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Barriers to Effective Climate Change Adaptation Draft Report April 2012

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the *Barriers to Effective Climate Change Adaptation* Productivity Commission Draft Report (April 2012).

Northern Alliance for Greenhouse Action (NAGA) made a submission to the Issues Paper consultation in December 2011, and acknowledges the Productivity Commission's reflection of NAGA's identified issues and priorities in the draft report. NAGA's submission on the draft report reinforces a number of the points included in our submission in December 2011.

The **Northern Alliance for Greenhouse Action** (NAGA) is an alliance of Moreland Energy Foundation and the nine councils spanning the northern metropolitan region of Melbourne from the CBD to the rural/urban fringe (see footer). The Alliance covers a quarter of Melbourne's population; the region spans major industrial, commercial, and residential areas, activities and types, as well as forests, agriculture, and water catchments on the urban fringe.

NAGA shares information, coordinates emission reduction and adaptation activities, and cooperates on the research and development of innovative projects. NAGA and its members have demonstrated significant climate change action innovation at the local government and regional level. NAGA is actively involved in implementing regional scale climate change projects and developing approaches to governance, project management and business cases to support this work.

Defining 'effective' climate change adaptation

The draft report notes that "within limits, the impacts of gradual climate change should be manageable" (p2). Recent research is suggesting that climate change may exhibit step changes rather than gradual change. Professor Roger Jones, Victoria University, has reported in a recent article in the Journal of Geophysical Research that "this idea [gradual change] leads to the expectation that people can adapt gradually to a smoothly changing climate. But sudden increases in risk may mean that gradual adjustments fail to cope with rapidly changing extremes – and that's what this research suggests is happening."¹

This demonstrates how important it is that current scientific research is understood by and incorporated into planning and policy approaches by all levels of government, business and communities. The task of understanding and communicating scientific research can be challenging and reinforces the government's role in facilitating this function (see below for further comments on this).

¹ <http://www.vu.edu.au/news/climate-change-steps-up>.

Jones, R. N. (2012), Detecting and attributing nonlinear anthropogenic regional warming in southeastern Australia, *J. Geophys. Res.*, 117, D04105, doi:10.1029/2011JD016328.

MEMBER ORGANISATIONS

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Information provision

The draft report notes that “when people are able to identify and evaluate the impacts and risks they face ... they will generally manage them...” (p5). This process obviously requires access to up-to-date and accurate information, and the ability to understand and interpret information on climate change impacts. The draft report recognises the need to better align adaptation research with the needs of users and provide more local climate change information (p93). The draft report also notes that “individuals may lack the capacity to make fully effective uses of information” (p93); NAGA supports this finding and reinforces the ongoing need for government roles in information dissemination, as noted in the draft report, “further tailoring or wider communication of information by governments” (p93).

Roles and responsibilities of governments

As well as government roles in information dissemination, there are significant ongoing roles for the federal government in climate change adaptation: to provide leadership, to support consistent national approaches to adaptation implementation, to support resourcing of local government implementation, and to develop the application of decision-making tools for major infrastructure projects that include early consideration of climate change impacts and adaptation approaches.

Local governments are well-placed to implement adaptation actions and support their communities to adapt, if adequate resources and skills are available. The draft report also acknowledges the role of regional alliances: “coordination and collaboration among local governments can address some of the capacity constraints they face” (p 115). Regional alliances and groupings of councils are an effective and efficient vehicle for implementation; regional groupings can implement nationally significant priorities whilst addressing local issues in a cost effective manner.

The draft report notes that “climate change has implications for a broad range of local government functions ... [including] provision of local public infrastructure and the delivery of local services such as recreational facilities” (p115). Local government plays a key role in implementation of sustainability and liveability programs, policies and objectives; with provision of adequate resources and in partnership with other levels of government, local government, and regional groupings such as NAGA are well-placed to effectively and efficiently implement climate change programs that are locally relevant and respond to local needs as well as state and federal priorities.

Please contact me if you would like to discuss any of these issues in more detail.

Yours sincerely

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The views represented in this submission do not necessarily represent the views of all NAGA members individually.