COMMUNITY CLIMATE NETWORK SCOPING PROJECT

A report that determines the need and advises on governance structure for a Community Climate Network in the region

LEADERSHIP Great South Coast Inc.

November 2023

This report has been written by the Community Climate Network Scoping Project Team as part of Leadership Great South Coast's 2023 Community Leadership Program

Cate Corbet
Business Analyst, Southern Grampians Shire Council

Cathryn Walder
Community Engagement Coordinator, Youth Live4Life

Nicole Wood
Travel Smart Project Manager, Warrnambool City Council

Rachel Cameron
Communications Coordinator, South West Healthcare

Emma Shortis
Senior Researcher, The Australia Institute

Important things to note when reading this report:

Any hyperlink will be **bold**.

Information gathered for the purpose of this report are a point in time and within the scope of phase one of the project brief.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

We are honoured to acknowledge and pay respects to the peoples who hold custodianship for the land on which we have gathered and worked to produce this report, who continue to hold strong connections to the land, river and sea country. It is with deep appreciation that we acknowledge these connections and pay respects to their Elders, past, present and emerging, whose enduring bonds have protected the land, waters and sky for thousand of generations. We acknowledge sovereignty was never ceded.

About Leadership Great South Coast

Leadership Great South Coast Inc (LGSC) provides an annual community leadership program for aspiring and emerging leaders from all sectors of the Great South Coast region. The LGSC Program builds relationships and networks between sectors allowing participants to benefit from a variety of perspectives when considering the nature of leadership and the future of our community and its economic prosperity.

A key aspect of the Program focuses on project management, engaging participants in a community project and the action learning cycle. Participants work together to develop a project to benefit communities within the Great South Coast, learning and putting into practice an array of project management skills through their community project. The Leadership Great South Coast Community Climate Network Scoping Report is an initiative of Project Team members: Cate Corbet (Project Lead), Cathryn Walder, Nicole Wood, Rachel Cameron and Emma Shortis.

CONTENTS

3 *ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY*

NEED

6 *EXECUTIVE SUMMARY*

8 *INTRODUCTION*

12 *PROJECT BACKGROUND*

16 *METHODOLOGY*

19 *RESULTS*

32 *NEXT STEPS*

GOVERNANCE

38 *REPORT BACKGROUND*

44 *RECOMMENDATIONS FOR HOW THE NETWORK COULD FUNCTION*

46 *SOCIAL CAPITAL AND NETWORKS*

48 *FUNDING FOR PHASE 2*

51 *RECOMMENDATION FOR NEXT STEPS*

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY
NEED

The social, environmental and economic wellbeing of the Great South Coast depends on rapid, inclusive climate transition. According to the **Great South Coast Regional Partnership**, 'climate change is impacting all corners of the region.'

As part of the Leadership Great South Coast 2023 Community Leadership Program, the Community Climate Network Scoping Project assessed the need for a community-led network for climate action in the region as Phase 1 in a longer-term project.

Through a comprehensive engagement approach, reaching across the Great South Coast, the project identified existing climate-focused activity and the key stakeholders across the region, scoping the need and appetite for a community-led climate network. This report outlines the consultation process and the evidence collected.

Key stakeholders overwhelmingly support the establishment of a community-led climate network (the Network) in the Great South Coast. There is significant support for the establishment of a network "from community for community". Stakeholders agreed that a community-led climate network could connect and consolidate existing activities and groups, bridge gaps between community and government, and play an advocacy and enabling role.

Participants identified a wealth of activity already occurring in the region across multiple sectors including health and wellbeing, clean energy, agriculture, manufacturing, and climate mitigation. There are significant opportunities for collaboration and capacity building across the region; the agricultural sector represents a particular opportunity for focus on climate adaptation and innovation.

Stakeholders generally agreed the Network will need to be carefully designed by and for community in order to ensure it is embedded and sustainable.

This report recommends that the project proceed to Phase 2: continuing and broadening consultations with key regional stakeholders and community members, with a view to bring together select stakeholders to begin the process of collectively designing and establishing a self-sustaining, community-led climate network in the Great South Coast.

The long-term aim of the project is to establish the Network to effectively unite and coordinate existing activity in the region in response to climate impacts. The Network could also strengthen advocacy, amplify and support community voices, understand and lead policy change, encourage community engagement and support community-led climate adaptation and mitigation projects. The consultation also demonstrated that the Network would have the capacity to increase leverage to attract resources, such as expertise and capacity, and increased investment for the region.

INTRODUCTION

The Great South Coast is renowned for, and depends on, its unique natural environment. Alongside the rest of the world, the environment of our region, and the people who depend on it, face catastrophic climate change.

Regional areas experience some of the worst climate risks and exposure in Australia. According to the **South West Climate Change Portal**, 'The Barwon South West region has already become warmer and drier – a climate trend likely to continue into the future.' Without significant efforts to curb climate change and its impact, our region can expect higher temperatures, less overall rainfall and more intense significant rainfall events, rising sea levels, and harsher fire weather. Climate impacts are already here and are increasing exponentially.

The '**slow emergency**' of climate change in our region has, in some quarters, encouraged complacency. Nevertheless, climate policy at the state and federal levels is moving quickly. The **Victorian Government**, for example, has set the ambitious climate target of a net-zero state economy by 2050 and is 'decarbonising at the most rapid rate of any major jurisdiction in Australia.'

The combined effect of climate impact, and an economic and policy transition that is already underway, means that the choice for our region is not whether to respond, but how and when.

Other regions in Victoria have responded through community-driven coordination and advocacy that sets aside old divides and focuses on uniting communities towards just and inclusive transition. Networks such as Gippsland Climate Change Network, Geelong Sustainability, and Queenscliff Climate Action Now provide great examples of what can be achieved. Understanding climate action as both a challenge and opportunity has been a key driver of innovation in regions across the state.

Important work is happening in the climate space across the Great South Coast. As yet, however, there appears to be an absence of a regional community-led coordination and advocacy body or network that is dedicated solely to climate action and mitigation. Without a more sustained effort to drive change across the region, the Great South Coast risks being left behind both economically and morally.

Established through the Leadership Great South Coast 2023 Community Leadership Program, the Community Climate Network Scoping Project aimed to assess the need for a community-led Climate Network for climate action in the region. The intent was that this project, due to time and capacity constraints, would be Phase 1 of a longer-term project.

