

Western Alliance for Greenhouse Action Adaptation Plan Case Study

Western Alliance for Greenhouse Action (WAGA) is a partnership of eight councils in Melbourne's west. This coalition of eight councils works collaboratively to foster community resilience in climate change mitigation and adaptation. WAGA focuses on catalysing and the implementation of a just transition to a low carbon society, WAGA's plans and projects are directed towards this aim. (information from WAGA's website)

Plan published: [Climate Change Adaptation Strategy: 2013-2020](#)

Initial Plan Motivation:

The adaptation plan (henceforth the Plan) came out of a regional climate change risk assessment back in 2011 initiated by WAGA. This assessment identified a range of regional and council risks, the Plan was developed to address those risks. The impetus and direction for the risk assessment was the councils' desires to start and understand their climate change risks.

Key stakeholders: WAGA councils

Defining a Vision, Objective and Goals:

WAGA employed the services of a consultant to work with the WAGA operational committee (the sustainability officers from each WAGA council). A baseline and 'starting-point' document was produced after extensive internal consultation and multi-criteria risk assessments. This assessment process was wide reaching, identifying many risks including regional and specific infrastructure risks. These risks were ranked and prioritised, and councils would use this data for their own individual climate change adaptation plan with varying success. WAGA developed a 'How Well Are We Adapting' framework that presented climate change response indicators, this tool is still being used and has also since been expanded for other purposes.

Key stakeholders: consultant, WAGA Operational Committee, Council sustainability departments

Analysing Multiple Futures/ Choosing Priorities and Options for Adaptation:

A multiple futures framework was not explicitly used to generate the WAGA adaptation plan. In place, WAGA engaged a consultant to undertake a risk assessment process against a multi-criteria analysis. The priorities of the Plan were decided by thorough internal consultation.

Key stakeholders: consultant, WAGA councils, council sustainability department

Monitoring, Evaluation, Reporting, Improving and Learning (MERIL):

WAGA employs a variant on the MERIL framework which is clearly expressed in their 'How Well Are We Adapting' tool. Creating a mechanism that ensured thorough and extensive feedback learning was a critical step in WAGA's adaptation planning process. 'The How Well Are We Adapting' tool was a result of extensive internal and external consultation. The tool adds to the MERIL framework by enabling practitioners and council members to 'check-in' on the adaptation process by viewing specific indicators.

Key stakeholders: consultant, council departments specifically community care and emergency teams, land use planners and asset managers. Catchment Management Authority (CMA), Melbourne Waters

Biggest Challenge:

At the conception and creation of the adaptation plan (2012/13) WAGA struggled with communicating and getting buy-in with the member councils. At this time climate change was not understood to be an important issue and not warranting council wide attention, barring the sustainability departments. Much has changed since this time; however, climate instability related concerns still seem to be understood as separate from much of the council's daily activities. For example, the planning system, being under significant influence of the council, has not on the whole engaged with environmental change nor climate resilience.

New challenges have emerged, notably the distinction between mitigation and adaptation. For the large part, councils seem to have understood and acted upon emissions abatement, yet have failed to respond adequately and mobilise the adaptive side of the climate change issue. WAGA highlighted the complexity and uncertainty of climate change as being potential barriers for more action as well as skewed priorities, on the part of councils, that drew attention and resourcing away from adaptive capacities and towards mitigation.

WAGA also highlighted a real gap in the data their member councils had access to, emphasising that many council decisions about climate adaptation were not based on evidence.

Key stakeholders: Councils

Biggest success:

The 'How Well Are We Adapting' tool was WAGA's biggest success because it was very effective at informing and facilitating the member councils in developing their own strong adaptation plans and policies.

Collaboration between councils and collaboration with research centres was also a significant success. WAGA noted that multi-sector and multi-discipline advocacy and collaboration is critical for effective mitigation and adaptation.

Key stakeholders: Councils, research centres and community groups

Key stakeholders: Private Industries and organisations like CMA and Melbourne Water, Council and their subsidiary departments, research centres and community groups

Key resources: 'How Well Are We Adapting' tool for councils and WAGA; collaboration with research groups, councils and government.

Produced by Lauren Blair, Karunvir Kaur, Naomi Kelsey and Sacha McDonald-Shaw