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Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment  
National Climate Resilience and Adaptation Strategy Taskforce

via email: [ncras.taskforce@environment.gov.au](mailto:ncras.taskforce@environment.gov.au)

**SUBMISSION TO THE COMMONWEALTH GOVERNMENT NATIONAL CLIMATE RESILIENCE AND ADAPTATION STRATEGY**

The Western Australian Local Government Association (WALGA) thanks the Commonwealth Government for the opportunity to comment on its consultation on an updated National Climate Resilience and Adaptation Strategy (NCRAS).

The Western Australian Local Government Association (WALGA or 'the Association') is the peak organisation for Local Government in WA. The Association is an independent, membership-based group representing and supporting the work and interests of 137 mainland Local Governments in Western Australia, plus the Indian Ocean Territories of Christmas Island and Cocos (Keeling) Islands. The Association provides an essential voice for more than 1,200 Elected Members and 22,000 Local Government employees, and the 2.67 million constituents that they serve and represent. The Association also provides professional advice and offers services that provide financial benefits to Local Governments.

WALGA's vision is to represent and support agile and inclusive Local Governments enhancing community wellbeing and enabling economic prosperity. The Association is committed to leveraging the collective strength and influence of the Local Government sector for the benefit of WA Local Governments and their communities.

This submission is made in accordance with the [WALGA Climate Change Statement](#), ('the Statement') endorsed by WALGA State Council in July 2018. The Statement, which represents the consolidated view of Western Australian Local Governments states:

**Local Government acknowledges:**

- I. The science is clear: climate change is occurring and greenhouse gas emissions from human activities are the dominant cause.
- II. Climate change threatens human societies and the Earth's ecosystems.
- III. Urgent action is required to reduce emissions, and to adapt to the impacts from climate change that are now unavoidable.
- IV. A failure to adequately address this climate change emergency places an unacceptable burden on future generations.

**Local Government is committed** to addressing climate change.

**Local Government is calling for:**

- I. Strong climate change action, leadership and coordination at all levels of government.
- II. Effective and adequately funded Commonwealth and State Government climate change policies and programs.

*WALGA Climate Change Policy Statement (2018), p3.*

WALGA notes it is intended that the updated NCRAS will focus on climate adaptation and resilience only. However, WALGA considers it is important to acknowledge that emissions reduction and adaptation cannot be separated – as well as the impacts already locked in, the extent of future climate change, and the magnitude of adaptation required, is dependent on reducing emissions. This submission therefore reiterates the WALGA Climate Change Statement's call for a more ambitious pathway for accelerating emissions reduction targets from the Commonwealth Government under the existing Paris Agreement.

In relation to adaptation, the WALGA Climate Change Statement urges effective adaptation and resilience planning and asserts it is the *responsibility of all spheres of Australian Government to ensure that their decisions, policies and programs take into consideration the likely impact of climate change on current and future human settlements, natural resources and ecosystems and facilitate adaptation to these. This includes but is not limited to disaster relief, national security, environment, energy, infrastructure and land use planning, water, housing, health and transport.* It also states that *the WA Local Government sector is committed to the common goal of ensuring that Western Australia's human communities and natural ecosystems have the resources and assistance to enable them to build maximum resilience and adapt to climate change impacts that are now understood to be unavoidable.*

## Climate Change Adaptation and Local Government

The COAG *Roles and Responsibilities for Climate Change Adaptation in Australia* clearly articulates the crucial role of Local Government:

*Local Governments are on the frontline in dealing with the impacts of climate change. They have a critical role to play in ensuring that particular local circumstances are adequately considered in the overall adaptation response and in involving the local community directly in efforts to facilitate effective change. They are strongly positioned to inform State and Commonwealth Governments about the on-the-ground needs of local and regional communities, to communicate directly with communities, and to respond appropriately and in a timely manner to local changes.*

As WALGA noted in its submission to the Australian Government Inquiry into the impacts of Climate Change on housing, buildings and infrastructure:

*As the closest sphere of Government to the community, Local Governments are expected to manage the impacts of climate change such as reduced rainfall, increased fire risk, increased risk of heat stress in the community, extreme weather events and sea level rise that increases the potential for erosion and inundation in coastal and estuarine areas.*

*Whilst there are policies, programs and limited funding (particularly given the extent of the Western Australian coast) available to address coastal climate change, there is minimal capacity or resourcing to address other current and expected issues arising from changes in temperature, rainfall, and extreme weather events, including floods, heatwaves and bushfires. This will directly impact Local Government infrastructure and service provision in many areas including social services infrastructure, local roads, public facilities, recreation and tourism facilities and insurance arrangements for buildings and infrastructure.*

*There will be other indirect consequences for Local Governments as a result of potential impacts to private properties, energy, telecommunications and water infrastructure, transport networks and health and education facilities. These impacts will be felt by local communities who will seek support and assistance from Local Government.*

Local Governments throughout WA are already allocating significant resources to adaptation planning and response. However Local Governments do not have the financial resources to shoulder the cost of implementing adaptation measures alone. This must be a shared responsibility.

For example, many WA Local Governments are undertaking the expensive and complex process of developing and implementing Coastal Hazard Risk Management and Adaptation Plans (CHRMAP) to identify and implement long term planning around risk management and adaptation. 30 WA Local Governments have at least one identified coastal erosion hotspot. The WA Coastal Erosion Hotspots Report commissioned by the WA Government found that of the 55 hotspots identified:

- 80 per cent have recreational assets susceptible to erosion in the next five years;
- Five have private property at risk in the next five years, increasing to 10 hotspots within five to 25 years and 26 hotspots projected beyond 25 years;
- 49 per cent have road and/or rail infrastructure at risk in the five to 25 year timeframe, increasing to 76 per cent projected beyond 25 years; and
- 36 per cent have leasehold property susceptible to erosion in the five to 25 year timeframe.

It has been estimated that the cost of managing these hotspots could be \$110 million over the next five years, which is well beyond the financial and technical capacity of Local Governments. WALGA has called for \$55 million in financial assistance for Local Governments to manage these risks and for the development of a nationally coordinated, collaborative approach to coastal erosion and inundation.

#### Priorities for an Updated NCRAS

WALGA considers it is essential that an updated NCRAS demonstrates leadership, is comprehensive, clearly articulates the full range of climate change impacts and provides a roadmap to adapting to these impacts that will build the resilience of communities, the economy and the environment.

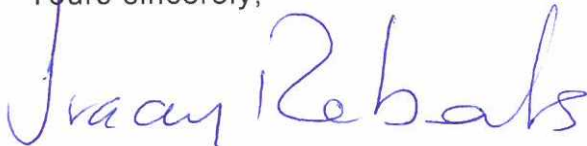
An updated NCRAS should act as an overarching strategy to coordinate and guide adaptation planning and resilience building across Australia. This will require Commonwealth leadership and collaboration to ensure all levels of government, the private sector and the community have clear roles and responsibilities under the framework. The Commonwealth Government has a critical leadership role to play in ensuring that where a national or cross jurisdictional approach is required, it is done in an effective, efficient and collaborative way.

WALGA is calling on the Commonwealth to provide additional financial assistance and resources to support climate change adaptation planning and response.

In conclusion, as the level of government that is most proactively managing and planning for a range of climate change impacts, the Local Government sector is calling for strong and clear leadership on climate change from the Commonwealth Government. While the Commonwealth does not have a direct role in all aspects of climate change adaptation, it is essential it ensures an effective national framework for adaptation planning and response based on the best available scientific modelling. Finally, WALGA emphasises the need for Local Governments to be provided with the long-term support and financial assistance that is required to undertake adaptation planning and response for the long term benefit of their communities.

For further information on this submission please contact Garry Middle, A/ Manager, Environment Policy on [gmiddle@walga.asn.au](mailto:gmiddle@walga.asn.au) or (08) 9213 2049.

Yours sincerely,



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**President**