



Prioritising net zero for climate resilient cities

Submitted via: infrastructure.gov.au/have-your-say

4 July 2024

Dear Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications and the Arts,

We appreciate the opportunity to contribute to the National Urban Policy (NUP) consultation. This submission represents a coalition of organisations, involving engagement with over 189 local councils across Australia. Through the Better Futures Australia (BFA) Local Government Working Group, we are committed to fostering urban environments that are sustainable, inclusive, and resilient.

Our group is actively working to support transformative projects that align with the draft NUP's goals to create liveable, equitable, productive, sustainable, and resilient urban areas.national goals for urban development. This submission focuses on evidence-based recommendations for sustainable urban practices. These will be detailed in the forthcoming 2024 Australian Local Government Climate Review, with a draft summary included in Appendix I.

Response to Consultation Questions:

Q14: Australian Government Involvement in Urban Policy

We recommend that the Australian Government work more closely with states and territories and local governments on urban planning and policy matters. This approach supports a holistic governance model that leverages the unique capabilities of each government tier, ensuring that urban policy is both inclusive and effective.

Q16: Highest Priority Goal

The goal of Sustainability, as defined in the NUP, is our highest priority. It emphasises the urgent need for cities to adopt comprehensive strategies that harmoniously balance environmental conservation with development needs. This involves reducing urban sprawl, promoting energy-efficient buildings, and enhancing public transport to reduce our carbon

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footprint. In this context, sustainability means developing our urban areas in ways that meet current needs without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own, ensuring a resilient, liveable, and resource-efficient environment.

Q17: Additional Key Goals for NUP

We propose the addition of “Net Zero Urban Centers by 2035” as a critical goal, encouraging all urban areas to adopt clear pathways towards carbon neutrality. With their high potential for emission reductions through infrastructural and systemic changes, cities can lead by example in climate action. This will align with global climate commitments, and foster a sustainable urban development model.

Q18-22: Improvements for Australian Cities

- **Liveability:** Increase green spaces and promote active transport options to enhance urban livability and health. Support urban designs that minimise the need for carbon-intensive travel, encouraging local living with access to social infrastructure and amenities that reduce daily commutes.
- **Equity:** Ensure equitable access to affordable housing close to employment and services, and to effective and affordable low emissions modes of transport.
- **Productivity:** Enhance urban productivity by redefining it to include not only economic output but also factors that contribute to sustainable, liveable, and equitable cities. Encourage a reduction in the use of private cars which can alleviate urban congestion and reduce environmental impacts. Emphasise the integration of technology and smart city solutions to improve efficiency and connectivity within urban environments.
- **Sustainability:** Adopt the “Avoid-Shift-Improve” framework¹ within urban planning to promote sustainability. Prioritise 'Avoid' strategies to reduce unnecessary travel, 'Shift' strategies to encourage the use of cleaner and more sustainable transport options, and 'Improve' strategies to enhance the efficiency of remaining necessary travel modes. Complement these strategies with comprehensive urban recycling programs and initiatives to expand the use of renewable energy across cities.
- **Resilience:** Strengthen urban resilience with infrastructure capable of withstanding climate-related events and transitions to sustainable transportation methods.

¹ <https://slocat.net/asi/>



Q23: Most Important Objective

We see “Our urban areas are sustainable” and “Our urban environments and communities promote health and wellbeing” as pivotal objectives, directly supporting our overarching goals of achieving net-zero emissions and enhancing urban quality of life.

Q24: Agreement with Government’s Goals (Liveable, Equitable, Productive, Sustainable, Resilient)

We agree with the proposed goals of creating liveable, equitable, productive, sustainable, and resilient urban environments. However, we advocate for the explicit inclusion of measurable targets and dedicated funding to ensure these goals are actionable and impactful. Clear metrics and adequate resources are essential for monitoring progress and ensuring that initiatives deliver on their promises.