"Big opportunity to build on the work already happening"

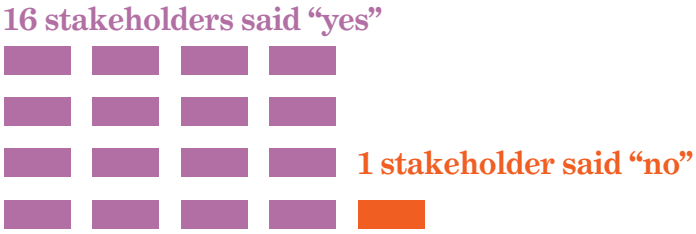
Andrea Pape

Beginning in July 2023, the Project Team engaged in comprehensive consultations with stakeholders in the climate space across the Great South Coast region. In the consultation process, the Project Team conducted 24 interviews with key stakeholders from each of the five Local Government Areas in the region (Corangamite Shire, Glenelg Shire, Moyne Shire, Southern Grampians Shire, City of Warrnambool), from industry, civil society, education and research, and local and state government.

This report outlines the results of this consultation process. It begins by outlining the background and context for climate action in the region and existing initiatives. It then describes the project's methodology, provides a detailed analysis of results, and provides recommendations.

Key stakeholders overwhelmingly supported the establishment of a community-led Climate Network in the Great South Coast.

We asked:
Do you think a community-led climate network in the region would be beneficial?



The Community Climate Network Scoping Project recommends that the project proceed to Phase 2: continuing and broadening consultations with key regional stakeholders, with a view to bringing those stakeholders together to begin the process of collectively designing and establishing the Network. Like existing regional networks in Victoria, a Great South Coast network would build a shared vision for climate advocacy and action, develop and support collaboration and coordination, and elevate community voices on climate.

NEED

PROJECT BACKGROUND

Across the Great South Coast region, there is significant, established activity underway in the climate change space. Across business and industry, civil society, education and research, and at all levels of government, through individual, small-scale efforts to large organisations, much work is occurring to raise awareness, coordinate, advocate and innovate. However, unlike in other regions in Victoria, the Great South Coast does not have a coordinating, independent community body in the region focused on uniting community towards inclusive, just climate transition.

The Community Climate Network Scoping Project aimed to assess the need for such a community-led Climate Network in the Great South Coast region.

Based on established evidence, the Project assumed that:

1. Climate impact is both real and increasing exponentially. Without significant, coordinated mitigation and adaptation, climate change will have a severe impact on the region's communities and key economic drivers;
2. There is an appetite within the region for a community-led climate network, but a lack of coordination, time and capability to make it happen;
3. Existing constraints and expectations mean that local governments and other agencies will not (and should not) be the drivers of transition in the region; and
4. The widespread perception that communities in the Great South Coast are conservative and do not see climate change as a relevant or pressing issue does not reflect the complex reality of regional experiences.

STRATEGIC ALIGNMENT

The aim of the Community Climate Network Scoping Project directly aligns with the strategic aims of umbrella regional organisations and agencies, and local and state government climate and sustainability policies and strategies.

At the regional level, the **Great South Coast Regional Partnership** strives for a long-term outcome of a 'sustainable environment with a celebrated natural beauty'. It notes that the regional economy is underpinned by tourism, agriculture and fishing - all of which depend on a thriving and safe environment. The Regional Partnership also strives for 'a healthy, safe and resilient Great South Coast Community'.

A community-led climate network would also align with the climate action plans of regional organisations and agencies, including, but not limited to:

- Warrnambool City Council's **Climate Change Action Plan**
- **The Barwon South West Regional Climate Adaptation Strategy**
- The Corangamite Catchment Management Authority's **Natural Resource Management Plan for Climate Change**

All of which describe the need for collaboration and engagement with community as a key contributing factor to successful climate adaptation and mitigation strategies.

The Barwon South West Regional Climate Adaption Strategy in itself separates the Great South Coast region into its own category, which further speaks to the need of a community-led Climate Network with a Great South Coast region focus.

Globally, the project aligns directly with the United Nations' Global Transformation Agenda and **Sustainable Development Goals** - a project to which Australia is committed. Specifically, the project aligns directly with goal 13: Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts.

It also supports several other goals, including:

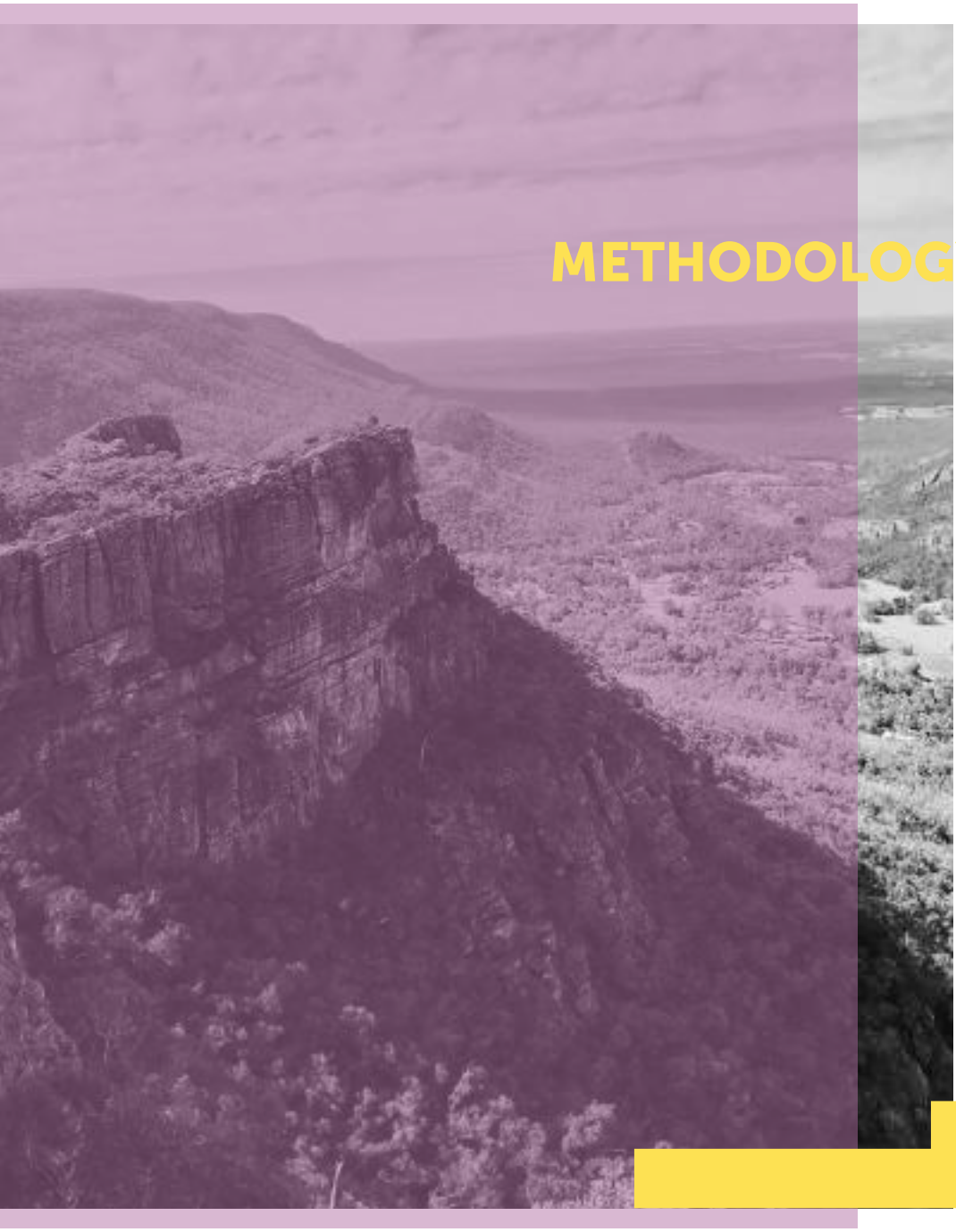
Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all

Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable; specifically Target 11.6: By 2030, reduce the adverse per capita environmental impact of cities, including by paying special attention to air quality and municipal and other waste management

Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development

Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss

NEED

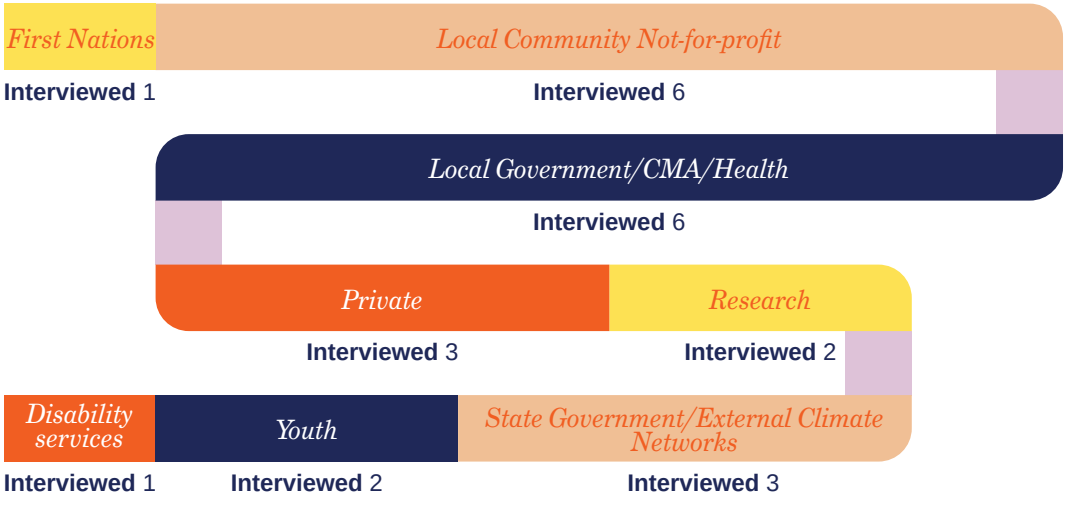


METHODOLOGY

Research for the project was divided into two broad categories: the perceived need for a community-led climate network, and the potential governance structure for such a network, should a need be established.

The project began with targeted research on existing activity in the region, seeking to understand the past and present of climate action and organising across the Great South Coast. Based on this evidence and using existing contacts and networks of both the Project Team and the broader Leadership Great South Coast network, the Project Team began identifying key stakeholders across the region that could inform Phase 1 (N=63).

The Project Team ensured that as far as possible, these key stakeholders made up a representative and diverse snapshot of activity and engagement across the region. In this, the Project Team was advised by two 'critical friends', experts in the climate space in the region and beyond.



Over a three-week period, key stakeholders (N=36) were approached via phone, email or in person by members of the Project Team to assess their interest in participating in semi-structured interviews. Depending

on their role, key stakeholders were asked a series of questions about either the need for a community-led climate network or organisational governance [see Appendices 1 and 2].

Participants in the first category were asked to outline their own work and experience in the climate space in the region, about existing and past network initiatives, challenges and opportunities for the region in the climate space, and if they saw the need for a regional, community-led climate network. Participants in the second category were asked about the governance structures of their own organisations, the social and economic benefits and challenges that come with that choice, timeframes for establishment, and any general advice.

Data was captured electronically by each of the Project Team members through both interviews (online, by phone and in-person) and electronic survey forms. This data was stored securely and collated into a “Miro” board, backed up in a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet.

These semi-structured interviews were captured by members of the Project Team and entered into a Microsoft Form, which was automatically exported to a Miro Board. At a workshop in August 2023, the Project Team reviewed, themed and analysed this data.

The Project Team had a 67% reply rate with 24 of the 36 stakeholders contacted agreeing to take part in the survey. Of those surveyed, 70% (17) were consulted about the need, and the remaining 30% (7) focussed on advice regarding governance, depending on their experience and expertise. A separate report regarding governance can be found here.

NEED

RESULTS

EXISTING ACTIVITIES

In the region, significant strides have been made in addressing climate change through community-driven efforts. These include examples such as the successful advocacy for Warrnambool City Council and Moyne Shire Council to declare climate emergencies, resulting in significant community mobilisation and financial commitment from Moyne Shire Council for a carbon offset program. Many businesses in the agricultural sector are adopting regenerative approaches, planting trees, and ceasing chemical use while actively engaging with Landcare initiatives.

The Barwon South West Climate Alliance seeks to bring strength by unification to regional efforts, however membership to the Alliance incurs a significant fee that has excluded some of the target member organisations.

Climate change already holds a prominent place in several organisations, including those focused on emergency services and public health, with a strong emphasis on mitigation strategies. Some organisations play advocacy roles in clean energy and climate issues. Collaborative initiatives and alliances, both regionally and at the community level, emphasise the importance of collective action to combat climate impacts. Efforts to educate and engage youth in climate action, along with research and investment into hydrogen technology and emissions reduction, underscore that significant efforts are already underway.

Despite challenges, these examples highlight successful climate collaboration efforts in the region.

Other activities we heard about include:

- Warrnambool City Council Climate Change Community of Practice
- Environmental Management Action Plan for large organisations

- Waste reduction programs
- Regenerative Agriculture actions and education
- Strategy and Policy development
- Emission Inventories
- Government facility upgrades
- Promotion of community groups and activities
- Community awareness and acceptance activities
- Development of Hydrogen technology
- School education programs
- Identification of cross sectoral links for systems approaches to climate adaptation
- Community engagement and strategic planning with local Aboriginal community organisations

OPPORTUNITIES FOR THE REGION

Opportunities for climate action in the region emerge from a wealth of ongoing activities and promising initiatives. In the consultations, regenerative agriculture stood out as a significant opportunity due to its potential for climate mitigation and its changing perception among the public. The region's significant agricultural sector could have a profound impact on climate mitigation through regenerative practices, particularly through regenerating soil and sequestering carbon.

