



5 August 2020

Neville Power
National COVID-19 Coordination Commission (NCCC)
NCCEnquiries@pmc.gov.au

Dear Mr Power,

Re: Stimulus measures for pandemic recovery

On behalf of their member councils, the Victorian Greenhouse Alliances would like to raise a number of important issues relating to the Government's response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Victorian Greenhouse Alliances are formal partnerships of local governments driving climate change action across 70 of Victoria's 79 municipalities. For the past two decades, the Alliances have worked across their councils, communities and partners to deliver regional climate change mitigation and adaptation programs. This includes the implementation of joint initiatives that provide economies of scale and enable projects typically beyond the reach of individual councils. Our project work is complemented by targeted advocacy, capacity building activities and regional partnerships.

We urge you to consider that there is a key opportunity to link the economic recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic with the need to develop the local skills and supply chains to transition to zero carbon emissions. In particular, we ask you to consider the following issues when providing advice to the Australian Government on stimulus measures to address the economic and social impacts of the global COVID-19 pandemic:

1. Improving the quality of housing is critical for supporting the vulnerable

Councils support the numerous proposals to improve the energy efficiency in low income households, including (but not limited to):

- The joint statement released by the Healthy Affordable Homes Coalition in June 2020, including forty public advocacy and consumer groups from across the country.¹
- The cross-section of groups representing business, the energy industry, property owners, unions, and major investors calling for a COVID recovery targeting inefficient buildings.²

¹ <https://www.acoss.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/Economic-Stimulus-Healthy-Affordable-Homes-NLEPP-June-2020-Final-18062020.pdf>

² https://www.bca.com.au/building_a_stronger_and_cleaner_post_pandemic_australia

- The One Million Homes Alliance’s letter, requesting fully funded retrofit packages and subsidies for energy efficient appliances in low income households.³

The overwhelming support for strong policies supporting social and low income households is accompanied by a raft of academic and leading industry research, including (but not limited to):

- Australia’s chief scientist, Alan Finkel, who is advising the Government on its Low Emissions Technology Roadmap.⁴
- The International Energy Agency, which has highlighted that energy efficiency upgrades could deliver over 120,000 job-years of employment.⁵
- The Australian study, The Million Jobs Plan, calculates a five-year national home retrofit program would employ up to 100,000 people every year to benefit social housing and low income households.⁶
- ClimateWorks Decarbonisation Futures report, demonstrating the key role the energy efficiency retrofits can play in assisting Australia achieve the Paris goals.⁷

2. Support for the expansion of fossil fuels should be explicitly ruled out

We are deeply concerned by the massive gas subsidies proposed by Manufacturing Taskforce of the NCCC.⁸ These gas subsidies will dwarf any past subsidies provided to renewable energy and erase any emission reductions that might be made possible by the Government’s proposed *Technology Investment Roadmap*. The decision to expand fossil fuels under the cover of COVID-19 economic recovery are deeply concerning and run counter to any intention to address greenhouse gas emissions. It is also in conflict with the goals of councils and their communities across Australia, who are increasingly making ‘climate emergency’ declarations, setting ambitious science-based zero net emission goals and implementing them through their own initiatives, which involve switching to renewable energy, efficiency and demand management. One emerging trend is the electrification in order to move away from gas as a polluting fossil fuel. As well as avoiding emissions, councils are actively avoiding investment decisions which lock them into emissions-intensive infrastructure which may prove wastefully expensive over its lifespan, as gas markets change and renewable energy advances.

3. Leverage the unique capabilities and capacity of councils to support local economies, create jobs and tackle climate change

For decades, Victorian councils have led climate change initiatives that deliver direct financial savings to communities, boost local economies, create jobs, improve health and wellbeing of people and enhance the natural environment. The Commission can leverage this experience and prioritise cross-government stimulus measures that synchronise the

³ http://environmentvictoria.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/One-Million-Homes-Alliance_Joint-Letter_Household-Energy-Stimulus_June-2020.pdf

⁴ https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2020/jun/21/chief-scientist-joins-calls-for-australia-to-dramatically-boost-energy-efficiency?CMP=Share_iOSApp_Other

⁵ <https://www.iea.org/reports/recommendations-of-the-global-commission-for-urgent-action-on-energy-efficiency>

⁶ <https://bze.org.au/the-million-jobs-plan/>

⁷ <https://www.climateworksaustralia.org/resource/decarbonisation-futures-solutions-actions-and-benchmarks-for-a-net-zero-emissions-australia/>

⁸ <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2020-05-21/leaked-national-covid-commission-gas-manufacturing-report/12269100>

objectives of councils with the country's long-term recovery plans and the future skills and jobs Australia's needs.

