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UNFCCC Taskforce  
Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet  
One National Circuit  
Barton ACT 2600

### **Australia's Emissions Reduction Target**

Local Government NSW (LGNSW) is the peak body for councils in NSW, representing all 152 NSW general-purpose councils, the special-purpose county councils and the NSW Aboriginal Land Council. In essence, LGNSW is the 'sword and shield' of the NSW Local Government sector.

LGNSW is a credible, professional organisation that represents the views of councils to NSW and Australian Governments; provides industrial relations and specialist services to councils; and promotes NSW councils to the community. LGNSW facilitates the development of an effective community-based system of Local Government in NSW.

Please note that in order to meet the consultation deadline, this submission is provided in draft form in anticipation of the LGNSW Board approval in June 2015. LGNSW will advise the Taskforce of any amendments to the submission at that time.

LGNSW welcomes the opportunity to make a submission to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) Taskforce into Setting Australia's post-2020 target for greenhouse gas emissions. Local Governments have already shown a willingness and enthusiasm to mitigate or reduce their emissions, and the emissions of their communities. Over the past two decades Local Government has actively engaged in programs to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from council operations and also implement community greenhouse gas abatement programs.

### **Australia's post-2020 target**

To achieve the International agreed goal of limiting global warming to 2°C, LGNSW believes the emission reduction target needs to be more ambitious than the current target of reducing emissions by 5% below 2000 levels by 2020. The target also needs to be comparable to other wealthy developed countries. For example, the USA plan to reduce emissions by 26-28% by 2025 relative to 2005 levels and EU have set a reduction target of 40% by 2030 relative to 1990 levels.

As the independent agency charged with reviewing Australia's emissions reduction target, the Climate Change Authority's recommended target takes into account Australia's national circumstances of population and economic growth and reliance on fossil fuel resources. Given the costs that Local Governments will incur (and are already incurring) from the impacts of climate change, particularly from extreme weather events, LGNSW supports the intent of the Climate Change Authority's recommendation. We are aware that there are councils in NSW that have set emission targets in a similar range. For example:

- Eurobodalla Shire Council aims to reduce corporate emission by 25% of 2006 levels by 2020.

- Lake Macquarie City Council aims to reduce both community and corporate emissions by 30% of 2008 levels by 2018.
- City of Sydney Council aims to reduce community emissions by 70% of 2006 levels by 2030.

### **Impact of target**

Australia is very vulnerable to the impacts of climate change and even a 2°C increase in warming will have severe impacts for Local Government to manage.

Climate change has the potential to damage council assets, cause serious disruptions to the delivery of Council services, generate unbudgeted financial impacts and affect the wellbeing of the community, particularly those vulnerable to weather extremes.

If Australian Governments do not proactively seek to limit the impacts of climate change, then it is increasingly likely that Local Government resources will be diverted to maintain poorly adapted assets and programs. The more often resources are diverted towards clean up and emergency response activities the less likely a council will be able to meet its service delivery and performance KPIs. NSW Local Government is prioritising adaptation to avoid the worst impacts, with over 82% of councils having undertaken a climate change risk assessment.

Over the longer term, climate change also has the potential to affect the liveability and economic viability of a region. The sustainability of a council could be threatened if businesses and rate payers start leaving a region. Councils also have a duty of care to all people in their Local Government Area. Climate change has the potential to generate a range of hazards for the public (increase in fire weather and extreme heat, coastal and riverine flooding, subsidence, slippage, erosion, infrastructure damage etc.).

### **Complementary policies**

LGNSW's position on reducing greenhouse gas emissions is that this is best achieved through a polluter pays market mechanism rather than financed through limited public funds. Measures to reduce emissions should come from all sectors of the economy including energy generation, mining, transport, waste, buildings and agriculture. LGNSW also supports policies that promote the use and further development of renewable energy; and practices that conserve energy and/or increase energy efficiency. Complementary policies also need to focus on adapting to the impacts of climate change.

### **Conclusion**

Local Government plays a key role to prepare for climate change by adopting policies and practices in relation to climate change mitigation and adaptation, targeting both council operations and services to the community. Local Government also plays a role in community capacity building and awareness raising. LGNSW calls on other spheres of government to continue to work with and support councils to reduce the risk of climate change impacts on the community.

Yours sincerely



Noel Baum  
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