



NAGA Strategic Plan

2020 - 2025

1. Background

This strategic plan has been developed through a collaborative process involving the members of the NAGA Executive and Implementation Forum, guided by the NAGA Governance working group.

NAGA commenced development of this strategic plan at a workshop, held on 4 February 2020 involving NAGA Executive, NAGA Implementation Forum and the NAGA Secretariat.

The workshop identified 14 areas of work for NAGA for the coming five years:

- Adaptation – revisiting and updating the *Adaptation in the North* strategy.
- Advocacy – strengthening the role of NAGA in delivering more targeted and effective advocacy.
- Biodiversity – developing a network of officers sharing best practice on the impacts of climate change on biodiversity.
- Community Resilience Building – developing the capacity of the community to deal with extreme weather events.
- Corporate PPAs – developing PPAs for businesses throughout the NAGA region.
- Electricity Retailer – investigating the costs and benefits and appetite for developing a local government electricity retailer.
- Farms for Life – investigating Green Wedge and agricultural land for carbon sinks.
- Fleet Electrification – investigating moving all NAGA council fleets to 100 per cent EVs or hydrogen in the next five years.
- Getting off Gas – shifting council facilities (e.g. aquatic centres) away from a reliance on natural gas and expanding this into the community as well, integrated with advocacy for renewable energy use.
- Internal Governance – embedding climate change throughout all council activities and governance.
- Local Electricity Trading – progressing local electricity trading as identified in earlier studies.
- Procurement – understanding scope of councils to influence procurement-based emissions.
- Risk – working together to protect councils and their communities from risks associated with climate change impacts.
- Young People – extending engagement to target young people as a specific demographic to drive community action on climate change.

These work areas were then combined into seven work packages, which form the heart of this strategic plan.

2. Operating Environment

The Northern Alliance for Greenhouse Action (NAGA) councils represent more than one million people in northern metropolitan Melbourne. In their work to mitigate and adapt to climate change, NAGA councils are influenced by external factors expressed at the international, national and local level, including political, economic and social factors.

The following review of the operating environment is based on a survey of strategies and plans from identified key stakeholders, including state and Federal government departments, electricity networks, other greenhouse alliances and non-government organisations.

The Science of Climate Change

Global surface temperatures have increased by one degree Celsius on average above pre-industrial levels¹. In Australia, this is experienced as increased and prolonged periods of warming, lower rainfall, rising sea levels and coastal inundation and increased incidence of extreme weather events, including bushfires, storms and flooding.

Currently, despite pledges to reduce emissions to keep future increases in global temperatures to 1.5 degrees Celsius, globally we are tracking on a high emissions pathway that would result in increases in global average temperatures of 4.5 degrees Celsius by 2100 (with a possible low of a 3 degree increase and a possible high of a 6 degree increase)².

Federal and State Government Policy Responses

Following the federal election in May 2019, there has been no indication of a substantial change in either climate change or energy policy from the Federal Government. NAGA should proceed on the basis that there is unlikely to be any significant political or economic support from the Federal Government.

There exist funding opportunities from Federal Government agencies that possess a degree of independence, such as the Clean Energy Finance Corporation (CEFC) and the Australian Renewable Energy Agency (ARENA). These favour large-scale projects, usually linked to technology demonstration or trial. This government support has been supplemented by increasing interest in renewables from private investors, but generally needs to be at significant scale.

The Victorian Government has passed a raft of legislation responding to climate change, including the establishment of a Climate Change Framework, which guides action by the state government. The Victorian Government has committed to reduce the state's emissions by between 15 and 20 per cent below 2005 levels by 2020 and reduce emissions from government operations by 30 per cent below 2015 levels by 2020. Their long-term emissions reduction target is to get to net zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050.

The Victorian Government passed a Climate Change Act in 2017 that establishes five yearly targets for emissions reduction, seeks to embed responses to climate change within government operations and develop regional and sectoral climate adaptation plans. This framework has resulted in initiatives such as the establishment of the Victorian Renewable

¹ Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (2019) *Global warming of 1.5 C*

² Ibid.



