

CLIMATE ADAPTATION POLICY

Approved by:	Policy and Planning Committee (Resolution #: PAPCC/2026/017)	
Sponsor:	General Manager, City Services	
Department responsible:	Climate Adaptation and Resilience	
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PURPOSE

The Climate Adaptation Policy (this Policy) ensures that Council decisions about infrastructure, services and investment take climate risks into account early and consistently, in line with the Climate Change Response Act (2002 and signalled amendments), the National Adaptation Framework, and other relevant statutory and government direction. It supports better long-term decision-making to reduce damage, disruption and cost from climate-related hazards, including flooding, coastal hazards and extreme weather, and to protect communities, assets and services. Through this approach, the Council aims to help Ōtepoti Dunedin thrive through change and build a safer, better city for current and future generations.

OBJECTIVES

Community and Environment. This Policy aims to achieve:

- Reduced impact of climate hazards on communities, evidenced by fewer instances of avoidable damage, disruption and service interruption.
- Improved resilience of infrastructure, services and the natural environment, reflected in their ability to maintain function or recover under changing climate conditions.
- Increased community awareness of climate risks and meaningful participation in decisions about how those risks are managed.
- Stronger partnerships with mana whenua in climate adaptation and resilience planning, consistent with Te Tiriti o Waitangi.
- Fairer and more proportionate adaptation outcomes, where the distribution of costs, risks and impacts across communities and generations is better understood and considered.

Council Governance and Operations. This Policy aims to achieve:

- More consistent and transparent decision-making, with climate risks routinely identified, assessed and clearly reported in Council advice and decisions.
- A progressively stronger evidence base and organisational capability to support risk-informed decision-making.
- Better-targeted and more cost-effective investment, including improved timing, location and design of infrastructure and services.
- Consistent integration of climate risk across Council planning, asset management and investment.
- Improved quality and clarity of advice to Council, including explicit consideration of uncertainty.
- More coordinated responses with mana whenua, communities and partner agencies.

CONTEXT

The Office of the Auditor General has described climate change as “the most enduring and pervasive challenge councils will face.” Ōtepoti Dunedin is already experiencing climate-related impacts including flooding, coastal hazards, and increasing pressure on infrastructure, services and the natural environment. These risks are expected to increase over time. Managing climate risk requires decisions that balance immediate needs with long-term outcomes and consider impacts across current and future generations.

Council has progressively developed its approach to climate adaptation over time, including early work on climate projections, a focus on South Dunedin flooding and resilience, and more recent decisions to establish a citywide approach to climate risk and adaptation planning. This Policy provides a clear and consistent foundation for how climate risks are considered in Council decision-making. It replaces and builds upon Council's 2011 Climate Change Predictions Policy (first adopted in 2006).

This Policy sits under the DCC's Te Ao Tūroa – Environment Strategy (2016-26). Due to resilience being integral to sustainability, this Policy is strongly aligned with all eight DCC strategies and Te Taki Haruru – Māori Strategic Framework. It also aligns with many of DCC's other bylaws, policies and plans. Those relationships are described in Appendix 1: Strategic Alignment Analysis.

SCOPE

This Policy applies:

- To all DCC employees, contractors and consultants.
- To all DCC activities.
- To the extent possible, to Council's:
 - Position on proposals or activities enabled or supported by the DCC.
 - Agreements with local and regional partners.
 - Guidance and oversight of council-controlled organisations.

DEFINITIONS

Activity: Any business, service or piece of work undertaken by or on behalf of the DCC, excluding procedural functions, emergency works or regulatory functions where this Policy does not apply.

Climate adaptation: The process of responding to the actual or expected physical impacts of climate change.

Climate change: Long-term shifts in temperatures and weather patterns, largely due to human activities altering the composition of the global atmosphere.

Climate change projection: A model-derived estimate of how climate conditions may change in the future under specified emissions or socioeconomic scenarios.

Climate change scenario: A plausible future pathway of greenhouse-gas emissions and socioeconomic conditions used as an input to generate climate projections.

Climate mainstreaming: Systematic integration of climate change risks, impacts, adaptation needs and mitigation opportunities into policies, planning, budgeting, investment decisions and day-to-day operations across all sectors of an organisation or government.

Climate resilience: The capacity to prepare for, cope with and recover from climate-related impacts.

Emergency works: Activities required urgently to meet health, safety, or statutory requirements.

Maladaptation: Actions or processes that may increase vulnerability to climate change impacts, rather than reducing it.

