



# TRACKING PROGRESS:

2019 Snapshot of Council  
Action on Climate Change



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## Cities Power Partnership

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# Foreword

In nearly three years, the Cities Power Partnership has become Australia's largest network of local governments taking action on climate change. With over 125 councils on board, we have seen tangible action and exciting projects taking place all around Australia.

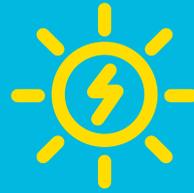
To gain feedback and help inform the future of the program, as well as receive an update on your Cities Power Partnership pledges, we recently collected information from our member councils. This report summarises the results from the 110 councils who completed the Cities Power Partnership 2020 Reporting & Feedback Survey.

We hope it provides in-depth insight into where you are tracking as an individual council, as well as information on how other councils are leveraging the benefits of the program to accelerate climate action.



**David Craven**  
Director, Cities Power Partnership

# Key Findings



**Over 50% of councils have pledged to install renewable energy on council buildings**

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**Almost all councils joined the Cities Power Partnership to connect, collaborate and share knowledge with other councils**

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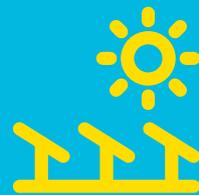
The top areas of interest for councils are net zero communities, adaptation and electric vehicles

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79% of councils are exploring an electric vehicles policy

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Nearly 50% of councils have a renewable energy target

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# 1. Introduction

**Looking at all 126 councils, the Cities Power Partnership represents a total of 12,855,708 million people in Australia.**

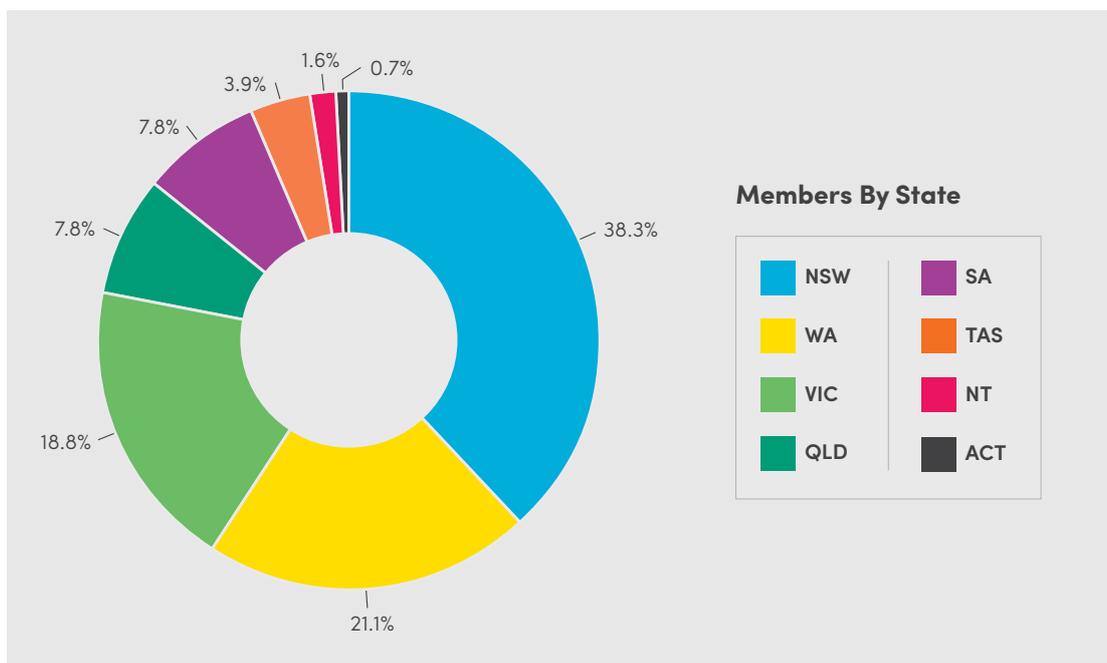
Council populations range from the smallest council in Australia (2,900) to the largest (1,200,000). Cities Power Partnership has council members in 5 states and 2 territories and New South Wales has the largest representation of member councils. Nearly half of all councils are classified as regional towns/cities with 32% metropolitan, 15% rural, 4% capital cities, and 2% remote.

The program focuses on connecting, empowering and celebrating local governments to take action on climate change. For nearly all Cities Power Partnership councils (95%), a key reason they joined the program was to **share or learn from other councils on emissions reduction.**

Most councils also said they joined to access experts on climate change/renewable energy and to do more on emissions reduction initiatives. This demonstrates both the opportunity and importance of connecting and sharing knowledge between councils across Australia.