Q27: Objectives Achieving Goals

We suggest that the objectives be supported by specific policies, such as the establishment of urban green funds and incentives for low-carbon technologies. These initiatives should focus particularly on electrification powered by renewable energy, ensuring that the transition to a sustainable future is both equitable and economically viable. It is crucial that these technologies are not only environmentally sound but also accessible across all communities to prevent any disparities in benefits.

Q30-31: Key Urban Challenges Not Included

A critical urban challenge not adequately addressed is the integration of climate risk assessments in all aspects of urban planning. We recommend a national framework that mandates climate vulnerability evaluations for all new urban developments, ensuring that resilience becomes a standard aspect of urban planning.

Q32: Additional Actions for NUP Objectives

We propose the creation of a National Urban Climate Resilience Fund, aimed at supporting local government initiatives that focus on sustainable urban design, community greening projects, and infrastructure to support active transport. This fund would facilitate local actions that contribute significantly to national climate change and community wellbeing goals.

The Better Futures Local Government Working Group, representing the interests of a broad range of cities and councils, is currently drafting the Australian Local Government Climate

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review - providing evidence based recommendations for actions across all levels of government. A draft summary of recommendations relevant to Urban Policy is provided in Appendix I for both council corporate infrastructure, and community-wide approaches. This will be finalised shortly and published at the Better Futures Forum in September.

Local governments will also be heavily hit by climate impacts and face direct risks across essential services, assets, and operations. Local governments play a crucial role in addressing climate change adaptation and risk at the community level due to their responsibilities for land use planning, infrastructure development, emergency management, and public health and safety. Effective climate adaptation and resilience-building demand concerted efforts across all levels of government and collaboration among stakeholders. Prioritising net zero climate resilient cities will require national support for councils to work across boundaries and collaborate across regions, states and federally.

We look forward to contributing substantively to shaping a NUP that truly reflects the aspirations and needs of Australian communities, driving towards a future that prioritises resilience and sustainability in urban development. Our Local Government network stands ready to engage further in shaping a policy framework that genuinely reflects the needs and ambitions of Australian urban areas.

We urge continued dialogue and iterative consultations to refine and implement these crucial policies. For arranging follow up discussion, please get in touch via lisa@cana.net.au or [REDACTED].

Sincerely,

Lisa Cliff
Program Director - Better Futures Australia

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Appendix I

Table 1. Urban policy to support net zero cities - local government corporate emissions actions.

Sector	Local Government	State Government	Federal Government
Energy including the Built Environment	<p>Participate in Renewable energy Power Purchase Agreements (PPAs)</p> <p>Surrender renewable energy certificates to retain the emissions savings from renewable energy projects</p> <p>Install local large and small-scale solar photovoltaic systems and, where appropriate, battery storage</p> <p>Degas all facilities</p> <p>Implement high ESD standards for new builds and upgrades</p> <p>Demonstrate what is achievable and could be mandated by other levels of government for the entire built environment</p> <p>Implement systemic energy efficiency retrofits for council buildings</p> <p>Optimise the operation of major building and facility equipment (air conditioning systems, swimming pool systems, etc.)</p> <p>Build staff capacity to minimise energy and maintain optimised performance of equipment</p> <p>Upgrade to high-efficiency computer servers, and optimise virtualisation and CRAC distribution</p> <p>Upgrade streetlights to LEDs and consider smart lighting if distributors are supportive</p>	<p>Replicate policies like the Victorian Local Government Energy Saver Program</p> <p>Continue/replicate programs like Victorian Energy Upgrade and Energy Saver Program</p> <p>Support Smart cities funding to target council street upgrades</p> <p>Mandate smart metres for all new housing</p> <p>Develop ESD guidance resources for council buildings</p>	<p>Scale up support programs like the \$100 million Community Energy Upgrades Fund</p> <p>Fund public lighting upgrades nationally</p> <p>Provide funding and resources to enable regional, state or national local government corporate programs to improve efficiency and scale of progress</p>

