



About

The Eastern Alliance for Greenhouse Action (EAGA) is a formal collaboration of eight Councils in Melbourne's east, working together on regional programs that reduce greenhouse gas emissions and facilitate regional adaptation. The Alliance implements joint initiatives that provide economies of scale and enable projects typically beyond the reach of individual Councils. EAGA's project work is complemented by advocacy, capacity building and regional partnerships.

Impact

Since its inception in 2012, the net benefits of EAGA's work in the region has amounted to 7.9 times the amount invested by its member councils in the form of membership fees and project costs.

Year at glance

16,926

**Tonnes emissions
reduced**

+1MW

**Residential
solar installed**

\$3.1M

**savings from
projects**

\$42M

**Impact from
advocacy
(to 2046)**

46

**Councils sign 100%
renewable PPA**

Members



Chair Person's Statement

I am proud to present EAGA's annual report in a year that has witnessed our councils realise their most ambitious action on climate change yet, with the triumphant launch of the Victorian Energy Collaboration (VECO).



Cr Marijke Graham
Maroondah City Council,
EAGA Executive Chair

This landmark initiative is the largest ever emissions reduction project undertaken in the Australian local government sector and is the culmination of a huge body of work instigated by EAGA and the Victorian Greenhouse Alliances in 2017. VECO demonstrates how the Alliance model can be used to effectively scale-up regional action to a state-wide level.

This cross Alliance approach was also effective in generating significant financial impacts through coordinated advocacy for the sector. The response to the Electricity Distribution Price Review will assist councils avoid over \$30M in public lighting charges over the next 25 years and will provide \$6.9M in co-funding for public lighting upgrades. Advocacy targeting the state's COVID stimulus response was also successful in facilitating a \$5M investment in electric vehicle charging infrastructure that will be critical to transforming vehicle transport across Victoria.

A number of key projects are assisting our members to adapt and build capacity to respond to the impacts of climate change. This includes the successful delivery of the Resilient Emergency Relief Centres project which involved building vulnerability assessments at 23 sites across

the region. EAGA also undertook an exploratory study into the costs and benefits of adapting the region's assets and infrastructure that will inform a number of other critical adaptation projects over the coming year. These important initiatives have been co-funded by DELWP and facilitated by our Executive Officer through their position on the stakeholder committee for the Regional Adaptation Strategy for Greater Melbourne.

This report marks the end of a four year Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between EAGA's eight council members. In considering a commitment to a new MOU, EAGA has commissioned an independent assessment of the Alliance's overall impact and made recommendations for improving outcomes in the next MOU period. This process found that EAGA delivers substantial value for its member councils, and its activities have led to a range of highly beneficial outcomes for communities, councils and the environment. I am delighted to see that these findings have reinforced the commitment of members to working collaboratively at the regional level to deliver an ambitious, new MOU and Strategic Plan for the next four years.

Summary of 2020-21 outcomes against strategic plan

Strategy Direction	Initiatives	Outcomes
Mitigation and adaptation projects	Victorian Energy Collaboration (VECO)	The transformational initiative has enabled 46 Victorian councils to switch to 100% renewable energy from mid-2021. The 'buyers group' aggregates approximately half of the entire sector's electricity load – equivalent to powering 48,000 homes with renewable energy or taking 90,000 cars off the road each year. Six EAGA members are participating in the project which was initiated by EAGA and the Victorian Greenhouse Alliances and led by Darebin City Council.
	Solar Savers	Despite COVID restrictions on activities in the field, Solar Savers has continued to deliver substantial financial savings and emissions reductions for households across the region. Over 163 installations were delivered that will cut emission by over 650 tonnes per year. This included two rates programs involving councils investing their own funds to pay the up-front costs of solar systems on vulnerable households and recouping the funds via rates charges. Maroondah Council has continued its leadership role by administering the program and hosting the Solar Savers team.
Capacity building and information exchange	Resilient Emergency Relief Centres	The project assessed the risks and climate vulnerabilities of selected Emergency Relief Centre buildings (ERCs) across the EAGA region. Twenty-three sites were assessed using a Building Vulnerability Assessment (BVA) framework and each council was provided with individual recommendation reports, which included specific adaptation measures to improve climate resilience. The project also aimed to build the capacity of council facility managers to address climate change risks in their day to day asset management planning and processes.
	Exploratory Study – Costs & Benefits of adaptation and Investment	To assist councils and other stakeholders develop a clearer evidence base on the costs of climate impacts on public and private assets and infrastructure, EAGA engaged Ernst & Young to undertake a scoping study across the Greater Melbourne region. The project focused on the costs and benefits of adaptation measures on the electricity, buildings and urban forest sectors and assessed whether these types of adaptation measures are applicable to private investors.
Advocacy	Electricity Distribution Price Review (EDPR)	EAGA worked with the Victorian Greenhouse Alliances, Ironbark Sustainability, and the Municipal Association of Victoria (MAV) to develop a joint submission to the EDPR on behalf of the local government sector. The Australian Energy Regulator (AER) ruled in favour of the Alliance-led submission, which will assist councils across Victoria to avoid over \$10.7M in public lighting charges over the next five years, plus a further \$19.8M out to 2046. For the first time in Australia, councils have undertaken a coordinated negotiation with a distributor (AusNet Services) to secure a \$6.9M funding contribution to upgrade old mercury vapour lights to LEDs. The project will deliver over 220,000 tonnes in emission reductions over the next 20 years.
	Submissions and Engagement	EAGA and the Greenhouse Alliances have generated further impact through coordinated advocacy on the State's COVID stimulus measures. This has been successful in leveraging a \$5M investment in electric vehicle charging infrastructure. Through EAGA, councils continue to have a coordinated conversation with the State Government regarding a number of key climate and energy issues. This includes the ongoing partnership with Department of Environment, Land, Water, and Planning (DELWP) to oversee the Regional Adaptation Strategy for Greater Melbourne, and securing further grant funding to deliver two key adaptation initiatives under the plan in the coming year.

