Victorian Climate Resilient Councils

Consultation Report

Contents

1   Summary

The Western Alliance for Greenhouse Action (WAGA) is leading the establishment of the 'Victorian Climate Resilient Councils' (VCRC) program, designed to guide local governments through a clear step-by-step process to manage climate change risks and implement actions to manage impacts to their operations, assets and local communities.

From 1 January to 30 June 2022, WAGA undertook a consultation project for the VCRC program. The purpose of the consultation was to consult local governments and other stakeholders on the proposed program model to refine the model and develop a program vision and framework to support all Victorian local governments to become climate resilient.

The consultation activities comprised:
- Briefings and discussion in Victorian Greenhouse Alliances' meetings, the Northwest Metropolitan Region Emergency Management Collaboration Forum and 'How Well Are We Adapting' program network meetings
- Interviews with a number of Councillors
- Presentations to and discussion with a number of community organisations
- A written survey for local government staff and Councillors
- Meetings with a Project Advisory Group, made up of greenhouse alliances' representatives, RMIT University and the Municipal Association of Victoria (MAV).

In total, 52 Victorian local governments were engaged during the consultation period, equivalent to 66% of the 79 local governments in Victoria. The consultation reached 30 metro, 17 rural and five regional local governments. The process involved just over 60 council officers (sustainability and emergency management officers, coordinators and team leaders), 12 Councillors and officers from three community organisations, two Catchment Management Authorities and two state government agencies.

Overall, the consultation showed strong support for the proposed program.

Sustainability officers and coordinators stand out as the preferred program users within the local government organisation. The most important audiences beyond these are senior council leadership, Councillors, and risk and emergency response officers. This reflects a strong desire for the program to assist sustainability officers to meaningfully engage these key internal audiences to raise their awareness, ownership and capacity to respond to adaptation issues.

The consultation results confirmed and helped to refine the following recommended program structure for participating local governments:
- Step 1: Application process. This step could potentially also help local governments define their needs and outcomes from participating in the program and commit a level of resourcing towards its implementation.
- Step 2: Assessment. The consultation showed interest in a climate change risk assessment, as well as an adaptive capacity or governance assessment.
- Step 3: Response Planning. Using the priorities established in the climate risk assessment process, a response plan or strategy would be developed by a participating local government, including endorsement by council leadership and Councillors and resource commitment for priority actions.

- Step 4: Implementation. For example, a participating local government could convene working groups for each priority risk, establish a reporting process and implement actions utilising program resources such as case studies, shared projects, communities of practice, shared advocacy, training and access to expertise and workshops for key issues.
- Step 5: Monitoring, evaluation and reporting. This would offer important opportunities for reflection, learning and accountability. Recommended models include a brief check-in at the end of each program step to reflect on process and lessons, reports verified and presented to council leadership and Councillors, completion of the Adaptive Capacity Checklist and detailed ME&R through How Well Are We Adapting. (The Adaptive Capacity Checklist and 'How Well Are We Adapting' are tools for ME&R already developed by WAGA.)

A governance model has been outlined based on the consultation results and existing formal and informal local government and institutional structures. The greenhouse alliances have been identified as potential managers of the program, as they are critical actors with longevity in supporting local government sustainability initiatives. Accordingly, the outlined governance structure is designed to meet the following basic requirements:

- Allow the greenhouse alliances to collaboratively manage a state-wide program in a way that fits with their various governance models and implementation plans and processes; and
- Help and facilitate the greenhouse alliances' and their members' work rather than simply add another potentially onerous administrative layer.

Funding and resourcing options were also explored through the consultation, and a proposed funding model has been outlined for consideration in future program development. Funding may comprise:

- Subscription membership by local governments
- Bi-annual contributions from local governments
- Individual local government contributions, with three tiers for metro, medium-sized regional and rural councils
- Contributions to be promoted through the greenhouse alliances.

In summary, the key learnings from the consultation project are as follows:

- Local government climate resilience requires effective leadership, strong partnerships, inclusive processes and an ability to translate technical data and information into practical action.
- The proposed VCRC model would leverage existing strengths within the Victorian local government sector for innovation, collaboration and knowledge sharing.
- The VCRC program would respond to pressing challenges, including:
  - A strong desire to engage with local government executive leadership and elected officials
  - Lack of resources and growing costs in responding to climate change
  - A need to move away from reactive planning towards a more strategic and sustained response
  - Desire in the sector for a clear set of processes to build adaptation capacity and expert technical guidance
  - Desire in the sector to coordinate with and enhance existing initiatives and programs
  - A need to consider the different contexts, issues and constraints of rural and regional councils compared to metropolitan councils.

The consultation process established a broad base of support within the local government sector and raised awareness of the benefits such a program might offer. Consultation participants

expressed a desire for transformative action and an urgent need for improved support and response. Potentially one of the most important and transformational outcomes of a program such as the VCRC would be to build momentum for action and establish trustful and productive relationships within the sector and with partner organisations, including the Victorian Government, which can overcome systemic barriers and accelerate adaptation response.

2 Introduction

2.1 Background to the Victorian Climate Resilient Councils program and consultation project

The Western Alliance for Greenhouse Action (WAGA) is leading the establishment of the 'Victorian Climate Resilient Councils' (VCRC) program, designed to guide local governments through a clear step-by-step process to manage climate change risks and implement actions to manage impacts to their operations, their assets and local communities.

The aim of the program is to build capacity across the sector to implement sustained and coordinated responses to climate change risks and provide flexibility to meet the needs and local contexts of individual councils.

In 2021, the WAGA project team supporting the development of this program prepared two reports to inform its design:

- Needs Analysis: This report scoped the key needs and opportunities of Victorian local government organisations to embed and build capacity for climate change adaptation to inform the development of the program.
- Program models comparison report: This report compared similar programs operating in other parts of Australia and overseas identifying common features, and what challenges and achievements such programs had experienced through implementation.

From 1 January to 30 June 2022, the project team led consultation for the sector on key needs and preferences of councils to produce recommendations for the design and core components for the VCRC program. This stage of the program, the 'consultation project', was undertaken with funding from the Victorian Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (DELWP), through 'Supporting our Regions to Adapt' to implement the Greater Melbourne Regional Climate Change Adaptation Strategy.

This report details the consultation. A summary of the program and the consultation project, including information about the Needs Analysis and the Program models comparison report, can be found on the How Well Are We Adapting/VCRC website.

2.2 Consultation purpose

The purpose of the consultation project was to consult local government and other stakeholders identified in the Stakeholder Engagement Plan (Appendix 2) on the proposed program model to refine the model and develop a program vision and framework to support all Victorian local governments to become climate resilient.

2.3 Consultation objectives

This consultation engaged broadly with the local government sector and associated stakeholders to:

1. Understand and meet the needs of diverse communities.
2. Establish buy-in and ownership of a proposed support program by those local governments and other organisations expected to participate in it.
3. Test a range of delivery models and component projects for the program, particularly as the concept of a coordinated adaptation support program is new and it is unlikely that any existing model will completely fit community needs.
4. Establish a governance model which makes best use of the existing formal and informal government and non-government structures and networks that currently manage climate change risks.
5. Explore options for future resources and funding.

3 Methodology

The project was conducted as outlined in the project Stakeholder Engagement Plan (Appendix 2), and each of the engagement methods are detailed in the following sections.

In total 52 Victorian local governments were engaged during the consultation period, equalling 66% of the 79 local governments in Victoria. The consultation reached 30 metro, 17 rural and 5 regional local governments. The process involved just over 60 Council officers (sustainability and emergency management officers, coordinators and team leaders), 12 Councillors and officers from three community organisations, two Catchment Management Authorities and two state government agencies.

3.1 Briefings

Victorian Greenhouse Alliances' meetings, the Northwest Metropolitan Region Emergency Management Collaboration Forum and the 'How Well Are We Adapting' program network meetings were identified as important opportunities to present and consult on different aspects of the program with many sustainability officers who are actively working on adaptation issues. Seven meetings were attended and just over 56 Council officers were consulted in this way, including 28 metro, 12 rural and 2 regional Council areas.

Table 1 shows the number and name of local governments consulted during each meeting. Sessions were attended mainly by sustainability officers and sustainability coordinators. The Emergency Management Collaboration Forum was attended by coordinators and officers from local government Emergency Management teams.

NAGA Northern Alliance for Greenhouse Action	WAGA Western Alliance for Greenhouse Action	SECCCA South East Councils Climate Change Alliance	GMCA South Goulburn Murray Climate Alliance	EAGA Eastern Alliance for Greenhouse Action	How Well Are We Adapting network	Emergency Management
6 metro councils • Darebin • Whittlesea • City of Melbourne • Moreland • Hume • Yarra	*6 metro Councils* • Melton • Brimbank • Maribyrnong • Wyndham • Mooney Valley • Hobsons Bay	*2 Rural 3 metro Councils* • Cardinia Shire • Dandenong • Port Phillip • Casey • Mornington Peninsula Shire	*10 Rural 2 Regional Councils 7 Councillors 2 CMAs* • Mansfield SC • Murrindindi SC • Alpine SC • Benalla SC • Campaspe SC	*6 metro Councils* • Maroondah • Yarra Ranges • Boroondara • Stonnington • Knox	*7 metro Councils* • Hume • Kingston • Monash • Moonee Valley • Glen Eira • Stonnington • Wyndham	*14 Councils and 2 State Gov. organisations* • Banyule • Wyndham • Brimbank • Darebin • Hobsons Bay • Hume • Maribyrnong • City of Melbourne

• DELWP Hume	• Melton
• Indigo SC	• Moonee Valley
• Mitchell SC	• Moreland
• Moira SC	• Nillumbik
• Northeast CMA	• Whittlesea
• Goulburn Broken CMA	• City of Yarra
• Greater Shepparton CC	• Department of Families, Fairness and Housing (DFFH)
• Strathbogie SC	• VicSES
• Towong SC	
• Rural City of Wangaratta	

Table 1: Summary of meetings attended during the consultation

The 42 local government areas engaged through this method vary widely in terms of resources, capacity, governance, and processes of action on climate change adaptation response. Presentations focused on the proposed program components and invited focused discussion around one or two program components in each meeting with the chance to provide broad feedback about the program overall. The Goulburn Murray Climate Alliance was the only meeting that allowed Councillors to be consulted through this method and the only opportunity to engage regional and rural local governments and two Catchment Management Authorities through discussion.

These meetings were supported by a power point presentation and a flyer presenting the program's background information and proposed program model as follows:

Victorian Climate Resilient Councils Program

What is it?

The Victorian Climate Resilient Councils (VCRC) will be a climate change adaptation program for Victorian local governments. It will guide councils through a clear step-by-step process to manage climate risks and embed climate change adaptation. The program will provide:

- **Clear structured process to accelerate responses**
- **Coordinate existing tools, expertise, and resources**
- **Leadership engagement**
- **Build capacity across the sector to implement sustained adaptation responses**
- **Flexibility to meet the needs and local contexts of individual councils**

Why is it needed?

Multiple reviews and inquiries have found that the LG sector needs more support so we are prepared to adapt to climate change (E.g., Local Government Climate Review, 2021)

Our preliminary discussions with local government officers confirmed these findings and highlighted:

- **Lack of support and funding for more sustained, strategic climate change adaptation**
- **Inequity in resourcing and capacities between councils and communities**
- **Climate risk management is not being prioritised or embedded across councils**
- **A lack of clear guidance to help manage complexity**

For full details about the program, visit the
Victorian Climate Resilient Councils Program website

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Proposed program structure

1. Application process
2. Assessment process
3. Resources
4. Peer-learning communities of practice
5. Action planning
6. Implementation
7. Monitoring, evaluation and reporting
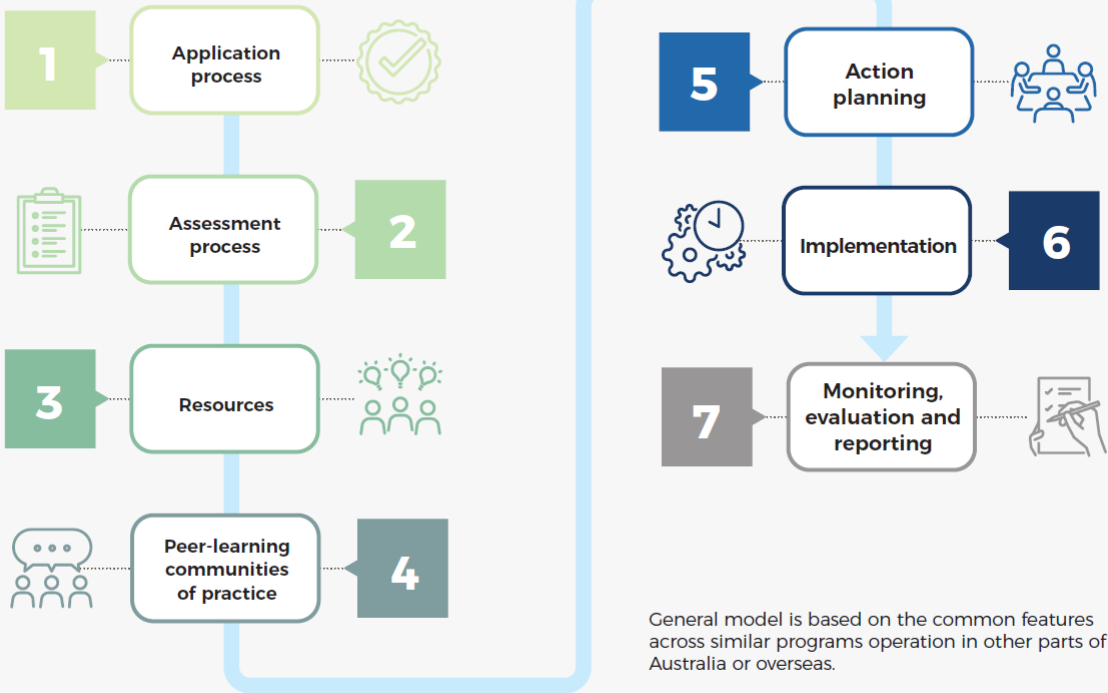
General model is based on the common features across similar programs operation in other parts of Australia or overseas.