Transport	<p>Develop EV/low emissions fleet transition plans</p> <p>Establish targets for fleet emissions</p> <p>Install EV charging stations at council facilities</p> <p>Implement vehicle sharing programs</p>	<p>Support the installation of EV charging infrastructure through resourcing and strategic planning</p> <p>Grants for fleet purchasing and building electricity upgrades to support EV capacity</p>	<p>Create low emissions standards for new vehicles</p> <p>Expand targets for EV adoption rates</p> <p>Create incentive schemes to expand the EV market, improving the range of brands and models, in particular for the lower end of the market</p> <p>Support and build upon the National Electric Vehicle Strategy</p> <p>Support development of zero emissions specialist fleet vehicles like utes, street sweepers and garbage trucks</p>
Civic infrastructure	<p>Procure recycled/low emission materials and minimal hard surface designs for all civic infrastructure (roads, footpaths, car parks and hard surfaces)</p>	<p>Update state infrastructure guidelines to allow for low emissions materials (i.e. VicRoads fly ash content)</p>	<p>Support hard surface redesign trials with funding and research, to mandate effective approaches</p>
Waste	<p>Develop sustainable procurement policies and guidelines for local government</p> <p>Procure products and services that meet sustainability criteria</p> <p>Implement flaring for landfills operated by Council</p> <p>Advocate for landfill flaring where this is subcontracted out to a third party, or make it a condition of service</p> <p>Implement complete Scope 3 emissions tracking to understand where emissions are occurring from your procurement and waste activity</p>	<p>Establish waste reduction targets and reporting</p> <p>Develop and incentivise circular economy strategies</p> <p>Regulate recycled material use</p> <p>Establish criteria for environmentally preferable products</p>	<p>Regulate single-use plastics</p> <p>Fund local waste reduction programs and sustainable packaging research</p> <p>Develop recycling and composting regulations for residential, and commercial and industrial operations</p> <p>Mandate and provide guidance on sustainable procurement</p>
Land Use/Ag	<p>Develop and implement an urban forestry plan to increase tree coverage</p> <p>Adapt local planning policies to support afforestation on private land</p> <p>Develop relationships with local farming communities and representative groups to collaborate on emissions reduction activities and studies</p>	<p>Increase restrictions on land clearance to reduce large deforestation impacts</p> <p>Fund programs investigating commercially viable solutions for transitioning agriculture to lower-emissions practices</p>	<p>Establish subsector specific targets for agricultural emissions reduction to guide investment</p> <p>Continue to support afforestation as a means of carbon credit creation</p>

Monitoring and reporting	Explore scope 3 reporting for council's inventory and supply chain (likely to become a requirement in future)	Provide systems to support councils to more efficiently and accurately gather scope 3 emissions data Provide common tools for the creation and update of corporate emissions inventories	Review Climate Active processes and guidelines Provide resourcing and nationally consistent systems for councils to monitor and report on corporate emissions Provide accessible emissions factors for public use
Collaboration	Share knowledge libraries and lessons learnt for policies, strategies and plans and implementation Provide staff training on emission reductions and embed actions across council portfolios	Share best practice information about transitioning to zero emissions	Coordinate knowledge systems across all of government

Table 2. Local government community emissions actions.

