens human societies and the Earth's ecosystems.*
- 3. Urgent action is required to reduce emissions, and to adapt to the impacts from climate change that are now unavoidable.*
- 4. A failure to adequately address this climate change emergency places an unacceptable burden on future generations.*

Local Government is committed to addressing climate change.

Local Government is calling for:

- 1. Strong climate change action, leadership and coordination at all levels of government.*
- 2. Effective and adequately funded Commonwealth and State Government climate change policies and programs.*

July 2018 – 72.5/2018

Since the 2018 Advocacy Position was adopted there have been significant legislative, policy, technological and scientific changes, including:

- The national *Climate Change Act 2022* and the Western Australian Climate Change Bill 2023.
- The *Local Government Amendment Act 2023*, which expanded Western Australian Local Governments' general function to include planning for, and mitigating, the risks associated with climate change.
- The release of the Australian Government's [National Climate Risk Assessment](#) and [National Adaptation Plan](#) in 2025.

- Escalation of the transition to renewable energy, uptake of electric vehicles and energy efficiency standards under the National Construction Code.
- Climate science and projections ([international](#), [national](#) and [WA specific](#)) have also become clearer regarding the risks posed by climate change and the need for action to address the consequential impacts.

It is important that the WALGA climate change advocacy position is updated to reflect these changes and the consequent needs and priorities of Local Governments. An updated climate change advocacy position, which complements other WALGA advocacy positions, will provide a sound basis for WALGA's advocacy.

Following initial consultation, consideration by State Council in March 2025 and feedback from the Environment Policy Team, WALGA has developed a revised, draft Climate Change Advocacy Position for Local Government feedback:

1. *Local Government acknowledges the risks associated with, and is committed to, addressing climate change.*
2. *WALGA calls on the Australian and Western Australian Governments to:*
 - a. *Provide the necessary climate leadership, coordination and action to ensure an orderly transition to achieve emission reduction targets and address the impacts of climate change.*
 - b. *Provide dedicated funding, guidance and practical support to assist Local Governments to undertake emissions reduction and adaptation actions.*

WALGA is seeking Council endorsed feedback on the draft Climate Change Advocacy Position by **COB Friday, 1 May 2026**. Feedback can be provided to environment@walga.asn.au.

This Paper provides an overview of matters which were considered in the development of the updated draft Advocacy Position including the legislation and policy (Section 2), technological changes (Section 3), climate science information (Section 4), feedback from Local Government on their needs, activities and barriers in relation to climate change (Section 5), and WALGA advocacy (Section 6). Section 7 provides detail on the rationale for the draft Advocacy Position.

2. Legislation and Policy

Since WALGA's Climate Change Policy Statement was endorsed in 2018, there have been significant Australian and Western Australian legislative and policy changes, these are outlined in Table 1.

Table 1: Government climate legislation and policy

| Document | Summary |
|-------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Climate Change Legislation | |
| <u>Climate Change Act 2022</u> | <p>The Australian Government <i>Climate Change Act 2022</i> establishes a national framework for reducing greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions and enhancing climate resilience in Australia. It mandates setting emission reduction targets, annual reporting to Parliament and developing policies to support the transition to a low-carbon economy.</p> <p>Australia's <u>Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC)</u> under Article 4 of the <u>Paris Agreement</u> commits to reducing greenhouse gas emissions to 43% below 2005 levels by 2030.</p> |
| <u>Annual Climate Change Statement 2025</u> | <p>The Annual Climate Change Statement is a requirement under the <i>Climate Change Act 2022</i>. It provides an overview of the country's progress in reducing GHG emissions and enhancing climate resilience. The Statement includes updates on emission reduction targets, government initiatives and programs supporting the transition to a low-carbon economy. The Statement also identifies additional areas for further action.</p> |
| <u>WA Climate Change Bil 2023</u> | <p>The WA Climate Change Bill was introduced to Parliament in November 2023. The Bill sought to commit to net zero GHG emissions by 2050 and an interim whole of WA Government 2030 reduction target of 80% below 2020 levels. It also focuses on adapting to climate change impacts through sectorial adaptation planning and ensuring transparent progress reporting to the community and Parliament.</p> <p>The Bill has not progressed. In May 2025 the <u>Premier</u> indicated that climate change legislation introduced in WA would need to be carefully considered, particularly in regard to <u>net zero targets</u>, as WA is captured by national net zero legislation.</p> |
| <u>Local Government</u> | Amendments made to the <i>Local Government Act 1995</i> , under |

