

10. Southern Councils Group – Climate Change Statement of Intent

The Southern Councils Group is proposing a regional approach in its response to Climate Change and seeks Council's endorsement of its recently adopted "Statement of Intent – Regional Response to Climate Change".

General Manager

BACKGROUND

10 The Southern Councils Group (SCG) Board recently adopted a Statement of Intent (attached) outlining how it would respond to the various challenges arising from Climate Change. The Board now seeks formal endorsement of the Statement of Intent (SOI) from its seven member councils.

The SOI is not intended to be a detailed Climate Change Strategy or Action Plan, rather it provides a strategic framework and direction that aims at ensuring a consistent regional approach by member councils.

The SCG Board has recognised the important role Local Government will play in addressing the predicted environmental, economic and social challenges that climate change will place before our communities. As such the SCG sees it as important that member councils use their unique positions within their local communities to demonstrate leadership and build community resilience in tackling the climate change issue.

20 ISSUES

Legal

Climate Change related liability is an emerging issue for Local Government, particular in the areas of land use planning, development control and public risk. Council's insurers Statewide require Council to develop policies, strategies and be implementing adaptation based actions, that demonstrate Council's commitment to addressing Climate Change.

30 By adopting a regional approach through the SCG , member councils will ensure that their proposed policies and actions are consistent and in line with current best practice in Local Government. The regional approach will also allow for knowledge sharing and for efficiencies in the research and development of policy.

Policy

It is recommended that the SCG Statement of Intent form the basis for the development of a comprehensive Bega Valley Shire Council Climate Change policy.

Environmental

Climate Change is predicted to have a range of environmental impacts including changes in temperature ranges, rainfall, severe weather events, species / ecosystem migration and sea level rise related impacts on our estuarine, beach and marine environments. Many of the member councils have similar environmental attributes and as such there is great potential for the development of joint research partnerships, data and knowledge sharing between councils.

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Asset

Adaptation planning for Council's extensive infrastructure network is a key issue from an operational and financial view point. BVSC, in partnership with Eurobodalla and Shoalhaven Councils has submitted a funding application to the Commonwealth Government to prepare an Adaptation plan, a key part of which will be examining the climate change adaptation requirements for Council's Assets. It is expected that this regional approach will result in significant savings and improved outcomes in the development of our Adaptation Plan.

Consultation

The Statement of Intent has been supported by the SCG Board and presented to the SCG Planning Directors and Natural Resource Officers sub-group for comment. All member councils are being asked to provide their endorsement for the SOI.

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CONCLUSION

The co-operative, regional approach to addressing climate change, as outlined in the Southern Councils Group SOI, is seen as being proactive, efficient and further demonstrating Council's commitment to tackling climate change.

RECOMMENDATION

1. That Council endorses the Southern Councils Group's Statement of Intent – Regional Response to Climate Change.
2. That Council write to the Southern Councils Group Board to inform it of Council's endorsement.

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SCG Statement of Intent Regional Response to Climate Change March 2009

(Draft)

Southern Councils Group represents the Councils of Bega Valley, Eurobodalla, Kiama, Shellharbour, Shoalhaven, Wingecarribee and Wollongong.
At their Board Meeting of ----- SCG delegates agreed the following:

“We need to display leadership, develop community resilience and plan for environmental and economic sustainability in response to climate change”

We agree:

- that climate change is a reality that will impact on communities across our region
- to demonstrate leadership to our community through a coordinated approach in addressing the predicted climate change challenges.

We agree:

On the need to adopt a risk management approach in the consideration of climate change impacts, by

- integrating climate change adaptation and mitigation measures into everyday operations and strategic planning of our organisations
- ensuring that our actions, decisions and policy response to climate change remain current and reflect organisational capacity, community desires and the rapidly changing science and policy sectors

We agree:

To work to gain a better understanding of how different cc scenarios impact on

- Existing assets and infrastructure
- environmental resilience
- Regional business sectors and their levels of vulnerability.
- Community well being and transition opportunities

We agree:

On the need to

- work with our communities and businesses in the development of local solutions
- ensure that we are positioned to take advantage of the opportunities that arise through the development of alternative industry and technologies