The region's abundant natural resources, including wind and water, present opportunities for renewable energy projects. Circular economy initiatives, connecting existing groups, supporting emerging ones, and capacity building for regional leaders were understood as similarly important.

Many stakeholders saw empowering communities to address localised climate issues and providing accessible information about climate impacts as critical. Furthermore, social license considerations for energy transition, job opportunities in green tech, and sustainability-related careers for young graduates were identified as potential growth areas in the region.

Those interviewed also mentioned actions such as deducing reliance on gas, improving the power grid, transitioning to electric vehicles, promoting local food production, and securing water resources as additional opportunities to address climate change.

Many stakeholders agreed that a community-led climate network would offer a means to streamline efforts, share knowledge and identify local priorities effectively. There was a sense that the Great South Coast community is taking action, they are involved and engaged, however, at this stage there is a limit to the coordination of meaningful community collective approaches across the region.

POTENTIAL BARRIERS & CHALLENGES

In considering the barriers and challenges to establishing a community-led climate network in the region, several key points emerged from the consultation process.

Geography poses difficulties, as the region's size can lead to segmentation and competition among organisations striving for similar goals. Concerns about the potential perception of the network as "just another meeting" highlight the need for effective communication and diverse representation within the network itself, and the importance of a well-considered governance model.

"Our geography makes it difficult"

Ailiche Goddard-Clegg

Moreover, the region's political conservatism, distance from major urban centres, and short growing seasons can present challenges to climate-

related initiatives. Resistance to change is another hurdle, as is the task of effectively communicating climate change impacts to metropolitan communities. Educational institutions also play a role, as there is a call for broader environmental education, emphasising the limitations of traditional agricultural practices and the importance of sustainable alternatives.

"Voluntary contributions are hard to sustain"

Steve Garner

Additional challenges include the fragmented nature of climate initiatives, the need for consistent reporting on carbon emissions, and the interchangeability of terms related to climate change and sustainability. Conservatism and difficulties in recruiting and retaining participants were mentioned as well.

Public perception and disbelief, resource limitations among community groups, and the legal structures of existing and emerging groups present further challenges. Time constraints, governance considerations, and the need for sustainable funding mechanisms are also factors that need attention. Moreover, understanding the intricacies of local government areas, the segmented energy sector, and the current and future energy needs add complexity to the region's climate landscape.

These diverse barriers and challenges underscore the need for establishing a community-led climate network and the need for a multifaceted approach to address them.

The region has encountered difficulties in sustaining regional networks, with some struggling to diversify and engage various sectors effectively. In certain instances, successful collaborations were short-lived, primarily due to the exhaustion of dedicated individuals and reliance upon volunteer contributions.

"The challenge is how to make it sustainable long-term"

Juan Donis, Southern Grampians Shire Council

SUPPORT FOR A COMMUNITY-LED CLIMATE NETWORK

Key stakeholders consulted overwhelmingly support the idea of a community-led climate network.

With only one exception, every stakeholder answered “yes” to the question “do you think a community-led climate network in the region would be beneficial?” The one stakeholder who answered ‘no’, was more encouraging of utilising existing groups to support climate related discussions.

Participants envisioned such a network as a vital mechanism for empowering individuals and organisations to take action while fostering collaboration. Participants argued that such a network could bridge the divide between the community and government, educate, and raise awareness, enabling more effective local climate initiatives. Emphasising the personal benefits of climate-friendly actions, like promoting self-sufficiency, participants imagined the network as a way to drive grassroots change and influence policy independently of government organisations.

“There is a power in a cross-sector network “from community for community.””

Ailiche Goddard-Clegg

Moreover, a community network offers the potential to consolidate efforts, improve resource utilisation, advocate for funding, and enhance project coordination. Building on existing climate work, fostering diverse representation, and promoting cross-sectoral collaboration were widely seen as desirable outcomes. These supporters are motivated by the belief that a community-led approach could unite the region for an essential cause.

“Something that unites the community for an important cause has to be beneficial”

Britt Gow

RECOMMENDATIONS FROM KEY STAKEHOLDERS

Key stakeholders provided several recommendations for the potential community-led climate network. They emphasise the importance of:

- clear leadership
- sustainability
- a well-defined purpose
- organised governance structures and processes.

Many suggested beginning with a small, dedicated group with the skills to engage policymakers effectively, aligning their interests with climate initiatives. Government support was understood as crucial, though the independence of a community-led and adaptable network was emphasised by many participants.

"Leadership can come from diversity and membership could evolve in different stages during the process"

Ailiche Goddard Clegg

Almost universally, participants agreed that the network's focus should be on community empowerment, independence, and sustainability. Stakeholders also suggested that the network might collaborate with local councils to fund climate change facilitators working with the community and various stakeholders.

We have included some of the key themes and sector focussed information gathered from interviews on the following page. We have also produced a secondary resource which features information specifically related to governance of such a 'Network'. This report is in the upcoming section of this report.

"Empower community groups, don't divert people from their own community"

Andrea Pape, Sustainability Victoria

KEY THEMES

Key stakeholders identified several thematic areas that might be the focus of a community-led climate network, alongside suggestions of what roles a network might play in the region.

SECTORS

ENERGY

Strong advocacy for renewable energy and awareness of climate change's impact

- Utilise natural resources like onshore and offshore wind, solar, hydrogen, and geothermal for clean energy production.
- Opportunities for energy efficiency measures, local food production, and reducing reliance on reticulated gas.
- Networking and collaboration among organisations and communities for knowledge sharing and upskilling in energy and climate initiatives.
- Some participants emphasise the importance of community understanding of natural resources to drive renewable energy solutions, especially in regions previously associated with dirty energy industries like Gippsland.

"Renewable forms of energy must be used, there are so many forms and opportunities"

Steve Garner

HEALTH AND WELLBEING

- Implementation of climate adaptation plans, focusing on community safety and resilience.
- Collaboration to identify health impacts of climate change and promote community actions to address them.

HEALTH AND WELLBEING

- Recognition of the impact of world heritage listing of the Budj Bim landscape on the region.
- Cross-sectoral connections between health, environment, and emergency management to address climate change impacts.

