PIA CLIMATE SERIES:

Planning in a Changing Climate

Position Statement
March 2021

Planning Institute Australia

INTRODUCTION

This Position Statement follows the Planning Institute of Australia's (PIA) declaration of a climate emergency and adoption of the World Green Building Council (WGBC) commitment towards zero net carbon before 2050. The Position Statement is an update of PIA's 2015 Policy Position and is supported by discussion papers on reducing carbon and adapting to climate change.

PIA'S POSITION

PIA accepts the scientific assessments of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) that human activity is changing our global climate, that irreversible change is already locked in and that the planning profession must address the reality of a changing climate.

PIA recognises that the decisions we make now as planners in guiding urban and regional development extend far beyond current influences and shape the future environments in which communities will live. PIA believes that planners working for the different levels of government or in the private sector have a responsibility to integrate planning for climate change into their work and be proactive in the development of mitigation and adaptation strategies to avoid harm and negative impacts to present and future ecosystems, human and non-human populations.

Planning organisations in the UK and Canada have adopted an objective of achieving carbon neutrality while New Zealand Planning Institute (NZPI) are in the process of reviewing their position with reference to the Paris Agreement. Each of these Institutes are pursuing initiatives on how planning can contribute to mitigating greenhouse gas emissions.

As the consequences of a changing climate have become more apparent through research and lived experience, PIA has elevated the concern of the Australian planning profession by declaring a 'climate emergency' – simply because the time we have to respond is less than that available.

PIA is committed to working urgently to change the way we live in response to the increased threat of heat, drought, bushfires, floods, sea-level rise and coastal erosion.

PIA supports action to reduce greenhouse gas emissions beyond Australia's Paris Agreement undertakings – without which adaptation strategies may prove to be stopgap measures only.

PIA has specifically endorsed the WGBC Position 'Bringing Embodied Carbon Upfront' and its proposed timetable for achieving zero net carbon in aspects of the built environment sector before 2050. PIA is acutely aware that the earlier cost-effective carbon reduction measures are delivered then the more readily carbon neutrality can be achieved, and the Paris Agreement climate goals obtained.

PIA also supports the COAG Energy Ministers reform of the National Construction Code in adopting a trajectory towards net zero carbon (low energy buildings).

ABOUT THE ISSUE

PIA acknowledges that the effects of climate change are already apparent and that a changing climate poses significant challenges to our ecosystems, communities and economy. Various levels of Australian governments have adopted mitigation and adaptation policies that acknowledge the need to plan for climate change.

PIA notes that there is near-unanimous agreement among climate scientists that human-caused global warming is real and poses risk for human activity and natural systems. It further acknowledges that climate risks and vulnerability are unevenly distributed and generally greater for disadvantaged people and communities.

The extent and severity of impacts is projected to vary across the continent and includes: more days of extreme heat, longer bushfire seasons, more regular drought, increases to flooding depths and extent, sea level rise (inundation, storm surge and erosion) and more intense storms and cyclones. In turn these are likely to impact on our biodiversity, food security, human settlements, wellbeing and economy.

Housing and infrastructure at risk from sea level rise in Australia has been valued at more than $226 billion[1]. During the Victorian heatwave in 2014 there were 203 heat-related deaths[2] and over 'black summer' bushfire events the scale of loss of life, loss of property and loss of biodiversity is unprecedented.

Good planning is essential to mitigate and adapt to climate change, and is much less costly and more effective than retrofitting.[3] The Productivity Commission Inquiry in 2014 observed that only 3% of disaster management resources targeted resilience building rather than disaster response.[4]

