



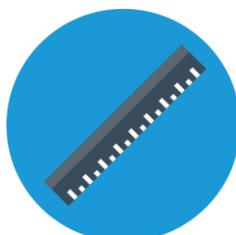
FIRST PERSON  
CONSULTING

## Evaluation of EAGA's impact

Prepared for the  
Eastern Alliance for Greenhouse Action



RESEARCH



EVALUATION



DESIGN

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## Document details

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## Executive summary

### Overview of the evaluation

The Eastern Alliance for Greenhouse Action (EAGA) is a collection of eight councils that are committed to responding to the challenges of climate change. **EAGA commissioned First Person Consulting and Point Advisory to evaluate EAGA's overall impact.** The aim is to help EAGA and its member councils in preparing their next Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) for 2021-25 and make recommendations for improving outcomes in the coming MOU period.

**As part of the evaluation, we reviewed relevant documents and interviewed 23 key stakeholders.** Documents included the EAGA strategic plan, project outputs, annual reports and emission and financial data maintained by the Executive Officer. While we did not audit this data, our review explored whether it was logical and the approach reasonable. We interviewed three councillors, ten council staff, five EAGA partners (including state government) and five other Alliance staff.

### Key findings

**EAGA appears to deliver substantial value for its member councils.** Work in building council capability, delivering projects and coordinating advocacy has led to a range of outcomes for communities, councils and the environment.

In terms of quantifiable benefits since 2012, EAGA's work has helped secure:

- **Net financial savings for EAGA councils in the order of \$10.1 million** (net present value), taking into account grants obtained through EAGA of \$576,222.
- **\$3.4 million in savings for EAGA households** (across 1,534 participating households).
- **Expected emission savings of 624,907 tonnes CO<sub>2</sub>e** over the lifetime of initiatives.
- **While not strictly a 'return-on-investment', EAGA's fees provide councils with an avenue for accessing net benefits (after additional investment) of 7.9 times the membership fee.**

EAGA has the lowest fees among the metropolitan Alliances, about one fifth (18%) less than average.

**Stakeholders were highly positive about EAGA's influence in building council capability**, noting that it helps in building networks and sharing information and knowledge, enables resource and document sharing, provides technical expertise and is a resource and driver for action.

**Importantly, this support for collaboration and action on climate change ultimately leads to:**

- Improvements in the skills and abilities of council staff.
- Efficiency benefits from avoiding duplication and sharing learnings.
- Identification of new opportunities for councils to pursue.

**Some of EAGA's most direct benefits come through collaborative projects.** In some cases, projects also include (and benefit) communities outside the EAGA region. **EAGA projects consistently:**

- **Provide a strong and well-considered evidence-base for intervention.**
- **Contribute to a range of outcomes**
- **Harness efficiencies of running at a regional (or larger) scale.**
- **Allow councils to participate that would not otherwise be able to**, providing councils with a range of initiatives to point to in demonstrating their work on climate change.

Recent examples of EAGA's project work include:

- Facilitation of energy performance contracts across six EAGA councils, facilitating efficiency upgrades on over 40 high priority council buildings, reducing emissions and running costs.
- Participation in a Local Government Power Purchasing Agreement that will deliver 100% renewable energy from 2021 to six EAGA councils, saving approximately 44,882 tonnes of emissions per year while also reducing annual electricity costs.
- Delivering Solar Savers, which has helped install over 290 solar systems in EAGA households, saving them \$1.3 million, improving their thermal comfort and reducing emissions.

**EAGA's work in advocacy was the most frequently mentioned benefit by interviewees.** EAGA makes frequent formal submissions (26 since mid-2017) and represents councils on a range of key stakeholder committees and groups. Some of the key pieces of advocacy include:

- Submissions and discussions relating to amendments to the Local Government Act. This helped result in streamlining of the use of council rates charges as a financing mechanism.
- Work on Energy Distribution Pricing Reviews that have led to pricing outcomes that save EAGA councils in the order of \$2.7 million and have resulted in \$5.6 million in funds for demand management programs in the EAGA region.

**This is an area of work that:**

- councils would typically not be able to do with their current level of resourcing
- has more influence through EAGA
- provides a more frequent and detailed representation of local government views and issues to state and federal government.

## Recommendations

Our summary of recommendations for EAGA (with detail found in the report) are to:

1. Consider increasing EAGA membership fee to enable employment of a Project Officer, increasing EAGA's capacity to deliver more benefits to councils and their communities.
2. Explore the potential for doing more work to directly support communities – such as with vulnerable households and businesses.
3. Ensure it communicates and sets appropriate expectations within councils about what benefits might be realised into the future.
4. Continue to strengthen their regional and cross-state work.
5. Consider a more formal consultation process for garnering input from councils about their current plans, priorities and progress in relation to climate change action.
6. Continue to maintain open lines of communication with other regional collaborations.
7. Consider raising awareness of EAGA's work within communities.
8. Continue to refine how it monitors its impacts.
9. Consider how technical expertise is retained within the organisation.
10. Consider developing a 'primer' for new officers/councillors on climate policy and programs.

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# 1 Introduction

## 1.1 Overview

The Eastern Alliance for Greenhouse Action (EAGA) is a collection of eight councils that are committed to responding to the challenges of climate change. EAGA has commissioned First Person Consulting (FPC), in collaboration with Point Advisory, to evaluate **EAGA's overall impact as an organisation**. The intent is that this can help EAGA and its member councils in considering and preparing their next Memorandum of Understanding for 2021-25.

This document reports on the findings from FPC's evaluation.

## 1.2 Objectives and scope of the evaluation

The objective of the evaluation was to:

- **provide an independent and objective assessment of EAGA's impact**
- **make recommendations for improving outcomes in the next MOU period.**

In turn, the scope of the evaluation includes:

- **Benchmarking EAGA's membership fees and staff resource model** against other Greenhouse Alliances.
- **Reviewing existing quantitative impact assessments** developed by EAGA for its annual reporting process (i.e. return on investment, emission reductions).
- **Identifying qualitative impacts** from EAGA's advocacy (i.e. submissions, engagement) and information sharing within the network (and beyond).
- **Identifying options for scaling-up EAGA's resource model** and implications for costs and benefits.
- **Provision of an evaluation report**, including key findings and recommendations for increasing the Alliance's impact over the next MOU period.

We turned this scope into a series of questions (see Appendix A) that we used to help guide the evaluation methodology (see Section 2).

## 1.3 This report

This report:

- outlines **the methodology** we used for the evaluation (Section 2)
- discusses **the impacts that EAGA has had** through its work building council capability, running projects and advocating for council and community interests (Section 3)
- summarises **the quantifiable benefits of EAGA's work** (Section 4)
- outlines **how EAGA compares with other Alliances** across the state and the opportunities for adjusting its staffing structure (Section 5)
- **summarises the key findings and recommendations** from the project (Section 6).

## 2 Methodology summary

Our approach to this evaluation included the following key steps:

- **An inception meeting** with the EAGA Executive Officer and two staff from EAGA member councils. This meeting helped to scope the evaluation and plan the data collection process. After the meeting we prepared an evaluation plan that we used to guide the project.
- **Document review.** This included key documents maintained by EAGA (e.g. the EAGA MoU, strategic plan, annual reports, etc.), as well as a review of other similar collaborations outside of Victoria.
- **Assessment of EAGA financial impact data.** We reviewed the data and analysis maintained by EAGA on its impacts on emission savings and financial savings to communities and councils. Our scope was to consider whether the estimates are reasonable and identify any limitations and opportunities for improvement. We have done some additional analysis with this data to calculate the net-present-value of key EAGA projects.
- **Consultation with key stakeholders.** Alongside the review of quantitative impacts, this was a key aspect of the evaluation. We interviewed:
  - **10 council staff** from across the eight EAGA councils, including both current and former members of the EAGA Steering Committee
  - **3 councillors** currently sitting on the EAGA Executive Committee
  - **5 EAGA partners**, including state government staff who have worked with EAGA and a consultant who worked on energy projects with EAGA and with other councils across the country.
  - **an EAGA Project Manager**
  - **4 Executive Officers/staff members from other Alliances.**

Interviews were semi-structured and done by phone or video-conference. They focused on interviewees experiences with EAGA, their views on how it functions and its impacts, as well as the opportunities for it into the future.

- **Analysis and reporting.** Early findings were tested in a presentation to the EAGA Steering Committee. The full results of the evaluation have been brought together in this report.

**Limitations to be kept in mind when reviewing the results of this evaluation are:**

- We did not do a detailed audit and verification of the EAGA quantitative data but did consider the overall approach and have suggested opportunities for improvement into the future.
- Many of the results are reliant on the perceptions of people associated with EAGA and, as such, have an inherent subjectivity. We have attempted to triangulate between different stakeholder groups and data sources to ensure the results are as reliable as possible.

## 3 Impacts on communities, councils and the environment

### 3.1 A framework for EAGA's impact

EAGA's strategic plan outlines four objectives:

- Leverage the network of EAGA to ensure the **implementation of innovative climate change mitigation and adaptation projects**.
- **Build the capacity of EAGA's members and stakeholders** through collaboration, partnerships and effectively sharing information.
- Utilise EAGA's scale, reputation and member's commitment to **influence climate policy, funding and programs within local, state and federal governments**.
- Develop partnerships to **secure resources for projects whilst maintaining strong governance structures and an engaged membership**.

Work against each of these four objectives – particularly capability building, projects and advocacy - has led to a range of outcomes for communities, councils and the environment. Figure 1 summarises the underlying framework or logic of EAGA's work, some of the benefits of being part of EAGA and the longer-term outcomes that being involved in EAGA is expected to lead to. These benefits apply to the EAGA region and beyond and include:

- emission reductions
- community resilience – e.g. through enhanced adaptation planning
- financial savings for council and ratepayers
- an enhancement of councils' voice in discussions on climate change.