Sector	Local Government	State Government	Federal Government
Energy	<p>Advocate to state and federal government for effective business and residential solar programs and financing, and a stable and sustainable electricity grid</p> <p>Source 100% of energy needs from renewable energy sources via Power Purchase Agreements</p> <p>Collaborate with State government for community led submissions and proposals on new renewable energy infrastructure</p> <p>Support community uptake of large-scale solar and innovative methods for local distribution of renewable energy</p>	<p>Provide state level support for residential and business energy efficiency programs and financing</p> <p>Provide residential/industry rebates and incentives to assist energy efficiency</p> <p>Increase grants for solar on residential and commercial properties</p> <p>Increase renewable energy technologies on state government owned assets</p>	<p>Fund a national Residential and Business Energy Advice Program and financing</p> <p>Collaborate with the State Government to ensure a stable and sustainable electricity grid</p> <p>Collaborate with energy distributors to release annual data in nationally a consistent format for community emissions reporting</p> <p>Increase grants for solar on residential and commercial properties</p>
Built Environment	<p>Educate, support and provide incentives to businesses and residents on gas transition, renewable energy and energy efficiency opportunities for existing and new buildings</p> <p>Establish local planning controls for low-emission, no-gas, climate-resilient new builds and upgrades that exceed national and state requirements to set best practices and demonstrate achievable standards</p>	<p>Improve low emission, no-gas and climate resilient planning controls for new builds and major building upgrades (e.g. rooftop solar, no gas, light coloured rooftops)</p> <p>Upgrade civic infrastructure and planning zoning and controls to align with climate change risks</p>	<p>Improve National Construction Code Section J energy efficiency standards and Greenhouse and Energy Minimum Standards for a national, consistent approach to energy-efficient and climate-resilient new builds, upgrades, and appliances</p>

	<p>Partner with the Federal Government to research gaps, challenges and ways to improve National Construction Code Section J Energy Efficiency compliance processes for new buildings and upgrades</p> <p>Implement low emissions civic infrastructure initiatives</p> <p>Upgrade public infrastructure to account for extreme weather events</p>	<p>(e.g. upgrade drainage systems to cope with flash flooding, prevent development in flood risk areas, defence mechanisms for estuarine inundation areas)</p> <p>Support low emissions civic infrastructure initiatives</p>	<p>Continue to improve and expand programs to monitor and improve building performance such as NABERS and the Commercial Building Disclosure program</p> <p>Lead research into gaps, challenges and ways to improve local government NCC Section J compliance processes</p> <p>Conduct research with all governments to identify barriers to low-emissions, climate-resilient urban development</p> <p>Investigate why local councils often lose in planning courts and develop legal frameworks, incentives, and guidelines based on the findings</p> <p>Research and support low emissions civic infrastructure (roads, footpaths, etc) initiatives</p>
Transport	<p>Prioritise active transport precincts</p> <p>Increase shared transport and public transport infrastructure</p> <p>Work with local communities to design changes suited to local needs</p> <p>Mode shift in urban areas, better design in peri urban areas,</p> <p>Support electrification in regional/rural area</p> <p>Enhance walking and cycling infrastructure</p> <p>Implement street calming measures (e.g., bollards, medians, refuge islands, trees, lower speeds).</p> <p>Mandate car share infrastructure in new developments</p> <p>Promote e-bike programs</p> <p>Educate on electric vehicles (EVs)</p>	<p>Collaborate with local government to design electric bus networks</p> <p>Make public transport planning and operation more accessible for local government and community to participate in and collaborate on</p> <p>Improve public transport services and active transport infrastructure</p> <p>Implement multi-tier governance strategy on EV charging infrastructure</p> <p>Develop strategies around how key freight infrastructure and routes will support electrification</p>	<p>Support shift from aviation to rail for domestic and commercial travel</p> <p>Implement policies to support a shift from road freight to rail.</p> <p>Provide incentives for the electrification of heavy vehicles</p> <p>Provide rebates for low emission vehicle purchases</p> <p>Help fund improved public transport services and active transport infrastructure</p>

