Climate Change Policy Template

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| IntroductionCouncil should establish a clear policy to direct management of climate change risk and adaptation. This will support successful implementation of the Climate Change Risk Assessment and Adaptation Plan. A Climate Change Policy should establish Council’s position on its approach to managing climate hazards, provide a clear process for undertaking climate risk assessments and implementing adaptation measures, and support the integration and uptake of climate risk management processes across Council.The following template draws strongly on best-practice climate change policies developed by NSW councils such as Orange City Council.For councils, development of an effective Climate Change Policy should consider the following:* **Existing policies, position statements and templates.** Does Council have existing internal or external policies or strategies relating to sustainability or climate change that the Climate Change Policy can draw upon? Has Council issued relevant position statements in the past – for example, for a climate emergency? Does Council have an existing template for policies? If so, is it intended to be used internally or externally?
* **Audience.** Council may wish to develop a policy aimed primarily at external stakeholders and the public to make them aware of Council’s climate change objectives. Alternatively, the policy may aim to inform the actions of local Council employees and others who work with Council.
* **Scope, applicability, purpose and policy objectives.** The policy should clearly define each component and set out policy objectives. Council may wish to reflect on the maturity of its current practices relating to climate change risk assessment, adaptation and emissions reduction, in accordance with the [Local Government Climate Readiness Tool](https://www.climatechange.environment.nsw.gov.au/sites/default/files/2023-09/Local%20Government%20Climate%20Readiness%20Tool.xlsx).
* **Governance.** Council should establish who owns the policy, who will approve the policy, what prior engagement needs to be undertaken (internal and external) and how often the policy will be reviewed.
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| Text for revision in this template is shown in blue. This text should be developed in consultation with relevant business areas in Council and other stakeholders, where relevant. Some details such as timeframes or measures are highlighted for revision in yellow.Explanatory text and examples are provided in text boxes like this one. |

Purpose

This Climate Change Policy identifies how Council will manage, mitigate, and adapt to the impacts of climate change.

Policy statement

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| The Hunter Joint Organisation has published detailed guidance on [climate change integrated planning and reporting](https://www.hunterjo.com.au/projects/act-now-on-adaptation-coastal-wise-communities/). Resources include descriptions of potential commitment levels and templates for making these commitments. The following position statement aligns with the Hunter Joint Organisation guidance for developing a strategic direction for Council at a ‘committed’ commitment level (see Section 4.2.1 of the guidance document). |

Council is committed to climate action and seeks to understand climate change risks, mitigate the effects of climate change, and prioritise action. Council will work with the community to adapt to a changing climate and reduce our impact. We are striving towards net zero emissions for our Council by 2030 and are adapting to climate change risks and opportunities. Council and the community will minimise greenhouse gas emissions and reduce risks from climate change.

Scope

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| The scope should be developed in consultation with relevant business areas, considering Council’s strategic goals and objectives. The scope should highlight specific requirements to integrate climate change risk, climate change adaptation and emissions reduction measures into Council policies, procedures, projects, or activities.For example, capital investments by Council in projects of a certain value (for example, $1 million) may be subject to additional requirements relating to climate change risk, climate change adaptation and emissions reduction measures. Selection of these policy thresholds should be based, at least partly, on Council policies, risk frameworks and regulatory requirements. |

All Council staff, Council insurers and community members.

All Council capital investment, operations, and maintenance activities.

[Identify specific threshold of investment for which additional measures may apply.]

Policy objectives

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| Potential policy objectives are outlined below, to be refined by councils. Not all objectives need to be used; where required, they should be adapted to reflect the language of Council, to support shared understanding.Other examples of objectives can be found in Section 4.2.2 of the Hunter Joint Organisation guidance on [climate change integrated planning and reporting](https://www.hunterjo.com.au/projects/act-now-on-adaptation-coastal-wise-communities/), which provides examples of strategic objectives relating to 3 commitment levels. |

This Climate Change Policy establishes a framework for Council to undertake its activities to:

