



# Low Carbon Communities

**Julia Gillard and Labor**  
Let's move Australia forward



## **LOW CARBON COMMUNITIES**

A Gillard Labor Government will provide \$80 million to support local councils and communities to take action on climate change and transition to a greener, cheaper future.

The *Low Carbon Communities* initiative will help local councils and communities to cut pollution and reduce their energy costs through energy efficient upgrades to street lighting, community facilities and council buildings.

The initiative will also assist communities to reduce pollution through investment in cogeneration facilities or energy efficient upgrades to community sites such as stadiums, education facilities, town halls or nursing homes.

### **Why are we doing this?**

This initiative is part of the Gillard Labor Government's plan to lower pollution and cut energy bills where we live, work and travel.

Councils and their facilities are at the heart of many communities and will be at the forefront of our community response to climate change.

Many councils and local communities have already demonstrated significant leadership in addressing the challenges of climate change and moving forward to a greener future.

Public buildings account for more than 25 per cent of non-residential building emissions in Australia, and these community facilities often use large amounts of energy.

Through this initiative, we will provide new opportunities for co-investment with councils and local communities in priority projects. These projects will give ratepayers a better deal, cut pollution levels and take pressure off local electricity grids.

## **What will Federal Labor do?**

We will provide funding support for councils and operators of community facilities to undertake small and large projects to reduce energy consumption and pollution.

For smaller scale projects, grants of up to \$500,000 will be available for councils. These grants could be used for projects such as:

- Replacing inefficient street lights with high-efficiency technologies that use less energy and are more reliable.
- Retrofitting council properties and community buildings.
- Improving the energy efficiency of council-operated childcare, aged care and recreation facilities.
- Replacing incandescent traffic lights with modern LED versions, which can reduce their energy consumption by around 90 per cent.

For larger projects to improve energy efficiency, grants of up to \$5 million will be available to operators of community facilities with the backing of their local council.

These grants could be used for local community icons such as stadiums, education facilities, town halls or nursing homes. Funded projects could include the installation of cogeneration and new heating and air conditioning.

## **What will councils have to do?**

Councils will be able to apply for grants for smaller scale projects to reduce energy consumption and pollution in facilities such as outdoor lighting.

For larger projects, operators of community facilities can put together bids with the support of their local council for energy upgrades to local community facilities.

Applications will have to meet merit-based criteria which include value for money and environmental outcomes, to be successful under this initiative.

All applicants will need to match Federal Labor's funding contribution.

These bids will also need to demonstrate best practice in the deployment of cost-effective and integrated energy retrofits.

Successful applicants will need to report on the energy they have saved, and use their experience and project plans to help similar facilities undertaking these upgrades in the future.

This way we can ensure experience is shared amongst councils and communities across Australia.

## **What would the projects look like? Can you give me a few examples?**

### **Example 1**

- A local council in metropolitan Melbourne spends around \$250,000 per year on energy to power its street lights and traffic lights.
- It puts together a \$1 million proposal to replace its oldest traffic and street lights with super efficient LED systems. These last four times as long and halve greenhouse gases emissions.
- It receives \$500,000 under the *Low Carbon Communities* program to support the project with the remaining funding coming from the council.
- In three years, once the upgrade is fully complete, the Council is saving more than \$150,000 a year in reduced electricity and maintenance costs.

### **Example 2**

- A major aquatic and sports centre spends about \$600,000 per year heating its pools and powering the outdoor lighting on its football and hockey pitches.
- The centre approaches its local council and receives their support to bid for funding under *Low Carbon Communities*.
- They propose a project worth \$4m to install a mix of solar heating, new lighting and cogeneration systems. The facility receives \$2m in funding from the Commonwealth Government under the *Low Carbon Communities* program.
- The retrofit and cogeneration project proceeds and the sports centre reduces its energy bill by about \$300,000 a year, the project paying itself off in around 8 years.

### **Example 3**

- A major TAFE College in Sydney spends about \$1 million per year on electricity and gas to heat and power its classrooms and buildings.
- It is approached by its local council which sponsors an application under *Low Carbon Communities*.
- A project worth \$8m is proposed, which includes a retrofit of the buildings and a replacement of the 1970s boiler. The project consortium receives \$4m in funding from the Commonwealth Government under the *Low Carbon Communities* program.
- The retrofit project proceeds and the TAFE College reduces its energy bills by about \$400,000 a year.

## **How will we help councils take advantage of this Initiative?**

Successful local councils will have access to financial support and project management expertise through the program to ensure projects are implemented quickly and efficiently.

Regional and remote councils will receive special help to take action in their communities.

## Greener Suburbs

Local councils invest considerable resources in managing parks and other green spaces in urban areas. These areas have the potential to provide a wide range of complementary benefits to the community – physical and mental health benefits, stormwater management benefits, biodiversity benefits, and energy savings through shading. These benefits are highly valued by local communities, who want to see practical, greenhouse-friendly action such as tree-planting happening in their neighbourhood.

Federal Labor will provide \$5 million to give councils the support they need to get greater benefits from their existing investment in green spaces.

Policy guidelines and support material will be developed and distributed to local councils. A competitive small grants program will be run annually to fund capacity building projects and demonstration projects to improve the use of our green spaces.

## Funding

Funding for the *Low Carbon Communities* initiative is already included in the Budget, through the Renewable Energy Future Fund.

## THE LIBERALS' RECORD

Tony Abbott broke the bipartisan consensus for action on climate change the night he became Leader of the Opposition, and reneged on his party's deal to support emissions trading.

- ✘ **Instead Tony Abbott is advocating a 'direct action' policy, under which emissions will actually increase.** Estimates from the Department of Climate Change show that under Mr Abbott's policy, emissions would increase by 13 per cent from 2000 levels.
- ✘ **Renewable energy went backwards under the former Coalition Government.** They let renewable energy drop backwards from 10.5 per cent of our national electricity supply in 1997 to only 9.5 per cent a decade later.
- ✘ **Under the former Coalition Government Australia was part of the problem on climate change, not part of the solution.** If he is elected Prime Minister, Mr Abbott has already made clear that he would cut away at funding for renewable energy.
- ✘ **The Coalition has promised to cut hundreds of millions of dollars of climate change funding.** This includes funding for renewable energy and energy efficiency.