

Many Hands make light work: Research Methodologies

Table of Contents

- Research Methodologies..... 1
 - 1. Many hands make light work: connecting governments to accelerate climate action..... 1
 - a. Survey data.....2
 - b. Desktop research.....3
 - c. Stakeholder engagement.....3
 - 2. The three recommendations for the federal government.....4
 - Who developed the recommendations?..... 5
 - a. Stakeholder mapping.....5
 - b. Desktop research (ie, scoping study).....5
 - c. Drafted recommendations.....6
 - d. Stakeholder engagement.....6
 - e. Incorporating feedback from the local government sector.....7
- References..... 7

1. Many hands make light work: connecting governments to accelerate climate action

This section outlines the research methodology behind the 2023 report *'Many hands make light work: connecting governments to accelerate climate action'*, produced by [Cities Power Partnership's](#) and the University of Melbourne's ['Melbourne Centre for Cities'](#) in collaboration with the [Better Future Australia's Local Government Working Group](#).

For the purpose of producing this report, a qualitative research approach was adopted to engage with the local government sector and gather comprehensive and insightful data. Adopting a data-driven methodology centred on consultation with local government experts

allowed the problem being examined (ie, a lack of coordination between Australia's tiers of government on climate policy) to be viewed from the perspective of practitioners required to navigate the implications of poorly designed national climate policy. The key findings in the report were identified via a process combining survey data, desktop research and stakeholder engagement with elected representatives and practitioners in the local government sector.

Importantly, this report was born out of an extensive research process spearheaded by the Better Future Australia's Local Government Working Group (hereafter WG) - including [Better Futures Australia](#), [Ironbark Sustainability](#), [Cities Power Partnership](#), [Melbourne Centre for Cities](#), [Climateworks Centre](#), [ICLEI Oceania](#) and [Climate Emergency Australia](#) - which identified vertically integrated climate policy between Australia's three tiers of government as a critical opportunity to unlock local climate action (read more [here](#)).

a. Survey data

In the context of the Cities Power Partnership's (CPP) [2022 Annual Reporting and Feedback Survey](#) (CPP 2023), a qualitative analysis was conducted to examine responses to a specific question. The question sought responses pertaining to the challenges faced by councils when engaging in collaboration between different levels of government. The insights gained from this analysis played a significant role in shaping one of the key findings of the report, which emphasised that to ratchet up local climate action across Australia, barriers councils face must first be addressed. To arrive at this finding, the open-text responses to the survey question were systematically coded into three distinct categories: (1) Policy goals and agenda setting, (2) Policy instruments, and (3) Policy implementation. These categories were derived from a well-established policy cohesion framework developed by Nilsson et al. in 2012.

The analysis revealed that when engaging in collaboration between different levels of government, **challenges relating to policy implementation were most commonly referred to by councils** (figure 1). A diverse sample of 58 councils responded to the question, with councils representing regional, rural and metropolitan councils from every state and territory in Australia. Sub-themes were also identified within each of the three categories listed above (CPP 2023. p28). The results from this analysis are further evidence of the significant challenges the

local government sector is required to navigate in the absence of aligned and integrated climate policy.

Policy Areas That Present Challenges to Councils When Collaborating (with other Governments and Councils)	
Category	Open-text References to the Category
Goals & Agenda Setting	27% (n=31)
Policy Instruments	22% (n=25)
Policy Implementation	51% (n=58)

Figure 1. Source: [Tracking Progress: 2022 Snapshot of Council Action on Climate Change](#) (CPP 2023. Table 4 p28).

b. Desktop research

To gain a comprehensive understanding of the application of Multilevel governance (MLG), an extensive literature review was conducted. This review aimed to identify key considerations, opportunities, and issues associated with MLG. In order to facilitate the integration of MLG principles into Australia's policy landscape, a thorough examination of existing reports and policies pertaining to the built environment sector was undertaken. This analysis encompassed materials from both non-government organisations and government agencies, allowing for the distillation of key information. Furthermore, the report also supports the steps and recommendations from the Global Covenant of Mayors for Climate and Energy (GCoM) [Playbook for Multilevel Governance Second Edition](#) (GCoM 2022) to address climate change through Multilevel Governance.

c. Stakeholder engagement

Engagement with prominent representatives from different organisations in the local government sector was carried out to gain deeper insight into the challenges impacting local climate action in the built environment. This involved semi-structured interviews with individuals from:

- The City of Melbourne (Victoria).
- The City of Vincent (Western Australia).

- The City of Hobart (Tasmania).
- The Shire of Augusta Margaret River (Western Australia).
- Eurobodalla Shire Council (New South Wales).
- The Australian Institute of Architects.

2. Methodology for producing the three recommendations for the federal government

This section outlines the process undertaken to develop the three key recommendations that appear in *'Many Hands Make Light Work: Connecting Governments to Accelerate Climate Action'*.