RURAL

- Focus on rural-specific climate impacts and collaborative efforts to mitigate them.
- Rural regions' unique challenges, including attracting investment, sustaining viable industries, and managing resources effectively.

AGRICULTURE

- Emphasis on regenerative agriculture and carbon sequestration.
- Promoting sustainable agricultural practices and reducing carbon emissions in lamb production.
- Young farmers making an impact and challenging traditional practices.
- Opportunities for farmers to get involved in regenerative agriculture and understand their farm's emissions.

WASTE

- Initiatives focusing on waste reduction and environmental management across public health services.
- Collaboration on circular economy targets and addressing waste issues in election campaigns.

EMISSIONS

- Agricultural emissions reduction, drawing on local examples of farmers actively engaged in emissions reduction efforts.
- There is a focus on developing hydrogen technology as a means to decarbonise heavy vehicles and reduce emissions. Building community awareness and social acceptance of hydrogen as a sustainable fuel source is crucial.

EMISSIONS

- Some participants mentioned the importance of creating emission inventories for council operations and reporting against them. Additionally, there is an emphasis on developing policies aligned with sustainability and natural environment goals, including a net-zero target, built environment standards, community engagement and education, natural environment preservation, and water conservation, guided by state and federal government policies.

> **“Producers can get a better understanding of their emissions within the enterprises they run and work towards some of the solutions”**
>
> *Johnny Gardner, South Mokanger*

WATER

- The region is widely understood to have ‘untapped’ natural resources, including wind and water, which present opportunities for renewable energy and hydrogen production.
- Water security and efficient groundwater use are essential strategies in the face of extreme climate change impacts.

MITIGATION

- Regenerative agriculture practices, tree planting, and waste reduction initiatives were all highlighted as key mitigation efforts.
- Climate change adaptation and mitigation should be integrated into public health services and strategic environmental management plans.

ADAPTATION

- Regenerative agriculture practices, tree planting, and waste reduction initiatives were all highlighted as key mitigation efforts.
- Climate change adaptation and mitigation should be integrated into public health services and strategic environmental management plans.

KEY THEMES

Community Support

Many participants emphasise the need for a mechanism that provides support to the community in taking climate action. This support could involve creating a space where community members and organisations can come together to collaborate.

"Primarily make it community based and establish own strategic direction"

Geoff Rollinson , Warrnambool Coastcare Landcare Network

Participants saw value in building a network that bridges the gap between the community and government, with a focus on education and awareness-building to empower individuals and organisations to contribute to climate solutions.

"It must be representative of the whole community"

Lachie Farrington

Connection

Participants highlighted the importance of connection within the community and among existing groups. Participants expressed a desire to connect existing groups, inspire each other, and support emerging groups by providing skills development and capacity-building opportunities. They recognised the potential for collaboration among various community organisations and see the benefits of creating networks that can facilitate the sharing of knowledge and resources. Connection was viewed as a means to overcome fragmentation and duplication of efforts.

"Already established groups, such as the Community of Practice and Landcare networks, could feed information and ideas into the Community Climate Change Network"

Nerissa Lovric, Warrnambool City Council

KEY THEMES

Inspiration

Inspiration is considered a crucial element in driving climate action within the community. Participants mentioned the need to address feelings of powerlessness, particularly among young people. Participants pointed to local success stories, such as the world heritage listing of Budj Bim, and the positive impact of young farmers as sources of inspiration for climate action. They also stressed the importance of avoiding hierarchy and promoting collective responsibility within community groups to inspire action.

> **"Climate change is a broad issue but localised issues can be tackled easier"**
>
> *Lauren Brown, Warrnambool City Council*

Information/Knowledge Sharing/Education

The data underscores the critical need for education and knowledge-sharing to empower communities in addressing climate change. Participants again highlighted the role of education in alleviating feelings of powerlessness at the local level.

> **"A key focus on passing on knowledge to next generation."**
>
> *Geoff Rollinson ,Warrnambool Coastcare Landcare Network*

Advocacy

Some participants advocated for climate emergency declarations, which have garnered significant community support and commitments. Regional stakeholders, including community organisations and governments, have already experienced how regional networks can consolidate efforts, advocate for funding, and coordinate climate initiatives effectively. Advocacy aims to influence policy and demonstrate the personal benefits of climate action. Collaboration across various sectors and organisations is crucial for effective advocacy and capacity building. Cross-sectoral

initiatives connecting health, environment, and climate change would enhance advocacy and community engagement, although there are challenges in managing regional advocacy efforts and achieving a unified voice without a dedicated network to coordinate.

Collaboration

The importance of effective communication and collaboration among existing groups and organisations working on climate change was recognised by many participants. Collaboration was understood as an opportunity to unite the community around a common cause and leverage collective efforts. Existing groups are seen as valuable resources for facilitating climate-related discussions and initiatives. Diverse representation in cross-sector networks, including young people and Indigenous perspectives, was widely regarded as critical. Collaboration could focus on narrowing priorities for local action, developing advocacy skills, engaging younger generations, and promoting effective communication. Various models, including advisory and non-hierarchical structures, were suggested in order to facilitate collaboration through a potential network.

“Collaboration is key - it needs joint objectives because many projects have their own objectives and funding streams.”

Nerissa Lovric, Warrnambool City Council

NEED

NEXT STEPS

As a result of the discussions with the diverse range of identified interested and influential stakeholders there was determination that there is a need for a community-led climate change network.

Our recommendation is for the project to proceed to Phase 2: continuing and broadening consultations with key regional stakeholders, with a view to bringing those stakeholders together to begin the process of collectively designing and establishing the Network.

There are many current community groups who have a link to climate change, but it is not their core business. Their continued contributions are pivotal to the success of the next phase. It is anticipated that these groups and/or individuals would be the focus of the further, deeper consultation in Phase 2.

We also acknowledge that engagement with First Nations groups, who were underrepresented in this phase of consultation, is a key priority. Along with Young People and ensuring equal engagement from across each geographical area of the Great South Coast.

Interested parties may be assisted by the accompanying governance report to inform an appropriate governance structure for the emerging and evolving community-led climate network.

BIBLIOGRAPHY/RESOURCE LIST

As per what is hyperlinked/stated in text

Gippsland Climate Change Network
https://www.gccn.org.au/

Geelong Sustainability
https://www.geelongsustainability.org.au/

Queenscliff Climate Action Now
https://www.queenscliffeclimateaction.org/

Appendix 1 Need Questions

Q1. Tell us about the work you do in the climate change space.

Q2. What are the opportunities for the region?

Q3. What are the barriers/challenges?

Q4. Are there or have there been community-based climate networks in your area? (To your knowledge why did they work/not work? What are the ingredients needed to make them successful?)