Nature-based solutions: Actions to protect, restore and sustainably manage natural or modified ecosystems to deliver services that address social, economic and environmental challenges effectively and adaptively.

Procedural functions: Matters concerning procedures, appointments, remuneration, budgeting and governance.

Tolerable risk: A level of residual risk that is accepted in a given context because it has been reduced to as low as reasonably practicable and any remaining risk is justified by the benefits of the activity.

Vulnerability: The degree to which people, the built environment and the natural environment are susceptible to, or unable to cope with, adverse effects of climate change.

POLICY

1. **General Approach.** Council will:
 - 1.1. Consider climate risks early and consistently in decision-making.
 - 1.2. Use up-to-date climate information and projections.
 - 1.3. Take a risk-based approach proportionate to the scale, cost and lifespan of activities.
 - 1.4. Prioritise actions that reduce long-term risk and avoid unnecessary future costs.
2. **Decision-Making and Investment.** Council will:
 - 2.1. Include climate risk considerations in significant projects, plans and investments.
 - 2.2. Prefer options that reduce long-term risk, avoid lock-in to vulnerable assets and deliver durable outcomes.
 - 2.3. Escalate decisions where climate risks cannot be managed to a tolerable level.
 - 2.4. Consider long-term and intergenerational impacts of decisions, including how costs, risks and benefits are distributed over time.
 - 2.5. Identify opportunities to deliver multiple benefits where doing so improves overall outcomes.
 - 2.6. Clearly identify how climate risks and trade-offs have been considered in Council reports.
3. **Infrastructure and Services.** Council will:
 - 3.1. Plan, design, operate and maintain infrastructure and services to manage current and future climate risks.
 - 3.2. Prioritise areas of known risk.
 - 3.3. Avoid creating or increasing exposure to climate-related hazards where practicable.
 - 3.4. Use cost-effective solutions, including nature-based approaches where they provide reliable and sustainable outcomes.
 - 3.5. Prioritise approaches that deliver multiple benefits, including improved resilience, environmental outcomes and community wellbeing where practicable.
4. **Planning and Integration.** Council will:
 - 4.1. Integrate climate risk considerations into planning, asset management and investment processes.
 - 4.2. Align Long-Term Plan decisions with climate risk considerations.
 - 4.3. Use consistent assumptions and information across Council.
 - 4.4. Ensure decisions are transparent and well-documented.
5. **Communities, Equity and Partnerships.** Council will:
 - 5.1. Provide accessible information to help communities understand climate risks.
 - 5.2. Engage with communities in ways that enable meaningful participation in decisions that affect them.
 - 5.3. Work in partnership with mana whenua in accordance with Te Tiriti o Waitangi.
 - 5.4. Consider how risks, costs and benefits are distributed across communities.
 - 5.5. Work with other agencies and partners to coordinate responses and share knowledge, responsibilities and costs.
6. **Organisational Capability.** Council will:
 - 6.1. Build and maintain the evidence base, systems and capability to support climate-informed decision-making.
 - 6.2. Use existing processes where possible, and integrate climate risk into normal planning and budgeting.
 - 6.3. Provide guidance, tools and training to support consistent application of this Policy.
7. **Costs and Affordability.** Council will:
 - 7.1. Consider long-term affordability when responding to climate risks.
 - 7.2. Seek to reduce overall costs by avoiding poorly timed, ineffective or short-lived investment.
 - 7.3. Pursue opportunities for co-funding and cost-sharing with central government and partners.

8. **Regulatory Role.** Where legislation allows, this Policy will inform regulatory decisions and submissions to support resilient land use, infrastructure planning and community wellbeing.
9. **Climate Change Projections.** Council will:
 - 9.1. Use organisation-wide climate change projections as the default basis for assessing climate risks.
 - 9.2. Ensure consistent and up-to-date climate data and assumptions are applied across Council, unless a justified departure is approved through appropriate governance processes and clearly documented.
 - 9.3. Apply organisation-wide climate projections to long-term planning and strategy development, infrastructure and asset management planning, project and investment decisions including options analysis and business cases, and advice, standards and policy development.
 - 9.4. Apply climate projections proportionate to the scale, risk and lifespan of assets or activities.
 - 9.5. Communicate uncertainty in climate projections and risk assessments, including the range of possible future conditions and the level of confidence in available information.
 - 9.6. Use ranges, scenarios or qualitative descriptions where appropriate, rather than relying on single values or assumptions.
 - 9.7. Take a precautionary approach where decisions involve long-lived or critical infrastructure, or where the consequences of underestimating risk are significant.
 - 9.8. Clearly document the assumptions, data sources and implications used in decision-making.