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| <u>Amendment Act 2023</u> | <p>the first tranche of changes in the <i>Local Government Amendment Act 2023</i>, expanded the requirements for Local Government in regard to their general functions to ensure good governance outcomes for their communities. Under Part 3 s3.1(1A) General Function, Local Governments are now required (change in bold):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. <i>to promote the economic, social and environmental sustainability of the district; and</i> b. <i>to plan for, and to plan for mitigating, risks associated with climate change; and</i> c. <i>in making decisions, to consider potential long-term consequences and impacts on future generations.</i> <p>These legislative changes were made without any sustainable investment model, or tools, to support the new responsibility.</p> |
| <u>State Public Health Plan 2025 - 2030</u> | <p>Under Stage 5 of the <i>Public Health Act 2016</i>, which commenced in June 2024, Local Governments are required to prepare and publish local public health plans by 4 June 2026 that consider the State Public Health Plan objectives and priorities.</p> <p>The objectives for the State Public Health Plan include “Protect against public and environmental health risks, effectively manage emergencies, reduce impacts of disaster, and lessen the health impacts of climate change”.</p> |
| Climate Change Mitigation | |
| <u>Paris Agreement (2022 update)</u> | <p>The Paris Agreement, under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, aims to limit global warming to 1.5°C by the end of this Century, requires a 43% cut in global GHG emissions by 2030.</p> |
| <u>6th Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) Report (2023)</u> | <p>The 6th IPCC Report summarises the state of knowledge of climate change, its widespread impacts and risks, and climate change mitigation and adaptation.</p> |
| <u>United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP 28) 2023</u> | <p>The COP 28 Agreement calls for a tripling of renewable energy capacity and doubling of energy efficiency improvements by 2030.</p> |
| <u>Net Zero Plan 2025</u> | <p>The Australian Government’s Net Zero Plan guides Australia’s transition to the legislated target of net zero emissions by 2050, covering all major parts of the economy and is consistent with</p> |

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| | <p>international and domestic targets.</p> <p>The Plan sets out Government priorities, establishes policies and measures to reduce emissions and support ongoing and new investment in low emissions and renewable activities. The Plan is supported by Treasury Modelling on the impact of the transition.</p> |
| Western Australian Climate Change Policy 2020 | <p>The Western Australian Climate Change Policy outlines the State Government's plan for a climate-resilient future. It highlights actions to be taken in collaboration with all sectors of the economy to achieve net zero emissions by 2050.</p> <p>Key programs include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Low carbon transition • Clean Energy Future Fund • Electric Vehicle (EV) Strategy • Building WA's climate resilient future • Sectoral Emissions Reduction Strategy (SERS). |
| <p>Climate Change Adaptation</p> | |
| National Climate Resilience and Adaptation Strategy 2021-2025 | <p>The National Climate Resilience and Adaptation Strategy 2021-2025 outlines how the Australian Government will fulfil its 2012 COAG Roles and Responsibilities through three objectives for effective adaptation across Australia:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Drive investment and action through collaboration 2. Improve climate information and services 3. Assess progress and improve over time. |
| National Climate Risk Assessment (NCRA) 2025 | <p>The NCRA is the first comprehensive evaluation of how climate change will impact key systems and regions across Australia and provides a solid evidence base for coordinated adaptation planning. The assessment identified 63 nationally significant risks with a more detailed analysis of 10 priority hazards.</p> |
| National Adaptation Plan 2025 | <p>The Plan builds on the National Climate Resilience and Adaptation Strategy and forms Australia's new framework for preparing for and responding to climate change impacts. The Plan represents the 'prioritise and plan' steps in the adaptation cycle, following the 'understand and assess' steps outlined in the NCRA.</p> |