Energy Target, which has legislated targets of 25 per cent of energy by 2025, 40 per cent by 2030 and 50 per cent by 2040. This target has been criticised by the Federal Government. The state Local Government Act has recently been updated and includes overarching principles for councils to mitigate against the production of greenhouse gas emissions and plan for climate change risks, as well as specific provisions, such as allowing the extension of Environmental Upgrade Agreements to residential properties.

The department with primary responsibility for climate change is the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (DELWP). Other relevant state departments and agencies include Sustainability Victoria and the Department of Health and Human Services (health and climate change, guidance on health and wellbeing plans).

Non-Government Stakeholders

Victoria's electricity distributors are recognisant of the need to shift to a greater reliance upon renewable energy and enhance grid flexibility. This is reflected in the forward strategies of those distributors in the NAGA region: Jemena, Citipower and AusNet. Distributors face issues of grid management due to increasing pressure of use at peak times as well as the ability of the grid to take on new renewables (especially on a large scale) and the forecast take-up of battery storage and electric vehicles.

New companies, such as Greensync and Reposit Power, have emerged in recent years with technology to support distributed renewable energy and storage in the form of virtual power plants. These companies have developed trials of their products that are anticipated to come to maturity during the life of this strategic plan.

NAGA has good relations with the largest universities in the region: RMIT University, University of Melbourne and La Trobe University. Each university has provided students to conduct guided research defined by NAGA. In addition, NAGA and RMIT University have developed the Climate Change Exchange, a research hub that is aiming to deliver climate change focused research for local governments.

NAGA is a member of the One Million Homes Alliance, pushing for higher energy efficiency support and standards for low income households in Victoria. Key members include Environment Victoria, Victorian Council of Social Services (VCOSS) and Tenants Union Victoria.

Recent years have seen increasingly integrated work between the different Victorian greenhouse alliances. While this has always been a feature of local government advocacy, it has recently expanded to large scale projects such as the Local Government PPA.

3. Member Councils

The NAGA Secretariat has conducted a review of existing member council climate change relevant strategies and interviewed member councils to ensure alignment between this Strategic Plan and these strategies.

Some NAGA council members are amongst Australia's leading local governments responding to climate change while other members are actively working to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, especially in Council operations, but climate change action is a less prominent Council priority. The following points reflect the primary feedback from members in terms of identified needs, opportunities for future work and reflections on the role of NAGA.

- There is a desire for *larger projects in the future tied to a recognition that just focusing on emissions within specific municipal boundaries will be insufficient* to meet the challenge of climate change. Increasingly, projects should be considered not only for the scale of their impact but also for their ability to disrupt existing systems that lock-in emissions production.
- NAGA has a diverse range of councils within its membership and we need to recognise that there is *strength in that diversity*, but also that councils may want to interact more with others in their typology (e.g. green wedge or growth councils), as they will share similar issues.
- In terms of reducing corporate emissions, councils are likely to *significantly shift their fleets (both light and heavy) to renewably sourced energy* over the next five years. There could be an opportunity to work together in the form of joint purchasing or sharing solutions. There is also an increasing need to address procurement and other scope 3 emissions.
- Councils are investigating *how to move away from gas*, both for their own operations and for the community and support this move with an integrated switch to renewable energy.
- Some member councils have ambitious targets to *substantially increase the amount of rooftop solar within their communities*.
- There needs to be further *exploration of the implications of the climate emergency movement*, including how better climate change governance can be more deeply embedded within councils across all divisions and services.
- The *advocacy role played by NAGA needs to be strengthened* through more structured planned and proactive advocacy including involvement of elected members.

The NAGA Strategic Plan is designed to support and complement existing work being carried out by member councils, primarily through providing opportunities for networking and information sharing, and advocacy to relevant external stakeholders. The Strategic Plan seeks to “fill in the gaps” at a regional level through the development of innovative projects that advance the degree of knowledge and capacity of its members. It should be noted that the work carried out under the Strategic Plan may adapt over time due to changing circumstances.

4. Vision

NAGA has established the following vision to encompass its operations in 2020-25:

Collaborate to urgently create a zero-carbon society and provide maximum protection against the impacts of climate change in the NAGA region and beyond.