IMPLEMENTATION

This Policy will be implemented through:

- Existing Council planning, asset management and reporting processes.
- Supporting guidance, tools and risk assessment approaches.
- The Long-Term Plan and associated investment decisions.

REVIEW

This Policy and the organisation-wide climate projections and assumptions will be reviewed at least once every three years, or sooner if required to reflect:

- Legislative changes.
- New climate information.
- Significant climate events.

STRATEGIC ALIGNMENT

Climate adaptation and resilience is not an isolated policy area. It intersects with many of the major legislative acts, policy statements, strategies and plans that guide and shape the work of the DCC as shown in Appendix 1. This Policy aligns with and supports these frameworks to ensure a coherent, integrated approach to building a climate-resilient Ōtepoti Dunedin.

APPENDIX 1: STRATEGIC ALIGNMENT ANALYSIS

Relevant Legislation

	What it does	How this Policy aligns
Climate Change Response Act 2002 (amendment bill expected in 2026)	Sets New Zealand's climate action framework and adaptation planning requirements	Requires embedding climate risk into plans, activities, decisions and investments
Aotearoa New Zealand Climate Standards (resulted from 2021 amendment to the CCRA)	Requires large New Zealand entities to disclose climate-related information Supports transition to a low-emissions, climate-resilient economy Enhances investment decision-making by improving visibility of climate risks	Requires reports to show alignment with policy Requires monitoring against resilience outcomes Mainstreams climate across DCC systems and processes Positions DCC to meet disclosure requirements if they become mandatory
Local Government Act 2002	Provides a structural authority and decision-making framework for councils Requires councils to promote social, economic, environmental and cultural wellbeing of their communities Empowers councils to develop bylaws, policies and strategies	Operationalises promoting the four well-beings Complies with LGA decision-making framework Mainstreams climate across DCC systems and processes Commits to partnering with mana whenua Commits to engaging, educating and empowering communities
Local Government (Water Services) Act 2025	Makes resilience to climate change and natural hazards a core statutory objective Requires long-term planning that incorporates climate impacts Requires comprehensive assessments of drinking water, stormwater and wastewater resilience Mandates stormwater network risk management plans Embeds resilience throughout financial and investment settings	Requires embedding climate risk into plans, activities, decisions and investments Requires embedding adaptation and resilience into plans, activities, decisions and investments Commits to ensuring assets and services minimise climate risk Emphasises reducing long-term costs Requires assessment of climate risk for all projects Requires scenario-based planning
Local Government (System Improvements) Amendment Bill (proposed 2025 amendment to the LGA)	Removes the four well-beings Prioritises core services Mandates stricter performance monitoring and public disclosure of council spending	Emphasises reducing long-term costs Requires reports to show alignment with policy Requires monitoring against resilience outcomes
Resource Management Act 1991	Requires consideration of climate hazards in planning frameworks	Requires embedding climate risk into plans, activities, decisions and investments Prioritises nature-based solutions
Planning and Natural Environment Bills 2025 (proposed 2025 replacement of RMA)	Requires consideration of climate hazards in planning frameworks Requires regional and district plans to have regard for climate adaptation plans Mandates spatial plans identify priority locations for adaptation plans	Requires embedding climate risk into plans, activities, decisions and investments Prioritises nature-based solutions Requires embedding adaptation and resilience into plans, activities, decisions and investments
Building Act 2004	Sets the building code to ensure regulated structures are safe and durable, and can withstand climate hazards	Commits to ensuring assets and services minimise climate risk
Public Works Act 1981	Provides a legal framework for land acquisition and planning of public infrastructure	Commits to ensuring assets and services minimise climate risk Requires embedding adaptation and resilience into plans, activities, decisions and investments

	What it does	How this Policy aligns
Civil Defence Emergency Management Act 2002	Provides for emergency preparedness, response and recovery	Requires embedding climate risk into plans, activities, decisions and investments Commits to engaging, educating and empowering communities
Emergency Management Bill 2 (proposed 2025 replacement of CDEMA)	Mandates engagement with Māori and disproportionately affected communities Emphasises risk reduction and requires identification and management of risks and hazards Requires taking a precautionary approach to risk despite uncertainty Requires the providers of essential infrastructure to maintain emergency response plans and contribute to developing sector response plans Expands monitoring and compliance	Commits to partnering with mana whenua Commits to engaging, educating and empowering communities Requires embedding climate risk into plans, activities, decisions and investments Requires assessment of climate risk for all projects Requires scenario-based planning Requires communication of uncertainty Commits to ensuring assets and services minimise climate risk Commits to collaborating with stakeholders Supports cost-sharing and joint investment Requires monitoring against resilience outcomes