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| Council of Australian Governments (COAG) Roles and Responsibilities for Climate Change Adaptation in Australia | <p>The Council of Australian Governments (previously COAG, now known as National Cabinet) defined roles and responsibilities for managing climate risk and adaptation across all levels of government. This highlighted that all levels of government play a significant role in climate change adaptation and risk management. Whilst this was agreed to in 2012, it is still referred to in national and state climate adaptation policy.</p> |
| Western Australian Climate Adaptation Strategy 2023 | <p>Sets out directions to support climate adaptation in WA:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Produce and communicate credible climate information and resources 2. Build public sector climate capability and strengthen accountability 3. Enhance sector-wide and community partnerships 4. Empower and support the climate resilience of Aboriginal people. |
| <p>Australian Local Government Association (ALGA) Policy and Advocacy</p> | |
| Advocacy | <p>ALGA has positions on both Climate Adaptation and Emissions Reduction and calls for a range of funding Programs and support for Local Government.</p> |
| Adapting Together – Local Government Leadership in a Changing Climate Report 2025 | <p>The Report uses more than 200 examples of Local Governments showing leadership and taking action to address climate impacts, and five case studies to model the national value of Local Government climate adaptation.</p> |

3. Technology

Technological changes most relevant to Local Government include the transition to renewable energy, uptake of electric vehicles and changes to energy efficiency standards under the National Construction Code.

In line with legislated net zero targets, the [Australian Government](#) is also targeting 82% renewable energy in the country's electricity grids by 2030. It is essential that the energy transition currently underway delivers economic opportunities, ensures reliable and affordable electricity and benefits for the local community. In 2024 WALGA developed a suite of advocacy positions (see Section 6) related to the renewable energy transition, forming the basis of WALGA's advocacy on behalf of the sector on this issue.

4. Climate Change projections and economic impact

Analysis of [historic trends](#) indicates Western Australia is already experiencing the impacts of climate change:

- Western Australia has warmed since 1910, with an average temperature increase of 1.3 °C.
- Since 1900, rainfall has increased over most of Western Australia, apart from the far west and southwest where it has declined; the decline in southwest Western Australia has been larger than anywhere else in Australia.
- The number of days with dangerous weather conditions for bushfires increased in nearly all locations.

In 2025, the Australian Climate Service released the first [National Climate Risk Assessment](#) (NCRA) in conjunction with the Bureau of Meteorology, CSIRO, the Australian Bureau of Statistics and Geoscience Australia, which provides an important evidence base on climate risks across Australia. The NCRA assembles data and analysis in a nationally consistent way to be used by Government and community to inform adaptation at a national, regional and local level. It identifies and assesses the impact of 10 priority hazards, over four time horizons, under emissions scenarios of 1.5°C, 2°C and 3°C for 11 geographic regions (including Western Australia north and south). The NCRA also considers the key risks to various systems, including communities in urban, regional and remote areas, primary industries and food, health and social support and the natural environment.

The most up to date projections of WA's climate up to 2100 are being produced by the Western Australian Department of Water and Environmental Regulation (DWER) as part of the State Government's [Climate Science Initiative \(CSI\)](#). The CSI is intended to provide a better understanding of climate change at a local level by producing climate projections at smaller scales (20 km and 4 km resolution). At these scales, regional influences like topography, land use and coastlines can be better understood, as well as extreme events like storms.

Statewide temperature and rainfall climate projections have been produced for the whole of WA at a grid resolution of 20 km up to 2099 under low and high emissions scenarios. Projections at a grid scale of 4 km are anticipated to be available for the South West in early 2026 and for the North West, covering the Pilbara and Kimberly regions, in late 2026.