* lead, encourage and work with our community to reduce greenhouse gas emissions
* adapt our existing activities and practices to realise the economic opportunities and benefits that climate change risk, adaptation and emissions reduction measures can provide
* consider the potential implications associated with adapting to and mitigating climate change when making operational, strategic planning and management decisions
* reduce or avoid risks from natural hazards, including the projected effects of climate change, by establishing adaptation strategies to minimise vulnerability to climate change
* comply with applicable legal requirements, and implement any relevant state government policies, guidelines, and directives
* develop and implement emissions reduction measures, and integrate them into Council’s operations
* develop and implement climate change adaptation and mitigation actions, and integrate them into Council’s existing risk management processes
* provide effective and strong leadership to the local community to respond to climate change, and build sustainability by modelling and communicating Council’s response to climate change
* commit to being innovative, flexible, and adaptive in our approach to climate change, and demonstrate meaningful emissions reduction measures
* commit to facilitating applicable programs, promoting opportunities, and assisting the local community to adopt climate risk assessment and adaptation, and emissions reduction practices
* publish Council’s emissions profile, demonstrate year-on-year reduced emissions associated with Council activities (corporate emissions) and support community emissions reductions.

The policy

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| Council may wish to refer to the [Local Government Climate Readiness Tool](https://www.climatechange.environment.nsw.gov.au/sites/default/files/2023-09/Local%20Government%20Climate%20Readiness%20Tool.xlsx) to establish its current maturity level and identify potential outcomes of this maturity level. Suggested outcomes, metrics and targets are also described in the NSW Local Government Resources – Monitoring and Evaluation Plan. Other examples of activities for Council to undertake can also be found in Section 4.3 of the Hunter Joint Organisation guidance on [climate change integrated planning and reporting](https://www.hunterjo.com.au/projects/act-now-on-adaptation-coastal-wise-communities/https%3A/www.hunterjo.com.au/projects/act-now-on-adaptation-coastal-wise-communities/https%3A/www.hunterjo.com.au/projects/act-now-on-adaptation-coastal-wise-communities/). |

In meeting the challenges of climate change, Council will:

* establish a Climate Change Risk Assessment and Adaptation Plan, or a climate change action plan, climate change strategy, climate change operational management plan, climate change mitigation strategy, sustainability strategy or net zero emissions strategy
* integrate climate change considerations into Council’s sustainability management plan and community strategic plan, and other Council policies, strategies, and management plans

pursue grant and other funding opportunities to further examine and respond to climate change issues as they affect Council and the community and ensure availability of appropriate resources for climate change initiatives.

Mitigation and emissions reduction

Council will:

* undertake a stocktake, and establish a methodology for regular inventories, of Council’s greenhouse gas emission levels, and prepare a road map aiming for net zero emissions by 2030
* understand Council’s fossil fuel use and fossil fuel–aligned investments, and strive to reduce consumption of [insert%] by [insert time] and divest from fossil fuel–aligned investments as early as possible

implement standards around reducing greenhouse gas emissions and fossil fuel consumption by our supply chain.

Climate risk assessment and adaptation management

Council will:

* progressively undertake detailed risk assessments of climate change hazards across Council operations, including the community strategic plan, strategic land-use planning, the sustainability policy, the business plan, and other strategic plans and policies. Climate risk assessments will be consistent with Australian Government and state government legislation and guidelines, as detailed at the end of this document
* undertake a detailed risk assessment of climate change hazards for any major project with a capital value of $1 million or more
* identify climate risk metrics for ongoing monitoring, review, and management by Council
* embed climate change–related risks within Council’s integrated planning and reporting framework
* establish triggers for decision making

support broad participation across Council, and with community stakeholders and community risk owners in climate risk assessment and adaptation planning on a regular basis

Policy review

Council commits to reviewing the Climate Change Policy every 5 years.

Review of current plans

Council will:

* regularly review its plans, strategies, policies, and benchmarks, where their content may be affected by climate change, to ensure that they remain current as the science of climate change develops
* ensure that Council actions, decisions and policy response to climate change remain current and reflect Council’s operational capacity, community expectations and changes in climate change scenarios

complement, collaborate with, and establish strong partnerships with, the community, key stakeholders, other local councils, and other tiers of government that strengthen Council’s adaptive capacity in response to climate change.