**Overall, feedback from stakeholders is highly positive about the value and benefits of being part of EAGA. This is supported by documentation showcasing the substantive range of work it is involved in and that estimates some of its quantitative impacts.**

More detail against EAGA's work and impacts through capability building within councils, project work and advocacy are outlined in the sections below. Some of the specific quantitative benefits of EAGA are discussed in Section 4.

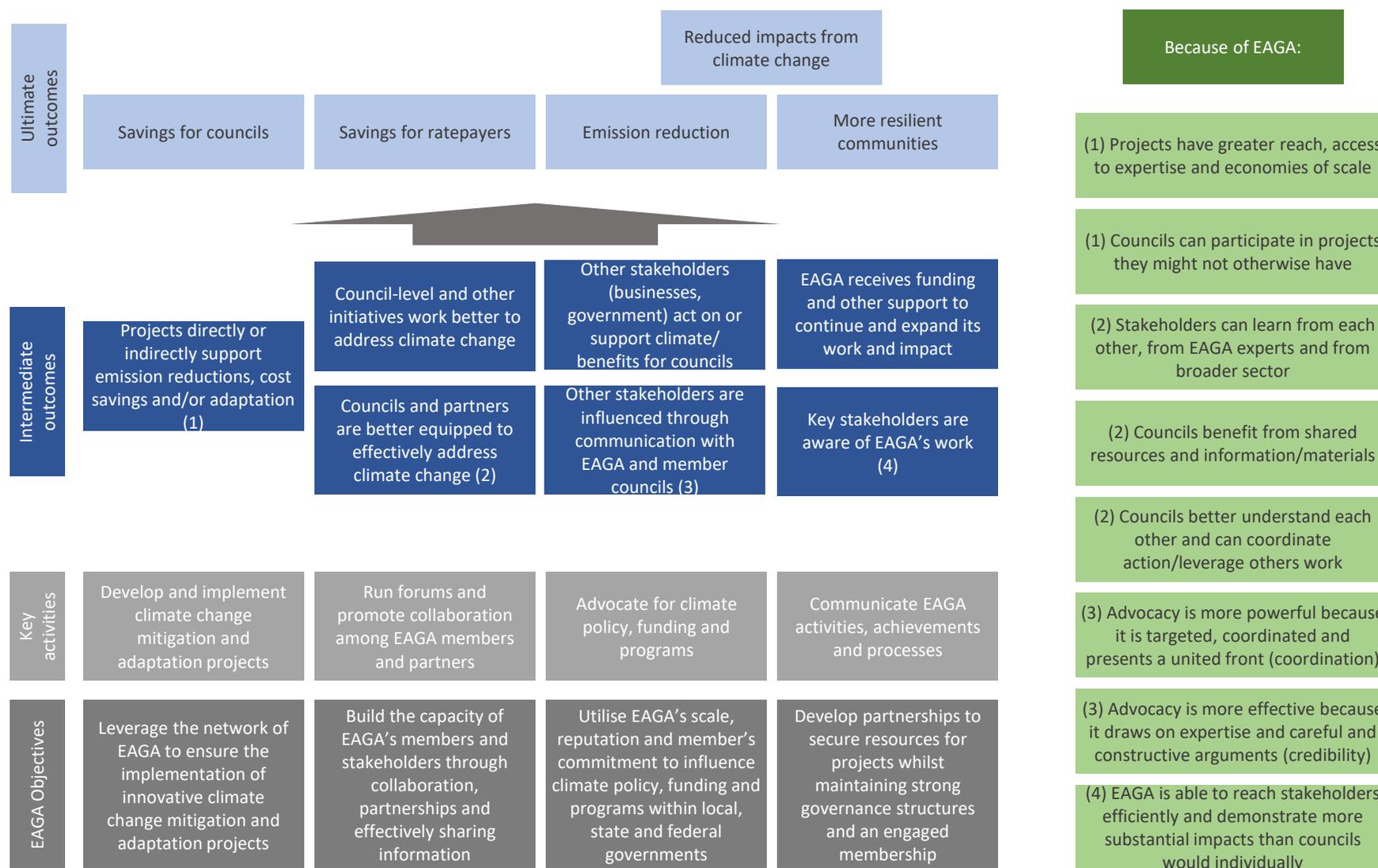


Figure 1. Program logic/framework outlining the relationship between EAGA's objectives and the intermediate and longer-term outcomes of its work. This includes key areas of benefit that EAGA provides because of its collaborative model.

## 3.2 Enhancing council capability through collaboration

**EAGA provides a valuable mechanism for fostering collaboration among councils and enhancing their ability to address climate change.** Council staff, councillors and external partners all emphasised the importance of this aspect of EAGA’s work and the value it brings to councils. EAGA does this in four ways, as outlined in Table 1:

- a forum for building networks and sharing information and knowledge
- resource and document sharing
- technical expertise
- driving action.

These mechanisms and benefits were well supported in the feedback from key stakeholders, but also in a broader review of collaborative approaches to climate change action (see Appendix B).

Table 1. Ways in which EAGA supports and enhances council capabilities with respect to climate change action.

Support mechanism	How it works	Why it is important
A forum for building networks and sharing information and knowledge	<p>EAGA provides an important collaborative environment through which council staff can share information and experiences relevant to their work on climate change adaptation and mitigation initiatives.</p> <p>The monthly EAGA steering committee is the key forum for this, but ad-hoc workshops/ seminars, project-based meetings and Alliance conferences are also important for building and maintaining relationships.</p> <p>Interviewees noted that these networks are increasingly extending beyond EAGA, allowing them to connect with and learn from councils in other Alliances.</p>	<p><b>A “brains trust” of ideas, insights and support.</b></p> <p>Council sustainability teams are typically small and climate change is one area of work among several (including biodiversity, water, waste). EAGA allows staff to go beyond their immediate teams to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• find out about what other councils are doing and identify potential opportunities or programs they could be running</li> <li>• identify lessons from other initiatives that might apply to their own work – either now or in the future – what worked, what didn’t</li> <li>• build a network of people on which they can approach for advice and input (as one interviewee noted, a “brains trust”).</li> </ul> <p>Several interviewees also indicated that their connections in the EAGA network help them not only in climate-related work, but also in other areas of their roles relating to sustainability more broadly.</p>
	<p><i>It’s about learning and networking with others. It’s not just being able to know different people, but it’s knowing and working with people who are dealing with the same problems – being able to pick up a phone and call them to work through things. You’ve effectively got eight more colleagues, even though they’re in different councils. (Steering Committee interviewee)</i></p>	

Support mechanism	How it works	Why it is important
Resource and document sharing	<p>A key aspect of the collaboration fostered by EAGA is the sharing of documents and resources. This happens through formal EAGA projects, such as recent work to develop an ESD Policy template. It also happens through sharing of work on a more ad-hoc basis between individual councils.</p>	<p><b>“Sharing the wheel rather than reinventing it”.</b></p> <p>Although documents will often need some tailoring of content to different councils, interviewees highlighted that sharing of the core content helps to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• reduce effort and duplication</li> <li>• save time to get materials prepared</li> <li>• allowing resources to be built on and improved as they iterate.</li> </ul> <hr/> <p><i>The number of times I’ve seen people say, ‘we’re doing this too’ can we can borrow that ... whether it’s a project scoping document, a tender an evaluation or whatever it is. (Steering Committee interviewee)</i></p>
Access to technical expertise	<p>While EAGA helps council staff to access the ideas and insights of staff in other councils, it also provides specific climate change expertise via the Executive Officer, project staff and consultants.</p> <p>Councillors, staff and partners noted, in particular, that the EAGA Executive Officer is a highly valuable source of expertise, especially with regard to energy markets and policy.</p>	<p><b>A resource for identifying and improving initiatives.</b></p> <p>The expertise available through EAGA:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• allows council staff to ask questions and build their own understanding of climate change and energy</li> <li>• distilled a complex technical and policy context to provide councils with information about opportunities and potential interventions with a councils-specific lens</li> <li>• allows for initiatives to be communicated more clearly within and beyond councils.</li> </ul> <hr/> <p><i>There’s value in having a dedicated resource- the EO - that has the skills as part of their role and that can review and keep up to date with these things. It’s the skill to distil something that’s very complex ... sometimes it’s hard to work out if something is valid and what to do locally. It’s about having a resource that can look at the big picture and apply it locally. (Steering Committee interviewee)</i></p>
Driving action	<p>Through having an Executive Officer that works across councils, EAGA helps to coordinate and drive action on climate change. In this role, EAGA acts as a catalyst; encouraging and supporting interactions that lead to collaboration, coordinating work and identifying opportunities for intervention.</p>	<p><b>An energy centre for driving progress.</b></p> <p>The dedicated nature of EAGA helps council staff to work with and identify meaningful opportunities in what is, as one interviewee noted, “a complex and crowded space”.</p> <p>EAGA’s Executive Officer, with their focus on climate change, helps to cut through this complexity, saving time for council staff and identifying opportunities that might otherwise be missed.</p> <hr/> <p><i>“We’re all time poor in our roles. In local government in the sustainability space you’re given a big portfolio - from water to waste to climate. Often with a small team and stretched thin. Someone who’s dedicated to climate change outcomes is really important” (Steering Committee interviewee)</i></p>

**Importantly, this support for collaboration and action on climate change ultimately flows through to three key benefits for the overall capability of councils:**

- 1. Improvements in the skills and abilities of council staff.** Participants in EAGA's Steering Committee and other forums clearly benefit from these interactions, learning from each other, from the Executive Officer and from other collaborators. They are able to improve their technical knowledge as well as their understanding of how to best manage and deliver meaningful outcomes for their councils. As such, there is a flow through of professional development through to better outcomes for councils.