	<p>Offer incentives like designated parking and discounted rates for EV users</p> <p>Assist third parties in installing EV chargers and participate in a regional EV charging network strategy</p> <p>Encourage EV readiness in new developments through town planning</p>		
Waste	<p>Provide food and garden organic (FOGO) collection services for households and businesses</p> <p>Invest in recycling facilities, composting programs Implement curbside recycling programs and community composting initiatives</p> <p>Enforce local regulations on waste separation and disposal</p> <p>Conduct educational campaigns on waste reduction and recycling for residents and businesses Collaborate with businesses, community organisations, and neighbouring councils to share resources and expertise</p> <p>Love food, hate waste - Parramatta program</p>	<p>Provide funding for regional waste management facilities and infrastructure upgrades</p> <p>Develop statewide recycling schemes and promote composting in public spaces</p> <p>Implement landfill levies and mandatory recycling requirements</p> <p>Provide resources and support for waste education programs in schools and communities</p>	<p>Support research and development of innovative waste management solutions and provide grants for infrastructure projects</p> <p>Set national recycling targets and provide financial incentives for recycling initiatives Develop national waste reduction policies and regulations, including extended producer responsibility schemes</p> <p>Fund national public awareness campaigns and promote sustainable waste practices through media channels</p> <p>Establish partnerships with international organisations and neighbouring countries to address global waste challenges and share best practices</p>
Land Use and Agriculture	<p>Support community based solutions and research into low emission farming practices</p> <p>Facilitate effective local advocacy and actions - establish regional officer roles to liaise with farmers and state/fed governments</p> <p>Integrate revegetation and climate resilience into local planning schemes and development controls</p> <p>Enforce local bylaw regulations combined with incentives to increase tree canopy and restore and conserve private and public land using a climate resilient approach. E.g. revegetate along river banks to withstand high rainfall run-off; Require nature strips to have at least one tree and increase nature strip tree request numbers to two; Introduce a</p>	<p>Expand support for low emissions agriculture, consider developing agriculture-specific climate roadmaps similar to the Queensland Government roadmap</p> <p>Provide financial incentives to rehabilitate and conserve biodiversity and strengthen resilience to climate change</p> <p>Strengthen land management, vegetation clearing and conservation laws and land use planning controls and zoning. E.g: Limit clear-felling on private land during development; legislate protection of green</p>	<p>Support research on low emissions farming practices and manure management and fertiliser use</p> <p>Increase funding to scale-up the production of methane-reducing feed supplements and other low emissions farming practices</p> <p>Reduce reliance on land-based offsets for carbon pollution</p> <p>Strengthen policies for environmental conservation and climate resilience</p>

	<p>“significant tree register” and measures to protect trees on private property</p> <p>Engage local communities, landholders, and indigenous groups to promote revegetation and climate resilience</p> <p>Provide education and resources for sustainable land management</p> <p>Support local projects like community planting, habitat restoration, and urban greening</p>	<p>areas on private land; end old growth forest logging; tighten restrictions on clearing remnant vegetation</p> <p>Conduct periodic surveys of vegetation cover across the state and changes in urban heat</p>	<p>Continue funding conservation programs like Landcare</p> <p>Fund and share research on biodiversity, climate change impacts, and land management</p> <p>Strengthen laws to protect biodiversity, manage land use, and reduce emissions</p> <p>Create frameworks for carbon credits and offsets</p> <p>Partner with all government levels, NGOs, private sector, and indigenous communities</p> <p>Develop systems to monitor and report revegetation project progress (e.g. nationally consistent data to support urban forestry projects and systems)</p>
Emissions monitoring and reporting	<p>Look to a long term monitoring and evaluation strategy</p> <p>Implement sector and activity specific targets for change</p>	<p>Support standardised inventories for communities across state</p> <p>Provide projection estimates for localities so that strategic development across communities can be done in a compatible manner</p> <p>Implement sector and activity specific targets for change</p>	<p>Support standardised inventories for communities across the country</p> <p>Implement the updated ASSB climate reporting to require companies to begin to track and report scope 3 emissions data</p>
Collaboration	<p>Investigate opportunities to collaborate with other councils on implementing specific interventions.</p> <p>Connect to community groups and determine specific deliverables for these groups to achieve, and support accordingly</p>	<p>Pursue multi-tier governance opportunities with local government, where roles can be explicitly defined and metrics of performance identified</p>	<p>Implement CHAMP to facilitate multi-level governance contributions</p> <p>Fund State Local Gov associations to coordinate collective feedback, for each net zero sector, to state and national governments</p>



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