

Guide to Councils

What do Councils do?

Councils can play a key role in leading the climate emergency response. But what do they actually do?

- Councils provide a wide variety of services to their municipalities and enforce various federal, state and local laws for their communities.
- The powers of local councils are defined laws passed by state parliaments and include responsibility for building regulations, public health, rubbish collection, local roads and animal management.
- Councils raise money from rates, duties and charges, and grants from state and federal governments.

How do Councils work?

- Councils are made up of two parts: the elected representatives (councillors) and administration (council staff).
- An elected council sets the overall direction for the community and develops plans and policies to achieve this.

The role of Councillors

- Councillors are elected to represent the interests of the local community. They are also required to:
 - provide leadership and guidance to the community
 - facilitate communication between the council and the community
 - promote the overall interests of the council to the other spheres of government and other relevant bodies.
- A councillor can only make decisions as a member of the council as a whole, the membership of which is determined by popular vote. No individual councillor has the power to make decisions on behalf of the council.

How to run a campaign focused on your local Council

- Councillors engage with residents and groups on a wide range of different issues which can contribute to the development of policies and strategies.
- One of the most effective ways of raising the climate crisis with your council is to go and meet your local councillor in person.
- Other important ways to raise the climate crisis with the council are by phone, letter or email, sign/create a petition, write to your local newspaper, or join/start a local campaign group.