Classification	Percentage
Regional	46%
Metropolitan	32%
Rural	15%
Capital City	4%
Remote	2%

**Table 1:** Local Government classifications of member councils and percentage in each category.



**Figure 1:** Percentage of Cities Power Partnership council members by state.

## Why councils joined the Cities Power Partnership

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- 1. Share or learn from other councils on emissions reduction successes and challenges (94%)** 

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- 2. Access experts on climate change and/or renewable energy (69%)** 

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- 3. To do more carbon emissions reduction initiatives (65%)** 

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- 4. Explore joint project opportunities with other Cities Power Partnership members (59%)** 

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- 5. Profile our success to local media and community (55%)** 

**46%**

of councils said  
their Councillors or  
Community were more  
aware of council's action  
on climate change as  
a result of the Cities  
Power Partnership

### Top 5 webinar topics councils want to see

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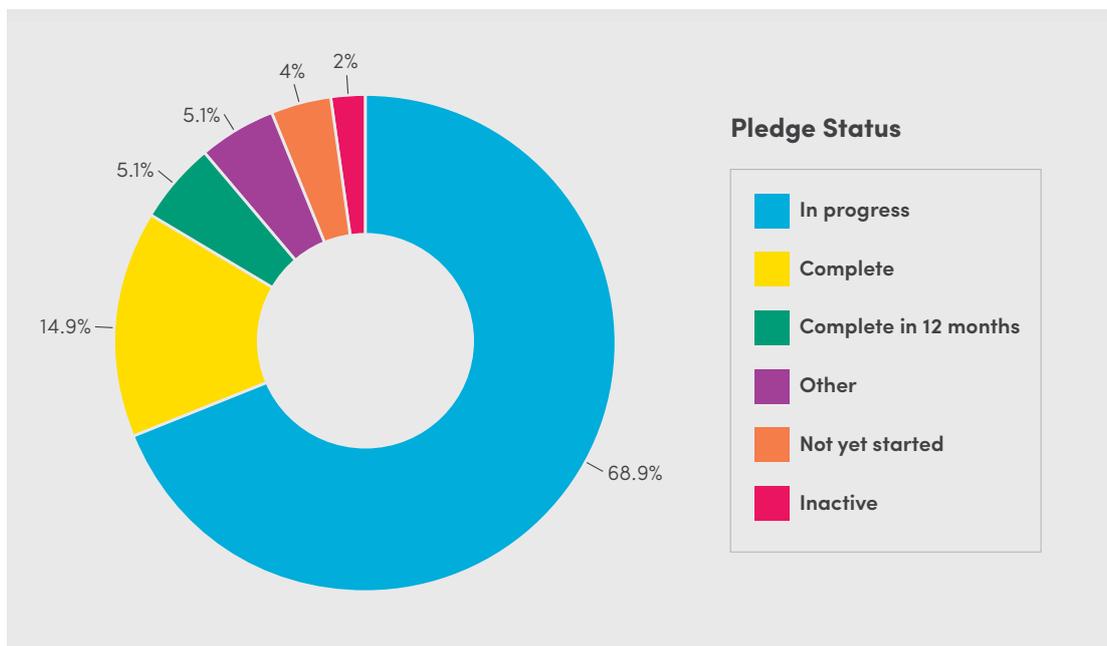
1. Net Zero Community Targets & Approaches
2. Adaptation
3. Electric Vehicles
4. Community Energy
5. New Energy Technologies



## 2. Pledges & Projects

Nearly 70% of council pledges are still **in progress**, 15% have been completed, and 5% will be completed in the next 12 months, with the rest of the pledges either not yet started, ongoing or inactive. **Almost half of sustainability officers said they'd like to see new ambitious pledges added in the future.** Most pledges made by councils fall in the Renewable Energy (40%) or the Energy Efficiency category (21%).

**Over half of councils have pledged to install renewable energy on council buildings**, with 99% of councils reporting that they currently have solar PV installed on at least one council building. The average PV system size was 467 kW, with the largest PV system sized at over 5MW at City of Newcastle.