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3.2   Presentation and Councillors' interviews

Interviews were conducted using video calls. Appendix 3 describes the questions that guided the interviews. In total there were five Councillors consulted through this method, two from rural and three from metro Council' areas

3.3   Presentation and consultation with community organisations

There were three community organisations consulted using video calls:
- Jesuit Social Services
- Lord Mayor's Charitable Foundation
- Victorian Council of Social Services.

These meetings were supported by a power point presentation followed by some questions to gain an understanding of how the program can support community organisations in the future. Appendix 3 presents the questions that directed the discussion.

3.4   Survey

During April - May 2022 a survey was conducted targeting local government staff and Councillors on key needs and preferences for the design and core components of the program. A link and invitation to complete the survey were sent through the MAV bulletin and via email to the Victorian Greenhouse Alliances' networks.

Appendix 4 shows the questions from the survey. In total 24 local governments completed the survey as per table 2:

Council area	Number of responses
Metro	14
Regional	6
Rural	4
Total	24

Table 2. Participating local government types

Thirty-one unique respondents participated in the survey with several councils having more than one representative respond, e.g. a sustainability officer, a sustainability coordinator and a Councillor.
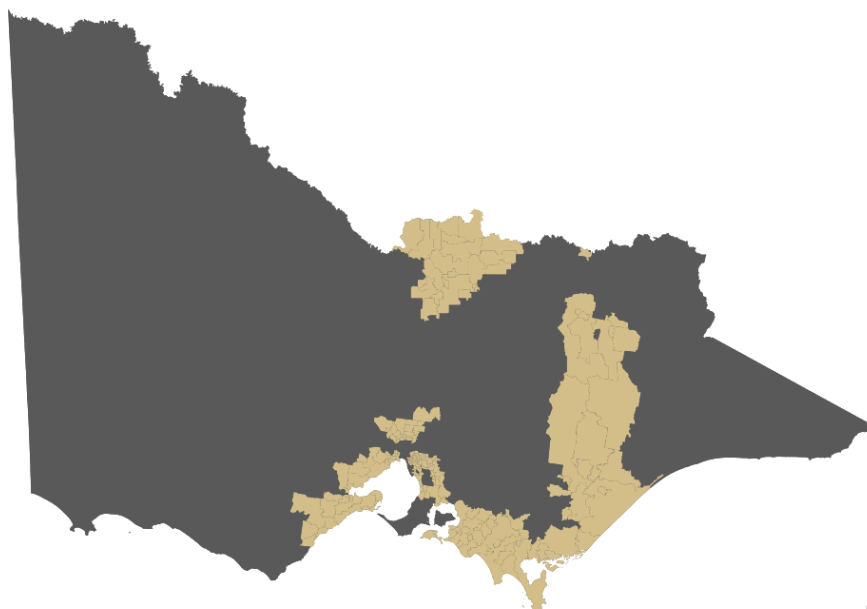
Figure 1. Distribution of council survey participants

3.5   CEO and director-level engagement

One gap emerged in the consultation process, with local government CEOs and director-level staff proving difficult to access during the short consultation timeframe and current low visibility of the VCRC program development for this level of local government. The consultation results show that this low level of engagement may reflect a low level of engagement at senior management level on adaptation response more broadly.

Despite this, we did briefly present on the VCRC at a LeadWest Committee Meeting, which included Councillors and CEOs from the Western Melbourne region. Unfortunately, there was not sufficient time to do more than raise awareness around the program development due to a full agenda. In the limited time available, a few questions arose around how the program could be resourced and implemented effectively.

If VCRC development continues, CEO-level engagement will become a focus of future engagement efforts since it is clear from the outcomes of this consultation project that this is a critical need expressed by sustainability officers to enable progress on adaptation response planning and implementation.

3.6   Meetings with Project Advisory Group

The Project Advisory Group was made up of Victorian Greenhouse Alliances' representatives, RMIT University and the Municipal Association of Victoria (MAV). Three meetings were held with the group to discuss the following topics:
1) Stakeholder engagement plan
2) Governance
3) Results from consultation and proposed program model

4   Findings

The most substantive consultation outputs come from the survey data and comments from the meetings with the greenhouse alliances. Therefore, this write-up is structured around survey data and enriched with commentary from the meetings held with stakeholders and interviews with

Councillors. Details of the comments and feedback from the different stakeholder meetings can be found in the appendix of this report.

4.1   Current adaptation capacity in the local government sector

The Needs Analysis characterised the local government sector as having low adaptive capacity, highlighting a gap between local governments' experience of climate change impacts and their readiness to respond. The gaps described in the analysis included lack of skills, knowledge, access to information, cross-organisational capacity, and governance support.

The results of direct consultation with the sector confirm that capacity generally remains low to moderate, with some local governments demonstrating a higher capacity for adaptation.

Number of adaptation planning responses taken
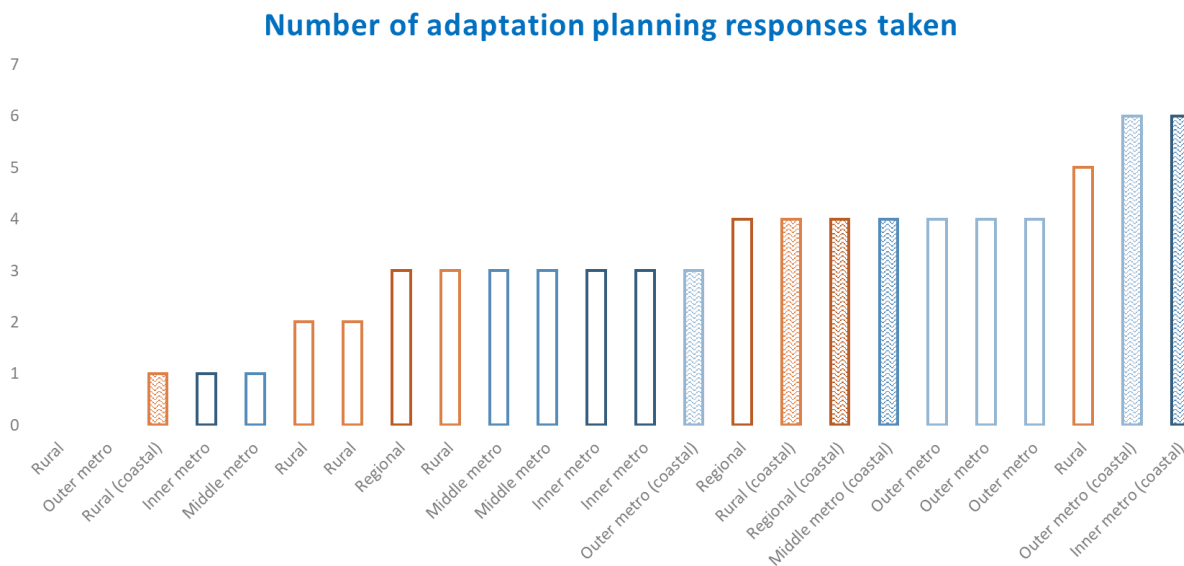
Figure 2. Number of adaptation response actions completed by councils

Out of 7 described adaptation actions, council respondents' reported they had on average completed three. Metropolitan councils averaged slightly higher, completing an average of 3.2 actions compared with regional and rural councils that averaged 2.8 actions out of 7.

Typically, coastal councils were more likely to have completed a greater number of adaptation planning responses, which may reflect the urgency and visibility of the coastal impacts occurring and the support from the Victorian Government to address those impacts.

The most popular adaptation actions completed were heat wave plans and updating key council plans or policies to consider climate change impacts and considerations.

What current plans or actions does your council have to respond to climate impacts on council services?

Percentage of survey respondents taking nominated action. N=31

Figure 3. Percentage of the 31 survey respondents having taken any of the nominated actions. *Note: survey respondents could select multiple response options.*

The development of local government heat wave plans is supported by a strong legislative framework and clear guidance, so it isn't surprising that it's a top action. Heat waves are also a widely experienced climate hazard with several severe heat wave events attracting community and media attention in the past decade.
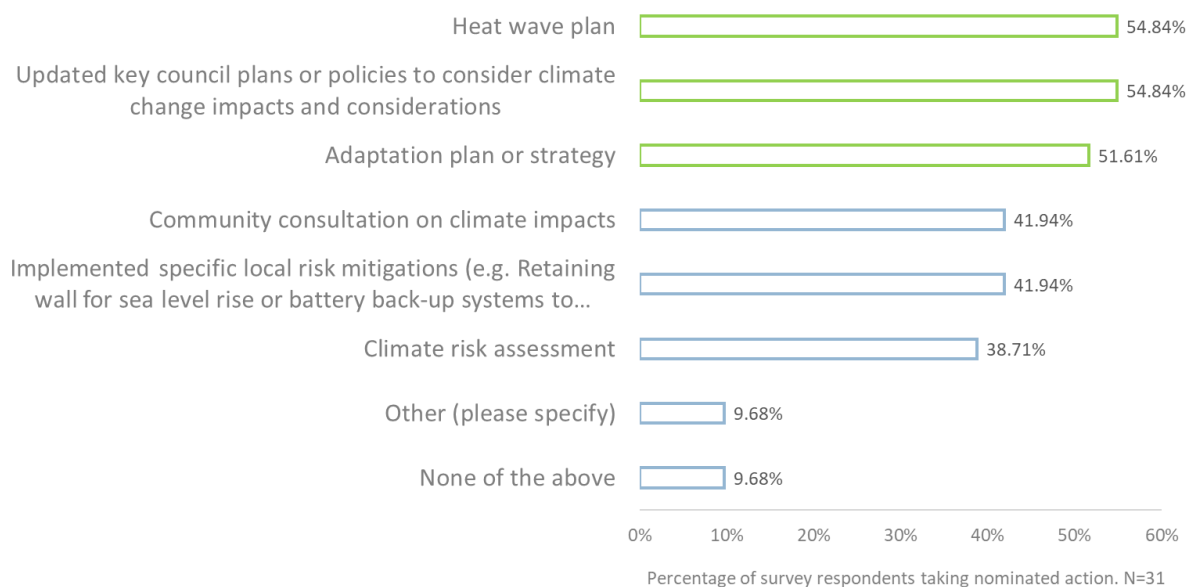
The integration of consideration of climate change impacts into plans and policies is a step most local governments have taken to varying extents with some indicating a more comprehensive approach to this than others, as Illustrated In the following examples:

- 'Water management plan, Urban Forest Strategy'
- 'Urban Cooling Strategy, Integrated Water Strategy in development responds to different climate scenarios, Flood Strategy, Municipal Health and Wellbeing Strategy addresses heat'
- 'Our Climate Emergency Response Strategy, Urban Forest Strategy, Integrated Water Management Plan (draft), Asset Plan'
- 'We have highly developed emergency management arrangements, in particular for bushfire, which is our biggest risk.'

Interestingly, while many local governments have an adaptation plan or strategy, fewer have completed a risk assessment to inform their plan or strategy. Implementation of risk mitigations were also shown as less frequent, reinforcing the finding in the Needs Analysis that while 'many councils now develop climate change adaptation plans, implementation remains a challenge' due to limited resourcing and lower priority of the issues in an organisational context[1].

Survey respondents were invited to nominate other climate change adaptation actions they've completed that weren't listed. The additional reported actions included:

- 'We have a recently adopted Climate Emergency Action Plan.'

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[1] Rubenstein, N. RMIT and McListon, H. WAGA (2022)

- 'Environmental Sustainability Strategy and Zero Net Carbon Action Plan both respond to impacts of climate change.'
- 'Emergency Management team working with specific communities to collaboratively plan and design for community resiliency. Climate action is built into current sustainability strategy and does not sit separately.'

Survey respondents were asked which key barriers prevent them from further progress in adaptation response and identified limited resourcing and limited capacity as the biggest barriers along with lack of support and funding for a more sustained and strategic response.
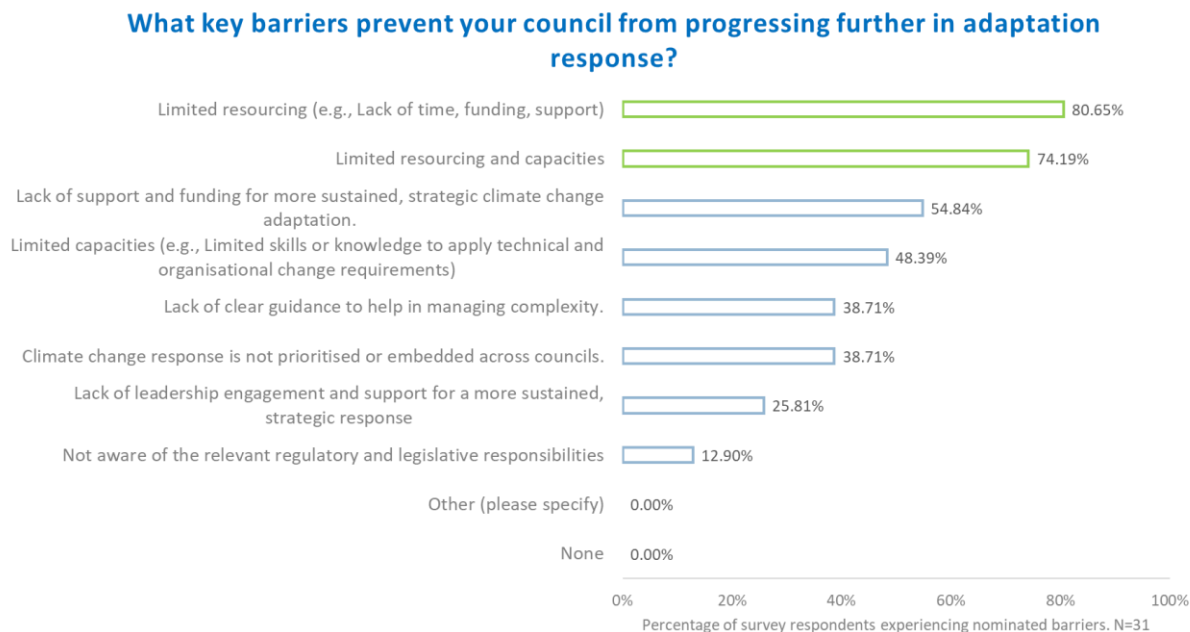
What key barriers prevent your council from progressing further in adaptation response?

