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## **Australian local governments moving to align emissions reduction commitments to Paris climate targets: report**

A new report assessing Australia's 57 largest local governments – representing over half Australia's population – found all councils are taking steps to reduce their emissions, and many have made comprehensive commitments to reduce their emissions to zero.

The *Net Zero Momentum Tracker Local Government Sector* report is the third in a series of studies tracking climate commitments made by major Australian companies, organisations and governments. The initiative evaluates emissions reduction activities against the net zero by 2050 goal of the Paris Climate Agreement.

The report found nearly 40 per cent of the Australian local governments assessed have made commitments to reach a zero emissions target by or before 2050 for their community emissions. Community emissions are those generated by residents, businesses and visitors and which typically represent 99 per cent of emissions within local government jurisdictions.

Of these, Moreland City Council in Victoria, Northern Beaches Council in NSW and the ACT/Canberra, each have a target to reach net zero by or before 2050, supported by interim reduction targets that address both community and operational emissions – those directly controlled by council.

Adelaide, Sydney and Melbourne also have a net-zero-by-2050 target for their community emissions, but not yet interim targets towards this goal. Canberra's community emissions are included in the ACT's legislated target to be net zero by 2045.

"These findings are significant," said Petra Stock, program manager of cities and policy at ClimateWorks Australia, which produced the report with Monash Sustainable Development Institute.

"To put these commitments into perspective, it means local governments covering 21 per cent of Australia's population already have agreed to eliminate all the emissions from their regions by 2050, which is aligned with the Paris Climate Agreement," said Stock.

Sydney, Melbourne and Brisbane are already carbon neutral for their operational emissions. Of the other capital city councils, Adelaide, Darwin and Canberra aim to become carbon neutral for their operations by 2020, 2030 and 2040 respectively.

Overall, the report found 58 per cent of assessed councils have a target to bring their operational emissions to zero by 2050. Collectively, these 33 councils – four of which are already carbon neutral – cover around one-third of the Australian population.

“Council commitments to reduce operational emissions are important,” said Stock. “Local councils rank among Australia’s most important infrastructure owners and managers, with collective responsibility for over \$380 billion in infrastructure and land.

“Local authorities already play an important role in helping communities adapt to climate change and be resilient to its impacts, and that vital work is happening right now across drought- and fire-affected regions,” said Stock.

“We found many local governments have come to recognise responding to climate change means reducing emissions to zero, too.”

By taking bold action to cut emissions, she highlights that councils can reduce their own energy costs and support businesses and residents to reduce emissions, while fostering a liveable environment for the communities they serve.

“This study reminds us that decisions made by councils matter,” said Stock.

Australian councils are responsible for town planning and building approvals and typically develop local planning schemes, which define what activities or developments occur within different areas of a municipality. Councils also have powers as purchasers, investors and managers of infrastructure and more.

She notes local governments worldwide are active in supporting climate goals.

“Not only are they generating public awareness and enthusiasm for a broader transition, they are collaborating with other jurisdictions to share knowledge and join combined initiatives, and lobbying other levels of government to take more ambitious action,” she said. All Australian states and territories have made a net zero by 2050 commitment.

“We encourage all local governments to work across the community and with businesses and state and federal governments to deliver on their commitments, and to make comprehensive commitments with interim targets.”

Petra Stock is available for comment.

To access a copy of the *Net Zero Momentum Tracking Local Government* report, go to: [netzerotracker.org](https://netzerotracker.org)

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