There is significant [evidence](#) identifying the negative impact on the economy from increasing climate change risks and hazards ([Productivity Commission Inquiry](#)) with [infrastructure and agricultural](#) sectors likely to face some of the most significant challenges. The [Insurance Council of Australia](#), reports that the cost of extreme weather events has resulted in payments to policy holders impacted by extreme weather events rising from an average of \$2.1 billion p.a. in real terms over the last 30 years to an average of \$4.5 billion p.a. over the last five years. [Deloitte Access Economics](#) (2022), estimate

that climate change will cost the nation up to \$1 trillion by 2050 and that \$380 billion of these costs could be avoided if immediate action is taken to reduce emissions and adapt.

5. Local Government activities and barriers

Reflecting the requirements of the *Local Government Act 1995*, as of July 2025, 79 Local Government's Strategic Community Plans make specific reference to climate change, with a further 40 mentioning sustainability more broadly. Of these, 50 have targeted climate change plans or strategies.

Figure 1 identifies metrics relating to Local Governments' climate change related commitments and activities.

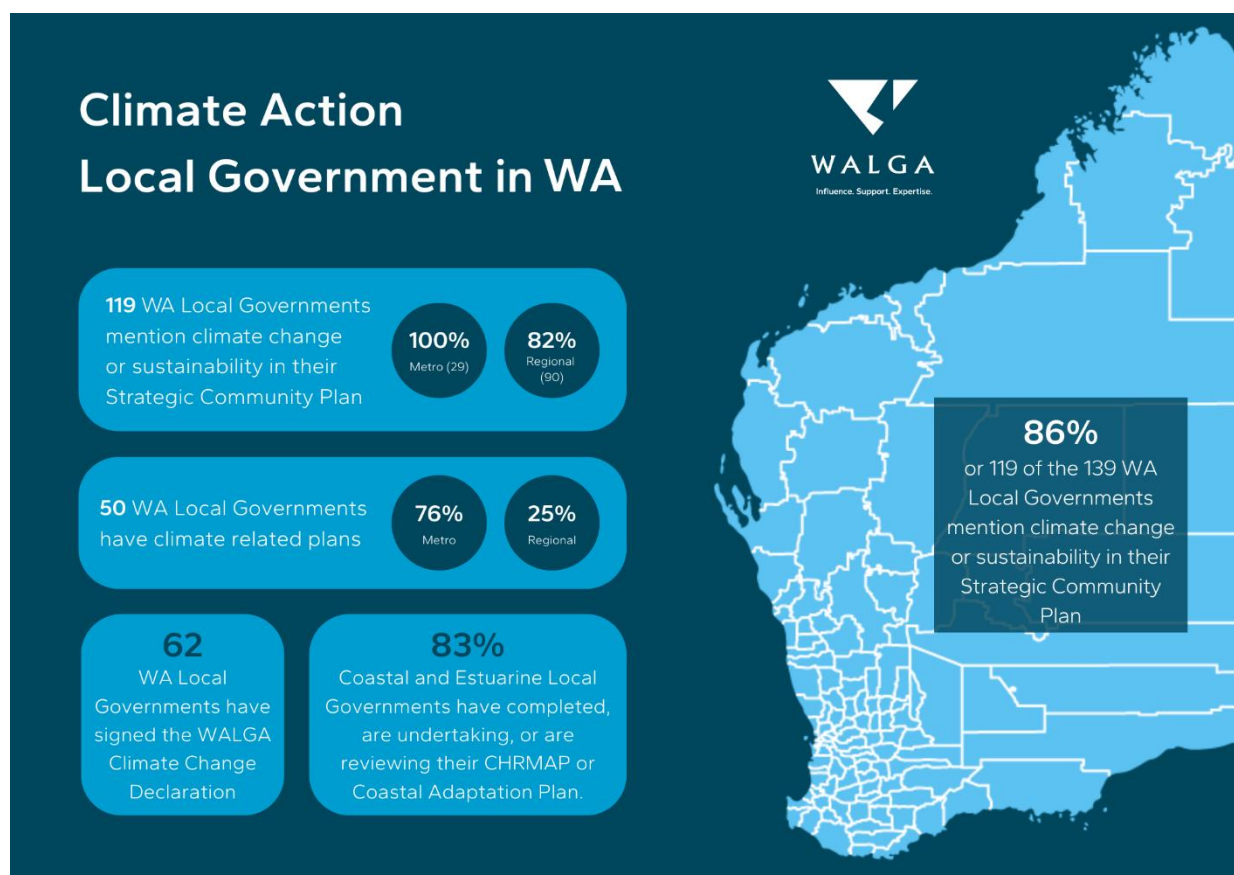


Figure 1: Local Government Climate Change commitments and activities

WALGA has undertaken a regular Climate Change Survey of Local Governments since the 2018 position was adopted, with surveys undertaken in 2020, 2022 and 2024 (see Table 2).