Barrier	Percentage
Limited resourcing (e.g., Lack of time, funding, support)	80.65%
Limited resourcing and capacities	74.19%
Lack of support and funding for more sustained, strategic climate change adaptation.	54.84%
Limited capacities (e.g., Limited skills or knowledge to apply technical and organisational change requirements)	48.39%
Lack of clear guidance to help in managing complexity.	38.71%
Climate change response is not prioritised or embedded across councils.	38.71%
Lack of leadership engagement and support for a more sustained, strategic response	25.81%
Not aware of the relevant regulatory and legislative responsibilities	12.90%
Other (please specify)	0.00%
None	0.00%

Percentage of survey respondents experiencing nominated barriers. N=31

Figure 4. Percentage of the 31 survey respondents experiencing each of the nominated barriers. *Note: Survey respondents could select multiple response options.*

Lack of awareness of regulatory and legislative responsibilities is not seen as a barrier – however it can still be a useful driver, since heat wave plans are the most common action taken and one of the most recognised responsibilities for local government. However, regulatory and legislative responsibilities related to climate change adaptation may only have a limited scope for driving action, as they typically target policies and strategies and are a broad mechanism that cannot guide specific, nuanced response.

They also don't require resource allocation, which seems to be a key barrier. Nor do they prescribe organisational structures or processes that could support adaptation response, such as the formation of steering committees inclusive of the executive leadership team or mandatory inclusion of climate change adaptation in audit processes.

Notably 'lack of leadership engagement and support for a more sustained, strategic response' is not seen as a barrier. However, in a subsequent question about secondary audiences, the leadership group is highly prioritised, and in another question about desired program resources, 'Resources or support to help engage senior leadership and Councillors' was a top priority.

Similarly, 'Lack of clear guidance to help manage complexity' is ranked lower as a key barrier, but under the desired program resources question, 'A set of resources for the sector which can be used to implement steps in a clear process' is ranked the highest.

4.2 Program model

Overall, there is strong support for the proposed program, as shown through the survey and in meetings with stakeholders.
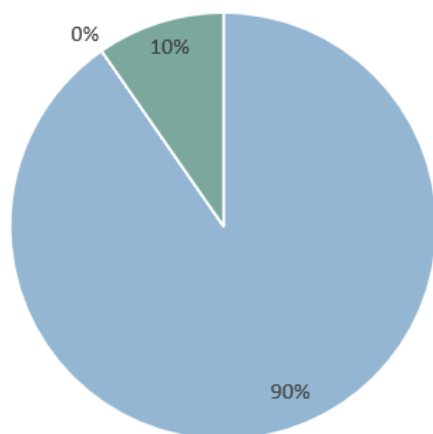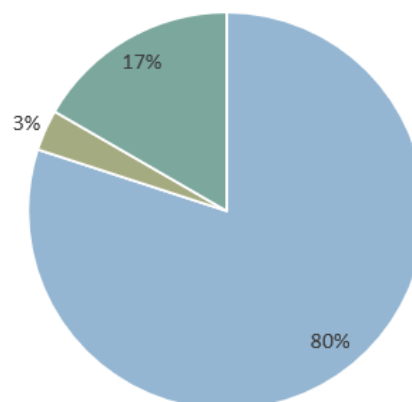
Figure 5. Percentage of survey respondents supporting overall program and key program components

A large majority of respondents agreed that the key components of the proposed program would help their council become more climate resilient.

> *"We'd definitely support such a program. We developed a Climate Adaptation Plan in 2017 and have made little progress in implementation due to resourcing constraints but see climate impacts on our organisation and community so need to increase our focus on adaptation."*

> *"I'm excited for this program of support - climate adaptation keeps me awake at night!"*

> *"Really supportive of this program - but needs to ensure it is aligned in key ways with the Victorian Resilient Coasts program and ABM councils so that coastal councils are not pulled in different directions for how / what to deliver for adaptation."*

Is there any additional component you would like to include in the proposed program model?

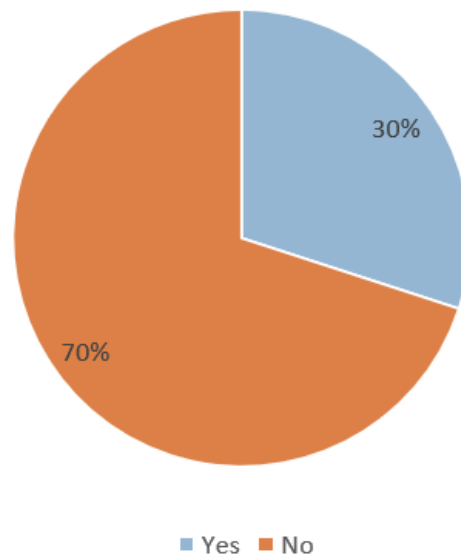**Figure 6. Percentage of survey respondents identifying need for additional program components**

However, 30% of respondents had additional components they would like the program to include:

- Guidance to implement a sequenced process of actions to take in response to risks
- Collaborative sector advocacy
- Consideration of scenarios and uncertainty and how they are operationalised
- Funding to undertake actions
- Dedicated program officer to assist with action planning or implementation
- Vision statement as part of the application process
- Implement a flagship adaptation response together rather than just capacity building alone (e.g., through the alliances)
- Overcoming resistance: Training and info sessions pre/during resources phase for all staff and decision makers

Many of the above suggestions could be accommodated within the proposed structure. Perhaps the most notable additional components suggested are that the program could distribute funding to local governments to support the resourcing of adaptation responses, and that the program could support collaborative sector advocacy.

4.3 Program audiences

Sustainability officers and coordinators stand out as the preferred program users within the council organisation. This finding is also supported by the feedback given in the greenhouse alliances' meetings. The general comment was that "…sustainability officers/coordinators should be the main user as there is still a lot of capacity building required for this work to be carried by the risk team. Then it can slowly be managed by the risk and governance team…" "This is a very collaborative issue."

Who should be the key user of the program in the council organisation?
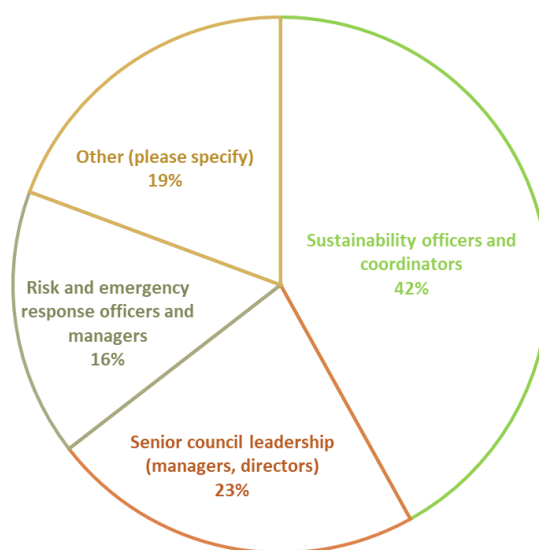
Figure 7. Preferred primary program audience identified by survey respondents. N=31

Respondents specified two additional key user groups under the 'other' option:
- Risk and emergency response AND sustainability officers (2)
- Organisation-wide (4)
  - 'Coordinators of individual teams responsible for managing assets (planning, design, construction, operational programs). e.g., Parks, Engineering, Planning, Social, community engagement'
  - 'All the above, and I believe sustainability representatives should be viewed as the 'consultants' in the room. Representation from all directorates must be present and understand from the outset what's in it for them relative to their focus/delivery drivers in the org for it to become embedded and sustained over time. Suggest moving away from sustainability being the hand holders and give independent meaningful drivers for every bit of the org to be motivated to adapt. Part of the application process might be to identify these.'

The most important audiences within the council organisation beyond sustainability officers and coordinators are senior council leadership, Councillors, and risk and emergency response officers.

This reflects a strong desire for the program to assist sustainability officers to meaningfully engage these key internal audiences to raise their awareness, ownership and capacity to respond to adaptation issues.

What other audiences within the council organisation should be engaged?

Multiple relevant council teams — 19%

Whole organisation — 13%

Risk and Emergency response officers and managers — 77%

Councillors — 74%

Senior council leadership (managers, directors) — 77%

Sustainability officers and coordinators — 48%

0% 10% 20% 30% 40% 50% 60% 70% 80% 90%

Percentage of survey respondents nominating each secondary audience type
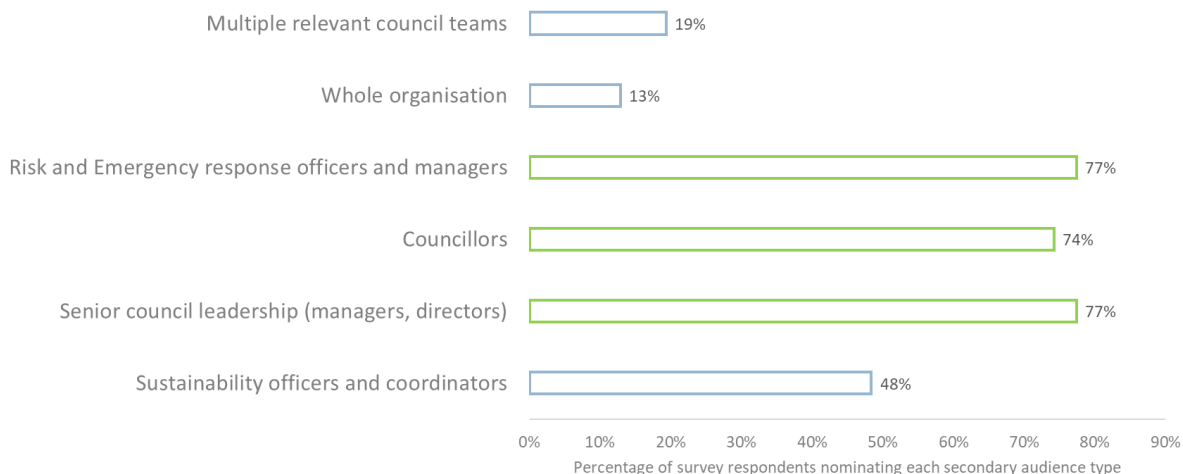
Figure 8. Preferred secondary audiences for the program. *Note: survey respondents could select multiple response options.*

4.4 Assessment process

Most respondents preferred that the program offer different assessment types at various stages of the program to accommodate a range of existing and future assessment needs.

What kind of assessment process is currently most important for your council?

Don't know 0%

A targeted technical assessment for a priority climate impact 7%

Other assessment type 10%

An assessment of organisational capacity 20%

Different assessment types offered at various stages of the program 43%

A municipal climate risk assessment 20%
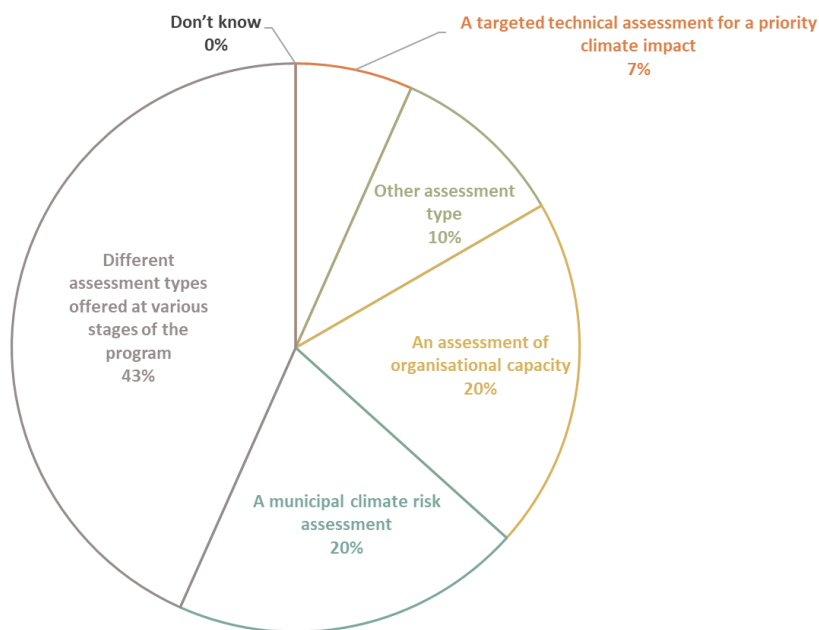
Figure 9. Preferred assessment type identified by survey respondents. N=30

Through feedback at the greenhouse alliances' meetings, the most popular combination of assessments is an adaptive capacity assessment offered as an initial scan of organisational capacity along with a climate change risk assessment in the second step of the program. Most sustainability officers didn't see the value in a targeted technical assessment given their current level of progress and capacity on adaptation response, but thought it might be valuable if they grow their capacity and have resources to invest in this type of detailed technical assessment.

