

6 September 2021

Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment
National Climate Resilience and Adaptation Strategy Taskforce

Via email: ncras.taskforce@environment.gov.au

Dear Taskforce Members,

National Climate Resilience and Adaptation Strategy

Anglicare Australia appreciates the opportunity to provide input to the new National Climate Resilience and Adaptation Strategy (the Strategy). Our responses to climate change must foster resilient, equitable communities that support the people most vulnerable to its impacts.

We know that people on low incomes and marginalised communities have the least ability to cope, adapt, move away from or recover from the impacts of climate change, including more frequent and intense extreme weather events and natural disasters. Climate change is impacting people's health, quality of life, livelihoods and ability to make ends meet financially.

It is vital that adaptation measures avoid increasing social inequity. In fact, adaptation actions to respond to climate change provide a clear opportunity to *reduce* inequity and disadvantage. For example, moving to renewable energy systems provides the opportunity to make electricity more affordable and reliable for people on low incomes. Similarly, retrofitting housing stock to maximise energy efficiency and comfort is an opportunity to lower energy costs and help people stay healthier.

Anglicare Australia recommends the **guiding principles that underpin the Strategy should be updated to include equity.**

The Strategy should also **include the community sector as one of its priority sectors.**

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As services on the frontline assisting communities to respond and recover from extreme events and everyday poverty, Anglicare Australia Network members provide vital support for the most vulnerable people in our society. For example, our emergency relief services help people with the everyday stress of high power bills. Some parts of the Anglicare Australia Network help to provide affordable, energy efficient housing for people on low incomes. Many of our members are partners in state and territory emergency action plans, or respond by helping people rebuild their lives after extreme weather events and natural disasters.

Yet the community sector continues to be overlooked in climate policy responses and capacity building.

Anglicare Australia Network members want to prevent, prepare for and adapt to climate change. Climate change is not an abstract, distant threat to the people we work with, our organisations or staff. It is a daily reality. But they are limited by a lack of financial resources, government leadership and contractual flexibility that would allow them to engage in resilience and capacity building to prepare for coming emergencies.

Our sector must be properly equipped to help communities mitigate and adapt to climate change, and recover and rebuild in response to the impacts that are already happening.

The roles and responsibilities document should be updated to recognise the role of community sector organisations, like Anglicare Australia Network members, in supporting vulnerable people and strengthening community resilience. Our role is unique and should not be conflated with the wider business sector.

For example, community sector organisations help make sure communities stay strong and connected, especially when they are facing disasters and emergencies. People connected with their communities are more resilient to climate change than those who are socially isolated, because they are more likely to be able to access the information, resources, services and other support they need.¹

The role of the federal government in the same document should include providing dedicated support for the community sector to adapt and respond to climate change impacts, and to support the community with adaptation and response.

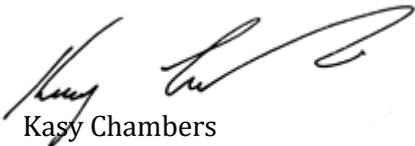
A climate adaptation fund would allow organisations to apply for funding to retrofit buildings, respond to extreme weather events, and better prepare their clients for the impacts of climate change. Training, rollout of existing resilience toolkits and sector specific benchmarking would help build sector resilience.

Anglicare Australia understands the new Strategy will showcase national resilience and adaptation efforts. We would welcome the opportunity to provide more detailed information about the work of our network members in helping vulnerable communities adapt to and respond to climate change.

However, the limited scope, short timeframes and few mechanisms for engaging with this consultation will inevitably mean important feedback, viewpoints and examples of adaptation efforts will be missed.

We urge the Department of Agriculture, Water and Environment to consider a more comprehensive consultation process that provides community members, including those on low incomes and who are vulnerable to the impacts of climate change, opportunity to participate.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Kasy Chambers', written in a cursive style.

Kasy Chambers
Executive Director

ⁱ Australian Red Cross, *Relationships matter: the application of social capital to disaster resilience*, National Disaster Resilience Roundtable Report, Melbourne 2012.