Q5. Do you think a community-led climate network in the region would be beneficial? Why/why not?

Q6. What would be your top 3 priorities for the network?

Q7. How do you think the group should be organised/governed?

Q8. If some kind of community based climate network did emerge, would you/your organisation want to be part of it? In what way?

Q9. Who else should we talk to?

Appendix 2 Governance Questions

Q1. Can you tell us about your governance structure and how it came about?

Q2. Select one of the following for current structure- Incorparated Association, Public companies limited by guarantee, Unincorparated Association

Q3. Why did you choose this model for your group? What are the benefits and disadvantages to this?

Q4. What have been some of your key learnings about governance/your current governance structure?

Q5. What were some of the key steps in becoming the organisation type indicated in Question 6, and what words of advice would you provide?

Q6. Did you need any external support?

Q7. Have you got a constitution or rules of association? How did you develop it - did you require legal assistance, if so, how was that arranged?

Q8. The Community Climate Network Scoping project will assess the need for such a network in the region. If the need for this network is confirmed, what would be your recommendation for the structure...

Q9. What are some of the key resources that need to be developed for this proposed network to be a success (stage 2 of the project)

Q10. If you have a Board, how did you develop the criteria and recruit the board members and the structure of the board and the organisation? Are there any paid positions within the organisation?

Q11. If you are an Unincorporated Association, how do you manage the finances, and what are your thoughts on auspicing?

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY
GOVERNANCE STRUCTURE

As part of the Great South Coast 2023 Community Leadership Program, the Community Climate Network Scoping Project Team assessed the need for a community-led network for climate action in the region as Phase 1 of a longer-term project.

Through a comprehensive engagement approach, reaching across the Great South Coast, the project identified existing climate-focused activity and the key stakeholders across the region, scoping the need and appetite for a community-led Climate Network.

A report titled Community Climate Scoping Project report has been developed specifically focussing on the need of a community-led Climate Network, which can be found **here**, or in print by contacting Leadership Great South Coast. To support Phase 2 of the longer-term project, collectively designing and establishing a self-sustaining, community-led Climate Network in the Great South Coast, the Project Team also commenced targeted consultation with a focus on collecting information regarding the potential Governance approaches of such a network.

The purpose of this report is to provide a summary of the possible organisational structures which may be considered to suit a community-led Climate Network in the Great South Coast (the region made up of Corangamite Shire, Glenelg Shire, Moyne Shire, Southern Grampians Shire and Warrnambool City Council).

It was found that key stakeholders overwhelmingly support the establishment of a community-led regional Climate Network in the Great South Coast. It was also agreed that such a network should have a bottom-up approach, where interested individuals are afforded the opportunity to develop a shared vision and purpose for the Network, whilst also acting in an evolutionary approach supporting a fit for purpose governance structure to be developed as the Network progresses.

A key indicator for success is to ensure that it is an easy network to be part of, that shares its resources and expertise, and has a common focus and direction. The region has capacity within its community to build the Network using current social capital, starting small and building momentum. Diversity in membership was also a key theme that would influence the sustainability and effectiveness of the Network.

"Does not need to be a stand-alone network, have it connected to something already established and sustainable"

Steve Garner

GOVERNANCE STRUCTURE

REPORT BACKGROUND

Across the Great South Coast region, there is significant, established activity underway in the climate change space. Across business and industry, civil society, education and research, and at all levels of government, through individual, small-scale efforts to large organisations, much work is occurring to raise awareness, coordinate, advocate and innovate. However, unlike other regions in Victoria, the Great South Coast does not have a coordinating, independent community body in the region focused on uniting community towards inclusive, just climate transition.

The Community Climate Network Scoping Project aimed to assess the need for such a community-led Climate Network in the Great South Coast region. Whilst also gathering initial information to help guide the governance approaches. This process was Phase 1 in a longer-term project with the long-term aim of collectively designing and establishing a self-sustaining, community-led Climate Network in the Great South Coast. This report is intended to be read in conjunction with **Community Climate Network Scoping Project Report**

Over a three-week period, key stakeholders (N=36) were approached by members of the Project Team to assess their interest in participating in semi-structured interviews conducted in person or via video call, and their responses were documented via a survey form. The Project Team had a 67% reply rate with 24 of the 36 stakeholders contacted agreeing to take part in the survey. Of those surveyed, 70% (17) were consulted about the need, and the remaining 30% (7) focussed on advice regarding governance. Both sets of stakeholders were asked to provide information regarding Governance.

Stakeholders in the first category (Need) were asked how they thought a community-led Climate Network should be organised/governed. Stakeholders in the second category (Governance) were asked about the governance structures of their own organisations, the social and

economic benefits and challenges that come with that choice, timeframes for establishment, and any general advice.

Data was captured electronically by each of the Project Team members through both interviews and survey forms. This data was stored securely and collated into a “Miro” board, backed up in a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet.

These semi-structured interviews were captured by members of the Project Team and entered into a Microsoft Form, which was automatically exported to a Miro Board. At a workshop in August 2023, the Project Team reviewed, themed and analysed this data.

WHAT IS A NETWORK?

According to the Oxford Dictionary, a network is defined as ‘a group or system of interconnected people’.

Examples of a community network include the Landcare Model, which has over 600 member groups representing more than 17,000 households and an estimated 60,000 individuals. Landcare is one of the largest environmental volunteer organisations in Victoria, fostering on-the-ground community-led action. Many of the stakeholders consulted mentioned the Landcare model as a good one to imitate in this scenario.

WHAT IS GOVERNANCE?

There is not one conclusive definition of governance, but for the purpose of this report we have developed the following definition as we feel it is most relevant to a community-led Climate Network.

Governance includes all the practices, processes and policies that support the Network to achieve the shared purpose. Governance informs the mechanisms by which it, and its people, are held to account. Key tasks such as ethics, risk management, compliance and administration are all elements of governance.

INSIGHTS TO GOVERNANCE FROM KEY STAKEHOLDERS

The respondents provided the following insights to the key questions relating to governance which will assist in guiding Phase 2:

Why is having a governance structure important?

- Governance structure can reduce the risk for partners/potential funders.

  "Our organisation started off as an incorporated association, but we evolved from this due to this not being a strong enough governance for what we wanted to achieve"

  Pauline Neil

- Governance provides the framework for vision to be realised.

  "Determine your purpose before you can determine an appropriate governance structure"

  Catherine Darkin, Loved and Shared

- Governance provides outlined roles and responsibilities, which in turn provides understanding between members.

  "Originally we have an informal gathering of interested people, but we soon realised we needed a bank account..."

  Gareth Colliton, One Day Studios

- Governance is a way for people to provide guidance on the development of the organisation.