This Strategic Plan is comprised of work packages to meet each of the following objectives:

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

These objectives are supported by an internal management objective to ensure sound management of the network and deliver value for members.

NAGA Strategic Plan 2020 – 2025

A. Adaptation

Objective

Increase the resilience of member councils and their communities to respond to projected climate change impacts in the region.

Strategic Actions

NAGA's adaptation objective will be achieved through the following strategic actions:

- A1 Understand and measure the consequences of climate change impacts for member council assets and services, including through a stronger understanding of climate risk.
- A2 Understand and measure the consequences of climatic impacts for member council communities and assist them to identify and act on opportunities for improving their resilience.
- A3 Support the development of a network for member council sustainability officers with a focus on adaptation issues.
- A4 Develop and deploy a capacity building program for strategic and statutory planning in member councils, to reduce community exposure to future projected climate impacts.
- A5 Investigate opportunities for member councils to work together to identify and respond to the impacts of climate change on biodiversity assets within their municipalities.

B. Climate Governance

Objective

Ensure that responding to climate change is deeply embedded within the governance practices of member councils.

Strategic Actions

NAGA's climate governance objective will be achieved through the following strategic actions:

- B1 Encourage and support member councils to declare and act upon declaring a Climate Emergency.
- B2 Manage the Climate Emergency Australia project.
- B3 Research, share and act upon best practice in embedding climate change as a key factor to be considered within all relevant local government operations and planning.
- B4 Develop and share a climate risk framework / guide for local governments to reduce climate risk, including physical, transition and legal risk.
- B5 Establish and maintain a climate risk working group to share best practice of climatic risk management between member councils.
- B6 Develop and apply a local government climate ready governance assessment for member councils.
- B7 Research a model process for incorporating climate change into a council plan.
- B8 Develop and distribute climate change information and training packages for councillors.
- B9 Build capacity of key council staff responding to climate change through training, information provision and working with professional networks.
- B10 Support councils to identify and act upon further opportunities in current member council policies to reduce procurement emissions (including Scope 3 emissions).

C. Advocacy

Objective

Deliver a pro-active program of advocacy to support our climate change mitigation and adaptation objectives.

Strategic Actions

NAGA's advocacy objective will be achieved by the following strategic actions:

- C1 Research, develop and deliver a NAGA Advocacy Strategy, identifying key strategic issues, criteria for assessing NAGA's involvement and delivery methodologies.
- C2 Prepare and submit relevant submissions to state and federal government policy development processes, including through collaborative advocacy with other Victorian greenhouse alliances and other key stakeholders (e.g. One Million Homes Alliance).
- C3 Continue to work with NAGA members and the Greenhouse Alliances to prepare a submission to the Australian Energy Regulator Electricity Distribution Price Review.
- C4 Ensure councillors from NAGA member councils are kept informed on NAGA activities, including current projects, recent networking opportunities and advocacy positions.
- C5 Ensure state government MPs representing NAGA electorates are kept informed on NAGA activities, including current projects, recent networking opportunities and advocacy positions.
- C6 Scope opportunities to involve councillors in proactive and face to face advocacy on behalf of NAGA
- C7 Explore opportunities for combined advocacy work on climate change with youth-based organisations

D. Regional Non-Residential Emissions

Objective

Develop and deliver a program of initiatives to reduce emissions from the non-residential sector, through investment in renewable energy and energy efficiency.

Strategic Actions

NAGA's regional non-residential emissions objective will be achieved by the following strategic actions:

- D1 Investigate potential for a regional approach to encourage wider scale solar and energy efficiency uptake including, but not limited to, the use of environmental upgrade agreements for the non-residential sector. If potential is justified, develop a regional approach.
- D2 Conduct a scoping study to identify potential participation in renewable energy power purchasing agreements in the non-residential sector.
- D3 Explore, develop and support projects that enhance battery storage solutions.
- D4 Support regional circular economy initiatives that actively reduce emissions.
- D5 Coordinate and facilitate the Economic Development Officers working group to help develop and deliver emissions reduction projects in the NAGA region, and to build the professional capacity of members.

E. Household Emissions

Objective

Investigate, support and deliver energy efficiency and renewable energy programs to reduce emissions in the residential sector.