*The PPA [Power Purchase Agreement] ... we learned a lot from the process – the dos, the don'ts. We went through a different process because of the timing but, because we had an understanding of the issue, we were able to ask the right questions. If we hadn't seen it go through EAGA, there was stuff that I just wasn't aware of, particularly in terms of the implications at different decision-points.  
(Steering Committee interviewee)*

- 2. Reductions in levels of duplication, the time taken to develop initiatives and the resources required.** Sharing knowledge, information, documents and experiences through EAGA all results in more efficient delivery of initiatives within councils. Council staff save time preparing documents that are already drafted and tested, they avoid pitfalls and issues others have encountered and they can proceed faster and with greater confidence their work will deliver value.

*Because we're able to share resources, a lot of the projects that put forward as a council, they're really streamlined and efficient. Because we've shared those resources and the learnings are taken from other councils, it saves us a lot of time and makes the roll out better. (Councillor interviewee)*

*The ESD policy project – it's about to be put to council in two weeks. Without EAGA, it wouldn't be anywhere near that or being adopted – particularly for us as we have very little resources in this space. (Steering Committee interviewee)*

- 3. Identification of new opportunities for councils to pursue.** Through enabling collaboration between councils and access to expertise, EAGA helps councils to identify projects and other initiatives that they might not otherwise be aware of. Councils become aware of what others are doing, but also have access to the continual 'environmental scanning' done by the Executive Officer, who filters through key opportunities to council staff to consider. These opportunities may not be realised by councils in the absence of this filtering simply because of a lack of time, but also because they may be reasonably technical or the implications for councils are unclear. These opportunities can lead to work within individual councils or, as outlined in Section 3.3, collaborative projects across councils.

*It's a big field and there's lots of technical knowledge and needs ... EAGA has been a great resource. They've introduced us to environmental upgrade finances and it's helped a lot to know a more about that (Steering Committee Interviewee).*

### 3.3 Climate change project work

Some of EAGA's most direct benefits for communities, councils and the environment come through collaborative projects. These projects are typically initiated through the EAGA Steering Committee and then coordinated by EAGA across member councils. In many cases, projects include (and benefit) councils and communities outside the EAGA region.

Key projects over the last MoU period (July 2017- June 2021) are outlined in Table 2, with a full list of EAGA projects since 2012 in Appendix C.

Table 2. Key EAGA projects between July 2017 and June 2021.

Project	Description	Key outcomes/benefits
<b>Charging the Regions</b>	EAGA partnered with the Central Victorian Greenhouse Alliance to undertake a study on EV charging stations and the opportunities for a joint investment program across the state.	<p>Greater information to help councils identify and plan for opportunities with respect to EV charging stations – both within the EAGA region and across the state.</p> <p>This was suggested to be a contributor, along with other advocacy done by the Alliances, to a recent announcement by the state government that it will invest \$25 million into electric vehicle charging infrastructure.</p>
<b>DNSP Engagement program</b>	<p>EAGA developed an engagement framework to guide and support engagement with the Distribution Network Service Providers (DNSPs).</p> <p>The framework includes a series of policy statements which detail the specific outcomes that councils are seeking to achieve through structured a coordinated engagement with distribution businesses.</p>	The framework has allowed for advocacy (see Section 3.4) as part of the EDPR that led to favourable pricing outcomes for councils (savings in the order of \$2.7 million – Section 4) and \$5.6 million in funds for demand management programs in the EAGA region.
<b>ESD in Council Buildings and Infrastructure</b>	EAGA engaged Organica Engineering to evaluate Environmentally Sustainable Design (ESD) policies and practices in council building projects. The overarching goal of the evaluation was to assist councils to achieve best practice sustainability outcomes in the way council buildings and infrastructure are planned, designed, built, used and maintained.	<p>A customisable template ESD policy for use of all EAGA councils, to either establish a new policy from scratch, or to enhance and update an existing policy.</p> <p>Guidance materials, to assist councils establish and implement the ESD policy, which, so far, has led to two councils adopting new policies and one updating their existing policy.</p>
<b>Energy Performance Contracts</b>	EAGA's joint Energy Performance Contracting (EPC) program is the first of its kind in the Australian Local Government sector. It takes a coordinated approach to energy performance contracts with energy services company (ESCO), who implement a holistic set of energy efficiency, renewable energy and other	<p>Six EAGA councils have proceeded with EPCs across more than 40 buildings in the region.</p> <p>This is expected to lead to emissions savings in the order of 54,000 tonnes over ten years.</p> <p>Under the EAGA model, councils benefit from a joint procurement approach and a shared staff resource, hosted at one of the participating councils.</p>

Project	Description	Key outcomes/benefits
	measures in facilities. These changes deliver savings to finance the full cost of the project and save emissions.	
<b>Local Government PPA</b>	The LG PPA is the largest ever emissions reduction project undertaken by local government in Australia. The initiative will enable 47 Victorian councils to switch to 100% renewable energy from mid 2021. Six EAGA members are participating in the project to secure renewable energy to power municipal offices, leisure centres, streetlights and community buildings.	The initiative is expected to reduce participating EAGA councils' emissions by approximately 44,882 tonnes per year, as well as saving on electricity prices through the bulk purchasing agreement.
<b>Major Road Lights</b>	EAGA completed a regional business case for the replacement of major road across the region. The findings show that replacing all inefficient major road lights with energy efficient LEDs could save \$61.6 million in electricity costs and cut emissions by 236,682 tonnes over the next 20 years.	The business case provides a key tool for negotiations between EAGA and state government to support the upgrade of main road lights.
<b>Resilient Emergency Relief Centres</b>	The project aims to enhance the resilience of emergency relief centres within the EAGA region to respond to the impacts of climate change. The initiative covers all eight EAGA councils and seeks to build the capacity of asset and facility managers to address climate change risks, including assessing the risks and vulnerabilities of sites and planning and prioritising targeted upgrades.	Still in its early stages, the project benefits from joint funding by the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning as part of the Regional Adaptation Strategy for Greater Melbourne.
<b>Scaling up Solar</b>	Between 2017 and 2019, five EAGA members (Knox, Boroondara, Maroondah, Monash, Whitehorse) systematically assessed and prioritised solar and storage opportunities at 53 'tier two' council facilities (outside the EPC project).	Funding for the project was secured through Local Government Victoria's Collaborative Council – Sustainability Fund Partnerships (CCSFP) Program. It has provided councils with an enhanced understanding of the investment opportunities, priorities and options for a wide array of sites not covered by the EPC.
<b>Solar Savers</b>	EAGA is currently delivering Solar Savers for 11 councils, including five EAGA members (Glen Eira, Knox, Maroondah, Monash and Yarra Ranges) and six non-member councils. The program supports low-income households to install solar systems, including facilitating access to no-interest council loans.	EAGA and its partners secured a \$760,000 grant to pilot solar savers from 2017-2019. Since then it has helped install close to 700 systems, including over 290 in EAGA households.  This will deliver savings to participating EAGA households in the order of 1.3 million over 20 years along with 32,570 tonnes of emission reductions. Importantly, participating households also benefit from improved thermal comfort as they are less inhibited by energy prices.

EAGA projects appear to have several key characteristics and benefits:

- **A strong and well-considered evidence-base for intervention.** Most of the projects reviewed here were backed by a clear business case with well-articulated goals. Interviewees highlighted that the work that EAGA puts into identifying and scoping project opportunities is, in itself, of substantial value. While some councils noted they simply would not have been aware of key project opportunities without EAGA (e.g. see Section 3.2), others pointed to the importance of EAGA’s work in developing evidence-based proposals, helping to provide councils with confidence to proceed.

*EAGA’s work provides further weight and justification for projects to get them moving forward ... it gives it credibility and brings it into the mainstream.  
(Councillor interviewee)*

- **Projects contribute to a range of outcomes,** including emission reductions, cost-savings for councils, cost-savings for community members and longer-term enhancements to community resilience and council capabilities in addressing climate change. Importantly, interviewees also highlighted that EAGA projects provides them with something to show their community tangible evidence of what council is working on in this space.

*If community members ask, ‘what actions are we taking on climate change’, the sort of stuff that we can point to as councillors, a lot of the stuff we can point to is from EAGA. (Councillor interviewee)*

Importantly, this includes outcomes that are unrelated to climate change per se, such as support for vulnerable parts of the community through programs such as Solar Savers.

- **There are efficiency gains in running at scale.** By running projects across EAGA member councils (and sometimes more broadly across the state) EAGA is able to harness efficiencies and economies of scale that would be otherwise unavailable to councils. This includes elements such as sharing a project manager across councils, but also the benefits of group procurement. For example, Frontier Impact Group estimated savings in the order of 50% or more within councils for savings in in contract management and procurement for work scoped under the Scaling Up Solar project.

*For the energy performance contracts, there was \$1.8 million investment in [our buildings]. If we were to do it on our own it wouldn’t have attracted the same interest and calibre of contract and so, with the other councils involved, it’s much bigger – service providers could see an interest and provide a more competitive offering. (Steering Committee interviewee)*

- **Closely related to the above point, as collaborative projects they allow councils to participate that would not otherwise be able to.** Three-quarters of council interviewees (six out of eight councils) identified specific projects that they would not have participated in had it not been for EAGA. For example, most council staff interviewed for the Solar Savers

program evaluation indicated that their councils would not have been able to run a similar program on their own and that it allowed councils to participate, even at a low level.

- **Many of EAGA’s key projects interact and build on each other.** For example, the DNSP Engagement Program had important elements that supported advocacy around the EDPR and was itself linked to the work done with the Northern Alliance for Greenhouse Action on the Future Energy Planning project. This is important to note as it highlights that tangible benefits are often indirect and can come some years after a preliminary piece of work begins.