Table 2: Snapshot of WALGA climate change survey responses

| <i>Year</i> | <i>Metropolitan (no. and % of respondents)</i> | <i>Regional (no. and % of respondents)</i> | <i>Total Respondents</i> |
|-------------|------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------|--------------------------|
| 2020 | 29 (79.1%) | 110 (79.1%) | 139 |
| 2022 | 16 (32.6%) | 33 (67.3%) | 49 |
| 2024 | 27 (31.3%) | 59 (68.6%) | 86 |

These surveys consistently identify the main barriers to undertaking emissions reduction and adaptation actions for Local Government as **limited capacity, expertise, funding and support**. These issues are particularly significant for smaller, regional Local Governments, whose assets and communities are more vulnerable to the [impacts of climate change](#), such as extreme weather events.

Findings from the 2024 climate change survey reinforced that these issues remain the main barriers for Local Governments and are compounded by the many **competing priorities** within Local Governments. Survey respondents understood requirements for Local Government to incorporate climate change considerations into their operational planning, however reported limited knowledge or resources to undertake change. The Australian Local Government Climate Review identified that this is a critical issue for the sector in relation to emergency management. When emergency events occur, [Local Governments](#) have the most significant and immediate burden of managing the consequences compared to other levels of Government (Figure 2).

Coastal erosion is an example of the inequitable cost burden placed on Local Government. The State Government has identified 55 coastal erosion 'hotspots' (15 metropolitan, 40 regional) and flagged an additional 31 locations (8 metropolitan and 23 regional) for future consideration. 23 Local Government areas have been recognised as requiring active management over the next 25 years.

Under State Planning Policy 2.6, Local Government is responsible for planning and addressing predicted erosion and inundation hazards, through the preparation of Coastal Hazard Risk Management and Adaptation Plans (CHRMAP). Through the CoastWA Program, the State Government has delivered funding and support to Local Governments to manage current impacts of coastal erosion and inundation and to plan and prepare for increased impacts in the future. However, the level of funding provided for the CoastWA Program is inadequate and is due to expire in 2025-26. Only \$33.5 million was allocated to the Program over five years to 2025-26, despite the State Government estimating in 2019 that the cost to manage the 55 hotspots was \$110 million over the same period – with more funding required over the medium to long-term.



Figure 2: Snapshot of 2024 WALGA Local Government Climate Change Data in relation to main barriers faced by Local Government in addressing climate change.

6. WALGA Advocacy

WALGA's 2025 [State Election Priorities](#) and [2026-27 State Budget Submission](#) advocates for State Government support and investment under Climate Resilience, Low Carbon and Disaster Ready themes including funding for emergency management, waste, water availability and infrastructure, coastal erosion and inundation, urban tree canopy and EV charging infrastructure.

WALGA has a suite of [Advocacy Positions](#) that relate to these priority areas and are supported by WALGA's current Climate Change Policy Position, including:

- Water Management (4.3)
- Urban Forest (4.5)
- Street Lighting (5.5)
- Vehicle Emissions (5.14)
- Renewable Energy (6.16, 6.17, 6.18)
- Building Act and Regulations (6.6)
- Coastal Planning (6.8)
- Emergency Management (8.1, 8.2, 8.11).

In 2021-23, WALGA secured State Government funding to deliver a [Regional Climate Alliance \(RCA\) Pilot Program](#), an initiative under the [Western Australian Climate Policy](#).

