

Local government position statement on climate change

Local government recognises a critical need for proactive collaboration between central and local government, and between city, regional, unitary and district councils which recognises the different mandates and roles for climate change responses. We will work together with our communities.



**We are.
LGNZ.**

Introduction

< Responsive leadership and a holistic approach to climate change is urgent. We must act now to avoid future risk and, at the same time, agree how to manage safety, existing risks, limitations and liabilities to underpin effective mitigation and adaptation. >

Climate change will affect us all during our lifetimes. The impacts that we observe today are the result of historical emissions and the increase in emissions in recent decades will lead to significant change in the coming years.

Environmental prosperity. We want to nurture our natural resources and ecosystems as environmental stewards, promoting biodiversity and environmental sustainability, and embodying the concept of kaitiakitanga. We want our social, cultural and economic activities to be aligned with our goals for the environment, and to be secure and resilient to the effects of climate change.

Social prosperity: We want communities that are characterised by equality, social cohesion and inclusiveness. In the face of the long-term implications of climate change, we also want our communities to promote inter-generational equity where we meet the needs of the present population, without compromising the ability to meet the needs of future generations.

Cultural prosperity. We want our communities to be empowered and enabled to express and celebrate their diverse cultural heritages, and recognise the particular cultural significance of Māori as tangata whenua of New Zealand. We want to support all cultures as they adapt to significant changes in climate, and influence how our society manages the environment.

Economic prosperity. We want to have a sustainable economy with world-leading productivity in which all New Zealanders have the opportunity to contribute and succeed. We want an economy that adapts to issues like climate change while still supporting the living standards New Zealanders need to lead happy, healthy lives.

Local government has a shared vision for what prosperous communities will look like in 2050 – and beyond. The 2050 vision encompasses four well-beings of environmental, social, cultural and economic prosperity. Climate change creates both opportunities and significant challenges in achieving prosperity in these four areas.

Climate change actions have three components:

1. actions to reduce emissions (mitigation);
2. planning and actions at the national and local level to support public safety and effective adaptation; and
3. limiting or removing pressure on systems affected by climate change.

All local authorities (city, regional, district and unitary) are at the frontline of climate change adaptation and have a role to play in mitigation.

Property owners and communities already facing the impacts of climate change are seeking assistance from local government. Decisions that are made today (or even where no decision is made) about infrastructure, land and water use and urban development will determine the extent and impact of climate change, community vulnerability and resilience outcomes.

City councils are well-positioned to lead and co-ordinate communities to reduce their emissions, both directly as a provider of infrastructure and services, and indirectly through their influence over activities responsible for emissions. Internationally, cities' emissions reduction efforts complement national strategies of building economic competitiveness through low carbon development.

< Action on climate change requires coherent and consistent governance across central and local government. Action on climate change requires a comprehensive understanding of the opportunities and risks, innovation, and prioritised actions to achieve our vision for prosperous communities. >

Part one: local government led action on climate change

1. Local government will collaborate

Local government (regional, unitary, district and city councils) will collaborate to achieve our shared vision for prosperous New Zealand communities in 2050.

All of local government is charged with meeting the current and future needs of communities for infrastructure, local public services, and regulatory functions (Local Government Act, section 10b). The focus of regional (and unitary) councils and district or city councils can differ however. Regional councils focus on decisions that relate to resource use and hazard management, while city and district councils provide core services that can impact on resources including land, water and coastal areas. By utilising the full range of skills and capabilities in local authorities we can align and support decisions to achieve a consistent understanding of environmental, social, cultural and economic opportunities and consequences of climate change in our communities. This requires strong leadership across all levels of local government.

LGNZ will advocate for and support collaborative efforts within the sector to improve the effectiveness of land use, service delivery and planning.

2. Local government will incorporate climate change implications into urban development and land-use decisions and take a long term approach to waste management and energy use, including transport infrastructure.

Local government recognises the value of explicitly incorporating climate change considerations, including emissions, into land-use decisions, district plans, urban design and development, energy use, transport planning and waste management.

Local government is working to proactively develop New Zealand's urban centres into sustainable, liveable, globally competitive 21st century cities. To achieve this, cities need to promote high quality, higher-density living. **Local government will ensure that low carbon, climate-resilient development is adopted as a key tenet of urban growth and development and land use decisions.**

Encouraging more intensive use of zoned land to avoid the need to build new infrastructure to reach outlying businesses avoids emissions that would result from construction, and from servicing and maintaining the infrastructure itself, and promotes lower emissions from those living and working in the area.

This approach is not limited to urban environments. Land-use decisions made in regional and provincial New Zealand have an equally significant effect on emissions and on community resilience to climate change impacts. To make land-use decisions that mitigate emissions, **local government will develop its understanding of the impacts of zoning and land use decisions on the emissions trajectory for their communities.**

Global emissions will need to pick up momentum to limit warming to the internationally agreed goal of staying below 2°C above pre-industrial levels.

