

**Northern Alliance for
Greenhouse Action**

**Review of the year
2021-2022**



About NAGA

The Northern Alliance for Greenhouse Action (NAGA) is a network of nine councils in Melbourne's north, working together to create a zero-carbon society and provide maximum protection against the impacts of climate change in the NAGA region and beyond.



NAGA formed in 2002 as a network that shares information, advocates for change, and collaborates on the research and development of innovative projects. It is one of eight active [Greenhouse Alliances](#) across Victoria.

NAGA's work is guided by our [Strategic Plan 2020-25](#). This sets out eight aims that will guide our work over those five years:

- Increase the resilience of member councils and their communities to respond to projected climate change impacts in the region.
- Ensure that responding to climate change is deeply embedded within the governance practices of member councils.
- Deliver a pro-active program of advocacy to support our climate change mitigation and adaptation objectives.
- Develop and deliver a program of initiatives to reduce emissions from the non-residential sector, through investment in renewable energy and energy efficiency.
- Investigate, support, and deliver energy efficiency and renewable energy programs to reduce emissions in the residential sector.
- Work to overcome energy market barriers to the uptake of renewable energy, both for corporate and community needs.
- Assist member councils to move rapidly away from dependences on fossil fuels, both for corporate and community needs.
- Ensure sound management of the network and deliver value for members.



From our Chair

I am pleased to present this review of NAGAs work in 2021-22. This year NAGA marks its 20th anniversary, which we celebrated in style at the NAGA-led Victorian Greenhouse Alliances conference in April, the first since the Covid-lockdowns that have changed the way we work.

I was proud to have been elected NAGA Chair in May 2022, with Yarra Councillor Amanda Stone elected as Deputy Chair. I'm pleased to have served as a member of the NAGA Executive since it was set up in 2010.

NAGA councils continue their ambitious climate change programs, with most councils planning to reduce emissions in their community to zero by or before 2036 – in alignment with what the science tells us is necessary to maintain a safe climate. Councils can't do this work alone, so advocacy on climate change is essential, as is working with other levels of government with more levers for widescale change.

In 2021-22 we stepped up our state-level advocacy, working with the other Victorian Greenhouse Alliance and CASBE to develop a campaign to secure vital changes to our planning system to tackle climate change, as well as deepening our relationship with the Municipal Association of Victoria (MAV) by making joint advocacy approaches.

We supported the climate emergency movement that continues to grow with over 100 councils across the country declaring climate emergencies, one of the most recent being NAGA member council Nillumbik in May 2022. We led Climate Emergency Australia from its pilot year to a membership model and a major advocacy campaign on the National Construction Code changes in 2021-22.

We also supported our councils to embed climate change action across their organisation through guidance and research on best practice Council Plans to tackle climate change and developing a cost-benefit analysis framework for councils to use when planning how to adapt their assets to the changing climate.

The successful Greenhouse-Alliance-initiated and Darebin-led VECO (the Victorian Energy Collaboration) saved 187,000 tonnes of greenhouse gas emissions in its first year in 2021-22. 46 councils bought renewable electricity for their own operations from two wind farms in Western Victoria, slashing their electricity bills by around 25%, and a further five councils have committed to join the contract.

This review highlights the key activity and successes of the NAGA network in 2021-22.

Councillor Trent McCarthy
NAGA Chair

Highlights 2021–2022

Victorian Greenhouse Alliances Annual conference 2022

The annual Victorian Greenhouse Alliances conference was held on 29 April 2022 and opened by Minister for Climate Change, Lily D'Ambrosio MP. The conference was organised by NAGA and supported by the other Victorian Greenhouse Alliances and CASBE.

Over 300 participants from local governments across Victoria attended the conference, participating in sessions covering issues such as climate change governance, zero emissions transport, renewable energy opportunities, working with business and the future of off-setting.

As the first major climate change local government conference held since Covid restrictions, the day was enthusiastically welcomed by attendees, who were “inspired”, energised” and “connected” by the end of the day. For the first time we charged a fee for attendance at the conference to cover costs, which participants found was affordable. Feedback from attendees was that they enjoyed the opportunity and time to network, the diversity of topics, found the speakers engaging, and felt the Welcome to Country was a real highlight.

[Victorian Greenhouse Alliance Conference 2022](#)



Planning for a Safe Climate

There is a disconnect between high level policy positions on climate change, both by State and local government, and day-to-day planning decisions. Despite work by councils to make the planning system a better tool for change, the system is not yet doing enough to help restore a safe climate and create resilient communities.