### 3.4 Advocacy

EAGA’s work in advocacy was the most frequently mentioned benefit by interviewees. Over the last five years (i.e. since the start of the MoU in mid-2017), EAGA has made formal submissions on 26 matters of relevance to EAGA councils (Table 3). It has also had representation through a range of stakeholder committees and groups, including:

- EAGA’s Executive Officer was appointed on Ausnet Services Customer Consultative Committee where issues of importance to councils can be directly raised with the distribution business’ CEO and Directorate.
- EAGA’s Technical Officer was appointed to the State Government’s stakeholder engagement panel for the Victoria Energy Efficiency Target and its scheme that provided subsidies to the EPC program.<sup>1</sup>
- EAGA’s Executive Officer is on the Stakeholder Committee for the Regional Adaptation Strategy for Greater Melbourne, which also supports EAGA’s work on the Resilient emergency relief centres project.
- The manager of the Solar Savers program is regularly consulted by Solar Victoria in relation to the design of the Solar Homes program.
- EAGA and the Greenhouse Alliances have been providing an ongoing vehicle for councils to have a coordinated conversation with the State Government regarding the sector-based adaptation plans and Victoria’s emission reduction targets.<sup>2</sup>

Table 3. EAGA’s advocacy submissions for the current MoU period.

Year	# Submissions	Examples
2017	10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Senate inquiry into the current and future impacts of climate change on housing, buildings and infrastructure</li> <li>• Review of the Carbon Farming Initiative legislation and the Emission Reduction Fund</li> <li>• Informing the Local Government Act Bill 2018</li> </ul> <p><b>Example outcome:</b> Amendments to the Local Government Act to streamline the use council rates charges as a financing mechanism for sustainability</p>

<sup>1</sup> EAGA (2017). 2016-2017 Annual Report.

<sup>2</sup> EAGA (2019). 2018-2019 Annual Report.

Year	# Submissions	Examples
2018	8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Minimum Electricity Feed-in Tariffs</li> <li>• Victoria’s Interim Emissions Targets</li> <li>• Solar Homes Package</li> </ul> <p><b>Example outcome:</b> Enhancements and alignment between the incentives available through Solar Homes and the EAGA Solar Savers program, allowing further benefits for vulnerable households</p>
2019	5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Senate Committee on Fair Dinkum Power</li> <li>• AEMC rule change wholesale demand response</li> <li>• Inquiry into Tackling Climate Change in Victorian Communities</li> </ul> <p><b>Example outcome:</b> The Victorian Legislative Assembly ‘Inquiry into tackling climate change in Victorian communities’ has over 120 references to the Greenhouse Alliances and more than 20 specifically to EAGA. It recognised <b>“The Victorian Greenhouse Alliances, of which almost all Victorian local governments are members, are a world-leading example of collaboration for climate action.</b> Their key initiatives include one of the largest energy-efficient public lighting upgrades in the world and a local government renewable energy power purchase agreement”.<sup>3</sup> The inquiry recommended additional funding and support for the Alliances and for Local Government participation.</p>
2020	3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Technology Investment Roadmap</li> <li>• National COVID-19 Commission</li> <li>• Eastern Metropolitan Partnerships Roundtable</li> </ul> <p><b>Key issue raised:</b> Advocacy for climate positive stimulus measures that would help address the economic and social impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. This includes improving the quality of the building stock (particularly for vulnerable households) and leveraging the capabilities and capacity of councils.</p>

Advocacy is notably different to some of EAGA’s key project work in that the impacts are generally less easily attributable. Nevertheless, stakeholders indicated that EAGA’s advocacy work is a key benefit of the Alliance and is an area of work that:

- **Councils on their own would typically not be able to do.** Representatives from seven of the eight EAGA councils indicated that they would not engage in advocacy, or to the same extent, as they do through EAGA. EAGA enables someone to have the time and expertise, on behalf of all councils, to investigate and coordinate advocacy on a range of issues.

*We couldn’t do the level of advocacy we do at the moment without EAGA ... we can have a voice in the policy area where we might otherwise not. (Steering Committee interviewee)*

- **The advocacy likely has a greater influence.** Most council and state-government interviewees highlighted that because EAGA represents an alliance of councils and is presenting a consistent message, it helps to carry more weight with decision-makers. This is

<sup>3</sup> [https://www.parliament.vic.gov.au/images/stories/committees/epc-LA/Inquiry\\_into\\_Tackling\\_Climate\\_Change\\_in\\_Victorian\\_Communities/LAEP\\_C\\_59-01\\_Inquiry\\_into\\_tackling\\_climate\\_change\\_in\\_Vic\\_Communities.pdf](https://www.parliament.vic.gov.au/images/stories/committees/epc-LA/Inquiry_into_Tackling_Climate_Change_in_Victorian_Communities/LAEP_C_59-01_Inquiry_into_tackling_climate_change_in_Vic_Communities.pdf) p. xviii

extended further through advocacy done in collaboration with the even broader network of the other Alliances. Several interviewees also noted that the submissions developed by EAGA are high quality and technically proficient, further enhancing their credibility.

*EAGA is quite well respected in local and state government. Those broader government departments, they like work working with collaborative groups – it helps them ensure the information is consistent ... it helps set a higher expectation. (Steering Committee interviewee)*

One State Government interviewee suggested that sometimes the influence of EAGA's advocacy work could be further enhanced by demonstrating 'sign-on' by individual mayors and/or councillors, rather than being just from EAGA on behalf of councils. The caveat to this being that part of EAGA's ability to manage an effective advocacy program is its ability to do this quickly and outside of council consultation timeframes.

- Feedback from state government interviewees also suggests that **EAGA's project work is a form of advocacy in and of itself**. By running projects in often new areas, they noted that EAGA and its member councils are demonstrating what is achievable and showing leadership in this space, helping to raise the bar on what councils consider possible and 'mainstream'.

**Closely linked to advocacy is the role that EAGA plays as a bridging organisation with the State Government.** All four state government interviewees noted the important role that EAGA plays in helping government agencies engage with local government on climate-change related issues. They noted that it is both:

- A way to rapidly gain input from a local government perspective (via EAGA) that, in turn, means that they are more likely to approach EAGA (and the other Alliances) for a local government perspective.
- A way for state government to 'test' ideas and the potential feasibility of new initiatives with local government, which was seen to be particularly useful given the ability of the EAGA Executive Officer to provide a critical, local-government viewpoint over issues.

*The alliances have a unique lens – they understand the intersection between councils' programs and state government policy. There's a nuanced understanding of the space that alliances 'get'. (State government interviewee)*

## 4 Quantifiable benefits of EAGA's work

**As described in Section 3, EAGA's work leads to outcomes for communities, councils and the environment.** Many important outcomes are difficult to quantify – such as improvements in planning for climate change, the thermal comfort of residents, the resilience of communities or the efficiency benefits of information sharing. It is therefore important that quantifiable benefits – particularly financial benefits – do not become too narrow a focus for judging the success of EAGA initiatives.

**That said, some of EAGA's impacts are quantifiable and it has demonstrated substantial achievement in terms of cost savings and emission reductions.**

The EAGA Executive Officer maintains a spreadsheet for quantifying these benefits where possible. This evaluation involved reviewing this spreadsheet to ensure that the approach used in making the estimates was appropriate and reasonable, suggesting improvements where possible. Suggestions on amending the spreadsheet and completing the information were made as part of the iterative review process.

One key refinement has been calculating the net-present-value (NPV) for the key investments and actions undertaken during the review period. This helps account for long-term benefits and costs of such investments and actions beyond the current MoU period. This is standard practice when an investment has been made and will keep delivering benefits for a long time into the future. For example, once replaced with LEDs, streetlights deliver savings for the life of the asset, i.e. around 20 years.

We used this in any calculations of return-on-investment (ROI), providing a whole-of-life assessment of the financial value of these projects (Table 4). It is worth noting that additional societal benefits were not incorporated in the calculation, only financial benefits accruing primarily to participating councils. This means that **the overall economic value of the projects undertaken will be higher than the financial value calculated**, and qualitative assessment of such benefits should be considered alongside the financial value (see Section 3).

Overall, based on the NPV calculations, using a 5% discount rate<sup>4</sup>, EAGA has led to quantifiable benefits in terms of:

- **Net financial savings for EAGA councils in the order of \$10.1 million** (net present value), taking into account grants obtained through EAGA of \$576,222.
- **\$3.4 million in savings for EAGA households** (1,534 households participating in EAGA programs; Table 5).
- **Expected emission savings of 624,907 tonnes CO<sub>2</sub>e** over the lifetime of initiatives.

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<sup>4</sup> We used a 5% discount as a conservative balance of common practice in energy investment projects, feedback on typical council discount rates and application of the Grattan Institute's recommendations from 2018 (<https://grattan.edu.au/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/900-unfreezing-discount-rates.pdf>).

Table 4. Estimated lifetime savings and emission reductions for councils from EAGA's projects and advocacy work (expressed as net present value, using a 5% discount).

Area of work	Key projects	Net Present Value of investment <sup>5</sup>	Return on Investment	Emission Savings
<b>Energy efficiency projects (capital intensive)</b>	Streetlight upgrades and Energy Performance Contracts	\$7,818,117 <sup>6</sup>	1.3	131,402 t
<b>Advocacy and negotiation on electricity tariffs and the streetlighting OMR</b>	EDPR 2016-2021 + Ausnet OMR negotiations	\$1,168,644	41.0	
	EDPR 2021-2026	\$1,556,088 <sup>7</sup>	64.8	
	Tariff reviews	\$479,138	13.6	
<b>Other council-focused programs</b>	Local government PPA	Not yet confirmed, but likely to be substantial		448,823 <sup>8</sup> t

Table 5. Lifetime financial and emission savings for community members from EAGA's projects.

