



17 September 2009

NC03-05

**Report to National Council  
2 October 2009**

**Agenda Item 5: Policy Issues (for decision)**

**5(d): Local Government Leaders Position Statement on Climate Change**

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**Purpose**

To seek National Council approval of the Local Government Leaders Position Statement on Climate Change.

**Background**

On 17 February 2009 the Regional Affairs Committee (RAC) considered a report looking at climate change as one of the RAC's top six issues. As part of that report it was recommended that a position statement for regional government be developed as a way of ensuring a consistent message was used within the sector and when talking with central government.

The report also noted that the National Council Climate Change Sub-committee (NCCCS) was well placed to lead the political debate on climate change. The NCCCS also considered the RAC report and supported the idea of developing a position statement. The NCCCS agreed that the position statement should be written as a representation of the views of all of local government.

**Considerations**

The position statement highlights that local government is prepared to play its part in preparing for the future and to respond to the challenges, risks and opportunities of climate change. It has been produced as a collaborative effort between staff from nine local authorities and *Local Government New Zealand*. It is recognised that the different parts of local government bring a different focus on climate change issues and the position statement acknowledges this difference.

The NCCCS and the RAC have already approved the position statement.

The position statement specifically provides flexibility for individual councils to make choices because, as is noted in the position statement, one size will not fit all when climate change actions are being considered. While a degree of flexibility is needed there is also a need to provide a consistent message.

The drafting of the position statement has used a number of principles. These are:

- use of simple language
- a larger number of more detailed statements, rather than overly broad comments, to provide specific comments on key issues of concern
- generic terms for local government - "councils" or "we".

The position statement provides a brief introductory context, a number of overarching statements in

relation to the position on climate change, and then statements on the areas of adaptation and mitigation. The position statement also builds a picture of the expectations that we have of Central Government - particularly around responsibilities for leading on mitigation.

This statement is a conservative, first step in describing local government's collective view of climate change. A collective view brings with it the challenge of retaining one version, avoiding the temptation to edit the position statement and in cases accepting that the wording may not quite fit with an individual leader's or council's perspective.

It would be proposed that the statement would be reviewed in two years time to reflect any changing emphasis, central government policy, or new research. This would also provide the opportunity for local government to discuss the introduction of climate change targets for local government.

For the position statement to be powerful and effective it will ideally be endorsed by local government leaders i.e. Mayor or Chair of each local government entity (regional, unitary and territorial). A number of chairs and mayors have already signalled their willingness to be signatories to the position statement. *Local Government New Zealand* will promote the position statement seeking signatures through sector meetings and by communications to councils, as appropriate.

### **Conclusion**

The NCCCS and the RAC have developed and subsequently approved a Local Government Leaders Position Statement on climate change as attached.

The position statement highlights that local government is prepared to play its part in preparing for the future and to respond to the challenges, risks and opportunities of climate change. It recognises that the different parts of local government bring a different focus on climate change issues and the position statement acknowledges this difference. The position statement also builds a picture of the expectations that we have of central government - particularly around responsibilities for leading on mitigation.

For the position statement to be powerful it should be endorsed by local government leaders i.e. mayor or chair of each local government entity (regional, unitary and territorial). A number of chairs and mayors have already signalled their willingness to be signatories to the position statement. *Local Government New Zealand* will promote the position statement seeking signatures through sector meetings and by communications to councils, as appropriate.

### **Recommendations**

That National Council:

- i. **NOTE** the National Council Climate Change Sub-Committee and Regional Affairs Committee have approved the climate change leadership position statement
- ii. **APPROVE** the proposed climate change leadership position statement
- iii. **AGREE** to *Local Government New Zealand* seeking endorsement of the position statement from Mayors and Chairs of local government entities.

Eugene Bowen  
Chief Executive  
*Local Government New Zealand*