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Climate change risk assessments are currently the most used assessments to inform adaptation plans and strategies. However, some sustainability officers observed that there are many different types of risk assessment, so if the program offered a standard assessment that has been verified to meet local government needs it would provide confidence for them and minimise costs, whereas local governments currently tend to pay for expensive risk assessments from external consultants who don't always follow a recognised standard or best-practice approach.

Although there was majority support for an offering of climate adaptation assessments, two councils said they've already completed most of the assessments and so weren't clear on the benefits of the program to them if the focus was to be completing assessments. However, these councils may find value in the implementation steps, which were not explored in the specific meeting those councils attended.

Several other assessment types were identified by sustainability officers apart from the three main assessment types described in the survey:

- 'Embedding governance and decision-making assessment process'
- 'Adaptation Response Strategic Focus would be useful to set in place long term strategic change to support adaptation across the whole organisation.'
- 'Adaptation pathways planning assessment is valuable for informing decision making.'

The embedding governance and decision-making and adaptation response strategic focus assessment types are not standard or existing assessment types that were identified by the survey respondents who nominated these. However, there is potential to include these considerations in the adaptive capacity assessment report, as the Adaptive Capacity Checklist does focus on these areas.

The adaptation pathways approach is well-established[2], though not currently widely utilised within the local government sector. It could be included as an option within the program, following the risk assessment step.

4.5   Program components and resources

Survey respondents were asked to rank which program resources would be most valuable on a scale of 1 to 5, with 5 being the most valuable.

The highest ranked option is a set of resources for the sector which can be used to implement steps in a clear process. This would provide a sequenced set of steps and accompanying resources to guide councils through a clear process that would accelerate their adaptation planning and implementation.

'Councils need tangible steps to follow. I appreciate the sequential approach this program proposal offers.' (Northern Alliance for Greenhouse Action)

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[2] South West Climate Change Portal (2022)

What resources does your council need to support your response to climate change impacts?

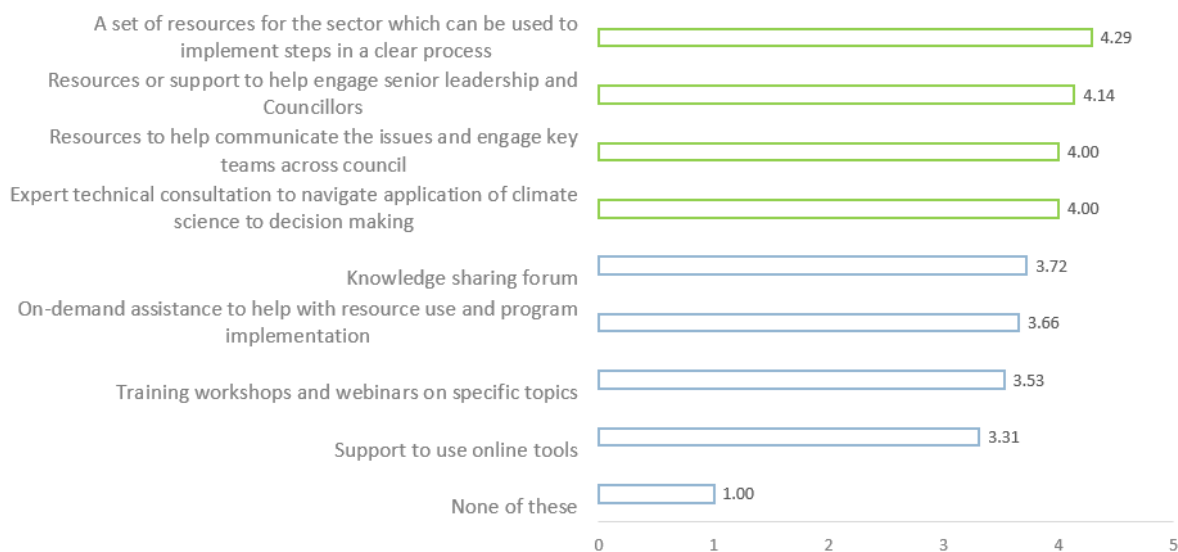| Resource	Score
A set of resources for the sector which can be used to implement steps in a clear process	4.29
Resources or support to help engage senior leadership and Councillors	4.14
Resources to help communicate the issues and engage key teams across council	4.00
Expert technical consultation to navigate application of climate science to decision making	4.00
Knowledge sharing forum	3.72
On-demand assistance to help with resource use and program implementation	3.66
Training workshops and webinars on specific topics	3.53
Support to use online tools	3.31
None of these	1.00

Figure 10. Priority program resources. *Each resource could be ranked on a scale of 0 - 5, with 5 being the highest value. Average ranking score from total survey responses is provided. N=30*

Resources or support to help engage senior leadership and Councillors is of next highest value. This was reiterated by many supporting comments in the greenhouse alliances' meetings, and in the final comments from survey respondents:

> *'Leadership and Councillor support is currently lacking and it is important for getting resourcing and prioritising the issues.' (Goulburn Murray Climate Alliance member)*

> *'Useful information like case studies and information or sessions to engage senior leaders (like Sarah Barker's presentation). Understanding legal and financial risks are important. Make these resources as simple as possible e.g., 1. Legislative requirements 2. What do we need to do to address them? etc.' (Western Alliance for Greenhouse Action member)*

> *'It would be great for exec level to connect with a similar council that has a large agriculture base that is also working on climate resilience as it seems ELT (executive leadership team) / Councillors are scared to challenge and are not sure how to support change for farmers.' (Survey respondent)*

> *'The level of climate action is determined by councillors. Therefore, this is the number one link in the chain of action. Without this level of support resource allocation and action is limited.' (Survey respondent)*

There was also discussion about how best to engage these audiences:

> *'ELT (executive leadership team) will want to know how much it will cost and you'll need to have good answers. E.g., It will cost this much for the program, committing an internal resource, costs this much, but you will save this much in efficiency and best practice approaches through the program and the risks will accumulate and cost you more if you don't act, etc.' (Goulburn Murray Climate Alliance)*

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*'Experts involved in this program need to be non-political. For example, NAGA
organised a presentation with Sarah Barker that was so good and non-political.
Keep experts neutral.' (Councillor interview)*

*'I would like to see it become more common practice in standard council business.
Councillors want to see that it is being dealt with and a normal practice.'
(Councillor interview)*

*'Keep engagement with Councillors politically neutral. Focus on risk and
responsibilities to make it relatable to a broad audience.' (Councillor interview)*

Survey responses showed a clear need for the program to develop resources to communicate adaptation issues and engage key teams across the council organisation. This will assist sustainability officers to meaningfully engage internal audiences to raise their awareness, ownership and capacity to respond to adaptation issues. These resources would likely target the secondary program audiences identified as: senior council leadership, Councillors, risk managers and emergency response officers.

There is also a desire to develop additional communication resources for other internal audiences such as asset managers, community wellbeing teams, social planning staff, etc., however these audiences are not seen to be as critical, where initial capacity building is the priority. They are likely to become a priority during risk assessment and implementation stages.

The other program resource seen to be highly beneficial is expert technical guidance to navigate application of climate change science to decision-making. This reflects feedback from council officers that they don't have the time or capacity to engage in the complexity of certain technical tools or stay updated on best practice decision-making practices, yet they recognise the need to integrate climate change projections into decision-making.

It is also clear that there are many process gaps to be filled that would facilitate the successful application of climate science to decision-making in the local government context. For example, how can climate change projections at broad scales meaningfully inform asset management planning and project design at very local scales? There is very limited guidance and support for this level of decision-making, and what guidance exists often takes substantial resourcing to implement - e.g., potentially requires technical assessment, research into appropriate decision support frameworks (if any relevant framework exists), and officer time that isn't available to research, educate and implement what is currently a non-standard process.

The VCRC program could research and develop decision support frameworks and technical guidance to provide confidence to the sector and further implementation processes where guidance is currently lacking. It could also identify any existing guidance and recommend the most beneficial resources for program participants and recommend how and when to apply them in decision-making processes relevant to local government.

An additional service the VCRC could offer is to identify relevant adaptation programs, projects or opportunities that provide technical support and recommend them to VCRC participants. This would minimise duplication and provide guidance and access points to relevant expertise at appropriate stages of adaptation progress and decision-making.

Respondents were also asked which program activities would benefit them most. The most popular activity was 'Partnerships with neighbouring councils and support agencies to scale up responses'. This speaks to the need to overcome barriers to implementation and suggests that working through the existing greenhouse alliances' structures could be worthwhile, since these alliances are geographically based and explore shared issues. Through the consultation process, Councillors also

highlighted the importance of sharing case studies from a wide range of Councils to demonstrate different levels of complexity. It also would help them to gain better understanding about adaptation projects.

A community of practice for risk or emergency management officers was also a popular activity. Such communities of practice could facilitate the sharing of knowledge with internal audiences to improve confidence in implementation.

Would your council benefit from any of the following activities?

Activity	Score
Partnerships with neighbouring councils and support agencies to scale up responses to shared issues	4.68
A community of practice to build capacity for risk or emergency managers or other relevant council departments involved in implementing climate risk responses	4.28
Peer learning through regular meetings with local governments at similar stages of their response	3.90
Peer benchmarking to identify progress and motivate internal leadership / staff engagement	3.28

Figure 11. Priority program activities. *Each activity was ranked on a scale of 0 - 5, with 5 being the highest value. Average ranking score from total survey responses is provided. N=30*

4.6 Program evaluation options

Action monitoring and evaluation to measure implementation is the most popular evaluation option (45%). This is an interesting result since the 'How Well Are We Adapting' (HWAWA) program is based on this type of evaluation, yet many local governments have difficulty engaging with it in a meaningful way due to limited resourcing to collate and assess data, and indeed many report they are still at earlier points in their adaptation journey and have not necessarily completed earlier steps such as risk assessment and adaptation strategy development. These reports from local governments through the HWAWA program were an initial prompt to pursue the development of a broader capacity building program for adaptation response in the local government sector.

The second most desired evaluation type is benchmarking to understand relative progress and identify opportunities for peer learning (27%). During the consultation, respondents also commented that a broad form of anonymous benchmarking could stimulate motivation with council leadership to allocate resources and develop responses through comparing progress against similar local governments.

An evaluation and reflection component at key program stages was also selected by many (21%), with those respondents seeing value in a reflection and learning process incorporated Into program design.

Although there is evidence citing the many benefits of reflection and learning for adaptation response[3] to encourage innovation and best practice around new decision-making practices, challenges exist with establishing this practice effectively in the local government context[4].

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[3] Melbourne Sustainable Society Institute (2021)
[4] Scott, Moloney (2022)

Therefore, potentially building a brief evaluation and reflection component at each stage when recollections are fresh could be a low-resource way to build a stronger evaluation approach to the program.
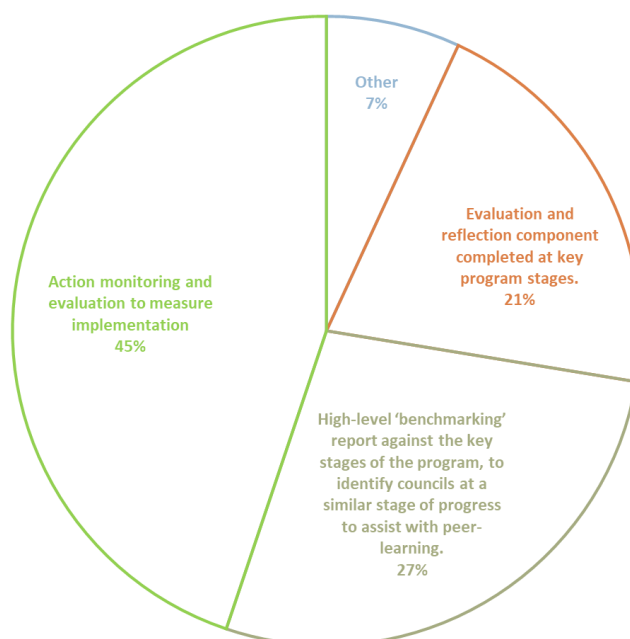
What type of evaluation could inform the program?

Other
7%

Evaluation and reflection component completed at key program stages.
21%

Action monitoring and evaluation to measure implementation
45%

High-level 'benchmarking' report against the key stages of the program, to identify councils at a similar stage of progress to assist with peer-learning.
27%

Figure 12. Preferred program evaluation type. N=29

4.7   Program partners

Survey respondents were asked to rank likely program delivery partners in order of importance. The top three partners nominated were greenhouse alliances, individual local governments and the Department of Environment Land Water and Planning (DELWP). These entities have a history of collaboration on adaptation and Victorian local governments have confidence that these partners are consistent in their interest in, and capacity for, adaptation response.

For example, individual local governments are important partners that demonstrate innovation within the sector, share knowledge, accelerate learning and offer economies of scale on adaptation response.

Despite this history, it is important to acknowledge that the capacity and interest of potential partners will evolve over time. For example, greenhouse alliances that have traditionally focused most strongly on mitigation are increasingly growing their capacity to support local governments in their adaptation response, based on an increased desire by member councils to address adaptation.