New Zealand's challenge is also significant as our greenhouse gas emissions continue to rise. By 2014 they had risen 6 per cent from 2000 levels and 23 per cent from 1990 levels. Road transport, industry and agriculture are the main drivers of this increase. New Zealand ratified the Paris Agreement on 4 October 2016, submitting a target to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 30 per cent below 2005 levels by 2030. This target is equivalent to 11 per cent below 1990 levels by 2030. Achieving reductions will require action across land use and forestry, urban development and planning, energy and transport.

Local government will incorporate emissions reduction targets into investment decisions that it makes on transport, fleet procurement and waste management.

3. Local government will take an all hazard approach to managing risks

Local government has responsibilities to plan for and provide infrastructure, and to avoid or reduce the risk of hazards such as floods, storms, and sea level rise. It is understood that climate change is changing the severity and frequency of these events. Local government recognises that these changing patterns also mean that these hazards can interact in new ways. For example, the combination of an extended drought and sea level rise could have a worse impact on water supply than either event alone.

Local government will explicitly build in the effects of climate change as part of an all hazards assessment to inform decision-making.

The cost of climate exacerbated natural hazard events in our communities is on the rise. Historic settlement patterns leave people, public assets and private investments exposed to storms, sea level rise and flooding (including flooding from rising ground water levels). Local government costs include damage and renewals of infrastructure and civil defence responses. In the interests of the public good these costs are borne by the community as a whole. **Compensation for loss of private investments will not be funded by local government.**

4. Local government will factor in the impacts of climate change on water security

Local government will factor climate change projections into all freshwater investments and adapt water management practices to match these changing conditions. This includes investment in land use change and green infrastructure eg wetlands, rain gardens and swales.

Future climate projections show that changing meteorological conditions will alter the amount of rainfall around the country and at the same time there is likely to be increased societal demand for freshwater. This will affect the amount of water able to be allocated and in turn, the efficient provision of three water services.

Local government will factor in the impacts of climate change on water security. Local government will identify the changes required in infrastructure investment, including green infrastructure (wetlands, rain gardens and swales), and the management of water quality and quantity.

Part two: what local government requires of central government

Government at all levels, individuals and the private sector have different but complementary roles in adapting to climate change. Effective responses to climate change are context specific and are therefore best addressed at the regional and local level. Internationally, cities and regions are increasingly seen as policy laboratories for action on climate change. There is an opportunity for local authorities in New Zealand to try different approaches.

Innovative technological practices and the implementation of strategies are needed at the appropriate levels for adaptation and mitigation. Central government needs to support local government's search for appropriate responses by supporting innovation within local government.

To effectively address climate change at a national level, local government seeks central government action in four key areas:

1. National campaign to raise awareness of climate change

A central government led campaign is needed to make New Zealanders aware of the opportunities and risks of climate change, and the options for communities to contribute to reducing emissions.

Many New Zealanders understand the fundamental causes and impacts of climate change at a global level but most remain uninformed about the impacts that climate change could have on their daily lives, and are unaware of how the actions of their community can help to mitigate emissions. While local government can educate their communities on the impacts of climate change, **we seek a national campaign (comparable to central government campaigns on smoking and road safety) to raise awareness and to promote specific actions individuals and communities can take to support the reduction of green house gas emissions and adaptation measures.**

2. Policy alignment and a clear mandate to address climate change

Central government policies can support (or hinder) council, private sector and community action to respond to climate change.

Effective climate policy involves a diverse range of adaptation and mitigation actions. A broad review of existing policy is required to support climate change adaptation and mitigation actions.

To highlight that local government's actions to address climate change are part of a national effort, **we seek an explicit mandate under the Local Government Act to consider how decisions affect climate change outcomes.**

3. A decision on fiscal responsibility for adaptation

Responding to the challenges posed by rising sea levels and increased rainfall requires national consensus on who will bear the costs. As the national policy setter, central government needs to lead the discussion on roles and responsibilities for adaptation actions, including fiscal responsibility.

The effects of climate change, such as rising sea levels, create a new set of social, economic and political challenges, for instance in supporting people that are displaced by eroding coastlines and flooding. These decisions will have repercussions for all communities and need to be considered as a matter of urgency, as the effects of climate change are already being felt in the form of increased flooding and exacerbated erosion on our coasts.

We seek a clear statement from central government on responsibilities (for government at all levels, private sector and individuals) for adaptation actions, including fiscal responsibility.

4. Co-investment with central government to support low carbon, climate resilient infrastructure.

Central government policy settings and incentives must provide clear, consistent and enduring direction to ensure we are investing in low carbon, climate resilient infrastructure. The Government Policy Statement on Land Transport, for example, should incorporate aims for emissions, including active transport (walking and cycling), public transport and consider the cumulative effects of emissions.

Local government seeks to work with central government to develop a joint response to climate change including a clear pathway to a low carbon economy.