

# Climate Change, Waste Management and Local Government: moving from Promotions to Actions

Cr Doug Thompson

Chairperson, Southern Metropolitan Regional Council (SMRC)

## Abstract

It is widely recognised that local governments play an important role in encouraging communities to achieve reduction in greenhouse gas emissions by making lots of incremental changes such as:

- Promote hope in communities about the capacity to affect the bigger picture by individual actions;
- Importance of the aggregation of effects;
- Promote carbon free communities by promoting actions that are credible, verifiable and real;
- Biggest issue facing us to get people to change their behaviour and the way they conduct their activities; and
- Emphasis on limiting carbon emissions can include big outlays initially but will return costs over time.

However, local governments need to go beyond being persuaders of others or endorsers of climate change initiatives. Currently many local governments do support climate change initiatives however there is always a danger of these being short term (focused on a 2 year election cycle), lack the substantial funding needed ("who's going to pay for this?") and can sidetracked into irrelevancies, which may look and sound good but do not make verifiable achievements.

Local governments need to take verifiable long-term actions to combat climate change.

One area where local governments can make a significant impact on Carbon emission is through their waste management and recycling practices. While not a "sexy" media attention grabbing issue, here is an area where local regional councils can make a real difference. To do this local government must:

- Adopt carbon neutral as the objective, with verified achievements as the measure of success
- Understand carbon trading and seek ways to become carbon brokers and actively seek to achieve carbon credits thru innovative actions
- Be willing to join together in larger conglomerations, such as regional councils to achieve the large-scale reductions that are beyond the reach of individual smaller councils.

