



Snapshot

The Victorian Adaptation and Sustainability Partnership (VAS Partnership)

Summary

The Victorian Adaptation and Sustainability Partnership (VAS Partnership) is a 2013-2016 initiative between the Victorian State Government and all 79 Victorian councils to work together on climate adaptation. The VAS project is a great example of using a partnership approach for state-wide local scale adaptation planning. Such an approach ensures that risks are managed cost-effectively and that local capacity is built to respond to challenges and opportunities in a collaborative and coordinated way.

The Victorian Adaptation and Sustainability Partnership (VAS Partnership) is a 2013-2016 initiative between the Victorian State Government and all 79 Victorian councils to work together on climate adaptation. The VAS Partnership builds on a culture of collaboration between state and local governments to drive local adaptation action through partnerships, strategic resource allocation, learning and knowledge sharing and mutual understanding.

The Victorian Government's Climate Change Adaptation Plan 2013 identified strengthening partnerships with local government and communities as one of its six strategic priorities. The VAS Partnership was designed to play a key role in delivering this. Regional and local scale adaptation strategies are best developed and implemented by those with local knowledge and with risk management responsibilities. Local governments have an important role to play in ensuring local conditions are taken into account and local knowledge is considered in climate adaptation measures. This is mainly because the broad impacts of climate change affect whole communities. The partnership approach ensures risks are managed cost-effectively and that local capacity is built to respond to challenges and opportunities in a collaborative and coordinated way.

Keywords

Innovative partnership, regional partnership, local adaptation, planning

The \$6 million VAS Partnership uses a holistic approach to develop adaptation thinking and action, including:

- \$4.75 million in local government grants
- a state-wide adaptation mentoring initiative
- development of a memorandum of understanding between state and local government to provide a framework for ongoing engagement regarding adaptation roles and responsibilities
- development of an adaptation online hub.

Of Victoria's 79 councils, 70 are leading or are a partner to a project allocated funding from the \$4.75 million. To access the funding, councils have to partner with other councils and organisations, and present a project that either embeds climate adaptation into local decision making, or puts climate adaptation plans into action. This grant funding process was available under two categories: a competitive section open to all councils, and a non-competitive section designed for resource constrained rural councils (thus allowing them, in some cases, to start their adaptation journey).

Adaptation mentors with extensive and complementary experience across adaptation, climate change, business, and local government were employed and are available to all 79 councils depending on their immediate needs. The VAS Partnership is overseen by a Ministerial Advisory Committee (see Figure 1) made up of Councillors, the Parliamentary Secretary for Environment, and representatives from three local governments.

The Department of Environment and Primary Industries works closely with councils at the regional level, acting as a knowledge broker and running annual adaptation forums to share learnings and provide networking opportunities. The VAS Partnership was designed holistically, rather than one size fits all, to provide equal access to funding, mentoring and information to councils no matter where they are on their adaptation path. This approach has enabled many councils to explore innovative and diverse adaptation solutions that will prove useful beyond regional and state boundaries.



Figure 1: VAS Partnership Ministerial Advisory Committee. Source: © State Government of Victoria (Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning).

Examples of VAS Partnership local government projects that address the five main topics are:

- **Adaptation for prosperity: Climate-smart Agricultural Development in the Goulburn Broken (Moira)**
This will generate and communicate long-term data, information and strategic plans that enable councils and agri-businesses to focus on regional development, infrastructure and agricultural industry transformation.
- **Communication for climate adaptation: Are You Ready? (Mornington Peninsula)**
This will develop an interactive website and direct community engagement program to assist residents to learn about the risks to their property and lifestyle associated with climate change and help them to plan for the future.
- **Helping the natural environment: Bushland and Urban Biodiversity Management in a Changing Climate (Boroondara)**
This will assist local governments to develop adaptive management techniques to better manage biodiversity assets, by monitoring natural ecosystem responses to changes in climate.
- **Climate adapted city life: Assessing the Economic Value of Green Infrastructure (Melbourne)**
This will produce an economic framework to value the benefits of green infrastructure, including liveability, health and wellbeing, ecosystem services, energy reduction and property value.
- **Resilient communities: Enabling Adaptation Action for Vulnerable Rural Persons (Southern Grampians)**
This will increase the capacity of vulnerable rural populations to better plan for the impacts of climate change.

Further reading

The VAS Partnership website: <http://www.depi.vic.gov.au/environment-and-wildlife/sustainability/victorian-local-sustainability-accord> (accessed 15 June 2017).

The Municipal Association of Victoria (MAV) website: <http://www.mav.asn.au/policy-services/environment/Pages/default.aspx> (accessed 15 June 2017).

This Snapshot was prepared by the NCCARF CoastAdapt Development Team. Please cite as:
NCCARF, 2016: The Victorian Adaptation and Sustainability Partnership. Snapshot for CoastAdapt, National Climate Change Adaptation Research Facility, Gold Coast.



Australian Government

Department of the Environment and Energy