NAGA is leading a joint advocacy campaign - Planning for a Safe Climate - with the other Victorian Greenhouse Alliances and CASBE. A targeted consultation process with councils, state government and industry experts identified barriers in the planning system to tackling climate change. The final report – [Climate Change and Planning in Victoria](#) - is the evidence-base for a campaign in the lead up to the Victorian election in November 2022.

NAGA has been engaging with councils and external partners such as the MAV and the Planning Institute Australia to prioritise the key asks for the campaign and has briefed a range of Alliance Executives, councils, and other relevant bodies to engage them in the campaign. Councils have received an advocacy kit to support their own discussions with MPs.

NAGA is contacting key parliamentarians (Ministers, Shadow Ministers, Crossbench, and influential backbenchers) to communicate the main messages of the campaign and seek their support for significant reform of the planning system.

[Planning for a Safe Climate](#)

Embedding climate change in the Council Plan process

NAGA consulted with councils across the Metro Melbourne area to research how they could incorporate climate change into their Council Plans. This project explored the processes that councils used to develop their new Council Plans, including the new requirement for deliberative engagement, through before-and-after interviews with council staff and peer-to-peer learning. It particularly focused on comparing the level of inclusion, integration and embedding of climate change in the new council plans compared with previous councils plans.

This project was supported by the Victorian Government's Regional Climate Change Adaptation Strategy / Yearly Delivery Plan - Port Phillip Region.

[Embedding climate change in the Council Plan process research](#)



Climate Emergency Australia (CEA)

CEA started the year by moving to a membership model, with NAGA continuing to run CEA via a contract with the host City of Melbourne.

CEA completed five webinars, pushed for mandatory seven-star rating for new buildings under the National Construction Code (NCC) in collaboration with other local government and environmental organisations, and completed training materials for councils, based upon NAGA's previous work conducted for DELWP.

City of Melbourne and NAGA handed the running of CEA to Hume City Council from July 2022.

[Climate Emergency Australia](#)



Scoping the costs and benefits of adaptation options for local government assets

NAGA and the other metropolitan Alliances have been working on a multi-stage project to help Victorian councils make informed decisions about asset management in the context of climate change.

Funding from the Victorian Government's Regional Climate Change Adaptation Strategy / Yearly Delivery Plan - Port Phillip Region was secured for the first part of this work: a scoping study focusing on metropolitan councils. This first phase was coordinated by NAGA and its aim was to understand the asset management data that is already available to inform cost-benefit analysis, and to develop a robust framework for carrying out cost-benefit analyses.

The final report and framework for councils to use to create their own cost-benefit analysis were shared in December 2021

[Cost benefit analysis framework.](#)

NAGA achievements 2021–2022

Objective from our Strategic Plan 2020-25	Year 2
<p>Adaptation</p> <p><i>Increase the resilience of member councils and their communities to respond to projected climate change impacts in the region.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Managed a project, with funding from the Victorian Government Supporting our Regions to Adapt program, to help Victorian councils make informed decisions about asset management in the changing climate. A report and cost-benefit analysis framework were produced for use by councils and the results were shared via a webinar in December 2021. • Part of the Project Advisory Group for the development of the WAGA-led Victorian Climate Resilient Councils (VCRC) program, aiming to guide councils through a step-by-step process to reduce and manage climate risks.
<p>Climate Governance</p> <p><i>Ensure that responding to climate change is deeply embedded within the governance practices of member councils.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Set up a membership model for Climate Emergency Australia following a successful pilot year. CEA delivered five webinars, provided councils across the country with training materials for their councillors based on work done the previous year by NAGA, and worked with other organisations on an advocacy campaign to a mandate seven-star energy rating for new buildings under the National Construction Code (NCC). • Completed research, with funding from the Victorian Government Supporting our Regions to Adapt program, on how councils across the Metro Melbourne area embedded climate change in their new Council Plans and shared this with councils through a webinar and report.
<p>Advocacy</p> <p><i>Deliver a pro-active program of advocacy to support our climate change mitigation and adaptation objectives.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Managed research into how the planning system can best deliver climate change mitigation and adaptation outcomes. The final report provides the evidence base for changes needed to the planning system. • Developed an engagement and advocacy plan for ‘Planning for a Safe Climate’ to deliver in the lead up to the Victorian election in November 2022. Ran an information session for CEOs and councillors in June 2022 attended by over 80 individuals from half the councils in the state. • Worked on a joint letter sent by the MAV and Greenhouse Alliances to Ministers and Shadow Ministers highlighting key climate change priorities for the Victorian