Benefits for others	Key projects	NPV of benefits	Notes	Emission Savings <sup>9</sup>
<b>EAGA communities</b>	Solar Savers	\$1,307,660	Net savings to participating community members	32,570 t
	Live Green with Less	\$2,125,846	Net savings to participating community members	12,112 t

Of note in the project-level breakdown is:

- **Capital intensive projects such as streetlight replacement and energy performance contracts had a return on investment of 1.3 (across councils).** As well as being a positive return to councils (a strongly positive return in the case of streetlight upgrades), **these projects are also expected to reduce emissions by at least 131,402 tonnes** over 10 years.
- **Other projects and advocacy led by EAGA have had substantial benefits for councils with low levels of additional investment.** For example, tariff negotiations and EDPR advocacy have resulted in \$3.2 million in savings for councils – an average return on investment for these projects of 36.0, due to the low level of required investment by each council (noting that this does not take into account the time investment by Alliance and council staff).

<sup>5</sup> Incorporating project costs only and excluding membership fees.

<sup>6</sup> Conservatively set at 10 year life but may be up to 20, which would more than double the net benefit

<sup>7</sup> Preliminary estimates only – the AER has yet to make its final determination.

<sup>8</sup> Over 10 years

<sup>9</sup> Deemed lifetime savings

- **The \$576,222 in grants secured through EAGA represent almost half (47%) of the EAGA membership fees over the last nine years (\$1,226,944).**

An overall assessment of the financial value of participating in EAGA comes from the ratio of the membership fees to overall net value of projects to councils (i.e. the fee provides and enables access to benefits worth X amount). For the period under review, **EAGA's membership fees provide councils with an avenue for accessing net benefits (after additional investment and including grants) of 7.9 times the membership fee.**<sup>10</sup>

Note that, if using a discount rate of 0% (instead of 5%), i.e. assuming no "time value of money", the whole-of-life benefits and ratio increase. Indeed, depending on councils' approaches to investment, a discount rate of less than 5% may be reasonable given the current, historically low, interest rates.

Note also, the key caveat to this analysis is the extent to which these impacts would be realised in the absence of EAGA. As described in Section 3, feedback from key stakeholders indicates that the majority of project work simply would not have happened without EAGA coordinating it across councils. Some advocacy outcomes are more difficult to attribute solely to EAGA (e.g. funding commitments for EV charging infrastructure). However, the above examples (i.e. the EDPR) are ones in which EAGA's role and influence is relatively clear. Regardless, even if only a fraction (e.g. 5%) of the benefits of these changes attributed to EAGA, the return on investment is still highly positive.

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<sup>10</sup> Note that the project-level assessments of return on investment do not include the EAGA membership fee as the fee contributes to the full breadth of EAGA's work. Also, this ratio itself is not an estimate of return on investment but highlights the magnitude of the value that being part of EAGA provides to participating councils.

## 5 Benchmarking EAGA's operating model

**Given EAGA is recognised to provide good value to councils, there is interest in how it might build on the work it is doing and expand the scale of its impact.** One approach to this is to adjust its operational structure so that it has more capacity for project work, advocacy and supporting collaboration. This section benchmark's EAGA's fees and staffing against other Greenhouse Alliances to support further consideration of this issue.

Each of the seven Alliances has an operational and membership fee structure that has emerged to address its members' needs. Table 6 outlines EAGA's membership fees and staff structure as compared to five of the other Alliances who were able to share data.

Of note when comparing across the Alliances is:

- EAGA has the lowest fees among the metropolitan Alliances – about one fifth (18%) less than the average.
- EAGA funds a portion of its work through consultancy fees, particularly in terms of business case development and support for project implementation (see Section 3). This is most similar to WAGA's approach, who also rely on a single Executive Officer.
- There may be an opportunity to reduce the administrative load on the EAGA Executive Officer:
  - The EAGA Executive Officer contributes to projects and is the primary driver of the advocacy and capability building elements of EAGA's work. They also engage in a substantial element of administration – organising and coordinating meetings, taking minutes, etc.
  - Reducing this administration load was highlighted as a key opportunity by Steering Committee and Executive Committee interviewees, freeing the Executive Officer up for more impactful work.
  - SECCCA has recently engaged an Administrative Support Officer at 0.6 FTE to reduce the administration burden on their Executive Officer, freeing them up to work more closely with each of their member councils. Note also that SECCCA is an incorporated organisation and is not administratively supported by councils the same way as Maroondah does for EAGA (or for example, Brimbank does for WAGA).
- Some of the other Alliances (NAGA, CVGA) have a separate Project Manager or Project Officer who help both with some administration and contributing to project/advocacy work.
- EAGA also manages the Solar Savers program and the Resilient Emergency Relief Centre project and their respective project managers. These are not shown here as they are funded through project-specific funds. They are an additional staffing consideration and one that, particularly for Solar Savers, grapples with a variable flow of work intensity.

Table 6. EAGA membership fees and staff structure as compared to other Alliances.

Alliance	Membership fees	# Councils	Total fees	Notes	FTE EO (Band 8)	FTE EO (Band 7)	FTE Project Manager (Band 6)	FTE Project Officer	FTE Admin	Total FTE
EAGA	\$21,855	8	\$174,840	~20% of fees are allocated to project costs (e.g. consultants, etc.)		1.0				1.0
SECCCA	\$36,500	9	\$328,500	No fees are spent on project costs, but ~1.4 FTE is spent on project work. Project costs are secured separately.	0.9			1.0	0.6	2.5
NAGA	\$24,544	9	\$220,896	~6% of fees are allocated to project costs (e.g. consultants, etc.)	0.8		0.8			1.6
WAGA	\$24,500	6	\$147,000	~17% of fees are allocated to project costs (e.g. consultants, etc.)		1.0				1.0
CVGA	\$12,231	13	\$159,000	As there are a mix of regional and rural councils, membership fee is an average – fees vary depending on council size	0.8			0.6		1.4
GBGA	\$9,319	13	\$149,100	As there are a mix of regional and rural councils, membership fee is an average – fees vary depending on council size		1.0				1.0
Average <sup>11</sup>	\$26,850		\$217,809							1.4

<sup>11</sup> Average of non-regional Alliances that use a standard fee for all councils (i.e. EAGA, SECCCA, NAGA and WAGA).

**The points above make a basic case for additional membership fees to fund staff that either free-up Executive Officer time and/or add project management capacity.** There was strong feedback from the EAGA steering committee and from other Alliances that there is sufficient opportunity in this space that their time could be used productively. This may include some of the work currently done by consultants. It is important to keep in mind, however, that additional staff come with additional overhead/management time, meaning that the relationship between additional capacity and additional impact may not be 1:1.

**An outstanding question is whether EAGA is best served by a focused administrative assistant, or a project manager who is more skilled, capable and flexible, but that might cost more.** A key point in making this decision is what the administrative load is currently for the Executive Officer and, importantly, how this load varies day to day (i.e. whether a part-time employed focused on administration duties would be fully and consistently utilised). SECCCA's employment of a 0.6 FTE administrative support suggests there is substantial work here but, unlike EAGA, SECCCA is not administratively supported by a council and so has greater administrative overheads.

As a last point, other Alliances also highlighted the value they have had from collaborations with universities and getting post-graduate-level students to work on contained research/review pieces. This may be a further opportunity for EAGA to explore in concert with the options above, noting that the supervisory/administrative burden of a student could be better supported with a Project Manager/Project Officer resource.

## 6 Key findings and recommendations

### 6.1 Key findings

EAGA appears to deliver substantial value for its member councils. Work in building council capability, delivering projects and coordinating advocacy has led to a range of outcomes for communities, councils and the environment.

**Stakeholders were highly positive about EAGA’s influence in building council capability, noting that it:**

- Provides a forum for building networks and sharing information and knowledge - a “brains trust” of ideas, insights and support.
- Enables resource and document sharing among councils.
- Supplies technical expertise, particularly with respect to the EAGA Executive Officer.
- Is a resource and driver for action.

**Importantly, this support for collaboration and action on climate change ultimately flows through to three key benefits for the overall capability of councils:**

- Improvements in the skills and abilities of council staff.
- Efficiency benefits in terms of reductions in levels of duplication, the time taken to develop initiatives and the resources required.
- Identification of new opportunities for councils to pursue.

**Some of EAGA’s most direct benefits for communities, councils and the environment come through collaborative projects.** In some cases, projects also include (and benefit) councils and communities outside the EAGA region. Recent examples of EAGA’s project work include:

- An initiative to evaluate ESD policies relating to council buildings and infrastructure, which led to a template that each of the EAGA councils can tailor and adopt for their own purposes. So far two councils have implemented policies using this work and one has updated their existing policy using some of its insights.
- Facilitation of energy performance contracts across six EAGA councils. These contracts provide a straightforward means of guaranteeing energy savings, emission reductions and efficiency upgrades on over 40 high priority council buildings in the region.
- Six EAGA members are participating in a Local Government Power Purchasing Agreement, initiated by EAGA and the other Greenhouse Alliances across 47 Victorian councils. The agreement will deliver 100% renewable energy from 2021, saving EAGA councils approximately 44,882 tonnes of emissions per year while also reducing annual electricity costs.
- The Resilient Emergency Relief Centres project works across all eight EAGA councils to build the capacity of asset and facility managers to address climate change risks. Jointly funded with the Department of Environment Land Water and Planning, it is a key initiative under the Greater Melbourne Regional Adaptation Strategy.

- EAGA has run the Solar Savers program since 2017. Over that time it has helped install over 290 solar systems in EAGA councils by providing support and facilitating no-interest council loans to low-income households.

**EAGA projects appear to have several key characteristics and benefits in terms of how they are scoped and delivered:**

- **A strong and well-considered evidence-base for intervention**, typically supported by formal business cases.
- **Projects contribute to a range of outcomes**, including emission reductions, cost-savings for councils, cost-savings for community members and longer-term enhancements to community resilience and council capabilities in addressing climate change.
- **There are efficiency gains in running at scale**. By running projects across EAGA member councils (and sometimes more broadly across the state), EAGA projects harness the benefits of shared delivery models and bulk purchasing economies.
- **They allow councils to participate that would not otherwise be able to**, providing councils with a range of initiatives to point to in demonstrating their work on climate change.