Relevant National/Regional Strategies/Plans

	What it does	How this Policy aligns
National Adaptation Plan 2022-28	Is New Zealand's roadmap for climate adaptation and resilience	Requires embedding climate risk into plans, activities, decisions and investments Commits to partnering with mana whenua Commits to engaging, educating and empowering communities Prioritises nature-based solutions Prioritises solutions with co-benefits
National Adaptation Framework 2025	Establishes New Zealand's strategic long-term approach to climate adaptation	Requires embedding climate risk into plans, activities, decisions and investments Commits to sharing hazard and risk information Commits to collaborating with stakeholders Supports cost-sharing and joint investment
National Policy Statement for Natural Hazards 2025	Tells councils how they must assess and manage natural hazard risk in land-use planning decisions. Requires a risk-based, proportionate approach.	Requires embedding climate risk into plans, activities, decisions and investments Commits to sharing hazard and risk information Commits to ensuring assets and services minimise climate risk
National Policy Statement for Infrastructure 2025	Tells councils and decision-makers how they must prioritise, enable and manage infrastructure when making planning and consent decisions. Requires improved resilience to natural hazards and climate change.	Requires embedding climate risk into plans, activities, decisions and investments Commits to ensuring assets and services minimise climate risk
Proposed Otago Regional Policy Statement 2021	Identifies climate change impacts as significant regional issues that need to be integrated into planning processes Requires identification of climate change effects, including from a Kāi Tahu perspective	Requires embedding climate risk into plans, activities, decisions and investments Commits to partnering with mana whenua Commits to engaging, educating and empowering communities Prioritises nature-based solutions

	What it does	How this Policy aligns
Regional Land Transport Plan 2021-31	Prioritises enhanced maintenance and network resilience	Commits to ensuring assets and services minimise climate risk Commits to collaborating with stakeholders Supports cost-sharing and joint investment
Draft Regional Indigenous Biodiversity Strategy 2025	Identifies climate change as a major pressure on ecosystems Emphasises strategies to enhance landscape-scale resilience to climate-driven change	Prioritises nature-based solutions Prioritises solutions with co-benefits
He Rautaki mō te Huringa o te Āhurangi – Ngāi Tahu Climate Change Strategy 2018	Provides strategic direction on empowering whānau, papatipu rūnaka and Kāi Tahu whānui to manage and prosper through climate change	Commits to partnering with mana whenua Commits to engaging, educating and empowering communities Requires embedding equity into climate actions Requires embedding intergenerational responsibility into climate actions
Te Kounga Paparangi – Ngāi Tahu Climate Action Plan 2024	Sets goals and notes achievements within Kāi Tahu whānui in mitigating climate change, building resilience and promoting sustainable business practices	Commits to partnering with mana whenua Commits to engaging, educating and empowering communities Prioritises nature-based solutions Prioritises solutions with co-benefits

Relevant DCC Strategies/Plans/Frameworks

	What it does	How this Policy aligns
Te Ao Tūroa – Environment Strategy 2016-26	Guides Dunedin’s approach to climate change and adaptation Elevates resilience as a core strategic priority Commits to delivering a climate adaptation plan Calls for implementation of appropriate climate adaptation responses Emphasises collaboration and sharing of information and resources	Operationalises DCC’s strategic goals Operationalises promoting the four well-beings Requires embedding adaptation and resilience into plans, activities, decisions and investments Mainstreams climate across DCC systems and processes Prioritises nature-based solutions Prioritises solutions with co-benefits Commits to partnering with mana whenua Commits to engaging, educating and empowering communities Commits to collaborating with stakeholders Commits to sharing hazard and risk information
Zero Carbon Policy Zero Carbon Plan	Emphasises that strong mitigation is required for effective adaptation Commits to actions to build a more resilient urban environment and support adaptive capacity	Mainstreams climate across DCC systems and processes Requires embedding climate risk into plans, activities, decisions and investments Commits to ensuring assets and services minimise climate risk Prioritises solutions with co-benefits Positions DCC to meet disclosure requirements if they become mandatory

