

Our ref: Sub-758, R24/0063

4 July 2024

NSW Environment Protection Authority

via climatechange.review@epa.nsw.gov.au

Draft Submission on the proposed Climate Change Assessment Requirements and draft Greenhouse Gas Assessment Guide for Large Emitters

Local Government NSW (LGNSW) is the peak body for local government in NSW, representing NSW general purpose councils and related entities. LGNSW facilitates the development of an effective community-based system of local government in the State.

LGNSW welcomes the opportunity to comment on the draft assessment requirements and guide. Some council facilities such as landfills and wastewater treatment plants may fall into the definition of 'large emitters', and councils also have an interest in the proposed requirements from the perspective of a local planning authority.

This is a draft submission and is subject to review and approval of the LGNSW Board. Any changes will be advised at the earliest opportunity.

Background

The draft Climate Change Assessment Requirements (CCARs) for large emitters require proponents to prepare a Greenhouse Gas (GHG) Mitigation Plan as part of environment impact assessment documentation. The GHG Mitigation Plan must include an assessment of the project's expected GHG emissions, and the proposed measures to mitigate emissions over time. The EPA will assess the proposal and provide advice to the Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure to enable appropriate climate change-related conditions of approval to be incorporated into applicable planning consents and environment protection licence, if approval is granted.

The CCARs will apply to all new projects or significant modifications expected to have large greenhouse gas emissions (>25,000 tonnes/year for both scope 1 & 2). This includes coal mines, landfills, chemical manufacturers, waste management facilities, sewage/water treatment.

Response to consultation questions

Do you think the level of detail required by the Climate Change Assessment Requirements and Guide for Large Emitters is reasonable?

Improving environmental outcomes is a high priority for local government, with the sector supportive of achieving carbon neutrality in as much of the sector as possible. Currently councils are not required to report under the National Greenhouse and Energy Reporting (NGER) scheme, however the CCARs would apply to council activities above the 25,000 tonnes CO₂-e per year threshold (e.g. expansion of a landfill).

The CCARs are quite detailed and it is likely councils will need to engage external advice and support to prepare GHG Mitigation Plans. The Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water has worked with LGNSW to build capacity within councils more broadly to move towards net zero. Local government would welcome a continuation of this support from DCCEEW (or the EPA) to increase capability within councils to support emissions reduction within their own operations.

Are there any parts of the draft Guide for Large Emitters that could be strengthened, clarified or improved? If yes, what should be changed?

LGNSW understands that GHG Mitigation Plans will be developed and used for the purpose of assessing a development application. This differs from a Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation Plan (CCMAP) that the proponent will prepare (once development is approved) which will focus on the operation and the ongoing performance of the activity. The consultation information also notes that, based on advice from the EPA following review of the GHG Plan, climate change-related conditions of approval will be incorporated into applicable planning consents and environment protection licences.

Some council staff have expressed a view that including annual or regular assessment and reporting requirements against emission reduction targets in conditions of consent would assist with tracking progress. It could also promote identifying new options to reduce emissions (as technology or options can change over time) and encourage proponents to invest in ways to reduce emissions (e.g., convert trucks to electric / hydrogen power) that may be cheaper in the long run, rather than defaulting to purchasing carbon offsets. While LGNSW does not have an endorsed policy position on this matter, we appreciate the importance of ensuring emissions reduction commitments are followed through and achieved.

For further information, please contact policy@lgnsw.nsw.org.au.

Yours sincerely



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