  "Bringing in experience and pro-bono support (Boards, Sub-committees) equated to 20 odd people who could provide specific advice and support - we were no longer alone"

  Bernard Galbally

Choosing a Governance Structure

- Understanding what you want to achieve allows for a more focused approach to creating a network.

  “You need all cards on the table from the get go - it might require an activation workshop to commence”

  Pauline Neil

- Understanding how various governance structures work and how they might support the Network’s shared purpose is critical. Understanding the reporting required by different governance structures is an important part of the selection process and may be determined by the skill sets of network members. Several key stakeholders recommended seeking expert facilitation to enable a strong partnership approach.

  “You can get fantastic results through strong governance”

  Bernard Galbally

- The type of governance required can be flexible – depending on the needs of the organisation, there may be a need to allow for changing volunteer workforce and community support.

  “Establish a community ecosystem”

  Gareth Colliton

	1 UNINCORPO-RATED	2 INCORPORAT-ED	3 PUBLIC COMPANY LIMITED BY GUARANTEE	4 NON-DISTRIBUTING CO-OPERATIVE	5 TRUST	6 CHARITY	7 SOCIAL ENTER-PRISE
INFORMAL NOT RECOGNISED AS A SEPARATE LEGAL ENTITY	✓				✓		✓
RECOGNISED AS A SEPARATE LEGAL STRUCTURE		✓	✓	✓		✓	✓
PROTECTIONS FOR MEMBERS FROM LIABILITY		✓	✓	✓	✓		
INSURANCE REQUIRED FOR PUBLIC LIABILITY	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
APPLY FOR GRANTS		✓		✓		✓	✓
ABLE TO APPLY FOR CHARITABLE STATUS (IF MEET REQUIREMENTS)	✓	✓	✓	✓			

Southwest Kids

GOVERNANCE STRUCTURE

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR HOW THE NETWORK COULD FUNCTION

Key stakeholders provided several recommendations for the development of the proposed Community Climate Network. They emphasised the importance of clear leadership, sustainability, and a well-defined purpose, with organised governance structures and processes in place.

"Avoid hierarchy- it gives the impression that all work sits on the leaders' shoulders, not the group as a whole."

Anna Sweeney, Wattle Park

Many suggested beginning with a small, diverse and dedicated group with the skills to engage policymakers effectively, aligning their interests with existing climate initiatives. Government support was understood as crucial, though the independence of a community-led and adaptable network was emphasised by many stakeholders.

Some stakeholders proposed that the Network could be integrated into existing organisations or committees to support sustainability. In this case, it was suggested that financial contributions from members and grant funding for a coordinator position could ensure long-term viability.

Almost universally, stakeholders agreed that the Network should focus on community empowerment, independence, and sustainability. Stakeholders also suggested that the Network might collaborate with local councils to fund climate change facilitators working with the community and various stakeholders.

GOVERNANCE STRUCTURE

SOCIAL CAPITAL AND NETWORKS

Encyclopedia Brittanica defines Social capital is a set of shared values or resources that allow individuals to work together in a group to effectively achieve a common purpose. This is typically achieved via a network of relationships. There are three ways we can utilise social capital. As several key stakeholders engaged in the Community Climate Network Scoping Project observed:

> ***Bonding*** involves deepening the relationships which already exist; i.e. being the source of information so the wheel doesn't get reinvented.
>
> ***Bridging*** involves creating new relationships beyond what already exists and finding commonality, which would allow for sharing knowledge, skills and resources; i.e. access to plain language documents which explain what is occurring in the region.
>
> ***Linking*** involves creating relationships with leaders or government officials to advocate/leverage their power and influence; i.e. Organisations often have their own agendas and are not in a position to advocate, so an independent voice is important.

SOCIAL CAPITAL AND SHARED VISION

Individuals within a network need to have agreement around values and a consensus on the vision and purpose of the Network. The Partnership Brokerage Association argues that "many issues are more unpredictable, complex and inter-connected than they were before – requiring far more layered and flexible responses". So, although a network requires governance with processes in place, there also needs to be a fair and reasonable way for individuals within that network to arrive at consensus. An informal gathering of interested people is a perfectly legitimate way to begin building a network, though planning is a critical part of creating a sustainable governance structure that is fit for purpose.

GOVERNANCE STRUCTURE

FUNDING FOR PHASE 2

To ensure that the vision and purpose of the community-led Community Climate Change Network can be developed, key stakeholders identified several options and considerations for funding a potential network:

Collaboration

Stakeholders recognise the opportunity for collaboration in securing funding. This collaborative approach was widely regarded as more effective and resource efficient.

Existing Funding Opportunities

There is an awareness of existing funding opportunities that can be tapped into, both at the regional and state levels. These opportunities could provide financial support for network activities and projects.

Grant Funding

Some stakeholders suggest the possibility of securing grant funding, similar to models used by organisations like Landcare. Grant money could be used to fund key roles, such as a coordinator, and support project-based working groups.

Voluntary Contributions

While grant funding is one avenue, there was also a consideration of member contributions. This might involve financial contributions from network members to sustain its activities and ensure stability. However, voluntary contributions have limitations in terms of sustainability.

Business-Like Model

Some stakeholders suggested setting up the Network as a business or social enterprise, moving away from a solely grant-funded model. This approach aims to build community investment and trust over time.

Governance and Structure

The governance structure is a significant consideration, with discussions around hierarchical vs. non-hierarchical models, rotating roles, and the importance of long-term commitment to roles.