**Figure 2:** Summary of pledge statuses for all Cities Power Partnership councils.

**Over half of councils have pledged to install renewable energy on council buildings.**



Figure 3

## Top 5 Pledges

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**1.** Install renewable energy (solar PV and battery storage) on council buildings (56%) 

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**2.** Roll out energy efficient lighting across the municipality (41%) 

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**3.** Adopt best practice energy efficiency measures across all council buildings, and support community facilities to adopt these measures (31%) 

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**4.** Power council operations by renewable energy, and set targets to increase the level of renewable power for council operations over time (26%) 

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**5.** Develop education and behaviour-change programs to support local residents and businesses to tackle climate change through clean energy, energy efficiency and sustainable transport (18%) 



Figure 4 (top), Figure 5 (bottom)



Figure 6

## Pledge Initiative Examples

### Renewable Energy

#### **The Melbourne Renewable Energy Project**

This huge renewable energy power purchase agreement, a joint project between the City of Melbourne, City of Port Phillip, City of Yarra, Moreland City Council and a number of universities and cultural institutions, saw the City of Melbourne become Australia's first 100% renewable-powered capital city in January 2019.

The Australia-first power purchase agreement saw the fourteen members of the buying group combine their purchase power to support the construction of the 80MW Crowlands windfarm, near Ararat in regional Victoria. The construction of the 39-turbine wind farm created 140 local jobs - and now it has gone live and it's providing 88 GWh of energy to power town halls, bank branches, universities and street lights across across the Melbourne region.

#### **Alice Springs' Big Battery**

Alice Springs is home to a "big battery" - the 5 MW system, which has 40 minutes of storage capability, provides a near-instantaneous response to variations in solar load, particularly during cloud cover, improving power generation reliability for the region.

### Energy Efficiency

#### **Future Proof Apartments Program**

North Sydney Council's Future Proof Apartments program offers free energy assessments, resources and support to strata communities to assist them to implement energy efficiencies and transition to clean energy. Since 2018, Council has run workshops, forums and webinars to meet and greet renewable energy and energy efficiency suppliers, and better understand apartment building requirements to facilitate EV charging.

#### **A 5,600 Street Light Upgrade**

Bathurst Regional Council in New South Wales has plans to deploy energy efficient LED lighting to approximately 5600 street and area lights by mid 2020. Overall the project is anticipated to save 1900MWh of electricity and 1800 tonnes CO<sub>2</sub>e emissions per year.



Figure 7

## Work Together & Influence

### Community Leaders Program

The City of Port Phillip's Community Leaders Program in Victoria provides funding for local community leaders to start their own projects to work toward reducing energy consumption or switching to renewables. The program offers support through training and mentoring, providing the tools needed for individuals to get their projects off the ground.

### Supporting Community Energy

As part of the Shire of Augusta Margaret River's commitment to support local community energy groups with their initiatives, council provides funds each year to the Augusta Margaret River Clean Community Energy Group. This helps support their project to establish a wind, solar and biogas facility which is expected to produce 60% of the Shire's energy consumption.

## Sustainable Transport

### Lending Electric Vehicles to the Community

Canterbury Bankstown City Council in New South Wales is investigating a program to enable residents to borrow and test drive Council's Hyundai Ioniq electric vehicles on weekends when the cars are not required for operational purposes. Working with Car Next Door, the program will offer residents the opportunity to hire and test drive EVs for free - working to remove purchase barriers for the public.

### A Fleet of Electric Buses

Brisbane will be the first city in Australia to receive a fleet of all-electric, high-capacity public transport vehicles. There will be 60 vehicles that carry 150 people comfortably and 180 for peak periods. When stopped, the vehicles will be able to "flash charge" in less than 6 minutes. This contributes to Brisbane City Council's pledge to encourage sustainable transport use through council planning and design.

## 3. Policies

### Climate Emergency Declaration

46 Cities Power Partnership councils have declared a climate emergency with six councils currently working on a Climate Emergency Plan. Darebin City Council was the first council in Australia to release their [Climate Emergency Plan](#) with several more councils currently developing their own climate emergency plans.

The total number of councils who have declared a climate emergency Australia-wide is 95. **This means roughly 50% of councils who declared a climate emergency in Australia are also members of the Cities Power Partnership.**

**50% of Australian councils that have declared a climate emergency are also members of the Cities Power Partnership.**



Figure 8

## Net Zero Emissions

Over 30% of councils **currently have a net zero emissions target**. Of the councils with net zero emissions targets, **nearly half aim to achieve net zero emissions by 2030** (see Table 3). Of those who currently do not have a target, almost 20% aim to develop a net zero emissions corporate target within the next 12 months.

The scope of net zero emissions targets for Cities Power Partnership councils was primarily focussed on corporate emissions, **with just under half of councils expanding their net zero scope to community emissions**. About a quarter of councils with a net zero target indicated they were investigating net zero community emissions.

There is still a significant opportunity for more local governments to address community emissions, since only 15% of all Cities Power Partnership councils who completed the survey had a net zero community emissions target.