	<p>Government and proposing a strategic partnership to deliver them</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Worked on joint letters sent by the MAV and Greenhouse Alliances to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ DELWP seeking assistance to ensure energy distribution businesses provide free and accessible postcode level consumption data; and ○ the Interim Targets Independent Expert Panel in response to their consultation on Victoria’s 2035 interim emissions reduction targets. ● Submitted a response to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ the Parliamentary Inquiry into Renewable Energy, noting the need for new buildings and urban renewable precincts not to be locked into gas infrastructure. ○ the Parliamentary Inquiry into Protections in the Planning Framework on behalf of the Greenhouse Alliances and CASBE, where we were mentioned in the interim report.
<p>Non-Residential Emissions</p> <p><i>Develop and deliver initiatives to reduce emissions from the non-residential sector.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Held two meetings of Economic Development Officers to share lessons on supporting businesses with climate change action and worked with the group on a project led by Darebin City Council to develop an online accreditation tool for green businesses. ● Worked with City of Yarra on a project to facilitate a renewable energy PPA for businesses.
<p>Local Energy Markets</p> <p><i>Work to overcome energy market barriers to the uptake of renewable energy, both for corporate and community needs.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Worked with City of Melbourne on a project investigating an electricity retailer partnership
<p>Dumping Carbon</p> <p><i>Assist member councils to move rapidly away from dependence upon fossil fuels, both for corporate and community needs.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Working with Climate Emergency Australia, NAGA hosted a webinar on the electrification of council buildings and operations and shared case studies of NAGA councils getting off gas in their own operations. ● Gained funding through the Victorian Government Electric Vehicle Charging for Council Fleets (EVCCF) for three NAGA councils to install electric vehicle chargers. ● Continued to support VECO - a local government renewable energy power purchase agreement project - through its first year of contract. Participating councils reduced emissions by 172,000 tones in the first year, and made substantial cost savings on their electricity bills.

Management

Ensure sound management of the network and deliver value for members.

- Ran the Victorian Greenhouse Alliances conference on 29 April 2022, attracting over 300 participants from LGAs across Victoria, opened by Victorian Minister for Climate Change, Lily D'Ambrosio.
- Ran regular NAGA Implementation Forum meetings and quarterly Executive and Executive Working Group meetings.
- All nine member councils committed to new three-year Memorandums of Understanding to work together as NAGA.

Member highlights 2021–2022

Banyule

- 82 of the highest energy using Council buildings were fitted with solar PV.
- 33 households participated in the Better Score Energy Efficiency Upgrade Program, providing part reimbursement for upgrades identified by home energy audits.
- Council's organisational emissions dropped by 60% as a result of the VECO contract.
- The gas fired cogeneration unit was turned off and a pool blanket was trialled at the Watermarc aquatic centre, representing significant drops in gas usage.

Darebin

- The successful VECO renewable energy electricity contract was expanded to include five additional councils, bringing the total to 51. It won an LGPro Award for Excellence - Sustainability Initiative category and the Collaboration Award at the Cities Power Partnership Climate Awards 2021.
- Council received Climate Active Carbon Neutral Certification for the 2020-21 reporting period
- Construction was completed at Narrandjeri Stadium, Council's first all-electric, 6-star Green Star stadium, which opened in June 2022.
- The Climate Emergency Plan 2017-2022 was reviewed, with 92% of the 156 actions completed or in progress.

Hume

- The Energy Savvy program with the Victorian Government was completed. 106 Hume households experiencing bill stress received a subsidised home assessment through the program and 63 proceeded with subsidised upgrades. Options for a Hume delivered program for low incomes residents will be scoped.
- Hume's Solar Roll-out has supported 145 households to install a total of 745kW with a high proportion of these concession card holders.
- Hume's panel of solar suppliers was renewed with seven suppliers appointed. A further ~800kW of solar was commissioned in 2021-22 bringing the total on Council facilities to over 3MW. This includes installing solar at facilities leased to community organisations who pay the bills.

Manningham

- Council endorsed a draft Climate Emergency Action Plan for Manningham, which went out for community feedback. The Plan incorporates Council's recently adopted mitigation targets
 - net zero emissions for Council operations by 2028; and
 - net zero emissions for the Manningham community by 2035.
- A tender is underway for installation of solar and/or batteries for seven Council buildings, to add to the four buildings with 600kW of solar and batteries already installed.
- 14 Council EV chargers were installed and a Nissan Leaf EVs was purchased for the Council fleet
- A Neighbourhood battery feasibility investigation for Tullamore estate, funded by the Victorian Government, was completed.