Testimonials

“Boroondara Council is soon to endorse our Climate Action Plan which sets our path for the next decade as Council and our community respond to the challenges of climate change. Through this Plan, we will build on our success with Council’s emissions, now over 80% lower than they were a decade earlier. Our participation in EAGA has been critical to our previous success with projects such as the Local Government Power Purchase Agreement (PPA) and the Energy Performance Contract Project (EPC) being key pillars for our achievements. Our participation in EAGA and the alliances network are crucial as we build on this success, particularly as we support our community to reduce their own emissions.”

**Cr Wes Gault,
City of Boroondara**

“Knox Council’s Climate Response Plan has a current community goal of Net Zero by 2040. To achieve this target, every level of government and local communities need to work together on the tough challenge ahead of us in making deep cuts to our emissions in all sectors of community life. We must also prepare our communities to effectively prepare and adapt to the increasing impacts of our changing climate. EAGA will continue to be a crucial partner in both coordinating the response and advocating for change across other levels of government.”

**Cr Jude Dwight,
Knox City Council**

“Our membership with EAGA provides substantial and ongoing value to the Glen Eira community, environment and Council. Through capacity-building and information exchange this year, we assessed the risks and climate vulnerabilities of four, large community buildings identifying opportunities to improve the resilience of these facilities to climate change. This will ensure we can continue to operate and deliver their important functions and services to the community during extreme weather events. The Resilient Emergency Relief project also built our facility managers and sustainability team capacity to address climate change risks in their day to day asset management planning and processes. We are also proud to be a part of the Victorian Energy Collaboration (VECO) project, including taking on the role as lead organisation for the next two years. Along with 45 Councils we’re switching to 100% renewable energy from mid-2021 – significantly reducing our greenhouse gas emissions and helping us meet our zero emissions target. And lastly, the recently adopted Our Climate Emergency Response Strategy 2021-25 setting out new zero emissions targets for council by 2025 and community by 2030. EAGA will continue to be a key partner in delivering projects and advocacy to reach these ambitious goals.”

**Cr David Zyngier,
Glen Eira City Council**

Testimonials

“Monash continues to benefit from the support and collaboration provided through our membership of EAGA. This year Monash has been able to develop its first Zero Net Carbon Action Plan and I’m confident we will deliver on our target of corporate carbon neutrality by 2025. Thanks to EAGA, we are also proceeding to deliver an Energy Performance Contract to reduce electricity and gas use in our highest energy intensive buildings. Since completing our Environmentally Sustainable Design (ESD) policy for Infrastructure and Buildings in partnership with EAGA councils, a number of our recent builds have used it to guide the design of new facilities resulting in greater use of solar and a reduction of reliance on gas appliances. There is also more focus on integrating the impact of climate change and the need for adaptation into our Council Plan.”

**Cr Josh Fergeus,
City of Monash**

“Whitehorse City Council endorsed a two-year interim Climate Response Plan in September 2020, recognising the need to accelerate and strengthen our current actions and set the foundation for Council and Whitehorse community to work together to set strong, ambitious targets for our next Sustainability Strategy to be developed in 2022. EAGA has and continues to play a significant role in this through its array of partnerships, project delivery and advocacy activities. In 2020/21, EAGA provided a robust and strategic direction to collaborate and deliver on local emission reduction projects. Council is pleased to continue its involvement in EAGA with signing the new Memorandum of Understanding 2021/25 to continue our collective work with neighbouring councils.”

Cr Tina Liu, Whitehorse City Council

“In February 2020, the City of Stonnington declared a climate emergency, committing to urgent action on climate change and the development of a Climate Emergency Action Plan. The work undertaken through EAGA has continued to support Council’s climate mitigation and adaptation response over the last year and will support our ongoing climate emergency response, contributing to key actions in the plan. The latest annual report highlights the great work achieved over the last year through this collaborative forum, including building council capacity to understand and improve the vulnerability of emergency relief centres to climate impacts as well as the work undertaken to facilitate our involvement in VECO – the Victorian Energy Collaboration, which has resulted in huge emissions reductions for Council as well as substantial cost savings.”

**Simon Holloway,
Stonnington City Council**

“Building on the endorsement of the Liveable Climate Plan, Yarra Ranges Council took a big step towards its 100% renewable energy target this year by switching streetlighting onto VECO, thanks to EAGA’s ongoing support. Additionally, the outcomes of the Resilient Emergency Relief Centres project have highlighted opportunities for Yarra Ranges Council to improve refuge centres and the ongoing resilience of its facilities, resulting in further grant applications to act on the recommendations. The dedication and encouragement of EAGA and our partnering Council’s provides hope and direction in delivering emissions reductions as well as championing effective adaptation and mitigation works.”

**Cr Catherine Burnett-Wake,
Yarra Ranges Council**



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