Year	Percentage
2020	10%
2021 - 2030	36%
2031 - 2040	18%
2041 - 2050	36%

**Table 2:** Summary of the year council net zero targets are set and percentage for each.



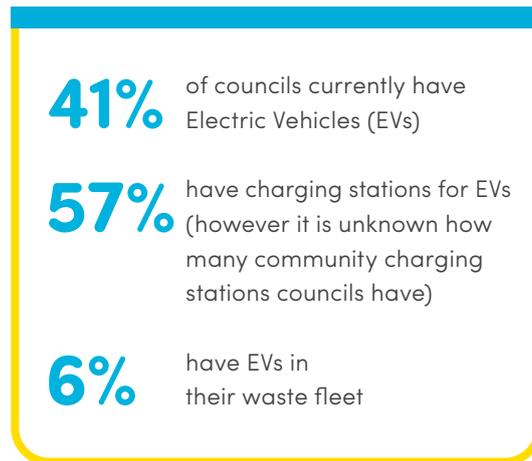
### Investigating a net zero community emissions target?

Read this [Case Study](#) on the City of Port Phillip's Net Zero Community journey.

**Over 30% of councils have a net zero emissions target and 50% aim to achieve their target by 2030.**

## Electric Vehicles

While only 5 councils have developed an electric vehicle (EV) policy, 79% of councils are investigating EV policy, indicating this is an area of high interest for councils. This interest was mirrored with electric vehicles being the third most wanted webinar topic. The types of policies being investigated are for their council fleets (82%) and community charging infrastructure (66%).



**“Participating in the Cities Power Partnership, combined with being on-track to reach our 2020 target has raised councillor and staff awareness of important emissions reduction projects. Ongoing support through the program is incredibly vital to maintaining Council’s momentum and meaningful action on climate.”**

**Cairns Regional Council, Qld**

## Renewable Energy Target

Nearly half of councils currently have a renewable energy target, with 43% currently investigating a renewable energy target, and 9% of those councils anticipating to have a renewable energy target within the next 12 months.

Year	Percentage
By 2020	17%
By 2025	39%
By 2030	39%
By 2040	6%

**Table 3:** Summary of the timeframe renewable energy targets are established and percentage of answers for each.

**45%** of the councils with a renewable energy target have a 100% target

**70%** of the councils with a renewable energy target only established a target for corporate consumption

**28%** have a target for both corporate and community consumption.



Figure 9

## Building Electrification

Only 4 councils have developed a policy for building electrification however 42% of councils are currently investigating either developing a policy or integrating targets into existing policies such as planning or ESD policies. Some councils in Queensland are

not pursuing this because they already don't use piped gas in buildings. Around 10% of councils haven't considered this as an option yet. Canberra is leading in this space with their recent [Climate Strategy](#) outlining a plan to electrify transport and homes.

**42% of councils are investigating or developing a building electrification policy.**



Figure 10

## Adaptation

Over 40% of councils have an adaptation policy with 50% currently investigating this. Adaptation was also the second most popular topic that councils were interested in seeing a webinar on. Examples of adaptation plans include Port Douglas's

comprehensive [Coastal Adaptation Plan](#) and Resilient Hills & Coast's [Adaptation Plan for the Adelaide Hills, Fleurieu Peninsula and Kangaroo Island Region](#).

**Over 40% of councils have an adaptation policy.**



Figure 11

## Climate Policy Summary

The policy that the most number of councils have implemented is a renewable energy target. The most investigated policy is electric vehicles, followed by adaptation.

Policy	Yes	No	Investigating
Climate Emergency Declaration	42%	35%	18%
Climate Emergency Plan	5%	75%	15%
Net Zero Emissions Corporate Target	33%	49%	18%
Net Zero Emissions Community Target	15%	75%	10%
Renewable Energy Target	48%	9%	43%
Electric Vehicle Policy	5%	15%	79%
Building Electrification Policy	4%	50%	42%
Adaptation Policy	40%	12%	50%
Just Transitions Policy	3%	26%	30%

**Table 4:** Summary of all councils who answered “yes”, “no” or “currently investigating” to climate related policies.

**“A fantastic program for councils to be a part of. Having a reliable source of information available for those who need it is very valuable and key to accelerating Australia’s local energy transition.”**

**City of Newcastle, NSW**

## 3. Going Forward

Using the feedback provided in the reporting survey, Cities Power Partnership will work towards providing the additional following resources and support in 2020 (including but not limited to):



Council plans/templates available to members



Examples of requests for tender documentation



More state-specific material



Lists of cost and carbon savings from different carbon emissions reduction actions



International benchmarking performance standards



Practical case studies from councils



Webinars and events focussed on the key areas councils identified

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## Cities Power Partnership

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