Melbourne

- Alongside University of Melbourne and RMIT, Council completed a techno-economic feasibility study to establish a network of mid-scale neighbourhood batteries and retail electricity offering for residents and small businesses, finding that a retailer partnership is viable, though for many proponents, the inclusion of batteries as part of an agreement is a key factor.
- A Voluntary Local Review for the City of Melbourne using the UN Sustainable Development Goals was completed.
- Melbourne Fashion Week, Melbourne Music Week, Moomba, and Melbourne Knowledge Week were delivered as certified carbon neutral events.
- Great progress was made in developing new guidelines and processes for ensuring sustainable and resilient Council assets

Merri-bek (Moreland City Council during 2021-22)

- In December 2021, Council endorsed new emissions reduction targets of:
 - 75% reduction in community emissions by 2030 and net-zero by 2035
 - 80 – 100% reduction in Council emissions by 2030 (prior to any offsets)
- Council led the development of a joint statement signed by local councils across Australia to support energy performance increases in the National Construction Code. Building Ministers agreed to increase the minimum energy standard for new homes from 6 to 7 stars and introduce an energy budget to encourage energy efficient appliances.
- The Electrify Everything communications campaign was delivered with a winter focus of keeping warm and reducing energy bills. Council also coordinated a Community of Practice with over 70 council officers from across Australia on supporting communities to go all electric.
- A 100kW Solar system at Brunswick Baths was installed, bringing installed capacity to 1.2MW over 40 sites. Two solar systems were also installed on sites leased to community groups. An analysis of remaining capacity for solar on council sites was completed, finding that a further 1.3MW could be reasonably installed, on top of the 1.2MW installed so far.

Nilumbik

- The Climate Action Plan 2022-23 and implementation plan was endorsed by Council along with a declaration of a Climate Emergency.
- Small scale micro-inverter solar systems on pre-schools across the shire were completed and commissioned. Additional small systems are in the planning stage.
- Eltham Leisure Centre (267kW) and Diamond Valley Sports and Fitness Centre Solar (151kW) rooftop solar and EV charge station projects were completed, including battery backup systems. Council now hosts 49 renewable energy generation systems representing over 640kW capacity on large facilities (roof top and solar carport) and approximately 350kW across smaller community facilities.
- Three years of participating in the Solar Savers program resulted in over 60 household solar installations totalling around 310kW. The program for FY 2021/22 included opportunities for renters and small businesses.

Whittlesea

- A draft 10-year Sustainable Environment Strategy was developed, along with an associated two-year Action Plan and a 10-year City Climate Change Plan (CCP). The Strategy incorporates key focus areas including Biodiversity, Rethinking Waste, Climate, Greening, Water, and Green Wedge Management.
- A council-wide comprehensive service analysis is being conducted for water management at Whittlesea. An asset audit is being conducted into approximately 100 WSUD (water sensitive urban design) assets.
- 155 kW of solar PV and 194 kWh of battery storage was installed at nine sites.
- 1,300 decorative streetlights will be changed to more energy efficient LEDs by the end of 2022

Yarra

- A Yarra and Merri-bek led process has proposed changes to the planning scheme to be jointly adopted by 24 Victorian councils, supported by the Council Alliance for a Sustainable Built Environment (CASBE). This amendment has been lodged with the Minister for Planning. If approved, new developments would be required to: Produce net zero carbon emissions, be powered by renewables and avoid the use of gas, support electric vehicle charging, protect and enhance greening and biodiversity, and be more resilient to our changing climate future.
- Council supported the installation of the first urban community battery in Australia. Delivered by the Yarra Energy Foundation (YEF), this sector leading battery in Fitzroy North was launched in June 2022 and is an exemplar for others to follow. Further work is underway to develop the next community battery projects and research how to fast-track community battery rollouts (in partnership with YEF and neighbouring councils).
- A 10-session, 75-participant Community Skills for Climate Action program (in partnership with Merri-bek and Darebin Councils) resulted in 22 local climate action projects and a growing network of people working together to create change.
- Council led the *Business Renewables Buying Group* with partner councils to develop a scalable and replicable procurement process for medium to large electricity consumers to enter into renewable energy Power Purchase Agreements (PPA). Councils are supporting this business group towards an aimed 100% renewable energy purchase in 2022-23.