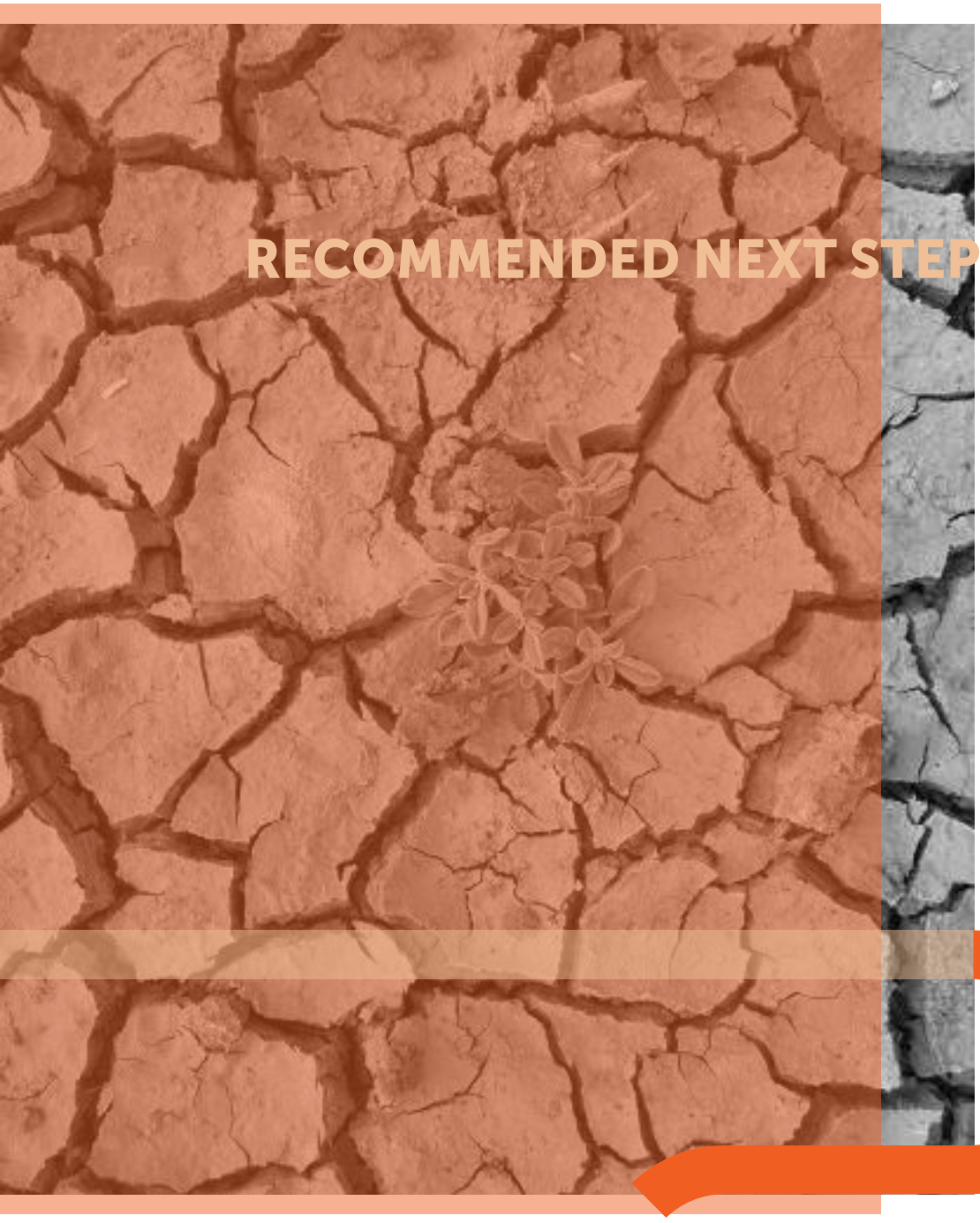
Role of Government

Participant feedback on government in funding for a potential Climate Network underscored the significant responsibility government entities hold in addressing climate change, encompassing both adaptation and mitigation efforts. Stakeholders often emphasised the importance of considering climate change in all council decisions, making it a whole-of-organisation responsibility. Government involvement in regional Climate Networks, like the Barwon South West Climate Alliance, is seen as essential for implementing climate actions and policies. There's a strong belief in the government's role in enabling and supporting communities to take context-appropriate climate action, while also acknowledging the challenges in collaboration when government priorities shift.

Many key stakeholders expressed a preference for independence and a desire to minimize reliance on government funding and approval. Responses highlighted government's multifaceted role, encompassing responsibility, support, collaboration, policy, and legislation, while also emphasizing the need for independence and consistency in climate initiatives.

Overall, stakeholder suggestions for diverse funding for a community Climate Network involved a combination of collaborative efforts, grants, member contributions, and careful consideration of governance and sustainability. For the benefit of progression to Phase 2, an auspice arrangement is recommended to allow the development of an appropriate governance structure.

GOVERNANCE STRUCTURE



RECOMMENDED NEXT STEPS

Seek out a community group to support the next step, prior to the conclusion of the 2023 Leadership Great South Coast Community Leadership Program

↓

The community group would not be required to lead the next step, but to auspice the visioning process, which could be piloted at a local level and the process implemented in the region, utilising the social capital bridging process (see above)

↓

Obtain funding to appoint a facilitator to workshop the following key questions:

What outcomes do we want?

Where is the need and what are the gaps?

↓

Determine successful models for developing a community climate change network, through discussion with existing and established regional Climate Networks such as the Gippsland Climate Change Network, Geelong Sustainability, or Queenscliff Climate Action Now

↓

Provide key questions/considerations which will guide the formation of the Network and begin to scope its purpose

↓

Identify existing key stakeholders, in addition to those already consulted during Phase 1

↓

Link to research, mentors, possible funding bodies, possible supporters, tools needed to develop the Network (i.e. SWOT analysis)

↓

Identify possible 'quick wins'

↓

Develop a skills matrix and recruitment criteria for the people who would like to be involved through the selected governance model e.g. steering committee/board

↓

Invite stakeholders to be part of the establishment process through the above-mentioned workshop or a "community visioning" process

↓

Once the purpose and vision is identified use this document to help inform the governance structure

REFERENCES

Partnership Brokerage Handbook
https://partnershipbrokers.org/w/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/Brokering-Better-Partnerships-Handbook.pdf

Social Enterprise
https://business.vic.gov.au/business-information/start-a-business/business-structures/social-enterprise

LGSC South West Kids

Social Capital
https://www.britannica.com/topic/social-capital

Further Reading

Diversity on Victorian Government Boards Guidelines
https://www.vic.gov.au/diversity-victorian-government-board-guidelines

DJPR Victorian Social Enterprise Strategy
https://djsir.vic.gov.au/about-us/overview/strategies-and-initiatives/social-enterprise and https://djpr.vic.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0018/2036205/DJPR-Victorian-Social-Enterprise-Strategy.pdf

Great Boards Distinguishing governance and management
https://wyoextension.org/parkcounty/wp-content/uploads/2015/12/Difference-between-Governance-Management.pdf

Geelong Sustainability
https://www.geelongsustainability.org.au/governance/ and https://www.geelongsustainability.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/GS_RULES_Registered_11Feb2015.pdf

Justice Connect
https://www.nfplaw.org.au/free-resources

Our Community
ourcommunity.com.au

AICD
https://www.aicd.com.au/

LGSC 2023 Community Climate Network Scoping Project Team

From left: Emma Shortis, Nicole Wood, Rachel Cameron, Cate Corbet and Cathryn Walder

LEADERSHIP
Great South Coast Inc.

PO Box 7063, Warrnambool Victoria 3280
0408 627 066
info@lgsc.org.au

Copyright © Leadership Great South Coast Inc. November 2023