**EAGA's work in advocacy was the most frequently mentioned benefit by interviewees.** Over the last five years (i.e. since the start of the MoU in mid-2017), EAGA has made submissions on 26 matters of relevance to EAGA councils. It has also represented EAGA councils on a range of key stakeholder committees and groups.

Some of the key pieces of advocacy include:

- Submissions and discussions relating to amendments to the Local Government Act. This helped result in streamlining of the use of council rates charges as a financing mechanism for sustainability.
- Submission and negotiation with the state government in relation to the Solar Homes program, leading to enhancements and alignment between the incentives available through Solar Homes and the EAGA Solar Savers program.
- Advocacy on climate positive stimulus measures that would help address the economic and social impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. This included highlighting opportunities to the National COVID-19 Commission on improving the quality of the building stock (particularly for vulnerable households) and leveraging the capabilities and capacity of councils.

**Stakeholders indicated that EAGA's advocacy work is a key benefit of the Alliance – elevating the voice of councils in the broader discourse on climate change – and is an area of work that:**

- councils on their own would typically not be able to do
- has more influence through EAGA.

Closely linked to advocacy is **the role that EAGA plays as a bridging organisation with the State Government, which allows more frequent and more detailed representation of local government views** and considerations to state government.

In terms of quantifiable benefits, EAGA has:

- **Net financial savings for EAGA councils in the order of \$10.1 million**, taking into account the grants obtained through EAGA of \$576,222.
- **\$3.4 million in savings for EAGA households** (1,534 households participating in EAGA programs).
- **Expected emission savings of 624,907 tonnes CO<sub>2</sub>e** over the lifetime of initiatives.
- **While not strictly a ‘return-on-investment’, EAGA’s membership fees provide councils with an avenue for accessing net benefits (after additional investment and grants) of 7.9 times the membership fee.**

In comparison to other Alliances, EAGA has the lowest fees among the metropolitan Alliances – about one fifth (18%) less than the average. The Executive Officer is also currently engaged with administrative duties, suggesting that additional staff that either free-up Executive Officer time and/or add project management capacity would lead to an increase in EAGA’s impacts.

## 6.2 Recommendations and opportunities

Flowing on from the findings above and the more detailed results in Sections 3 to 5, we recommend several opportunities below for improving and expanding on EAGA’s work into the future. Importantly, we acknowledge that some of these recommendations are already part of EAGA’s forward planning.

1. **EAGA should consider increasing its membership fee to help increase its own capacity and, in turn, deliver more benefits to councils and their communities.** EAGA currently delivers substantial benefits and there is the opportunity to increase these benefits through a relatively small increase in the fees per member. An additional part-time staff resource could reduce the administrative load on the Executive Officer and/or directly contribute to project, advocacy and capability building work. We suggest that a project-manager/officer-level resource is likely to provide the most meaningful benefit and capacity increase to the Alliance. To support this case, EAGA should ensure it has a clear strategic plan for the general areas in where the additional resources would be used and the opportunities they would be addressing, in line with Recommendation 2.
2. EAGA has delivered substantial benefits for council operations in recent years. Into the future, **EAGA and its member councils should explore the potential for doing more work to directly support communities** – such as with vulnerable households and businesses. This would fit with a growing appetite across EAGA councils to address climate change and its impacts. This could expand on some of the work EAGA has already done with communities (such as Solar Savers) or applying some of the mechanisms used with councils in the private space (e.g. supporting large business with energy performance contracts). Greater reach into councils’ planning departments to support, for example, energy efficient housing stock upgrades, is another area of opportunity.
3. In considering its future work plan, **EAGA should ensure it communicates and sets appropriate expectations within councils about what benefits might be realised.** There has historically been substantial focus on saving council operational funds. If there is a move to

more community-focused work, then EAGA will need to ensure that future expectations of financial savings for councils – and the costs of community-based programs – are realistic.

4. **EAGA and the Alliances should continue to strengthen their regional and cross-state work.** This was observed as a key strength of EAGA’s work in recent years and there is good support for it continuing, including helping councils connect across regions and coordinating broader advocacy programs. Drawing on the expertise of other Alliances is also an area that will be important in helping EAGA generate more impact from community focused programs, particularly those outside of the energy realm (Recommendation 2).
5. Some councils highlighted the occasional tension between EAGA’s projects – which are driven by group needs – and their individual councils’ plans and priorities. They suggested that **EAGA consider a more formal consultation process for garnering input from councils about their current plans, priorities and progress in relation to climate change adaptation and mitigation.** This could then be used to inform EAGA’s annual work plan. It might also help each of the councils understand where each other has progressed with respect to a range of issues. While we understand this happens through discussions within the Steering Committee, a more structured assessment might be helpful here.
6. **EAGA should continue to ensure that it maintains open lines of communication with other regional collaborations** (e.g. the Eastern Regions Group of Councils). This is important in both identifying opportunities, but also for avoiding or addressing potential conflicts in policy direction.
7. As part of its forward work planning, **EAGA and its member councils should consider raising awareness of EAGA’s work within communities** – this should help demonstrate councils’ commitments in this area but also serve to reinforce support for further action. This might also include raising awareness within councils of EAGA’s work, particularly among councillors. Using a rotating model for the Executive Committee may be one way of achieving this.
8. **In terms of further options for improving how EAGA monitors its impacts, EAGA should consider:**
  - Being clear on time boundaries: the period of the MoU is the period of ‘activity’ but the period of benefit can extend till the end of the life of an asset. This is important as yearly benefits to not necessarily line up with incurred costs and the benefit of an intervention has lasting impacts.
  - Be clear on spatial boundaries: Is the interest in council financial impacts, community financial impacts or whole of society benefits (i.e. emissions)? Not every project has to have the same boundaries, but it is important to be transparent about what is in/ out.
  - Set up indicators ex-ante and use these to structure data collection to make it easier for everyone: the same indicators can be used to build a business case and to monitor implementation and, eventually, gauge success. A robust data collection process and template, with clarity about information sources can avoid double handling and discrepancies across councils.
  - Use a mix of qualitative and quantitative indicators: complementary to the point above, it is useful to mix qualitative and quantitative indicators for most projects, to

form a complete picture of the benefits of a project. A simple 'program logic' can assist in determining what these indicators should be.

9. The current Executive Officer of EAGA is very well regarded and highly valued both within EAGA councils but also among external stakeholders. One of the key aspects of value are their combined strategic skills and technical knowledge. When considering succession planning, **EAGA and the member councils may wish to consider how similar technical expertise is retained within the organisation** – either through a separate position, through consultancies or codified within the Executive Officer position description. This may have implications for salary banding.
10. EAGA's networking function and role in supporting capability building within councils was highly regarded, particularly for new entrants and non-specialists. The **EAGA and the Steering Committee may wish to consider developing a 'primer' for new officers (and potentially councillors)** – such as a collection of key reading materials/resources relating to energy policy – that can help them get 'up to speed' in this space and, in turn, contribute more fully and constructively to EAGA discussions. This could be shared across Alliances.

## 7 Appendix A – guiding questions

Table 7 outlines a set of key questions we used to guide the evaluation. They are related to the objectives of the evaluation and helped in developing interview guides and in structuring the report.

Table 7. Guiding questions against each of the evaluation objectives.

Key question	Related objective
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. What are the quantifiable impacts of EAGA?               <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. What has EAGA contributed to in terms of emissions reductions?</li> <li>b. What savings for councils (and others) has EAGA contributed to?</li> <li>c. What other quantifiable benefits have there been?</li> <li>d. To what extent would these benefits have been realised without EAGA?</li> <li>e. How do the quantifiable benefits compare to the costs? (i.e. what is the return on investment?)</li> <li>f. In what ways can EAGA’s quantitative reporting be improved into the future?</li> </ol> </li> </ol>	<p>Reviewing existing quantitative impact assessments developed by EAGA for its annual reporting process (i.e. return on investment, emission reductions)</p>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>2. What other impacts has EAGA had?               <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. What has been its advocacy work and how has this contributed to broader changes?</li> <li>b. What benefits have there been for councils from the partnerships and collaboration fostered by EAGA?</li> <li>c. What has been the role of EAGA in coordinating and driving action in this space?</li> <li>d. What other benefits have there been?</li> </ol> </li> </ol>	<p>Identifying qualitative impacts from EAGA’s advocacy (i.e. submissions, engagement) and information sharing within the network (and beyond)</p>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>3. How does EAGA compare with other Greenhouse Alliances in terms of its funding?               <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. What are its membership fees relative to other Alliances?</li> <li>b. How is its staff model structured and how does this compare?</li> <li>c. What opportunities are there for improving the efficiency or effectiveness of EAGA’s model? How does this relate to the potential overall impacts of EAGA?</li> </ol> </li> </ol>	<p>Benchmarking EAGA’s membership fees and staff resource model against other Greenhouse Alliances</p> <p>Identifying options for scaling-up EAGA’s resource model and implications for costs and benefits</p>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>4. How can EAGA increase its impact?               <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. What opportunities are there for expansion of EAGA’s scope or remit of work to increase its impact?</li> <li>b. What opportunities are there to refine how the organisation operates, including its funding structure?</li> <li>c. What opportunities are there to scale-up its work to deliver greater impact?</li> <li>d. What other opportunities are there to improve EAGA’s function or outcomes?</li> </ol> </li> </ol>	<p>Provision of an evaluation report, including key findings and recommendations for increasing the Alliance’s impact over the next MOU period</p>