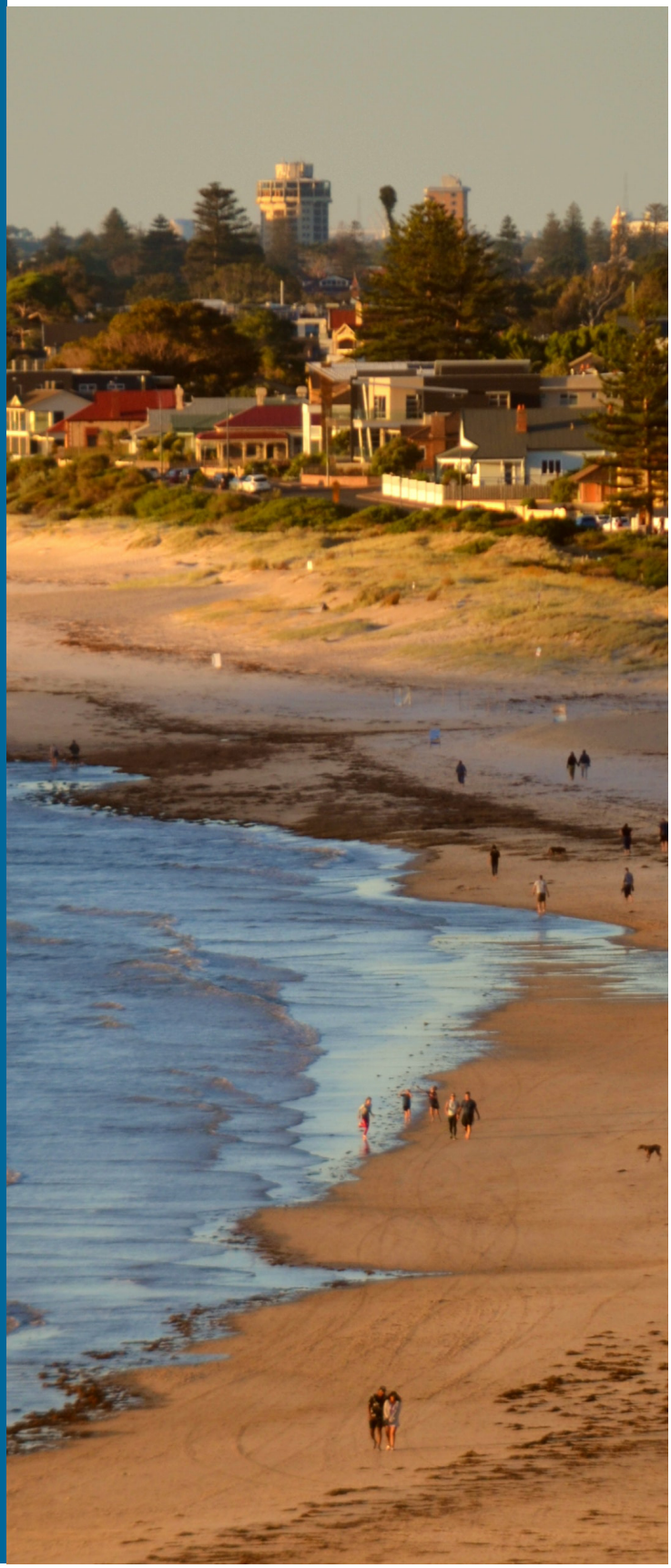
PIA recognises the need for urgent and deep reductions in greenhouse gas emissions and the need for complementary mitigation and adaptation strategies for reducing and managing the risks presented by climate change. PIA is concerned that there is a lack of long term strategic leadership on this issue and this in turn means there is a fragmented policy response, and limited coordination across and between levels of government.

To plan effectively we need alignment, coordination and integration of the planning policies and mitigation and adaption strategies being employed by local, state and federal governments.

PIA also believes that a balanced and sustainable framework for managing property rights and community interests in a changing climate needs to be put in place.

PIA acknowledges that the complexities of planning in a changing climate challenges traditional planning approaches, requiring innovation, collaboration and flexible responses. This includes improving the capacity to adaptively manage post approval actions with the close involvement of the community. The evolving data and science on climate change, changing technology and community opinion mean that planning systems need to be designed so that they are adaptive, and ensure early decisions do not unnecessarily limit potential future responses. Planning responses during recovery should result in land uses and a built environment that is less exposed to hazards in the future.

While PIA expects our members to incorporate the best available information and practice into their work, PIA also acknowledges that the planning profession needs to strengthen its understanding of the issues and that planning systems are underprepared to deal with this challenge.