Key definitions

* **Climate change risk, climate risk:** The effect of uncertainty on organisational objectives associated with acute and chronic climate change. Risks includes physical, transition and liability risks. Physical risks are associated with direct impacts from rising aggregate global temperatures. Transition risks may result from activities undertaken to adjust towards a lower-carbon economy. Liability risks arise when a person or entity is held responsible for not acting sufficiently on physical or transition risks, causing damage to others.
* **Climate change:** Persistent change in the average weather for an extended period, typically decades or longer. This change occurs on top of variability from year to year.
* **Mitigation:** Climate change mitigation includes actions taken globally, nationally, and individually to limit changes caused in the global climate by human activities. Mitigation activities are designed to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and/or increase the amount of greenhouse gases removed from the atmosphere by greenhouse sinks.
* **Adaptation:** Actions undertaken to manage or reduce the adverse consequences of climate change, as well as to harness any benefits or opportunities.
* **Greenhouse gas emissions:** Emissions into the atmosphere of gases such as carbon dioxide and methane that contribute to the greenhouse effect, leading to global warming.

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| Related legislation and guidelines | Related Council policies and documents  |
| * NSW Climate Change Policy Framework (2016)
* NSW Net Zero Plan Stage 1: 2020-2030 (2020)
* Local Government NSW Policy Platform (2021)
* *Clean Energy Act 2011* (Cwth)
* *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (Cwth)
* *National Greenhouse and Energy Reporting Act 2007* (Cwth)
* *Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979* (NSW) and Regulations
* *Local Government Act 1993* (NSW)
* *Protection of the Environment Operations Act 1997* (NSW) and Regulations

*Threatened Species Conservation Act 1995* (NSW) and Regulations | * Community strategic plan
* Sustainability policy or management plan(s)
* Strategic policy
* Enterprise risk management documents
* Asset management plans and policies
* Local environmental plan
* Local strategic planning statements
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References and guidelines

NSW Department of Planning, Industry and Environment (2021). [*Climate risk ready NSW guide*](https://climatechange.environment.nsw.gov.au/-/media/NARCLim/Files/Section-4-PDFs/Climate-Risk-Ready/NSW-Climate-risk-ready-guide.pdf)

Hunter Joint Organisation (2021). [Climate Change Integrated Planning & Reporting (IP&R) Package](https://www.hunterjo.com.au/projects/act-now-on-adaptation-coastal-wise-communities/)

Local Government NSW (2021). [Policy Platform](https://www.lgnsw.org.au/common/Uploaded%20files/Policy/2021_LGNSW_Policy_Platform.pdf), Climate Change Position Statement

Orange City Council (2021). [Climate Change Management Plan](https://www.orange.nsw.gov.au/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/OCC-Climate-Change-Plan.pdf)

Penrith City Council (2021). [Sustainability Policy](https://www.penrithcity.nsw.gov.au/images/documents/policies/OPD%20002%20Sustainability%20Policy.pdf)

Albury City Council ( 2021). [Climate Change Adaptation Strategy and Risk Assessment](file:///C%3A//Users/whitec01/Downloads/Climate_Change_Adaptation_Strategy_and_Risk_Assessment_August_2021-endorsed_25.10.2021.PDF)

Lake Macquarie Council (2020). [Environmental Sustainability Strategy and Action Plan 2020-2027](https://www.lakemac.com.au/files/assets/public/v/1/hptrim/project-management-environmental-management-projects-pm180003-2018-review-environmental-sustainability-policy-and-2014-2023-environmental-sustainability-action-plan/pm180003-public-exhibition-environmental-sustainability-strategy-and-action-plan-2020-2027/final-low-resolution-environmental-sustainability-strategy-and-action-plan-2020-2027-ratified-at-22-june-2020-council-meeting.pdf)

Parramatta City Council (2017). [Parramatta Environmental Sustainability Strategy](https://www.cityofparramatta.nsw.gov.au/sites/council/files/2019-04/Environmental%20Sustainability%20Strategy%202017v2.pdf)