## 8 Appendix B – the broader literature on climate alliances

EAGA was established in 2008, to drive collaborative climate change action in the Eastern region of Victoria. This formation occurred in response to community concern about climate change.<sup>12</sup> In Victoria climate change is causing increased heatwaves, bushfires, drought, flooding and sea-level rise, posing substantial risks to human health and our social, environmental, and economic landscapes.<sup>13</sup> Climate change is a contested matter in Australia at both the national and state levels, resulting in inadequate and ineffective climate change policy and action.<sup>14, 15</sup>

To ensure effective responses to climate change, multi-level governance is critical and subnational governments have an important role to play, as emphasised in the Paris Agreement.<sup>16,17</sup> At a global scale, subnational governments are developing and implementing their own targets and programs, often demonstrating more innovative and ambitious targets than national policy.<sup>18</sup> Greenhouse Alliances, such as EAGA, represent an alternative form of governance at the local and regional levels, where local governments are voluntarily involved to enhance climate action and boost adaptive capacity.<sup>19</sup>

Globally, the most effective regions dealing with climate change adaptation are those who are building collaborative networks among municipal agencies.<sup>20</sup> Other research suggests that local council networks that target a specific region and are supported by government, tend to deliver the most tangible climate change benefits.<sup>21</sup> International examples of municipal climate alliances include ICLEI-Local Governments for Sustainability, C40 Cities Climate Leadership Group, Energy Cities, Climate Alliance, Asian Cities Climate Change Resilience Network (ACCCRN).<sup>22</sup> These examples demonstrate municipal climate alliances operating within and across national borders. In the Australian context, the Queensland Climate Resilient Councils program provides an additional example of local government climate network where 54 out of 77 local councils have voluntarily joined the program to receive assistance in building capacity and responding to climate change.<sup>23</sup>

<sup>12</sup> EAGA. "About EAGA." Retrieved from: <https://eaga.com.au/about/>

<sup>13</sup> Clarke JM, Grose M, Thatcher M, Hernaman V, Heady C, Round V, Rafter T, Trenham C & Wilson L. 2019. Victorian Climate Projections (2019) Technical Report. CSIRO, Melbourne Australia.

<sup>14</sup> Climate Action Tracker. "Australia". Retrieved from: <https://climateactiontracker.org/countries/australia/>

<sup>15</sup> Jan Burck, Hagen, U., Hohne, N., Nascimento, L. & Bals, C. "Climate Change Performance Index". (2020). [https://newclimate.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/CCPI-2020-Results\\_Web\\_Version.pdf](https://newclimate.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/CCPI-2020-Results_Web_Version.pdf)

<sup>16</sup> Moloney, Susie, and Hartmut Fünfgeld. "Emergent processes of adaptive capacity building: Local government climate change alliances and networks in Melbourne." *Urban Climate* 14 (2015): 30-40.

<sup>17</sup> United Nations. "Paris Agreement" (2015), COP21.

<sup>18</sup> NDC Partnership. Engaging subnational governments in climate action. (2020).

<sup>19</sup> Moloney and Fünfgeld, "Emergent processes of adaptive capacity building".

<sup>20</sup> Aylett, Alexander. "Institutionalizing the urban governance of climate change adaptation: Results of an international survey." *Urban Climate* 14 (2015): 4-16.

<sup>21</sup> Fünfgeld, Hartmut. "Facilitating local climate change adaptation through transnational municipal networks." *Current Opinion in Environmental Sustainability* 12 (2015): 67-73.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

<sup>23</sup> Queensland Climate Resilient Councils. "Program purpose". Retrieved from: <https://qcrc.lgag.asn.au/join-the-q-crc-program>.

In addition to leading and coordinating regional-scale mitigation and adaptation plans, projects and research, and advocating for coordinated, systemic and effective responses to climate change, local government climate alliances have other notable benefits, such as:

- Alliances enable capacity building within and across local government boundaries and facilitate partnerships across government sectors (at all levels), civil society, business, and other local actors, to promote and strengthen climate action.<sup>24, 25</sup>
- Climate alliances can influence their local government members by providing opportunities, knowledge, and resources, including best practice tools and access to financial resources through third-party funded projects.<sup>26, 27</sup>
- Climate alliances play important roles in advocacy and international visibility of urban environmental governance, where there is a push towards recognising the role that cities play in responding to global climate change.<sup>28</sup>
- Local actions are better tailored to local context and needs with innovation and increasingly ambitious policy and successful local initiatives can encourage national policy.<sup>29</sup> Using local government networks has been identified as best practice for adaptation planning and delivery.<sup>30</sup>
- Increasing local networks may help councils to expand practices that support policy development, implementation, monitoring and evaluation, exchange, and collaboration.<sup>31</sup>
- Council networks may provide opportunities for increasing local government's visibility and recognition for innovation, this political capital can in turn leverage additional funding.

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<sup>24</sup> Moloney, S., Horne, R. "Reconfiguring spatial boundaries and institutional practices: Mobilizing and sustaining urban low carbon transitions in Victoria, Australia." Luque-Ayala, Andrés, Simon Marvin, and Harriet Bulkeley, eds. *Rethinking urban transitions: politics in the low carbon city*. Routledge, 2018.

<sup>25</sup>Ibid.

<sup>26</sup> Fünfgeld, "Facilitating local climate change adaptation".

<sup>27</sup> Moloney and Horne, "Reconfiguring spatial boundaries".

<sup>28</sup> Fünfgeld, "Facilitating local climate change adaptation".

<sup>29</sup> NDC Partnership, "Engaging subnational governments".

<sup>30</sup> Fünfgeld, "Facilitating local climate change adaptation".

<sup>31</sup> Fenton, Paul, and Sara Gustafsson. "Moving from high-level words to local action—governance for urban sustainability in municipalities." *Current opinion in environmental sustainability* 26 (2017): 129-133.

## 9 Appendix C – list of projects

Table 8. List of all EAGA projects in operation since 2012

Type	Project title	Year/s	Description
<b>Mitigation and adaptation</b>	Charging the Regions		EAGA has partnered with the Central Victorian Greenhouse Alliance to undertake a feasibility study on behalf of 55 councils and the Electric Vehicle Council of Australia. The project is funded through council contributions and additional funding from the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (DELWP). The feasibility enables councils to understand the opportunities for a joint investment program that could see a dense and coordinated network of EV charging across the state. This would be a first in the country to have a state with a high density of public chargers in regional and rural areas.
	Street Lighting change over	<b>2011-2016</b>	All 8 councils have completed a bulk streetlight change to energy efficiency technology on residential streets. <sup>32</sup> Emissions from the region's 53,223 street lights represent ~40% of the combined footprint of EAGA's members. This is part of a broader success story, where nearly 300,000 lights have been replaced by councils across the state, saving Victorians over \$0.5B and reducing emissions by ~2.2M tonnes. <sup>33</sup>
	Live Green with Less	<b>2012-2013</b>	This program assisted over 1,439 households to reduce emissions and save money through energy efficiency retrofits such as LED lighting, draft seals, in home displays, low flow shower heads etc. <sup>34</sup>
	Solar Savers	<b>2016-2019</b>	Since late 2016, EAGA has led a consortium of three Greenhouse Alliances and 26 council partners to deliver Australia's largest residential solar program for low income and vulnerable households. The program has installed over 434 solar systems (generating 1.6MWh of power and saving 1,749 t of CO <sub>2</sub> -e emissions annually) saving households an average of \$260 per year, and pioneered the use of council rates as an underpinning finance model. <sup>35</sup> The program is supported by a \$0.76M State Government grant. <sup>36</sup> Over 40% of all installations in the State were delivered in the EAGA region, leveraging an investment over \$1.1M in clean energy for the

<sup>32</sup> Ironbark Sustainability (2018). Basic V-Category LED Street Lighting Replacement Business Case for the EAGA Councils.

<sup>33</sup> EAGA (2019). Victorian Parliamentary Inquiry into Tackling Climate Change in Victorian Communities.

<sup>34</sup> EAGA (2017). Live Green with Less. Accessed from: <https://eaga.com.au/projects/live-green-with-less/>

<sup>35</sup> EAGA (2019). Victorian Parliamentary Inquiry into Tackling Climate Change in Victorian Communities.

<sup>36</sup> EAGA (2017). 2016-2017 Annual Report.

Type	Project title	Year/s	Description
			communities in Melbourne's East. A group of ten councils have committed to supporting the program in 2019/20, under a new business model independent of grant funding. <sup>37</sup>
	Energy Performance Contract (EPC)	<b>2016-2019</b>	Four EAGA members initiated the first joint EPC program in Australia's local government sector in 2016. The project aims to reduce energy consumption and operational costs by ~30% in council owned buildings and facilities. <sup>38</sup> From 2017-2018 EAGA's joint EPC program has expanded from four to six councils. A number of major energy conservation measures were implemented and were expected to deliver ~\$200K/yr in savings and 1,500 tonnes of abatement for each council. <sup>39</sup> From 2018-2019, the scope of EAGA's joint EPC program was extended to capture an additional 13 large council facilities. The first tranche of councils (Boroondara, Maroondah, Yarra Ranges) achieved the expected monetary and emissions savings and it was anticipated the other councils would achieve similar savings. <sup>40</sup>
	Eastern Sporting Savers	<b>2016-2017</b>	An engagement program to assist the region's sports clubs to save on their energy bills. It was estimated that the 37 clubs would save approximately \$22,400 per year on their energy bills, an average of \$607 per club. The expected greenhouse gas savings were estimated at 104 tonnes per year. The program was supported by a \$30,000 State Government grant. <sup>41</sup>
	Scaling up Solar on council facilities	<b>2017-2019</b>	Five EAGA councils secured funding from Local Government Victoria to develop a business case for scaling-up and refining a new procurement approach for behind the meter solar on council facilities. <sup>42</sup> The EAGA councils completed delivery of collaborative business cases for procuring and implementing behind the meter solar on council facilities. The project systemically assessed and prioritised 'second tier' sites (outside the EPC project), reviewed alternate contracting models (including leases) and developed a series of procurement templates and resources for use by all Victorian councils. The analysis provided councils with an investment plan for the roll-out of 935kW of solar at 53 sites for the following financial periods. <sup>43</sup>

<sup>37</sup> EAGA (2019). 2018-2019 Annual Report.

