

Council Policy CP-029 Climate Change

Officer	Manager of Environmental Health and Sustainability	Owner	Director of Sustainable Communities
Review Frequency	Annually	Next Review	2012
Council Resolution number and date			
Chair of Council		Chief Executive Officer	

OBJECTIVE

The City of Greater Geraldton is committed to addressing climate change and to:

- understanding its impacts in a local, regional and international context;
- evaluating the climate change implications of operational decisions and policy positions; and
- greenhouse emissions reductions and risk management through appropriate mitigation and adaptation strategies.

SCOPE

This policy covers all the operations of the City of Greater Geraldton.

DEFINITIONS

Mitigation: Refers to the reduction of climate change impacts via broad scale behavior change.

Adaptation: Involves identifying the inevitable changes that climate change will cause and planning for ways to adapt to them. Adaptation strategies also aim to take advantage of any opportunities that climate change may offer with respect to development, infrastructure, technology or science.

BACKGROUND

The City’s Community Strategic Action Plan aims to “progress towards climate change mitigation and adaptation principles and practices”. The City has already developed climate change actions plans which cover both its Geraldton-Greenough and Mullewa areas of operation prior to the most recent amalgamation.

The City has previously adopted a Towards Sustainability Framework Policy which supports a defined policy being created to ensure Councils commitment towards implementing specific climate change related actions is realised. This Policy provides the instrument to progress the community desire and need for action within this framework.

Local Government Legislative and Community Support for Climate Change management

Section 1.3 (3) of the Local Government Act 1995 states *“In carrying out its functions a local government is to use its best endeavours to meet the needs of current and future generations through an integration of environmental protection, social advancement and economic prosperity”*.

While the City of Greater Geraldton is the closest sphere of Government to the community it is not the best resourced sphere of Government to do so. The City of Greater Geraldton recognises that community expects it to take a leadership role and is committed to working with the State and Commonwealth Governments to ensure adequate resourcing for the City of Greater Geraldton climate change adaptation and mitigation actions and to using appropriate research frameworks and data to inform its own strategies, decision making and leadership activities.

POLICY PRINCIPLES

Climate Change Management for the City of Greater Geraldton (CGG)

In order to properly assess and address climate change implications the CGG will need to address climate change in its strategic planning framework. Climate change has a range of legal, indemnity, budgetary, asset management, infrastructure, planning and environmental implications, all of which will need to be embedded in strategic frameworks and actioned at both a political and operational level in order to ensure climate change liability issues are adequately addressed.

Acknowledging Impacts of Climate Change and Committing to Action Now

To ensure understanding of the relevance of climate change impacts to operational and strategic frameworks the City of Greater Geraldton (CGG) recognises that:

- Global climate is changing as a consequence of greenhouse gas emissions in the atmosphere and further climate change will occur as a result of past, present and future emissions.
- It has a responsibility for current climate change and an ethical obligation and opportunity for the CGG to play a leadership role, commensurate with its capabilities.
- Climate change is a direct responsibility of the State and Federal Governments and that as a result the State and Federal Governments have an obligation to address climate change in cooperation with Local Government, and in consultation with the Australian community as a whole.

Mitigation – Emission Reductions

The City of Greater Geraldton acknowledges that a successful response to the challenge of meeting appropriate emission reduction targets should begin immediately and that no single policy measure or technology will provide a solution to climate change and so all reasonable options need to be researched, explored and facilitated.

The City of Greater Geraldton is committed to:

- Working towards agreed national emission reduction targets and supporting the national emissions trading scheme.
- Reducing its operational greenhouse gas emissions and supporting the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions in the community.
- Encouraging and supporting community and business in the transition towards sustainable lifestyles that reduce greenhouse impact.

Adaptation – Collaborative Action

The City of Greater Geraldton is committed to planning, investment and infrastructure decisions to enable the community to successfully adapt to the impacts of climate change, reduce its risks and vulnerabilities to these impacts and take advantage of any opportunities.

The City of Greater Geraldton (CGG) commits to:

- Supporting the establishment of institutions and regulations that ensure effective, integrated cross-sectoral action by stakeholders for climate change management.
- Contributing to the common goal of ensuring that Western Australia's communities and natural ecosystems have the resources necessary to adapt to climate change impacts.
- Developing individuals and communities understanding about the impacts of climate change and develop strategies to help adapt to these.
- Ensure that all current regulation and policies take into consideration the likely impact of climate change on current and future human settlements, natural resources and ecosystems and facilitate adaptation to these.

Equity and Social Justice

The City of Greater Geraldton acknowledges that both the impacts of climate change and the policy responses required have significant equity implications and acknowledges that the burden of reducing greenhouse emissions must be equitably dispersed.

The CGG commits to supporting local development of policies and strategies that identify and minimise the climate change risks and vulnerabilities of disadvantaged communities and to work with State and Commonwealth bodies to source resources to enable adaptation and resilience building in these communities.

Appropriate Priorities and Objectives

The management of climate change impacts must reflect the priorities of the City of Greater Geraldton and its community. The City of Greater Geraldton commits to identifying and working towards:

- Regionally specific priorities and impacts with regard to their environmental, social and economic opportunities and risks.
- Cooperative, coordinated regional climate change management across the political and operational areas under its jurisdiction.
- Minimising climate change risks to its operations/communities and work together with Commonwealth and State Governments to plan and implement appropriate strategies.
- A set of internal targets for mitigation and adaptation that are adopted by Council and widely publicised in order to achieve stakeholder and community support.

Roles and Responsibilities

Climate change management is the responsibility of all Local Government Officers and Elected Members. To ensure that set objectives are met within a reasonable timeframe a program management group has been established from internal operational Managers and partnering agency stakeholder groups that are supported by the City's Executive Management Team.

Resourcing Barriers and Constraints

Climate change policy and project work management costs, while representing a relatively small financial commitment on a global scale, are likely to represent a larger proportion of internal spending. Local Governments must be adequately resourced via Australian Government revenue avenues to meet these community and political obligations. The City of Greater Geraldton asserts that funds from the Carbon Tax or a similar funding mechanism should be made available to Local Governments to fund these costs and additional activities. By considering climate change impacts early in the planning or design phase of a project it is generally accepted that future costs can be reduced.