DELWP has historically focused on developing sector-wide adaptation strategies and high-level policy, addressing resource-development gaps and developing project-based funding partnerships with local government. However future support may re-focus as adaptation implementation matures. Nonetheless the partnership between DELWP and local government must be strong and cohesive, guided by clear objectives. A program such as the VCRC could help guide a cohesive partnership where state government support can be maximised according to a clear process-framework that meets the needs of the local government sector. For example, local governments are likely to require continued support and guidance around how to apply climate change science in decision-making practice, and DELWP could support access to its climate science team at critical stages of local government decision-making. DELWP can also facilitate valuable partnerships with

state departments and agencies and review and update relevant policy settings to enable effective implementation.

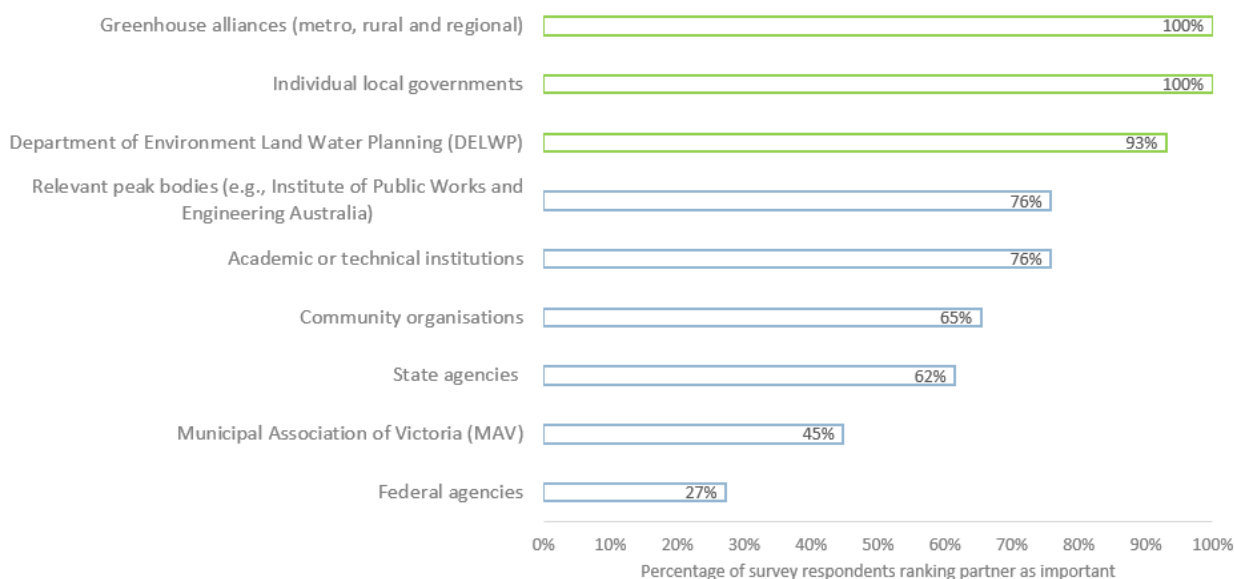## Ranking of partners most important to support program delivery

Figure 13. Priority program delivery partners. N=29. *Note: survey respondents could select multiple response options.*

Peak bodies and academic institutions would be valuable delivery partners for developing technical guidance and supporting innovative practice and knowledge dissemination.

Community organisations are likely to be important partners for specific aspects of adaptation response implementation. For instance, community organisations can advocate for the communities they represent and provide a way to facilitate engagement with key community issues. Key issues expressed through the interviews held with community organisations were extreme heat impacts, food insecurity and energy poverty.

Through the consultation process, community organisations highlighted the need to engage with culturally and linguistically diverse communities and community members experiencing disadvantage. Community organisations also expressed a desire to partner on project delivery. So targeted partnerships could be scaled up through the implementation stages of the VCRC. Significantly, community organisations felt It was important for local governments to increase their own capacity as a starting point to be able to show leadership and replicate learnings in the community and through their service delivery.

State agencies would similarly be important partners for specific aspects of program delivery. For example, consultation with emergency management officers and the State Emergency Services (SES), via the North West Region Metropolitan Emergency Management Forum, revealed that though council officers can choose to address adaptation within their council-level response, support for regional scale adaptation response in emergency management is currently lacking clear processes and guidance, and climate change adaptation planning has not historically been a priority at this scale of collaboration. Again, the VCRC could provide an opportunity to build regional-scale partnerships with certain agencies to identify and respond to process gaps.

Although the MAV and federal agencies were listed as the least important delivery partners, comments from survey respondents indicated this was based on past capacity and interest in adaptation response. Some survey respondents viewed MAV as an important potential partner 'if

they had sufficient capacity'. Presumably this is because the MAV is the peak body for local government and could communicate key adaptation issues and build support for adaptation response with council leadership and elected officials - an important priority for council sustainability officers. The MAV also has also advocated for important policy reforms to enable adaptation response.

There is likewise potential for valuable partnerships with the federal government depending on what priorities and programs develop at this level of government. But again, the federal government's ranking in importance as a delivery partner is based on past capacity in adaptation response.

5   Recommendations

5.1   Program objectives and outcomes

Throughout this consultation, the proposed VCRC program objectives were presented as follows:

- Clear structured process to accelerate responses
- Coordinate existing tools, expertise, and resources
- Leadership engagement
- Build capacity across the sector to implement sustained adaptation responses
- Flexibility to meet the needs and local contexts of individual councils

There was strong support for the proposed program, and no objections regarding these program objectives. There was also strong support expressed for a clear structured process and leadership engagement. Rural and regional councils emphasised a desire for the program to consider their local contexts and issues in program communication and delivery. Therefore, these program objectives appear well-supported.

Throughout the consultation the following desired program outcomes were expressed:

Raise capacity of council organisations across the state to effectively manage and respond to growing climate change risks by:

- Supporting sustainability officers to build their organisation's response and access resources
- Engaging leadership teams and Councillors on the issues and gain support and resourcing to design and implement a substantial and sustained response
- Engaging risk and governance teams to establish climate change as a key priority for their work
- Establishing strong working partnerships with other council teams on relevant climate risk issues. Particularly emergency management, assets and community services.

5.2   Program audience

The recommended program audiences are:

- Victorian local governments in the early or middle stages of their adaptation response. Councils more advanced in their response are also encouraged to join, potentially skipping through initial process steps already undertaken, but they are not the primary target of the program in the first few years.
- Sustainability officers to be the initial primary audience, with the eventual goal of having risk and governance teams and potentially other council departments engage directly with the program. e.g., through workshops, training opportunities, defined projects.

- Executive leadership and Councillors would be engaged through existing internal processes (e.g., council meetings, ELT meetings) with the program providing supporting resources, e.g., template presentations, opportunity for a program officer or another adaptation expert to attend a meeting to address a priority issue. Councillors could also be engaged through a presentation provided at a council meeting, if requested by a participating program council.

5.3   Program structure and components

The recommended program structure remains similar to the proposed structure outlined in the consultation flier, except the resources and community of practice components are included within the five remaining program steps instead of outlined separately. Details for each of the recommended components are provided based on the consultation and would be refined and updated if program development continues.

Step 1: Application process

Some council officers responded that there is a benefit in asserting a clear commitment to a program and understanding its purpose and benefits both at officer level and with council leadership.

An application or commitment process could potentially also help local governments define their needs and outcomes from participating in a program and commit a level of resourcing towards its implementation. Based on this feedback and similar models outlined in the program comparison report, the following options could be considered:

- A local government signs onto the program as a participant and commits to completing and resourcing the 5 program steps.
- The participant commits resources towards a risk assessment and strategy development process and (with the support of the program) identifies a process to engage with council leadership and their elected officials on climate change adaptation.
- The participant completes the Adaptive Capacity Checklist to assess current capacity, summarised in a report with organisational opportunities to focus on during the program.
- The participant develops a statement to prioritise the most important objectives for their engagement with the program and gain support from council leadership.
- Ideally there could be a matched funding or co-contribution of resourcing through the program to provide incentive to progress through the program and lock in resource commitment.
- The leading officer in the participating organisation establishes an internal steering committee or similar mechanism to oversee the program work. Must include risk or governance officer and managers of council teams likely to inform a response.

Step 2: Assessment

Each of the program models reviewed in Australia and overseas include an assessment process, and council officers agreed that this would be valuable to include in the VCRC program. The consultation results show strong interest in a climate change risk assessment, as well as an adaptive capacity or governance assessment. The adaptive capacity assessment can be completed in the application step, and the climate risk assessment is the focus of this step. The climate risk assessment should define the climate change adaptation issues and priorities that will be the focus of action planning.

As seen in the survey results many local governments have completed adaptation plans, but fewer have completed climate change risk assessment to inform those plans. Given climate change impacts are unique to geographic areas and communities, it's worth developing response plans based on a process that at a minimum considers the local climate hazards and risks with input from internal council teams.

- Climate change risk assessment undertaken with risk and governance teams using a standard process verified by the program
- Training and guidance provided through a community of practice for risk or governance officers.
- Program officer available to assist with facilitating an in-house workshop, access to resources to engage and inform staff and expertise to help frame climate risk thinking to achieve best outcomes from the process.
- Risk outcomes and priorities summarised in a report.
- Risk and governance teams to oversee climate risk management process within council, with support from the program and community of practice.

Step 3: Response Planning

Using the priorities established in the climate risk assessment process, a response plan or strategy would be developed through the following steps:

- Review and update to membership of internal steering group to support the response. Must include risk or governance officer and managers of council departments with priority risks.
- Working group to develop an adaptation response plan or strategy with support of program resources, e.g. templates, training videos, case studies addressing responses to priority risks, access to expertise.
- In the plan, address priority risks and organisational capacity and should interact with key council policies and strategies.
- Presentation of the plan to council leadership and Councillors for endorsement and resource commitment for priority actions, including technical hazard assessment, if required.
- Given resourcing for implementation is seen as a big barrier, there is a potential opportunity for matched funding at this point to provide an incentive to commit resources to initiate action, e.g., matched funding of up to $10,000 per council for a priority risk response.

Step 4: Implementation

Below is an example of how the program could support implementation. However, these details would need further consideration in the development phase.

- Participating local governments would convene working groups for each priority risk and establish a reporting process to the established internal steering group, council leadership and Council.
- Program resources would be available to support implementation, for example:
    - Case studies, shared projects, communities of practice, shared advocacy
    - Training on applying climate science to decision-making: consideration of scenarios and uncertainty and how they are operationalised
    - Resources to support embedding into key policies and operational processes
    - Resources on how to engage community in adaptation decision-making: transparency, governance, informed decision-making
    - Cost-effective access to expertise and workshops for key issues, e.g. emergency management, asset design
- Potential to engage and partner with key agencies in a coordinated way

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- Pathways to connect with specific programs that can support detailed response to key issues – e.g. Vic Resilient Coasts, the Council Alliance for a Sustainable Built Environment (CASBE)

Step 5: Monitoring, evaluation and reporting

Monitoring, evaluation and reporting (ME&R) offers important opportunities for reflection, learning and accountability.

Different types of monitoring, reporting and evaluation can offer value if their requirements are balanced with resource availability.

Based on the consultation results and review of similar program models, the following types of monitoring, evaluation and reporting are recommended:

- Brief check-in at the end of each program step to reflect on process and lessons.
- Reports verified and presented to council leadership and Council at key decision points
- The Adaptive Capacity Checklist could be completed at step 1 and then re-taken at step 5 once action implementation is established to measure any change in capacity since beginning the program
- Once a local government has established action implementation, they would be encouraged to commence detailed ME&R on their progress through How Well Are We Adapting, the ME&R framework and indicators already developed for Victorian local governments by WAGA, which measure operational adaptation responses across local government service areas. This detailed operational level ME&R program would help inform service level adaptation response performance and decision-making practices overtime.

5.4   Governance

A governance workshop was held on 12 May 2022 with the project advisory group (greenhouse alliance executive officers and representatives from other councils and the MAV), including a presentation and special input from Judy Bush, Lecturer Urban Planning at University of Melbourne, expert academic on collaborative governance for large-scale sustainability projects.

Greenhouse alliances have been key stakeholders and managers of the process to develop the VCRC program. They are also enthusiastic to remain as managers or at a minimum, key advisers and delivery partners of the program through its implementation. Indeed, they are critical actors with longevity in supporting local government sustainability implementation, so their involvement will be important to maintaining support for, and durability of such a program.

Greenhouse alliances are regional groupings of local governments collaborating on climate change projects – sharing knowledge, delivering projects cost effectively using economies of scale on shared issues, and maintaining communities of practice. Historically, the focus has been on mitigating greenhouse gas emissions, but the importance of adaptation response has grown over the past decade as local governments have had to respond to these issues with varying levels of funding, strategic and policy support from state and federal government.

Accordingly, the VCRC program's governance structure should meet the following basic requirements:
- Allow the greenhouse alliances to collaboratively manage a state-wide program in a way that fits with their various governance models and implementation plans and processes; and
- Help and facilitate the greenhouse alliances' and their members' work rather than simply add another potentially onerous administrative layer.