PIA'S ADVOCACY

PIA advocates for:

- Planning decisions to **contribute to the achievement of carbon neutrality** as early as practical and not later than 2050, in line with the attainment of the Paris Agreement goals (limiting global temperature rise to less than two degrees and with a target of less than 1.5 degrees).
- Long term **leadership across all levels and sectors** (built environment, infrastructure, energy, industry, energy and natural resources), to ensure we address climate change and avoid short sighted 'business as usual' approaches to planning and development.
- Continued **research and innovation** to develop the necessary tools, processes and data to enable effective planning and decision making.
- Strong, effective and integrated **policy frameworks to support sound decision making** at the strategic, development assessment and post approval (adaptive management) phases.
- Collaborative **engagement with all parties impacted by climate change** to improve understanding about climate change and involve them in decisions about possible responses – with a focus on working with Indigenous communities.
- New **models for planning** in a changing climate that support collaboration and partnership approaches across public, private and community sectors and across disciplines.
- Support for local government to **engage local communities** and implement mitigation and adaptation in specific ways for their locality.

PLANNING PRINCIPLES

The following principles should guide planning for adaptation and the mitigation of climate change. They complement PIA's Planning System Principles (July 2013):

- Promote strategies (including pathways towards zero net carbon) that seek to reduce overall demand for non-renewable sources of energy, reduce greenhouse gas emissions and support the shift to renewable energy.
- Adopt multi-disciplinary and collaborative practices, working alongside other professions and governments, to build consensus within communities, develop whole of government responses, and identify consistent and coordinated actions for mitigation and adaptation.
- Work with affected communities and other stakeholders to assess risks and vulnerabilities to climate change and develop appropriately resilient responses.
- Focus on the whole of existing communities and ongoing outcomes post-approval - not just new development.
- Take into account the social, economic, physical and ecological outcomes of responses developed, avoiding any unintended consequences and ensuring that the costs and benefits are shared fairly between and within generations.
- Specifically acknowledge that the natural environment (ecology and landscape) should not bear unreasonable costs of fire or other hazard management.
- Use the best available science and methods and work with researchers, governments and others to develop and adopt the policies, information and tools needed to support planning outcomes.
- Accept the need to adopt long term timeframes, work with uncertainty and embrace innovative and flexible approaches to identify resilient solutions that can be adapted over time.
- Promote resilience in adapting climate change so that future conditions are less exposed.
- Strategic planning and assessment should address and account for all forms of GHG emissions over the entire lifecycle - immediate or long term and local or global in impact.

PIA'S PREFERRED APPROACH

PIA supports:

Leadership

- Supporting planners to be leaders of action on climate change through the advice and advocacy provided to clients, government and the community.
- Communicating the challenges and opportunities posed by climate change and advocating for effective and consistent policy and legislative frameworks by all levels of government.
- Advocating the acceptance of responsibility and the need for urgent action (acknowledging climate emergency declaration) to be taken by all industry sectors, government agencies, communities and individuals, recognising that a sustainable and secure future cannot be left to 'business as usual'.
- Working with other peak organisations and research bodies to develop professional leadership across the challenges of research, innovation, communication, investment, mitigation and adaptation.

Education, Research and Innovation

- Working with planning educators to improve the quality of education that planners receive through PIA accredited planning courses.
- Advocating for collaborative research to support the development of regionally appropriate climate-related data and fit-for-purpose approaches to planning for climate change mitigation and adaptation solutions.
- Working with research institutions to identify the research needs of the planning profession and to communicate climate science clearly in planning processes and planning education.
- Participating in the development, testing and evaluation of new and innovative approaches and tools to account for carbon (in buildings, precincts and infrastructure) to support the work of planning professionals.

Policy and Practice

- Working with all levels of government and industry to develop effective and consistent policy, governance and statutory frameworks to enable effective mitigation and adaptation planning, including reviewing and commenting on relevant policy, legislative and corporate responses to climate change.
- Adopting integrated approaches to assessing climate change vulnerability and risks and responses that take into account the costs and benefits to ecosystems, the social, economic, and built environments over time.
- Accepting the uncertainties associated with planning responses to a changing climate and embracing adaptive management approaches that are supported by suitable monitoring, evaluation and research.
- Adopting the Precautionary Principle approach, as uncertainty is not a justification for delaying action.
- Considering options that allow flexibility with regard to responses and actions over time, to manage concerns about 'uncertainty' and incorporate updates to technical knowledge and evidenced impacts.
- Ensuring that our work includes and considers existing communities and their most vulnerable citizens and not just new development as administered through our statutory functions.
- Acknowledging the Sendai Framework objective to 'build back better' so that future conditions are less exposed and more resilient to hazards.