Victorian councils have identified a number of key initiatives that can deliver these outcomes (see Attachment) including:

- Upgrading 200,000 major road lights to energy efficient smart technology. A stimulus of \$10M over four years could bring forward a co-investment of a further \$14M from councils.
- Rolling-out a comprehensive Electric Vehicle (EV) charging network across Victoria. A stimulus of \$6M could support at least one fast charger (25–50kW DC) per municipality and create tourism and economic benefits of ~\$260M by 2030.
- Accelerating investment in street trees, parks and gardens, water sensitive urban design, stormwater capture and reuse. Stimulus funding of \$50M could reduce heat vulnerability, improve liveability and urban biodiversity and enhance \$5-\$10B in street tree assets.
- Transforming a number of closed landfill sites into community solar farms. Based on feasibility work already undertaken by councils, 50MW of new generation capacity could be unlocked with a stimulus of \$25M, via a coordinated co-investment approach.
- Funding to support acceleration of state-wide food organics and garden organics (FOGO) programs could divert over 32,000 tonnes of food waste from landfill each year. A stimulus of \$80M could support 280 new jobs in related industries and support communities to reduce emissions from waste.

Addressing climate change remains the defining challenge of our times. According to the World Economic Forum Global Risk Report 2020, infectious disease was tenth on the list behind five climate related risks.⁹ Australia's economic recovery from this devastating pandemic must embed zero carbon and climate resilience as core to Australia's economy and community wellbeing.

As you can see from the wide ranging membership below, Victorian Greenhouse Alliances and their member councils represent a wealth of information and knowledge about climate change action which can contribute to assist with the development of a post COVID recovery strategy.

If you would like discuss any of these proposals further, please contact the Alliance Executive Officers listed below.

Councils and contacts

This submission was prepared by the Victorian Greenhouse Alliances, partnerships of councils working to address climate change in their regions:

- Central Victorian Greenhouse Alliance (CVGA), Rob Law, Executive Officer, eo@cvga.org.au
 - Ararat Rural City Council

⁹ <https://www.weforum.org/reports/the-global-risks-report-2020>

- Ballarat City Council
- Buloke Shire Council
- Central Goldfields Shire Council
- Gannawarra Shire Council
- Greater Bendigo City Council
- Hepburn Shire Council
- Loddon Shire Council
- Macedon Ranges Shire Council
- Mildura Rural City Council
- Mount Alexander Shire Council
- Pyrenees Shire Council
- Swan Hill Rural City Council
- Eastern Alliance for Greenhouse Action (EAGA), Scott McKenry, Executive Officer, scott.mckenry@maroondah.vic.gov.au
 - City of Boroondara
 - City of Glen Eira
 - City of Knox
 - Maroondah City Council
 - Monash City Council
 - Stonnington City Council
 - Whitehorse City Council
 - Yarra Ranges Shire Council
- Goulburn Broken Greenhouse Alliance (GBGA), Bronwyn Chapman, Executive Officer, eo@gbga.com.au
 - Alpine Shire Council
 - Benalla Rural City Council
 - Campaspe Shire Council
 - Greater Shepparton City Council
 - Indigo Shire Council
 - Mansfield Shire Council
 - Mitchell Shire Council
 - Moira Shire Council
 - Murrindindi Shire Council
 - Towong Shire Council
 - Strathbogie Shire Council
 - Wangaratta Rural City Council
 - Wodonga City Council
- Northern Alliance for Greenhouse Action (NAGA), David Meiklejohn, Executive Officer, david@naga.org.au
 - Banyule City Council
 - City of Darebin
 - City of Melbourne
 - City of Whittlesea
 - Hume City Council
 - Manningham City Council
 - Moreland City Council
 - Nillumbik Shire Council
 - Yarra City Council
- South East Councils Climate Change Alliance (SECCCA) Dominique La Fontaine, Executive Officer, dlafontaine@secca.org.au
 - Bass Coast Shire Council
 - Baw Baw Shire Council

- Bayside City Council
- Cardinia Shire Council
- Casey City Council
- City of Greater Dandenong
- City of Port Phillip
- Frankston City Council
- Kingston City Council
- Mornington Peninsula Shire Council
- Western Alliance for Greenhouse Action (WAGA) Fran Macdonald, Executive Officer, franm@brimbank.vic.gov.au
 - Brimbank City Council
 - City of Greater Geelong
 - City of Maribyrnong
 - Hobsons Bay City Council
 - Melton City Council
 - Moonee Valley City Council
 - Moorabool Shire Council
 - Wyndham City Council

The submission has been approved through the Greenhouse Alliances' formal governance structures but may have not been formally considered by individual members. The submission does not necessarily represent the views of all councils.