Modelled on successful programs in other jurisdictions, two groupings of Local Governments, the South Coast Alliance and Goldfields Voluntary Regional Organisation of Councils (GVROC), focused on accelerating climate action at the regional scale. WALGA continues to advocate to the State Government to implement a statewide program to assist to Local Governments, particularly in regional communities, and secure State Government investment in the management of climate risks.

Local Governments own energy use provides an opportunity for renewable energy and enhanced disaster resilience, with many Local Governments upgrading their assets and facilities with solar and battery storage capabilities. In April 2022, WALGA commenced an aggregated purchase arrangement on behalf of the sector to deliver both economic savings and emission reductions to participating Local Governments. It is estimated that the first three-year term of the contract collectively delivered cost savings of approximately \$34 million and sustainability benefits through carbon offsets. The second iteration of the project, involving 50 Local Governments, commenced in early 2025 has projected savings of \$34 million to participating members in addition to substantial renewable energy and sustainability co-benefits.

The uptake of electric vehicles has also gained momentum with the Australian and State Governments investing in charging infrastructure and implementing programs to encourage the adoption of electric vehicles. Many Local Governments have also been transitioning their fleets and installing corporate and public use charging infrastructure.

In 2024, after two years of project development, WALGA successfully secured \$4.51 million (\$3.51 million funding from the Australian Renewable Energy Agency (ARENA) and \$1 million from the State Government) to fund charging infrastructure and energy upgrades to support the transition to electric vehicles across 22 Local Governments. 105 charging stations were delivered under the project and participating Local Governments co-invested \$7.68 million to roll out more than 140 Electric Vehicles to replace petrol and diesel vehicles.

In May 2025, [changes](#) to the National Construction Code came into effect. These changes included a strong focus on energy efficiency of new builds and expanding requirements for commercial buildings to facilitate electric vehicle charging infrastructure, solar and battery storage.

Local Governments play a role in the compliance and uptake of these standards both with industry and their communities. To support this, WALGA developed a discussion paper in 2022 to explore the opportunities for Local Government in supporting the Trajectory for Low Energy Buildings. The Trajectory is a national plan to achieve net zero carbon and energy residential and commercial buildings and provides recommendations to improve energy efficiency in existing buildings. WALGA's State Council endorsed its support of the Trajectory in 2021.

WALGA also provides secretariat support to the Western Australian Local Government Climate and Sustainability Alliance (WASCA), a growing sector-led officer network with over 100 officers from 45 Local Governments seeking to share knowledge and build capacity across the sector in climate related activities.

7. Draft Advocacy Position

The current climate change [Advocacy Position](#) reflects the policy and legislative environment and lower level of political consensus regarding the science of climate change at that time.

Importantly, the Australian Government has legislated Australia's emissions reductions targets of 43 per cent below 2005 by 2030 and net zero by 2050, consistent with Australia's commitments under the Paris Agreement. The Western Australian Government has indicated that it is committed to achieving net zero emissions by 2050 in line with the national legislated target, although it has not committed to progressing with legislating this target.

Local Governments' general function under the *Local Government Act 1995* has also been expanded to include planning for, and mitigating, the risks associated with climate change.

Climate analysis and projections emphasise the need for action to adapt to the escalating impacts from climate change on Australia and Western Australia, including more frequent and severe disaster events, as well as more heatwaves and rising sea levels.

Taking these factors into consideration, along with the feedback provided by the sector regarding the need for dedicated funding and support for emissions reduction and adaptation, WALGA has developed the following revised, draft Climate Change Advocacy Position:

1. *Local Government acknowledges the risks associated with, and is committed to, addressing climate change.*
2. *WALGA calls on the Australian and Western Australian Governments to:*
 - a. *Provide the necessary climate leadership, coordination and action to ensure an orderly transition to achieve emission reduction targets and address the impacts of climate change.*
 - b. *Provide dedicated funding, guidance and practical support to assist Local Governments to undertake emissions reduction and adaptation actions.*

WALGA is seeking Council endorsed feedback on the draft Climate Change Advocacy Position by **COB Friday, 1 May 2026**. Feedback can be provided to environment@walga.asn.au.