The following steps are recommended to set up a governance structure designed to achieve those requirements effectively and efficiently:

- Establish the program as a partnership of the greenhouse alliances, with a clear purpose and terms of reference agreed by all participating alliances. This should also be transparent to external stakeholders to boost their confidence.
- Ensure a clear line of sight for reporting to, and authority from, the partnering organisations through explicit approval and sign-on according to each alliance's own terms of reference.
- Establish one senior-level decision-making body, with all greenhouse alliances represented, such as a program steering committee comprising at least director-level local government officers. The aim should be a robust but lean structure, with representatives provided with transparent delegated authority to make decisions and a regular decision-making forum.
- This committee may be a joint delegated committee pursuant to the Victorian *Local Government Act 2020*, Section 64.
- Establish a lead organisation to auspice the program. This role could be periodically rotated to other participating organisations, ideally a greenhouse alliance or local government member which can be supported by its greenhouse alliance.
- Consider appointing an independent chairperson or 'program sponsor', such as a supportive councillor or local government CEO, who can engage external and internal stakeholders at a senior level and build political support. This position should be frequently rotated (e.g. annually) to attract more volunteers for the role and engage a wide range of stakeholders and regions over time.
- The greenhouse alliances' executive officers should form a coordinated secretariat or advisory team specifically to support the program steering committee and ensure continuous alignment of the program with the alliances.
- Too many administrative and decision-making layers creates complexity and risks devolving decision-making in an *ad hoc* way. So, rather than creating other decision-making sub-committees, provide employed program officers with clear delegations and ensure they are directly accountable to the lead organisation and program steering committee. Working groups may be established to guide program components.
- Leverage existing structures, such as the greenhouse alliances' membership and communication forums, and their existing relevant relationships, e.g., with the MAV.
- Have a clear agreed work plan with measurable outcomes and regular evaluation to make sure the program continues to meet local government needs. Make sure the work plan considers the needs of metro, regional and rural local governments. Ensure the work plan complements and is in fact incorporated into the greenhouse alliances' own work plans, e.g., by scaling up, creating economies for and filling acknowledged gaps in their work.
- Establish strong relationships, regular communication and partnerships for discrete projects with the Victorian Government and Commonwealth, but do not expect their partnership in the overall program. Request their help to ensure the long-term sustainability of the program through increased resource sharing (e.g. strengthening local government use of Victoria's Future Climate Tool), assisting the program to help implement state and national level plans (e.g. Victorian Adaptation Action Plans) and funding support.

5.5 Funding and delivery partners

A possible model for foundation program funding could be:

- Subscription membership by local governments
- Bi-annual contributions from local governments, scaled to cover base program expenses, including program staff (bi-annual rather than annual to provide enough continuity for program activities)
- Individual local government contributions, with three tiers for metro, medium-sized regional and rural councils
- Contributions to be promoted through the greenhouse alliances.

A possible delivery model could include:
- A centrally coordinated team of staff appointed to oversee and deliver the work plan
- All staff (or at least the management team) to be employed by the lead/auspicing organisation, with accountability and reporting back to the program steering committee
- A clear understanding that the main purpose of the foundation program is to scale up local and regional effort rather than take over municipal-level activities
- An agreed in-kind commitment from subscribing councils on that understanding, i.e. that the foundation program is designed to raise and supplement their capacity rather than take over and deliver their own local activities.
- Include additional project components that do in fact deliver local or municipal-level outcomes, where these are agreed to be provided by the program partnership (e.g. climate risk assessments for individual local governments), on a fee-for-service basis. As part of the broader or foundational program offerings, it is envisaged that these components would still be managed centrally and offer significant economies and other benefits for participating local governments.

As the governance recommendations envisage a partnership of the greenhouse alliances, it makes sense to establish funding and delivery models aligned with them. These are likely to be engaging to local governments if the program's work plan complements the alliances' own work plans (see recommendations under Section 5.4 above). The delivery model should also support the alliances' work.

The outlined models above are based on models already practiced by the alliances through their own structures and cross-alliance collaborative projects, such as the Victorian Energy Collaboration (VECO), which successfully included 46 Victorian local governments in the first round of contracts and has since been expanded.

6   Conclusion

6.1   Overall results of the consultation

The consultation described in this report responded to the following five objectives:

1. *Understand and meet the needs of diverse communities.*
2. *Establish buy-in and ownership of a proposed support program by those local governments and other organisations expected to participate in it.*
3. *Test a range of delivery models and component projects for the program, particularly as the concept of a coordinated adaptation support program is new and it is unlikely that any existing model will completely fit community needs.*

4. *Recommend a governance model which makes best use of the existing formal and informal government and non-government structures and networks that currently manage climate change risks.*
5. *Explore options for future resources and funding.*

The overall consensus of respondents in the consultation is that the VCRC program, as described to them, would be useful and worthwhile to establish for Victorian local governments. A range of delivery models were discussed through the consultation and agreement was reached on program objectives and outcomes, a broad program design, important program components and resource assistance required to raise local government sector adaptation capacity. This provides a clear consensus to aid further development of the VCRC program.

The project team ensured the views of metro Melbourne, rural and regional councils were included through the survey and via direct engagement with the Victorian greenhouse alliances, including at a regional meeting.

Rural and regional councils provided perspectives on the unique challenges faced by their communities and organisations from climate change impacts and adaptation response planning. They emphasised lack of resource-availability, large geographic regions, significantly different capacities and experience with service delivery and adaptation outcomes compared with metropolitan councils and the need for the program to accommodate these needs and perspectives. They also offered insights into initiatives that successfully address their needs such as resource-sharing models and existing partnerships and collaborations that the program could leverage.

Through consultation with community organisations, we received clear messages around how to incorporate their concerns and issues into the VCRC program design. It is likely that these needs would be met once local government capacity is strengthened and processes established to engage local communities in developing a community-informed response.

The consultation process also engaged several likely partner organisations including the MAV, state agencies and academic institutions and incorporated their perspectives into the program recommendations provided in this report.

A governance model has been outlined based on the consultation results and existing formal and informal local government and institutional structures that currently exist. This model may evolve and be further refined through program establishment.

Funding and resourcing options have been explored and a proposed funding model outlined for consideration in future program development, although it is recognised that funding options should remain open to a range of future opportunities to maximise potential of program delivery.

6.2   Key learnings

Climate change resilience can be defined as the capacity of individuals, institutions, businesses and systems within a city to adapt, survive and thrive no matter what kind of chronic stresses and acute shocks they experience (5).

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[5] City of Melbourne (2016)

This consultation process confirms previous findings (6,7) that local government climate resilience requires effective leadership, strong partnerships, inclusive processes and an ability to translate technical data and information into practical action.

The proposed program model would leverage existing strengths within the Victorian local government sector for innovation, collaboration and knowledge sharing (8) and responds to several of the most pressing challenges identified in the consultation findings and the Needs Analysis report:

- A strong desire to engage with local government executive leadership and elected officials
- A lack of resources and growing costs in responding to climate change
- A need to move away from reactive planning and towards a more strategic and sustained response
- A desire for a clear set of processes to build adaptation capacity that progresses beyond the planning stages into the implementation of adaptation measures
- A desire for expert technical guidance to apply climate science to decision-making
- A desire not to duplicate, but coordinate with and enhance existing initiatives and programs
- A need to particularly consider the contexts, issues and constraints of rural and regional councils who have relatively limited adaptation capacity compared to metropolitan councils and experience a different set of issues and decision-making contexts.

The discussion about governance arrangements reflects the desire to build on existing initiatives and structures that exist, particularly recognising the potential role of the greenhouse alliances as structures that enable resource-sharing and economies of scale, and identifying other potential partners in program delivery and management.

The consultation process has established a broad base of support within the local government sector and raised awareness of the benefits such a program might offer. Consultation participants expressed an urgent need for improved support and response: a desire for transformative action. Potentially one of the most important and transformational outcomes of a program such as the VCRC is to build momentum for action and establish trustful and productive relationships within the sector and with partner organisations that can overcome systemic barriers and accelerate adaptation response.

Despite raising and revealing a broad level of awareness and support within the sector, and with partner organisations, the consultation confirms that further work should focus on building support with council leadership and executive teams. The results from this consultation should also be broadly communicated to identify opportunities for development and collaboration.

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Appendix 1. Summary of supporting program resources

Survey respondents were asked to list any current climate change adaptation resources they thought we should consider aligning with or incorporating with the Victorian Climate Resilient Councils program. This list is not a comprehensive list of all current resources but are the resources Victorian local governments are aware of and engaging with at the time of the survey.

Program Name	Program Description	Navigation- Where to find it
Adaptive Capacity Checklist	This checklist provides an organisational scan of adaptation 'readiness' for local governments and is freely available for any local government to complete as a self-assessment to help inform their adaptation response planning. This checklist looks at high-level governance, leadership, process and policy capabilities and councils are encouraged to use it as a first step to inform adaptation program planning for local government. Once the checklist has been used to identify organisational needs and steps have been taken to build capacity, councils will be in a good position to successfully implement more in-depth monitoring through How Well Are We Adapting.	Adaptive capacity checklist.xlsx
Asset vulnerability economic assessment framework (SECCCA)	The SECCCA Asset Vulnerability Assessment project will use or develop any required tools to support councils demonstrate how council buildings, drainage and local road assets will be impacted by various climate scenarios. This will include attributing a vulnerability rating to these assets, identifying adaptation actions that may increase asset resilience, and assist with appropriate budget forecasting to ensure ongoing delivery of community services.	https://www.seccca.org.au/em_portfolios/asset-vulnerability-assessment/ SECCA Climate Vulnerability guide: https://www.seccca.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/1.-Scientell-%E2%80%93-SECCCA-GUIDE_final-final.pdf
BOOMPower	The BOOMPower software is a self-service software enabling property professionals to implement energy programs and asset management quickly and easily, including solar, storage and energy efficiency measures.	https://boompower.com.au/
Building Vulnerability Assessments (EAGA and NAGA)	This assessment template can be used to understand the potential climate vulnerability of a Council's building stock and provides a step-by-step guide to adapting and applying the framework, and options for how the framework can be used in a more targeted way if comprehensive assessments are beyond the available resources of Council.	https://eaga.com.au/wp-content/uploads/Building-Vulnerability-Assessment-sheets-final-2015-12-10.pdf
Bushfire and Natural Hazard	To build a disaster-resilient Australia,	https://www.bnhcrc.com.au/

Climate Resilience Centre (BNHCRC)	the CRC coordinates a national research effort in hazards, including bushfires, flood, storm, cyclone, heatwave, earthquake and tsunami.	https://www.bnhcrc.com.au/research/understanding-and-mitigating-hazards/8023 https://www.bnhcrc.com.au/resources/guide-fact-sheet/8229 The first link is a high-level description of the project, the team that worked on it, etc. The second link includes access to the actual maps and other tools that were developed (including wildcards and case studies).
Climate Compass	Climate Compass is a framework designed to help Australian public servants manage the risks from the changing climate to policies, programs and asset management. This risk management tool includes step by step instructions, guidance and information to develop an understanding of climate change risks.	https://www.awe.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/climate-compass-climate-risk-management-framework-commonwealth-agencies.pdf
Climate risk map	The Climate Council's Climate Risk Map of Australia is an interactive map of climate vulnerable places in Australia. To use this tool, enter your suburb or postcode in the search bar of this interactive map to obtain the climate risk results for that area.	https://www.climatecouncil.org.au/resources/climate-risk-map/
CoastAdapt – NCCARF	CoastAdapt is an information delivery and decision support framework. It is for anyone with an interest in Australia's coast, the risks it faces from climate change and sea-level rise, and what can be done to respond to those risks. The website and accompanying resources offer a thorough series of steps and processes to assist with developing an adaptation response.	https://coastadapt.com.au/about-coastadapt
Costs and benefits of climate change adaptation options for community assets	Provides councils in Greater Melbourne with an approach to determine the most appropriate climate change adaptation options through an assessment of costs and benefits. It will allow councils to: • Identify and prioritise adaptation options based on relative net benefits • Establish a clear business case for the implementation of adaptation options to address risks to community assets	https://www.naga.org.au/uploads/9/0/5/3/9053945/cba_framework_for_adaptation_options.pdf

	• Build an evidence base to inform business cases for adaptation projects by all levels of Government	
Embedding Action on Climate Change in Your Council Plan	This guide aims to help you embed climate change action in your Council Plan. It is written for local government leaders and policy writers and describes what your council should consider.	https://www.naga.org.au/uploads/9/0/5/3/9053945/embedding_action_on_climate_change_in_your_council_plan.pdf
How well we are adapting (WAGA)	This is a web-based tool to assist the Councils to implement the framework for monitoring, evaluation and reporting on climate adaptation. The portal is assisting to build the capacity of the council and community to respond to and manage municipal climate impacts.	https://adapt.waga.com.au/
My Canopy	a great resource the shows tree density in LGAs. Next step though is how Councils can use these trees as carbon offsets. Also useful as an overlay for vulnerable heat maps and where Councils can use trees to mitigate heat impacts	https://www.canopyamstel.com.au/my-canopy
Port Phillip Bay Coastal Hazard Assessment	The project will inform planning and the management of current and future natural, cultural and economic assets. The information will also be used by state, regional and local governments to set priorities. The project has two components: • Scientific assessment: define how much land is expected to be threatened by flooding, erosion and groundwater change. • Build capacity: support people and groups to use and respond to the findings. The project is still underway, with new contractors appointed to complete the assessment. A partial release of the findings is expected soon.	https://www.marineandcoasts.vic.gov.au/coastal-programs/port-phillip-bay-coastal-hazard-assessment
The Queensland Strategy for Disaster Resilience (QSDR)	The Queensland Strategy for Disaster Resilience (QSDR) and its implementation plan, Resilient Queensland 2018–21 – Delivering the Queensland Strategy for Disaster Resilience, provide a framework to empower Queenslanders to factor in resilience measures and activities as they anticipate, respond and adapt to changing circumstances.	https://www.qra.qld.gov.au/resilient-queensland/queensland-resilience-adaptation-pathways-and-transformation-approach-project

Victoria's Future Climate Tool	This interactive online mapping tool can be used to explore future climate information for your local region and export climate data to use in your own spatial tools. Risk practitioners can use this information for enhanced decision-making.	https://vicfutureclimatetool.indraweb.io/ Guidelines to use this tool: https://www.climatechange.vic.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0022/526216/Victorias-Future-Climate-Tool-Guidance-for-Risk-Management-ACCESSIBLE-VERSION.pdf
Victoria's Resilient Coast	DELWP is leading the development of a state-wide approach for coastal hazard risk management and adaptation. This will include a framework, guidelines, and support for Local Government, land managers and their communities to: • Enable place-based, best practice and long-term coastal hazard risk management and adaptation. • Build on the directions in the Marine and Coastal Policy 2020. Concerns that this program cannot meet expectations based on existing resource-provision and dated modelling (PPB Coastal Hazard Assessment still not released). The focus of the grant funding in the initial round in February was Marine and Coastal Management Plans. Limited focus so far on developing adaptation frameworks.	https://www.marineandcoasts.vic.gov.au/coastal-management/victorias-resilient-coast-adapting-for-2100
Your Council and Climate Change: Understanding the risks and learning to adapt. DELWP) Local (government adaptation training resources	Across April to June 2021, DELWP delivered 9 live, online, and interactive training sessions for Victorian local government councillors and executives on climate change risk and adaptation Note that in the training, the material presented was the slide pack and notes with the resources and brochures provided as hand-outs	https://www.climatechange.vic.gov.au/supporting-local-action-on-climate-change https://www.climatechange.vic.gov.au/supporting-local-action-on-climate-change Training slides: https://www.climatechange.vic.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0031/543883/Slide-pack-and-notes-from-councillor-and-executive-climate-change-training-session.pdf

WAGA
Western Alliance for
Greenhouse Action

MELBOURNE'S
CLIMATE
JOURNEY

Appendix 2. Stakeholder Engagement Plan

Introduction

The Western Alliance for Greenhouse Action has received funding from the Regional Climate Change Adaptation Strategy to consult the local government sector on the development and design of the Victorian Climate Resilient Councils (VCRC) program. A program under development which is proposed to provide sustained support for local governments to respond effectively to reduce and manage climate change risks and embed climate change adaptation across their services and operations.