The Better Futures Australia (BFA) Local Government Working Group outlined three key ways the Australian Government could implement an MLG framework:

1. Establish a comprehensive climate policy framework that integrates all levels of government and recognises local government contributions in the Australian NDCs.
2. Establish an effective partnership between local governments and the federal government to deliver an Accord defining shared objectives for strengthening climate mitigation, adaptation, and resilience across all tiers of government.
3. Allocate appropriate resources to implement the Accord. This should be based on a well-defined methodology to determine the region-specific real resilience and emissions mitigation costs. This will enable local governments to protect their communities and build back better.

Who developed the recommendations?

Better Future Australia's (BFA) [Local Government Working Group](#) (WG), led by [ICLEI Oceania](#), [Ironbark Sustainability](#) and [Climate Emergency Australia](#), conducted a scoping project and adopted a consultation process to develop the three recommendations put forward to the federal government in '*Many hands make light work: connecting governments to accelerate climate action*'. The process prioritised the involvement and feedback of relevant experts in the field and followed the steps, outlined below.

How were the recommendations developed?

In February 2022, local government leaders from the Global Covenant of Mayors (GCoM), ICLEI Oceania and the President of the Australian Local Government Association (ALGA) requested a proposal to engage the new Federal Government in addressing the barriers to accelerating local climate action.

a. Stakeholder mapping

On 1st March 2022, representatives from GCoM, ALGA, the Council of Capital City Lord Mayors (CCCLM), Cities Power Partnership (CPP), Ironbark, ICLEI Oceania, Climateworks Centre, Melbourne Centre for Cities, Climate Emergency Australia (CEA) and Better Futures Australia met at the City of Melbourne to align objectives. The group conducted a stakeholder mapping exercise to identify key stakeholders for consultation in order to identify common approaches in advocacy, and to develop recommendations for the federal government to unlock local climate action.

b. Desktop research (ie, scoping study)

A scoping study was conducted by ICLEI Oceania, Climate Emergency Australia and Ironbark Sustainability to outline the role, opportunities and barriers local governments face in achieving climate action. It was intended that this work provide a starting point to developing a longer report (ie, *Many hands make light work: connecting governments to accelerate climate action*)

presenting the opportunity to massively accelerate climate action through meaningful partnership between local governments and the federal government. The scoping study highlighted the opportunity of enhancing climate policy integration between the federal and local governments. Additionally, it presented 17 key barriers with an explanation of the implication of these for councils. The scoping study reviewed the following resources:

- Cities Power Partnership: [Tracking Progress: 2020 Snapshot of Council Action on Climate Change](#),
- ICLEI Oceania: [Mayoral Roundtable Meeting Summary: plans to accelerate climate action in 2022](#),
- Ironbark Sustainability and ICLEI – Local Governments for Sustainability (ICLEI Oceania): [Australian Local Government Climate Review 2021](#), and;
- Lynch, Oke and Leavesley, 2021: [State of play: Local governments and city networks accelerating climate action in Australia](#).

c. Drafted recommendations

Based on the research conducted, the BFA Local Government WG drafted a series of recommendations with plans to consult the sector and refine the recommendations.

d. Stakeholder engagement

Several workshops and interviews were conducted with key stakeholders to gather additional input and refine the drafted recommendations, including:

- On 8th April 2022 the (then) Shadow Minister for Climate Change and Energy, The Hon. [Chris Bowen](#) joined over 200 Mayors and elected members representing over 108 local governments from across Australia to discuss Labor's priorities to adapt, mitigate and build resilience. This Mayoral Roundtable was co-hosted by ICLEI, with ALGA, CCCLM, GCoM, Local Government NSW and support of Better Futures Australia, Climate Emergency Australia, CPP, C40 Cities and UN Habitat.

- In May 2022, at the [ICLEI World Congress 2021 – 2022: The Malmö Summit](#), ICLEI Oceania and Melbourne Centre for Cities interviewed elected member stakeholders, including Lord Mayor of Hobart Anna Reynolds, Amanda Stone from Yarra City Council and Newcastle City Council Mayor Nuatali Nelmes.
- On 20th July 2022, ICLEI Oceania [briefed](#) the [ALGA Board](#) about the development of the three recommendations for the federal government.
- On 7th September 2022, CPP and Ironbark facilitated a workshop at the [Better Futures Australia forum](#) in Canberra and received further input into the recommendations.
- On 27th October 2022 Ironbark hosted the *Snapshot Update webinar*, which was attended by 211 council representatives from around Australia. During this webinar the recommendations were socialised with further feedback sought from the sector.

e. Incorporating feedback from the local government sector

As highlighted above, an iterative approach was adopted throughout the process of developing the recommendations. This ensured that feedback from prominent voices in the sector was incorporated to build on the drafted recommendations initially developed by the BFA Local Government WG. This resulted in five recommendations being distilled down to the three included in *‘Many hands make light work: connecting governments to accelerate climate action’*.

References

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3. (GCoM 2022) Global Covenant of Mayors. (2022). The Multilevel Climate Action Playbook Second Edition. Accessed:
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