Capacity Development

- Supporting our members in building their level of understanding about climate change, mitigating, offsetting and accounting for GHG production - and remaining up to date through:
  - offering professional development on climate-science, best practice and fit-for-purpose tools and approaches for mitigation and adaptation (including liaising with other professional bodies about integrated learning opportunities)
  - promoting information sharing (through network development, social media and professional journals)
  - mentoring practitioners in the field
  - requiring the integration of climate change planning in academic and other planning courses accredited by the PIA.

- Supporting capacity building for elected representatives and other decision makers to facilitate the development of enabling governance systems and financial frameworks for climate change planning.

Community Engagement

- Promoting meaningful engagement with communities and stakeholders to raise their awareness about climate change and enable their participation in climate change planning, including in assessing risks and vulnerabilities, costs and benefits, and developing appropriate policy, regulatory funding or other responses.

- Ensuring that engagement processes are inclusive, targeting disadvantaged people and communities along with other stakeholders.

- Working with research institutions and engagement practitioners to help improve our ability to communicate clearly and engage with affected communities and stakeholders.

Collaborations and Partnerships

- Working alongside other professions, researchers and practitioners across the government, private and community sectors to help develop responses that are integrated, effective and equitably.

- Working with other peak bodies, industries sectors, and groups (including infrastructure providers, insurers, human services and the scientific community) to enhance our professional connections and understandings.

- Collaborating with our Pacific Island nation neighbours to help build professional and institutional capacities for climate change planning and management.

REFERENCES AND RESOURCES

PIA Policies:

- Planning System Principles (2013)
  <www.planning.org.au/policy/planning-systems-principles-0713
- *What is good planning?* (2013)
  <www.planning.org.au/policy/what-is-good-planning-0913>
- Public Participation (2011)
  <www.planning.org.au/policy/public-participation-0611>

PIA Climate Series Discussion Papers:

- Role of Planning in Reducing Carbon (2021)
- Role of Planning in Adapting to Climate Change (2021)

Other References:

- Royal Commission into National Natural Disaster Arrangements (2020)
  <naturaldisaster.royalcommission.gov.au/publications/royal-commission-national-natural-disaster-arrangements-report>
- Infrastructure Sustainability Council of Australia and Australian Sustainable Built Environment Council Reshaping Infrastructure for a Net Zero Emissions Future (2015)
  <www.climateworksaustralia.org/resource/issues-paper-reshaping-infrastructure-for-a-net-zero-emissions-future>
- United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change Paris Agreement (2015)
  <unfccc.int/process-and-meetings/the-paris-agreement/the-paris-agreement>
- Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change 5th Assessment Report – Synthesis Report (2014)
  <www.ipcc.ch/report/ar5/syr/>
- Climate Council *Unpacking the IPCC Fifth Assessment Synthesis Report* (2016)
  <www.climatecouncil.org.au/ipccar5synthesisreport>
- Australian Academy of Science *The science of climate change* (2015)
  <www.science.org.au/education/immunisation-climate-change-genetic-modification/science-climate-change>
- Australian Sustainable Built Environment Council *Built Environment Adaptation Framework* (2012)
  <www.asbec.asn.au/research-items/cross-sector-built-environment-adaptation-framework>
- IAP2 Code of Ethics
  <www.iap2.org.au/about-us/about/code-of-ethics>
- Planning Institute of Australia National Land Use Planning Guidelines for Disaster resilient Communities (2016)
  <www.planning.org.au/policy/national-land-use-planning-guidelines-for-disaster-resilient-communities-2>
- World Green Building Council *Bringing Embodied Carbon Upfront* (2019)
  <www.worldgbc.org/news-media/bringing-embodied-carbon-upfront>

ENDNOTES

1 Australian Academy of Science, *What are the impacts of climate change?* n.d <www.science.org.au/publications/scienceofclimatechange-q-and-a-2015/impacts>

2 Steffen, W, Hughes, L & Perkins, S 2014 *Heatwaves: Hotter, Longer, More Often* Climate Council of Australia Ltd.

3 International Panel on Climate Change 2007, *Climate Change 2007: Impacts, Adaptation and Vulnerability, Contribution of Working Group II to the Fourth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change,* Parry, ML, Canziani, OF, Palutikof, JP, van der Linden PJ & Hanson, CE (eds), Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, United Kingdom

4 Productivity Commission 2015, Natural Disaster Funding Arrangements Final Report <www.pc.gov.au/inquiries/completed/disaster-funding/report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