This consultation stage of the project will engage broadly with the local government sector and associated stakeholders to:

1. Understand and meet the needs of diverse communities.

2. Establish buy-in and ownership of a proposed support program by those local governments and other organisations expected to participate in it.

3. Test a range of delivery models and component projects for the program, particularly as the concept of a coordinated adaptation support program is fairly new and it is unlikely that any existing model will completely fit community needs.

4. Establish a governance model which makes best use of the existing formal and informal government and non-government structures and networks that currently manage climate change risks.

5. Explore options for future resources and funding.

The purpose of this Stakeholder Engagement Plan is to identify and prioritise project stakeholders and describe the processes and activities for how the project stakeholders will be consulted. Involving stakeholders in the planning stage will help create a sense of ownership and enable the project team and stakeholders to work together to determine the most appropriate approach to the project.

1. VCRC stakeholder identification and analysis

The Stakeholder Identification process has been carried out in accordance with the following criteria:
1. Are directly related to the project as will be the direct users of it.
2. Have interest in the project or should be encouraged to take interest on it.
3. The value or perspective that the stakeholder can bring.
4. The value of feedback according to their knowledge of expertise and experience.
5. Represent community.
6. Potential decision-making authority.

The list of stakeholders as following:
- ❖ Metro, regional and rural Councils (officer level). Including Sustainability and Emergency Management officers.
- ❖ Metro and rural Council's Executive Leadership Teams, Directors, Managers
- ❖ Councillors

- ❖ DELWP
- ❖ Victorian Council of Social Services (VCOSS)
- ❖ Lord Mayor's Charitable Fund
- ❖ Jesuit Social Services
- ❖ Project Advisory group (Greenhouse Alliances representatives, RMIT and MAV)

Below is the list of stakeholders identified for the project and the level of engagement:

2. Stakeholder identification and level of prioritisation

STAKEHOLDER GROUP	INTEREST IN THE PROJECT	VALUE THAT STAKEHOLDER CAN BRING TO THE ISSUE	INFORMATION THAT THE STAKEHOLDER WILL NEED TO PARTICIPATE	BEST METHODS TO ENGAGE THE STAKEHOLDER
Metro, regional and rural Councils (officer level). Including Sustainability and Emergency Management officers.	User of future program.	Provide feedback on program model and governance options. Can pass the information to other officer level between the organization.	Program model and governance options, survey	Email, survey, attendance to meetings Alliance meetings.
Metro and rural Councils Executive Leadership Teams, Directors, Managers.	User of future program	Provide feedback on program model and governance options. How it will deliver council priorities and cost of implementation or not implementing	Program model and governance options,	Email, surveys. Best way to engage through MAV networks. CEO and senior regional partnership gatherings
Councillors	User of future program	Support on program development	One page program model	Email, surveys. Best way to engage through MAV networks.
DELWP	Support organisation and potential program partner	Specialist, and strategic advice on project	Program's supporting documentation	Email, telephone, and meetings
Victorian Council of Social Services (VCOSS)	Support organisation and potential program partner	Specialist, and strategic advice on project	Program's supporting documentation	Interview
Lord Mayor's Charitable Fund	Support organisation and potential program partner	Specialist, and strategic advice on project	Program's supporting documentation	Interview
Jesuit Social Services	Support organisation and potential program partner	Specialist, and strategic advice on project	Program's supporting documentation	Interview
Project Advisory Group (Greenhouse Alliances representatives, RMIT and MAV)	User of future program, potential future program's partner	Specialist, and strategic advice on project	Program's supporting documentation	Email, telephone, and meetings

2. Engagement methods

In the table in section 2.1, stakeholders have been identified and prioritised and stakeholder engagement methods have been listed. This section describes the engagement methods in further detail.

- Survey officer level

A brief survey will the core consultation method. As identified in table 2.1, the survey will be distributed to local government sustainability officers and accompanied by a digital flier. The survey will collate a broad range of responses across the sector and enable structured analysis of the feedback

- Flier

A digital flier will be produced to inform stakeholders about the purpose of the project and the consultation process and timelines. The flier will aim to build engagement and create interest in the need for the VCRC program. It will provide links to additional background materials and encourage participation in the survey.

- HWAWA website

A page on the HWAWA website will collate consultation materials including preliminary research supporting the development of the VCRC program such as the Needs Analysis Report, the Program Models Report, and it will also contain a link to the survey and a summary of the proposed program models. The website will collate all the consultation material in one place and also provide more detailed information about the proposed VCRC program for stakeholders that are interested.

- Email

As outlined in table 2.1, email will be a key method of engagement with groups we wish to inform about the program. Emails will be tailored with messages suited to the target audience.

- Briefings

The project team will identify existing stakeholder meeting opportunities to attend to explain the consultation process and invite participation. Briefings will be targeted at stakeholders who need additional background information about the issues, or to create interest and awareness about the VCRC program within stakeholder groups that may not otherwise hear about the program through their networks. For example, attending a Lead West meeting to engage with Councillor and CEO level local government representatives.

- Power Point presentation or recorded video explainer

Presentations or a short video would be used to support briefings and made available on our website for local government staff who need a resource summarising the aim of the consultation and VCRC program.

- Interviews for Councillors

Similar projects that have recently consulted with Councillors have had success with directly approaching Councillors for a brief interview, particularly Councillors from rural councils. Direct interviews could be more effective than only approaching through an email and survey since this stakeholder group is less likely to be engaged on climate change issues than sustainability officers and may require some background information before being able to provide informed feedback.

- Interviews for rural Council Officers

This approach has been suggested to be able to get better responses from rural officers. This direct interaction could be more effective than an email.

3. High level stakeholder engagement plan

STAKEHOLDER	LEVEL OF ENGAGEMENT	WHEN	HOW
Metro, regional and rural Councils (officer level). Including Sustainability and Emergency Management officers.	Involve/consult	April and May	1. Email including: Survey of proposed program model, governance options. The email should include flier and website link to get further background information about the program. 2. Request officer to pass on to other relevant Council's officers. 3. Rural Councils officers need to be interviewed. 4. Participation at the Greenhouse Alliances conference 5. Present the program at the North West Region - Emergency Management Forum 6. Present the program at Greenhouse Alliances meetings -WAGA, NAGA 7. HWAWA forum. Email including survey.
Metro and rural Councils Executive Leadership Teams, Directors, Managers	Involve/consult/collaborate/empower	April and May	1. Email inviting them to complete a survey, including program's flier. 2. Email sent from the MAV 3. Attend SECCA's Executive Committee meeting to present the program. 4. Attend regional CEO's forum when possible. 5. Look for support from the Alliances to identify key Exec representatives to be interviewed.
Councillors	Collaborate/empower	April and May	1. Interviews: Consult with NAGA to see if the 7 councillors that were interviewed as part of the 'Embedding Climate Change in the Council Plan' would like to be interviewed again? 2. Consult with Greenhouse Alliances on how to contact key Councillors per region. 3. Attend regional forums

			4. Contact key Councillors that can support and advocate for the project for example Bernadette Thomas.
DELWP	Collaborate/empower	April and May	Interview /presentation
Victorian Council of Social Services (VCOSS)	Involve/consult	April and May	Interview /presentation
Lord Mayor's Charitable Fund	Involve/consult	April and May	Interview /presentation
Jesuit Social Services	Involve/consult	April and May	Interview /presentation
Project Advisory Group (Greenhouse Alliances representatives, RMIT and MAV)	Collaborate / Empower	Ongoing – as required	1. Email 2. Meeting 3. Survey 4. Power Point presentation

4. Consultation analysis and outcomes

The results of the survey will be the primary source of data to analyse a broad range of feedback about the program design and governance models. The survey is also expected to confirm and add detail to the findings in the needs analysis report.

The survey results will be supported by the outputs from additional consultation methods identified in this plan including briefings, and individual interviews.

These outputs will be analysed and summarised into a consultation report and the key findings will be identified. The findings of the consultation will inform the design of the program model and governance options which will be confirmed by the project advisory group and project team.
All the stakeholders that were consulted will receive an email with the project outputs and future steps.

Appendix 3. Councillors and Community organisations engagement

1. **Community organisations' questions**

   - How is your organisation experiencing the impacts of climate change in the community? What are some of the biggest climate change issues they have experienced so far / expect to experience as the climate changes?
   - How does your organisation interact with council services and assets?
   - What ways could council help them to reduce the impacts of climate change for their community? E.g., through the services or assets, they deliver?
   - How a program like VCRC can benefit your organisation?

2. **Councillor's interview questions**

   - How a program like VCRC can provide you support/resources to improve your knowledge or increase your interest on climate change adaptation?
   - How is climate change prioritised in your Council?
   - Can you give me some Insights on how a program like this will engage Councillors in general? Or how a program like this will get council support?

Summary of outcomes from stakeholder engagement meetings

Alliance meetings

NAGA:
- Assessment: Would be great to have a risk assessment product that can be pitched across the organisation – standard process.
  A combination of ACC (initial scan) plus a climate risk assessment process would be beneficial.
- Model: sequential approach
- Community of practice useful

WAGA:
- Assessment: What standards will be used for the risk assessment? AF: will be Australian Standard and will include scenario modelling.
  Most members commented risk assessment will be useful, ACC provides useful background check
- Communities of practise useful
- Resources: Useful information like case studies and information or sessions to engaged leaders/senior (like Sarah Barker's presentation). Understanding legal and financial risks are important. Make these resources as simple as possible eg 1. Legislative requirements 2 what do we need to do to address them etc.
- General support to the project was given.

EAGA
- Finding cohorts of Councils looking to do the same projects. Grouping them together instead of by Alliances.
- Assessment: there are lots of different types of risk assessments would be good to have a standard one. Special services are so expensive it would be good to have this resource available.
- It would be good to work as provision instead of a resource. Priority issues.
- Audience: it needs to be managed by the Sustainability officers, there is still a lot to progress for this work to be carried by the risk team. This is very collaborative issue.
- General support for the project was given.

SECCCA
- Assessment: Some of the Councils eg Port Phillip and Mornington have already completed most pf the assessments not sure how they can benefit from the program.
- Embedding working group – scenario on when we'd actually use the data. How far back in service planning process we need to plan. Right people in the room. Iterative process. Learning by doing. Integrating resource with any action.

GMCA
- Regional partnerships structure is a good model – e.g. risk is involved, ELT pays attention. The Regional Partnerships is the CEOs that get together and collaborate in each of our regions – Goulburn broken and the northeast
- Working the program through MAV could be a good approach because it would take the emphasis off sustainability officer / environment and put the focus onto other parts of council and council leadership. However, Carole notes some caution should be taken with MAV re their perspective on EM.
- Strong agreement that the program should target leadership and Councillor support because it is currently lacking and is important to get resourcing and prioritise the issues. Strong support for a presentation to be given to Council / ELT as part of the commitment process to generate buy-in. However, be aware that ELT will want to know how much it will cost and you'll need to have good answers. E.g. It will cost this much for the program, committing an internal resource, this much, but you will save this much in efficiency and best practice approaches through the program and the risks will accumulate and cost you more if you don't act., etc.
- Program management and implementation: Have we considered a shared officer position? E.g. each of the councils chip in some $ for a regional adaptation officer to support the program implementation. They do this with another program already and it works well and addresses some of the resourcing issues. The GMCAs shared ESD officer for the Sustainable Subdivisions programme.
- Communication: Be aware that rural and regional councils have different issues and focus to metro councils, so be mindful of this with program communication. For example, rural and regional have vast land area and low population density which means it hard to get the resources to deliver services and assets at the scale of metro councils. They also likely have a greater number and range of climate hazards to contend with and populations that don't have the resources to manage the risks either.
- Information management: Currently climate change work gets lost in amongst other corporate priorities. How will we lift the profile of adaptation work and how will we communicate that? E.g. will there be a web platform for shared resources, high level benchmarking or progress reporting, case studies, etc.?