<sup>38</sup> EAGA (2017). 2016-2017 Annual Report.

<sup>39</sup> EAGA (2018). 2017-2018 Annual Report.

<sup>40</sup> EAGA (2019). 2018-2019 Annual Report.

<sup>41</sup> EAGA (2017). 2016-2017 Annual Report.

<sup>42</sup> EAGA (2018). 2017-2018 Annual Report.

<sup>43</sup> EAGA (2019). 2018-2019 Annual Report.

Type	Project title	Year/s	Description
	Eco Driver		EAGA partnered with SECCCA to deliver a regional Eco Driver program. The overall goal of the program is to build the capacity of participating Councils to reduce emissions and save money through more efficient and safer management of vehicles. A customised training program was delivered to staff across 12 Councils. <sup>44</sup>
	Tariff Reviews		Reviewing the tariff arrangements with providers, to select the most appropriate ones. <sup>45</sup> Six EAGA councils completed a tariff review across the region's energy intensive sites and successfully identified annual savings of over \$98,000. <sup>46</sup>
	Resilient Emergency Relief Centres		<p>The project aims to enhance the resilience of emergency relief centres within the EAGA region to respond to the impacts of climate change by assessing the risks and vulnerabilities of sites and planning and prioritising targeted upgrades. The initiative covers all eight EAGA councils and seeks to build the capacity of asset and facility managers to address climate change risks in their day-to-day roles and service delivery planning.</p> <p>The project methodology includes the application of the building vulnerability assessment framework, developed by EAGA and NAGA in the Future Assets Forum initiative.</p> <p>The project is jointly funded through a partnership with the Department of Environment Land Water and Planning (DELWP) and one of the key initiatives delivered under Greeter Melbourne's Regional Adaptation Strategy (RAS). EAGA's Executive Officer is one of four Local Government representatives on the stakeholder committee for the RAS.</p>
<b>Capacity building and information exchange</b>	Bushland and Urban Biodiversity Management project	<b>2013</b>	A research project exploring current knowledge and challenges for local government in managing climate change. <sup>47</sup>
	Climate Change Adaptation Roadmap	<b>2014</b>	<p>The project involved the delivery of a regional risk assessment that identified 10 priority actions for local government to address the impact of climate change in the region.<sup>48</sup></p> <p>The project involved the delivery of a regional risk assessment that identified 70 priority risks to local government arising from climate change. These risks are diverse and affect every aspect of Council.</p>

<sup>44</sup> EAGA (2017). Eco-Driver. Accessed from: <https://eaga.com.au/projects/eco-driver/>

<sup>45</sup> RobertsBrown (2017). Impact of Eastern Alliance for Greenhouse Action (EAGA) Evaluation Report.

<sup>46</sup> EAGA. Tariff Review. Accessed from: <https://eaga.com.au/projects/tariff-review/>

<sup>47</sup> RobertsBrown (2017). Impact of Eastern Alliance for Greenhouse Action (EAGA) Evaluation Report.

<sup>48</sup> EAGA (2014). Climate Change Adaptation Roadmap for Melbourne's East.

Type	Project title	Year/s	Description
	Future Assets Forum	<b>2015</b>	A customised training program delivered for council asset and facility managers, to embed building vulnerability assessment approaches into ongoing asset management practices and capital works programs. <sup>49</sup>
	Biodiversity Monitoring in Melbourne's East	<b>2016</b>	Winner of the 2016 UN World Environment Day Award and Premier's Sustainability Award Local Government Category. The project successfully trialled a framework for monitoring indicators of biodiversity health in the context of a changing climate. <sup>50</sup>
	Future Energy Planning	<b>2016-2017</b>	EAGA partnered with the Northern Alliance for Greenhouse Action (NAGA) to deliver a cross sector engagement project to establish ongoing collaboration between electricity networks and local government planners in Victoria. The project aimed to build the capacity of planners in both sectors to harmonise land use and network planning and facilitate integrated planning outcomes. <sup>51</sup>
	Victorian Greenhouse Alliance Conference	<b>2017-2020</b>	In May 2017, EAGA partnered with the Victorian Greenhouse Alliances to deliver a conference attended by over 230 local government (and other) representatives from across Victoria. <sup>52</sup> The second joint conference was held in 2018 and attended by over 300 local government (and other) representatives from across Victoria. <sup>53</sup> The third joint conference was held in 2019 and attended by over 300 local government (and other) representatives from across Victoria. <sup>54</sup> The conferences feature a number of high profile key note addresses and showcase the depth and sophistication of local government projects across the country.
	Electricity Procurement in the Local Government Sector	<b>2016-2017</b>	Through a collaboration between the Victorian Greenhouse Alliances, a comprehensive discussion paper and series of workshops were delivered, to assist councils to critically assess their current procurement options and capture new opportunities to collectively procure best value electricity whilst meeting multiple policy commitments and objectives, particularly with respect to emissions reduction. <sup>55</sup>  Between October – December 2017, EAGA partnered with the Victorian Greenhouse Alliances to conduct a sector wide survey of Victorian councils. The intent of the survey was to: quantify electricity consumption by contract type across all Victorian councils, determine the extent to which Victorian councils have installed solar PV on their own facilities to inform future bulk buy initiatives, collect information on the preferences of councils

<sup>49</sup> EAGA (2015). Future Assets Forum. Accessed from: <https://eaga.com.au/projects/future-assets-forum/>

<sup>50</sup> EAGA (2017). 2016-2017 Annual Report.

<sup>51</sup> EAGA (2017). 2016-2017 Annual Report.

<sup>52</sup> EAGA (2017). 2016-2017 Annual Report.

<sup>53</sup> EAGA (2018). 2017-2018 Annual Report.

<sup>54</sup> EAGA (2019). 2018-2019 Annual Report.

<sup>55</sup> EAGA (2017). 2016-2017 Annual Report.

Type	Project title	Year/s	Description
			for developing new retail electricity procurement, investment and contracting models. This work supported the transition to the Power Purchasing Agreement.
	Local Government Power Purchasing Agreement (PPA)	<b>2018-2019</b>	In collaboration with the Victorian Greenhouse Alliances, EAGA led the establishment of a Local Government Electricity Contract Working Group in 2018, to help Victorian councils save money and reduce greenhouse gas emissions through their electricity contracting. <sup>56</sup> In 2019, EAGA continued its key role in the establishment of the LG PPA – an initiative that will enable 47 Victorian councils to procure low cost renewable energy from 2020/21, at the conclusion of existing retail contracts. <sup>57</sup> The group have come together to drive investment in renewable energy- resulting in pooling ~246GWh of electricity, which is the equivalent to powering 43,000 homes with renewable energy or taking 80,000 cars off the road each year. The committed councils are now in the tender stage to purchase renewable electricity for council operations through a long term Power Purchase Agreement (PPA). It is the largest ever emissions reduction project undertaken by local governments in Australia, aggregating approximately 45% of all Victorian Council electricity to switch to 100% renewable energy. <sup>58</sup>
	Major Road Lighting	<b>2018-2019</b>	EAGA completed a regional business case for the replacement of major road lighting across the region. The findings showed that replacing all inefficient major road lights with energy efficient LEDs could save \$61.6M in electricity costs and cut emissions by 236,682 tonnes over the next 20 years. On the back of the study, EAGA members began planning to undertake a joint retrofit program in the 2019/20 financial year. <sup>59</sup> In 2019 EAGA initiated a pilot ‘metering’ program aimed to ensure that savings generated through smart controls on public lighting infrastructure (i.e. dimming, trimming and other energy savings options) can be captured on energy bills. The project was conducted in partnership with Ironbark Sustainability and the Australian Energy Market Operator (AEMO) with intent to progress changes to the National Electricity Rules. <sup>60</sup>
	ESD in council buildings and infrastructure	<b>2019-2020</b>	In late 2019, EAGA engaged Organica Engineering to evaluate the extent to which Environmentally Sustainable Design (ESD) policies and practices are being implemented in council building projects and infrastructure delivery. The overarching goal of the evaluation was to assist councils to achieve best practice sustainability outcomes in the way council buildings and infrastructure are planned, designed, built, used and maintained. The scope of the project did not include an evaluation of ESD policies and implementation in planning schemes for privately owned buildings.

<sup>56</sup> EAGA (2018). 2017-2018 Annual Report.

<sup>57</sup> EAGA (2019). 2018-2019 Annual Report.

<sup>58</sup> EAGA (2019). Victorian Parliamentary Inquiry into Tackling Climate Change in Victorian Communities.

<sup>59</sup> EAGA (2018). 2017-2018 Annual Report.

<sup>60</sup> EAGA (2019). 2018-2019 Annual Report.

Type	Project title	Year/s	Description
			<p>The outputs of the project included (but was not limited to):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A customisable template ESD policy for use of all EAGA councils, to either establish a new policy from scratch, or to enhance and update an existing policy</li> <li>• Guidance materials, to assist councils establish and implement the ESD policy</li> <li>• Individual recommendation reports for each council, presenting the evaluation findings (what's working, what is not working and what needs to change)</li> <li>• A regional summary, including the common themes and opportunities for collaboration between councils</li> </ul>
	Local Government & Distribution Network Service Provider (DNSP) Engagement Framework	<b>2017</b>	The work of EAGA and the Greenhouse Alliances intersects with Victoria's Distribution and Network Service Providers (DNSP) in a number of ways. To assist Local Governments and DNSPs to establish a shared vision for an intelligent sustainable energy network, an engagement framework has been developed to guide collaborative activities between the two sectors.