**CMCF Submission on the ACT Climate Change Adaptation Strategy**

**April 2018**

Canberra Multicultural Community Forum Inc (CMCF) welcomes the opportunity to participate in the ACT Government’s next Climate Change Adaptation Strategy to a Net Zero Emissions Territory by 2045 (or earlier). Accordingly, CMCF puts forward this Submission that supports the Strategy, subject to its recommended actions focused on community welfare, particularly from the multicultural community’s perspectives.

CMCF looks forward to participating in further actions and consultations on climate change issues affecting the wellbeing of ACT’s multicultural communities.

 **About CMCF**

Canberra Multicultural Community Forum Inc is a recognised Peak body representing more than 110 ethnic and associated community organisation in the ACT and its surrounding areas. CMCF was established in December 2005 to have a unified voice and a single peak body to promote the common interests and articulate the purpose and direction of the multicultural community in the ACT. The Forum is established to act as the multicultural voice of the ACT.

CMCF held a community consultation evening session on 17 April 2018 to hear and share different views associated with the proposed ACT Climate Change Adaptation Strategy from the multicultural community’s perspectives. CMCF is grateful to the ACT Minister Shane Rattenbury for accepting the invitation to present the proposed Strategy at the session and answering to the questions and concerns raised by the community members.

CMCF also conducted a quick survey at the same session to obtain information about multicultural community members’ perception of climate change and how it relates to the ACT region and its people. The survey contained ten questions with multiple choice answers.

Please note that CMCF does not have any policy yet on the climate change adaptation. However, CMCF is aware of the fact that climate change has become one of the most important environmental issues that is going to affect the ACT households and businesses adversely, if mitigation strategies are not taken seriously and implemented quickly.

CMCF is also aware that the cost of inaction is by far greater than the cost of action in the case of climate change impacts. And that is why CMCF is of the opinion that the ACT community members should begin to take climate change impacts seriously and take necessary steps in their activities for transition to a low carbon economy. In particular, the community members need to take adaptive actions in the use of natural resources (such as, water and environment), infrastructure (such as, gas, electricity, transport) and social capital (such as, health, education, community engagement).

In this submission, CMCF sets out some of the key issues identified on the proposed Climate Change Adaptation Strategy to a Net Zero Emissions Territory by 2045 (or earlier) during the multicultural community consultations and subsequent recommendations for consideration by the ACT Government.

**Issues and Recommendations**

**Issue 1: Understanding Climate Change impacts in the ACT Community Context**

Most of the multicultural community members have a fair understanding of climate change issues and its impacts. Though most members agree with the fact that climate change affects the ACT region and its residents seriously, they are not quite clear about the mechanism of impacts and how the adverse impacts could be mitigated. This implies that community members are yet to form views on their prospective roles in contributing to climate change mitigation activities.

***Recommendation 1: CMCF recommends that a clear communication strategy on how to engage members from the multicultural ACT communities in climate change mitigation activities need to be developed with inputs from energy, health care, education, infrastructure and legal professionals and in consultation with the peak community organisations in the ACT region.***

***Recommendation 2: CMCF also recommends that more community awareness sessions need to be conducted on a regular basis for the purpose of wider multicultural community education and building an effective network between community members, policy makers, service providers and subject experts related to climate change issues.***

**Issue 2: Financing the Costs of** **Climate Change Adaptation Strategy**

Members of the ACT multicultural communities are concerned about the financial implications of the proposed Climate Change Adaptation Strategy of the ACT Government. Several questions about per head costs of the proposed strategy were raised at the community consultation session.

The general perception as reflected in the CMCF survey indicates that multicultural community members are not in favour of paying for the additional costs to be incurred for implementing the proposed strategy. Most of the members suggested that the strategy implementation costs to be borne by the state and federal governments with contributions from the service provider businesses and industries.

***Recommendation 3: CMCF recommends that information from a social cost benefit analysis of the proposed climate change adaptation strategy identifying per head social as well as financial costs and benefits of the proposed strategy, if already undertaken by the ACT Government, to be shared with the multicultural communities in a way that is easily understandable and accessible.***

This may involve a range of communication strategies to be adopted including engagement with community organisations, social media and printed information in different languages.