North West Metropolitan Region Emergency Management Collaboration Forum

- Don't duplicate effort. We have an internal climate change working group run through sustainability. They are working with our EM team to integrate climate change response. If possible, go through existing structures such as these.
- Through the Northwest Region risk assessment – we are encouraged to only look at the risks in front of us (current / past risk), not to consider forward risks.
- Has the VCRC team approached SES as the holders of the process? Internally, within council we can be more flexible with considering cc risk in our planning.

- Climate change risks are an 'emerging issue' for SES consideration. We are in the early stages of thinking about how to integrate them into our processes. State government emergency management teams need to be involved in developing a coordinated process that councils can apply to their MEMPCs. And the regional EM committee would be good level to engage with, too.
- Where would the responsibility for the climate change risk response level sit? Interesting factor to determine and crucial to the embedding process. And given we are used to working with past historical data, what are the metrics to show it (a new process considering cc risks in EM planning) works? It would be important to have a coordination function in place*)*

Governance

1. **Key governance criteria or principles**
   - All Alliances should be involved
   - Alliances have grown organically. But we need a few rules to start off with to provide security, clarity and respect.
   - VECO's governance has worked, one partner to lead and Alliances involved as a conduit.
     it's not necessary to start something new when we already have examples of good projects.
   - One Alliance needs to lead, and Councils will need to provide input. Implement senior level decision making model.
   - AS VCRC is still in working progress and the program is still to be defined (as per the current consultation process) need to keep it very broad and refine with the time. Alliances already know what it works.
   - MAV, factor in expectation of other level of government to secure funding. How the program is going to work? Would this program just be seeking funding to deliver, or also be issuing grants to councils?
   - PCG with Alliances to be conduit to members.
   - Complement rather than duplicate

2. **Administration of the program**
   - BSWA just been stablished, don't want to be part of another Alliance. Not another body – lean, not overdoing governance, but we do need a lead/auspicer, who can credibly represent the group. Need strong understanding of purpose.
   - NAGA keen to be part of the PCG, VCRC is already in NAGA's work plan.

3. **Organisation to be involved**
   - GMCA have more than just councils as part of the Alliance, other partners involved which has been really useful for furthering support and funding – DELWP, CMAs, etc.
   - Once the end product has been defined it can grow to an Alliance
   - The sustainabilty of the program is critical – drawing in existing resources and connecting those, which will aid sustainability.
   - Victorian Climate Resilient Coasts project – tools, support and funding – how do we link with that work so that councils don't have to go through multiple processes.
   - Include legal structures to provide accountability – e.g. MoUs.
   - Lead having a clear role, etc.
   - MAV: What the relationship of the program will be with each of the alliances adaptation work program?
   - Enable things that are already happened
   - Auspicing organisations – should DELWP up? This covers all of Victoria? But does that then take agency away from alliances / councils? Logically, that should be DELWP. Explicitly talk about these issues, rather than skirting around them.

- DELWP to fund MAV to auspice something like this? Halfway between alliances and DELWP. E.g. CASBE, ABM.
- VCRC must give confidence to external funders and supporters. Accountability is important. Bottom up/sharing projects, etc, but also top down/coordinated.
- Need strategic considerations to include regional/rural Councils.

- Who is responsibility is? Empowerment and action. Local Gov owwership
  MAV Auspicing? Reporting obligations are massive

Community organisations meetings

There are lots of information/resources available already please don't duplicate what already exists.***

1) **How is your organisation experiencing the impacts of climate change in the community?**
   What are some of the biggest climate change issues they have experienced so far / expect to experience as the climate changes?
   - There have been service disruptions when smoke case workers couldn't work and therefore clients won't have services
   - House and homeless programs: issues during extreme weather events – exacerbation
   - Heat definitely
   - Food security
   - Extreme heat
   - Energy poverty
   - Bushfires
   - Public houses tenancies

2) **How does your organisation interact with council services and assets?**
   - With community services
   - Individual support programs
   - Through Neighbourhood Houses
   - Some organisations don't interact with Councils directly, but Councils need to support organisations that do interact with them

3) **What ways could council help them to reduce the impacts of climate change for their community? E.g., through the services or assets they deliver?**
   Through consultation or outreach we could do when designing our responses in ways that could increase the resilience for your community?
   - Provide better infrastructure
   - More conversation with community organisations
   - Training and education to Council staff on 'climate change' issues for them to be able to understand the risks and act.
   - Develop better policies
   - Sustainable Urban design
   - 20 min neighbourhood** keen to develop a project together
   - Start by asking the community directly
   - Local Councils thinking on public areas and how the communities and how it looks like mowing forward to adapt these places.

4) **How a program like VCRC can benefit your organisation?**
- Councils to support organisations to think about climate change between the community
- Municipal Health and Wellbeing Plan

- Showing leadership
- Plan and deliver health promotion work around climate change
- Once Council's staff is trained apply the train the trainer model. Councils to train community organisations about climate change adaptation
- Developing case studies – community led projects
- What the community want? Need?
- Work together – how is a climate resilient neighbourhood look like?
- Voices of the most vulnerable are heard
- Hot spots project – current
- Not only work on heat response – what is making people vulnerable?
- Strat talking with the community – how to respond to the climate change impacts
- Focus on health and wellbeing
- Patronship with community organisations to engage/educate community

Councillors' interviews

- *How a program like VCRC can provide you support/resources to improve your knowledge or increase your interest on climate change adaptation*?
  - Experts involved in this program need to be non-political. For example NAGA organised a presentation with Sarah Barker that was so good and non-political. -Keep experts neutral-.
  - How do we get this knowledge strategic and operational?
  - Interaction with councillors through presentations and regular updates.
  - Need to plan strategic approach to different issues, it's a great space to consider presentations on these topics e.g., insurance and climate change – the industry is changing.
  - Training specific on climate change won't make a difference – only attracts Councillors already engaged.
  - Need presentations or topics that interact into our regular meetings.
  - Provide wide range of examples from wide range of Councils. Councillors need examples from 'standard' Councils and not always the ones that are leading.
  - Need to find 'compatible' Councils to be able to make it easier to understand 'how to do it'. Provide examples from non-leading Councils. Recognition that all Councils are different
  - Making this topic as BAS is important.
  - The program looks great, this month we are presenting the draft climate change action plan. This is has been driven by members of the community as well.
  - I'm not an expert I have done some courses and it's enough for me. A training about climate change won't attract me.

- *How climate change is prioritised in your Council?*
  - It's got consideration with a range with other things in some places is really pretty good.
  - For my Council disaster recovery has been a 'hot' topic the last ten years.
  - We are not getting significant community pressure …
  - Always supportive on this type of programs, however I'll need a report from Council to let me know if it's something that will be useful.
  - Our Council is already doing a lot on this space. The question will be back to staff asking what kind of support they need from Councillors.

- *Can you give me some Insights on how a program like this will engage Councillors in general? Or how a program like this will get council support?*

- To be able to engage Councillors, the topic must be high in their priority list. If we want Councillors to participate in a training it must be online and easy to access
- I would like to see it become more common practice in standard council business. Councillors want to see that it is being dealt with and a normal practice.
- Provide examples of what's happening in other Councils
- Keep engagement with Councillors politically neutral. Focus on risk and responsibilities to make it relatable to a broad audience
- It's been a big focus on mitigation ---- long game is all in adaptation this is the right thing to do
- Normalise the behaviours / normalise actions really an important thing
- Tools and resources – making this as an industry standard benchmarking

Appendix 4. Survey questions

1.1 Please provide your details

1.2 Please select the type of council you work for

1.3 What current plans or actions does your council have to respond to increasingly severe and frequent heat, drought, flood, bushfire, and storm events impacting services and operations?
Answer Choices

- None of the above
- Climate risk assessment
- Adaptation plan or strategy
- Heat wave plan
- Community consultation on climate impacts
- Updated key council plans or policies to consider climate change impacts and considerations
- Implemented specific local risk mitigations (e.g. Retaining wall for sea level rise or battery back-up systems to manage power outages caused by storm events) (comment box – please describe most recent action)
- Other (please specify)

1.4 What are the key barriers that prevent your council from progressing further in planning a response to climate impacts affecting your services and operations?
Answer Choices

- None of the above
- Lack of support and funding for more sustained, strategic climate change adaptation.
- Lack of leadership engagement and support for a more sustained, strategic response
- Climate change response is not prioritised or embedded across councils.
- Lack of clear guidance to help in managing complexity.
- Limited resourcing and capacities.
- Not aware of the relevant regulatory and legislative responsibilities
- Limited resourcing (e.g., Lack of time, funding, support
- Limited capacities (e.g., Limited skills or knowledge to apply technical and organisational change requirements)
- None
- Other (please specify)

1.5 In response to the challenges of planning for and responding to climate change impacts across the local government sector, we are proposing a program of support to address some of the barriers. Do you believe a support program could add value to your council's response?
Answer Choices

- Yes
- No
- Maybe

1.6 If you answered NO, is there another approach that you think would be more effective in helping your council become more climate resilient?

2.1. The program would be based on the following general model (refer to second page of linked document). Do you believe that the key components of this model could help your council become more climate resilient?
Answer Choices
- Yes
- No
- Maybe

2.2 Is there any additional component you would like to include in the proposed program model?
Answer Choices
- Yes
- No
- Maybe

2.3 If YES, what else would you like to include? (200 words max.)

2.4 Who should be the key user of the program in the council organisation?
Answer Choices
- Sustainability officers and coordinators
- Senior council leadership (managers, directors)
- Risk and emergency response officers and managers
- Other (please specify)

2.5. What other audiences within the council organisation should be engaged?
Answer Choices
- Sustainability officers and coordinators
- Senior council leadership (managers, directors)
- Councillors
- Risk and Emergency response officers and managers
- Other (please specify)

3.1. What kind of assessment process is currently most important for your council? Would you prefer:
Answer Choices
- An assessment of organisational capacity, awareness and governance settings that enable or hinder the organisation to respond to climate change impacts. This assessment requires fewer resources to complete but provides more access to all local governments. It will point to further actions to build capacity and plan responses
- A municipal climate risk assessment that identifies and prioritises climate risks to address. This assessment takes a moderate level of resourcing and technical skill to complete, with program support.
- A targeted technical assessment for a priority climate impact that would be resource-intensive to complete but provide more detailed response planning for a specific climate impact or risk. It is usually applied to a discrete risk or geographic area that has been prioritised. (E.g. a heat vulnerability map; a coastal hazard assessment, etc.)
- Different assessment types offered at various stages of the program, based on a councils' capacity and needs – e.g., a hybrid approach.
- Don't know
- Other assessment type

4.1. What kind of resources does your council need to support your response to climate change impacts? Online Resources: Victoria's Future Climate Tool, How well we are adapting, and Climate Compass (Select from given options and your preferences)

Answer Choices

- Training workshops and webinars on specific topics
- Expert technical consultation to navigate application of climate science to decision making
- Support to use online tools (such as above resources: "Victoria's Future Climate Tool" "How well we are adapting", "Climate Compass") (option to tell us which ones, below)
- A set of resources for the sector which can be used to implement steps in a clear process (guidelines, templates, case studies)
- Resources to help communicate the issues and engage key teams across council
- Resources or support to help engage senior leadership and Councillors
- On-demand assistance to help with resource use and program implementation
- Knowledge sharing forum
- None of these (Please provide comment below)
- Please provide additional details here:

4.2. We know many existing tools and resources exist to support climate adaptation response, which we don't want to duplicate. However, we think a program could coordinate the application of existing resources by identifying and sequencing their use through a set of clear program steps, which interact with local government decision making. Are there any existing tools, templates or guidance that you believe are important to include in the program?

5.1. Would your council benefit from any of the following activities? (Ranking scale: 1 is lowest importance, 5 is highest importance)

Answer Choices

- Peer benchmarking to identify progress and motivate internal leadership / staff engagement
- Peer learning through regular meetings with local governments at similar stages of their response
- Partnerships with neighbouring councils and support agencies to scale up responses to shared issues
- A community of practice to build capacity for risk or emergency managers or other relevant council departments involved in implementing climate risk responses

5.2. Does your council participate in existing forums, alliances or networks to plan for and respond to increasingly frequent climate impacts?

Answer Choices

- Yes
- No
- Not sure

5.3. If yes, please list any networks, forums or alliances you participate in, which help you to respond to climate impacts:(Comment box - 200-word max)

6.1. An important component of any program is measuring progress and assessing lessons to make improvements. There are several levels of evaluation and reporting that could benefit participating councils and program managers and we'd like your thoughts on what type of evaluation could best suit:

Answer Choices

- High-level 'benchmarking' report against the key stages of the program, to identify councils at a similar stage of progress to assist with peer-learning.
- Evaluation and reflection component completed at key program stages.

- Action monitoring and evaluation to measure implementation
- Other (50-word max)

7.1. Which of the following do you view as important to the successful delivery of this program?
Answer Choices

- Individual local governments
- Greenhouse alliances (metro, rural and regional)
- Department of Environment Land Water Planning (DELWP)
- Municipal Association of Victoria (MAV)
- Academic or technical institutions
- Relevant peak bodies (e.g., Institute of Public Works and Engineering Australia)
- State agencies (please list below)
- Federal agencies (please list below)
- Community organisations
- Please provide additional information here:

8.1. Is there anything else you'd like to tell us about your council's needs, the proposed program model, a specific opportunity, what to watch out for or anything else?