Strategic Actions

NAGA's energy efficiency and residential renewable capacity objective will be achieved by the following strategic actions:

- E1 Develop a maximum residential renewable energy strategy across the NAGA region, including research to identify maximum residential solar capacity based on relevant demographics, lessons from existing projects and the potential of relevant policy, regulations and financial tools to support the uptake of renewable energy.
- E2 Support member councils implementing projects to meet the objectives of the maximum residential renewable energy strategy.
- E3 Explore, support and develop projects to enhance battery storage solutions for the residential sector.
- E4 Explore and act on opportunities to support the uptake of energy efficiency upgrades for households.

F. Local Energy Markets

Objective

Work to overcome energy market barriers to the uptake of renewable energy, both for corporate and community needs.

Strategic Actions

NAGA's local energy markets objective will be achieved by the following strategic actions:

- F1 Investigate the costs and benefits of developing a local government owned or procured electricity retailer, including local energy trading and provision for communities. If the case for establishing a retailer is feasible, proceed with identified preferred option.
- F2 Develop a strong understanding of the community energy sector in NAGA and develop a strategy to better support this at a regional scale.
- F3 Research potential for virtual power plants in NAGA region.

G. Dumping Carbon

Objective

NAGA will assist member councils to move rapidly away from dependence upon fossil fuels, both for corporate and community needs.

Strategic Actions

NAGA's dumping carbon objective will be achieved by the following strategic actions:

- G1 Investigate the costs and benefits of specific technologies designed to reduce council operational reliance on fossil fuels with a particular emphasis on gas.
- G2 Promote beneficial technologies reducing reliance on fossil fuels and greenhouse gas emissions through workshops and joint projects.
- G3 Advocate to Victorian government to end the continual expansion of natural gas infrastructure for residential and commercial premises, with a focus on reduced greenhouse gas emissions in growth area development.
- G4 Support member councils in their potential use of available local government powers to discourage connection of properties to natural gas infrastructure.
- G5 Develop and host regular meetings of fleet managers from NAGA councils.
- G6 Conduct benchmarking of council member fleets as to optimised fleet number and current and ongoing percentage of zero-emissions vehicles (both light and heavy fleet). Following benchmarking, develop strategy to encourage take-up of zero-emissions vehicles in light and heavy vehicle fleets.
- G7 Support members to increase zero-emissions vehicle uptake in the community.
- G8 Develop / maintain working relationship with Electric Vehicle Council and other relevant trade bodies.
- G9 Investigate the use of online tools to support on new vehicles (both light and heavy fleet) and charging infrastructure for fleet managers.
- G10 In conjunction with other greenhouse alliances, research opportunities for agricultural land to be used for carbon drawdown for NAGA member council emissions.
- G11 If viable, develop a strategy for NAGA and rural and regional councils to develop linked carbon drawdown.
- G12 Support member Councils to divest from fossil fuel investment.
- G13 Participate in the local government power purchase agreement project.

H. Management

Objective

NAGA will ensure sound management of the network and deliver value for members.

Strategic Actions

NAGA's management objective will be achieved by the following strategic actions:

- H1 Ensure effective governance of NAGA through the Executive
- H2 Ensure effective management of Executive to oversee delivery of Strategic Plan.
- H3 Ensure effective management of Advocacy and Research Working Group to oversee delivery of advocacy and research priorities.
- H4 Ensure effective management of Finance Working Group to oversee delivery of NAGA budget.
- H5 Ensure effective management of Governance Working Group to deliver good governance of NAGA.
- H6 Ensure that NAGA is financially stable.
- H7 Ensure effective networking and joint working through the Implementation Forum
- H8 Run workshops, webinars and subject-specific working groups to support development and implementation of work packages in this strategic plan, and ongoing knowledge sharing amongst NAGA members.
- H9 Conduct regular annual work planning to ensure NAGA effectively delivers this Strategic Plan.
- H10 Maintain an effective and skilled Secretariat.
- H11 Recruiting and managing students and volunteers to support the work of NAGA.
- H12 Update and maintain a public presence through the NAGA website, Climate News and other mechanisms.