	What it does	How this Policy aligns
Te Taki Haruru 2025	Emphasises intergenerational wellbeing Centres on delivering a sustainable environment Promotes approaches that are culturally grounded and respect traditional ecological knowledge	Commits to partnering with mana whenua Commits to engaging, educating and empowering communities Requires embedding equity into climate actions Requires embedding intergenerational responsibility into climate actions Operationalises promoting the four well-beings Prioritises nature-based solutions Prioritises solutions with co-benefits
3 Waters Strategic Direction Statement 2010-60 Integrated Systems Plan 2025	Ensures infrastructure is designed and maintained to withstand hazards Embeds resilience considerations into long-term infrastructure planning and investment decisions Supports planning to reduce vulnerability and safeguard essential services	Requires embedding climate risk into plans, activities, decisions and investments Requires embedding adaptation and resilience into plans, activities, decisions and investments Commits to ensuring assets and services minimise climate risk Emphasises reducing long-term costs Requires assessment of climate risk for all projects Requires scenario-based planning
Integrated Transport Strategy 2013	Ensures infrastructure is designed and maintained to withstand hazards Prioritises resilience in planning and investment decisions Supports integrated approaches to reduce vulnerability and maintain connectivity	Requires embedding climate risk into plans, activities, decisions and investments Requires embedding adaptation and resilience into plans, activities, decisions and investments Commits to ensuring assets and services minimise climate risk Emphasises reducing long-term costs Requires assessment of climate risk for all projects Mainstreams climate across DCC systems and processes Commits to collaborating with stakeholders Supports cost-sharing and joint investment
Future Development Strategy 2024-54	Shapes how Dunedin will grow Identifies natural hazards to guide land use decisions and avoid development in high-risk areas	Requires embedding climate risk into plans, activities, decisions and investments Commits to ensuring assets and services minimise climate risk
Parks and Recreation Strategy 2017-27	Supports provision and management of greenspaces Promotes ecological resilience	Requires embedding climate risk into plans, activities, decisions and investments Prioritises nature-based solutions Prioritises solutions with co-benefits
Social Wellbeing Strategy 2013-23	Promotes wellbeing Fosters equity and inclusion Strengthens social networks and community engagement	Requires embedding equity into climate actions Requires embedding intergenerational responsibility into climate actions Commits to partnering with mana whenua Commits to engaging, educating and empowering communities

	What it does	How this Policy aligns
Economic Development Strategy 2013-23	Influences how Dunedin's economy evolves	Requires embedding climate risk into plans, activities, decisions and investments Requires embedding adaptation and resilience into plans, activities, decisions and investments Commits to sharing hazard and risk information Commits to collaborating with stakeholders Supports cost-sharing and joint investment
Ara Toi – Arts and Culture Strategy 2015 Public Art Framework 2017-22	Strengthens community identity and cohesion Enhances public spaces Supports use of creative platforms for community engagement	Commits to partnering with mana whenua Commits to engaging, educating and empowering communities Prioritises nature-based solutions Prioritises solutions with co-benefits
Long-Term Plan (including the Infrastructure Strategy)	Sets priorities and funding for infrastructure, services and community initiatives Embeds climate risk considerations into long-term investment decisions Is the primary mechanism for turning strategic objectives into funded actions	Requires embedding climate risk into plans, activities, decisions and investments Mainstreams climate across DCC systems and processes Operationalises DCC's strategic goals Operationalises promoting the four well-beings Commits to ensuring assets and services minimise climate risk Emphasises reducing long-term costs Requires assessment of climate risk for all projects Requires scenario-based planning Requires communication of uncertainty Requires monitoring against resilience outcomes Complies with LGA decision-making framework Positions DCC to meet disclosure requirements if they become mandatory
Project Management Framework	Establishes a consistent, organisation-wide framework for initiating, prioritising, approving, delivering and reviewing projects and programmes Defines lifecycle stages, governance, assurance, roles and responsibilities, and investment decision-making to support effective delivery of DCC objectives	Requires embedding climate risk into plans, activities, decisions and investments Requires embedding adaptation and resilience into plans, activities, decisions and investments Mainstreams climate across DCC systems and processes Requires assessment of climate risk for all projects Requires monitoring against resilience outcomes
Procurement and Contract Management Policy	Establishes a consistent, transparent and strategically aligned approach to how the organisation plans, sources and manages all goods, services and works	Requires embedding climate risk into plans, activities, decisions and investments Requires embedding adaptation and resilience into plans, activities, decisions and investments Mainstreams climate across DCC systems and processes
Waste Management and Minimisation Plan	Builds circular and local systems that are less vulnerable to climate shocks Strengthens infrastructure and services to withstand future disruptions Builds community capability to adapt	Commits to engaging, educating and empowering communities Commits to collaborating with stakeholders Requires embedding adaptation and resilience into plans, activities, decisions and investments