Preparing for a changing climate

The NSW Government wants your feedback on the Draft Climate Change Fund Strategic Plan.

In 2017 we’ll be developing an action plan for ‘preparing for a changing climate’ and investing up to $100 million over five years in this priority area.

Your feedback will help us shape this action plan to support households, local communities and businesses across New South Wales prepare for a changing climate.

UNDERSTANDING CLIMATE CHANGE

New South Wales has diverse landscapes and ecosystems, including Australia’s largest and highest alpine areas, part of the Murray-Darling Basin, extensive rangelands, and some of the nation’s most productive agricultural areas.

Temperature and rainfall fluctuate greatly, with large variability in seasonal and regional climatic conditions bringing heatwaves, storms, droughts, floods and bushfires, which can have devastating effects on the environment, human life and property.
Climate change will exacerbate New South Wales’ natural climate variability, making it more difficult to manage our landscapes and ecosystems and the human activities that depend on them. Communities already affected by climate variability will be challenged by this shift in the climate, and there will be additional demands on our emergency services and our health system.

Much of the state’s irrigated agriculture is located in the south-west, a region already sensitive to changes in water availability. Climate change may exacerbate water security in these areas. Most of the population of New South Wales lives on the coast, which has many high-value assets and infrastructure that are susceptible to storm surges, sea level rise and increased flooding.

CURRENT NSW GOVERNMENT ADAPTATION PROGRAMS

Climate change science and research

The NSW Government has invested more than $6 million in new science and research to understand and respond to the local impacts of climate change in New South Wales.

The NSW and ACT Regional Climate Model (NARClim) provides local-scale projections of future changes in temperature, rainfall and other climate variables for the whole of New South Wales and the Australian Capital Territory. This modelling project was developed in partnership with the ACT Government and the Climate Change Research Centre at the University of New South Wales.

The NSW Adaptation Research Hub draws together leading experts in climate change science and adaptation practice under the themes of coasts, biodiversity and communities to inform government policy and programs. The hub is a first of its kind for New South Wales in the way government is working with expert researchers to provide the necessary science to inform climate change decision-making.

The Eastern Seaboard Climate Change Initiative program is a suite of six interrelated projects which have improved our understanding of the formation and impacts of east coast lows and how their frequency and intensity may alter with climate change.

Building resilience to a changing climate

The NSW Government has invested in programs that are helping to build the resilience and adaptive capacity of local communities to prepare for a changing climate.

AdaptNSW is an online portal that provides a single point of access for climate change information. This portal is an important source of information and tools, including NARClim, for government agencies, local government, businesses and communities to understand and minimise the impacts of climate change.

The NSW Government’s Enhanced Bushfire Management Program was developed in response to emerging risks from bushfires and the increased frequency and severity of bushfires as a result of climate change. Under this program, the NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service has conducted hazard reduction activities across an average of 135,000 hectares per year, protecting local communities and households across the state.

The NSW Government is carrying out Integrated Regional Vulnerability Assessments across regions in New South Wales. This assessment process is providing a sound basis for local climate change adaptation planning by working with local stakeholders in a series of participatory workshops to identify and understand regional vulnerabilities.
NEW DIRECTIONS
The NSW Government has committed to a NSW Climate Change Policy Framework and a new aspirational objective to ensure New South Wales is more resilient to a changing climate.

The policy framework sets out the roles of NSW Government to implement policies to plan for climate change impacts and provide targeted support to households, communities and businesses, to assess and manage climate change risks to government assets and services, and advocate for Commonwealth, COAG and international action to support effective adaptation.

The Draft Climate Change Fund Strategic Plan is an important first step in meeting our aspirational objective and implementing the Climate Change Policy Framework. Over the next five years, the strategic plan will support up to $100 million of activity to ensure New South Wales is more resilient to a changing climate.

Around $900 million of funding under the Climate Change Fund has also been allocated to ongoing NSW Government priorities in climate change adaptation such as:
» conserving private land to reduce the vulnerability of ecosystems to climate change
» building the capacity of land management agencies to enhance bushfire management
» supporting councils to reduce exposure to coastal hazards
» future proofing Warragamba Dam
» delivering successful on-going adaptation programs to assist our regions adapt to climate change
» delivering sustainability programs to improve our use of water, energy and land
» delivering programs to understand and plan for climate extremes of flooding and storms.

POTENTIAL ACTIONS TO PREPARE FOR A CHANGING CLIMATE
The Draft Climate Change Fund Strategic Plan focuses on supporting local adaptation actions, managing climate change risks to government assets and services and removing market, regulatory and governance barriers to the private sector and local government adapting effectively.

The potential actions aim to reduce costs to public and private assets arising from climate change, reduce the impacts of climate change on health and wellbeing, particularly in vulnerable communities, and manage the impacts of climate change on natural resources, ecosystems and communities.

The potential actions also include providing information about climate change impacts and best practice approaches to adaptation, and encouraging and supporting private action to prepare for climate change.

Following public consultation, the NSW Government will develop an action plan for ‘preparing for a changing climate’ that will:
» make the most of opportunities to grow new industries in New South Wales
» reduce costs to public and private assets in New South Wales arising from climate change
» reduce climate change impacts on health and wellbeing
» manage impacts on natural resources, ecosystems and communities.
Some of the potential actions in the *Draft Climate Change Fund Strategic Plan* include:

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<th>Action</th>
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<td>Ensure 100% of NSW agencies are taking action to manage their climate change risks</td>
<td>With careful planning and preparation by government, we can reduce the impacts of climate change on the value of public assets and the delivery of services.</td>
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<td>Increase awareness of climate change risks in industry sectors and local governments</td>
<td>By making climate change information more accessible and relevant to each sector of the NSW community, we can position households, businesses and local councils to adapt to climate change.</td>
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<td>Grow the adaptation services market</td>
<td>By supporting the growth of an adaptation services market, professional service providers will be available to provide advice to households, business and government on assessing, managing and responding to the risks of climate change.</td>
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<td>Assist local communities to reduce their exposure to natural hazards</td>
<td>By unlocking private funds, through innovative finance mechanisms such as resilience bonds and social impact investments, we can support urban, regional and remote communities to build their resilience to natural disasters and enhance their capacity to adapt.</td>
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<td>Invest in private land conservation</td>
<td>We can increase the resilience of our natural ecosystems to respond to the impacts of climate change by investing in long-term and coordinated conservation efforts on private land.</td>
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<td>Increase canopy coverage in heat-exposed suburbs and regional towns</td>
<td>By demonstrating the benefits of green cover such as parks, street trees, vegetation on buildings, we can encourage local communities to adapt to climate change.</td>
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<td>Improve understanding of climate change impacts in priority sectors</td>
<td>By generating high quality information with the help of agencies, industry, and academic researchers, we can identify the best steps to adapt to climate change, and keep New South Wales communities, infrastructure and services reliable and secure into the future.</td>
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Have your say on the proposed changes

The NSW Government is interested in your feedback on:

» whether and how we should refine and deliver the potential actions identified
» whether there are other actions that should be considered to deliver the government’s priority investment areas.

You can visit the Have your say website to make a submission.

Submissions close at 5pm on 16 December 2016.