**Issue 3: Transition to Energy Efficient Resource Use-Multicultural Households Perspective**

Climate change affects all households and businesses, small or large, though in different degrees. However, studies indicate that climate change will affect low income households and disadvantaged communities disproportionately and being migrants, a large section of multicultural communities belong to lower income households.

On average, low income earners spend a greater proportion of their total monthly household budget on energy (water, electricity, gas), transport and health care services than wealthier households. Given that all of these are essential services, when the prices of these services increase, householders are left with little option but to bear the excess costs burden. In addition, households with low incomes usually use second hand appliances (like washing machine, dishwasher, vacuum cleaner, television, oven etc.) for daily activities, which are inefficient, waste energy and increase bills.

Also, a substantial proportion of multicultural community households live in modest neighbourhoods with old dwellings and are unable to afford significant energy efficiency measures at home, such as insulation, instant hot water systems, solar electricity or rainwater tanks.

In fact, multicultural households who live in private rental or public housing, do not have rights or incentives to make capital improvements in their residences. Consequently, they are forced to spend a major part of their disposable income on energy bills.

***Recommendation 4: CMCF recommends that a comprehensive means tested resource program for multicultural community households should be developed, supported by easy financing for energy efficient living and household appliances as well as community education session.***

**Issue 4: Flexible Working Arrangement to support the Climate Change Strategy**

Adverse impacts of climate change affect most economic activities. Therefore, mitigation strategies of climate change require a holistic approach encompassing transport, health,

education, job creation and community engagement. Change in work culture, such as flexible working arrangement, also can add positively to mitigation of climate change by reducing carbon footprint as people use motorised transport less and reduce traffic congestion by travelling to work at off-peak hours. Flexible working refers to a work culture that supports employees working from home, job sharing, working part time and choosing own work hours.

***Recommendation 5: CMCF recommends that the proposed climate change adaptation strategy should develop a holistic approach integrating options that link public transport, health, education, work culture, job creation and community engagement. In particular, a low-cost initiative of flexible working arrangement at work should be explored using a pilot project for the multicultural communities.***

In addition to reducing traffic congestion and use of motorised vehicles, this change in work culture environment will raise multicultural households’ disposable income by allowing their women entering paid labour force, while looking after family in a traditional set up.

**Issue 5: A** **communication strategy specific to multicultural community needs**

Climate change impacts are long term environmental issues which are not visible or felt by the community members immediately and clearly. In addition, available information written in English may not be understandable to all multicultural community members.

***Recommendation 6:***  ***CMCF recommends that the ACT Government develops an effective communication strategy specific to multicultural community needs using different languages in consultation with peak multicultural community organisations.***

This communication strategy will include printed concise information brochures as well as regular information and awareness sessions in prominent multicultural languages spoken in the ACT.

**Issue 6: Community perceptions on top policy issues for the ACT Government attention**

CMCF community survey on climate change tried to find out multicultural community’s perceptions on the most important policy issues for the ACT Government’s immediate attention. While majority of members identified climate change, health and job opportunities as the top three policy concerns, issues like aged care, transport, renewable energy, housing and education are also identified as one of the three top priority issues.

In addition, some community members have suggested the following policy actions:

* No further Light Rail network extension in the ACT region
* Discouragement to high rise buildings in the ACT region
* Inclusion of climate change issues and mitigation strategies in the settlement programs of new migrants in the ACT region
* Provision of quarterly or annual snapshots of environmental benefits and other benefits of climate change adaptation strategy to the larger ACT community so that community members can easily perceive the current policy outcomes and the future actions necessary for intended target policy outcomes within a stipulated time frame.

***Recommendation 7: CMCF recommends that the ACT Government conducts wide community consultation to assess ACT community’s views about all these identified policy issues and inform the community about the current and future policies or programs being undertaken by the ACT Government, aligned with the national approach.***

CMCF appreciates the efforts taken by the ACT Government to consult with the community on its proposed Climate Change Adaptation Strategy. This submission contributes to this consultation process by adding the views, concerns and suggestions of the ACT’s multicultural community.

CMCF welcomes this opportunity to participate and engage our members on this important climate change policy development. CMCF will look forward to take part in future consultation process, as required.

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Yours sincerely

Chin Wong

Chair

Canberra Multicultural Community Forum Inc.

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