Net Zero Commission

Pathways Call for Evidence Submission

18 July – 14 August 2026

Submission type	Upload
Submitter	City of Canada Bay
Response ID	382317

Disclaimer

This document is a submission to the Net Zero Commission's 2026 Pathways Call for Evidence. As part of the consultation process, the commission has committed to publishing the submissions it receives. Submissions do not represent the views of the commission.

Submission to NSW Net Zero Commission – Call for Evidence: Decarbonisation Pathways

Submitted by: City of Canada Bay Council (draft for Council review)
Date: July 2026

Contents

1. Introduction 2

2. Role of Local Government in Delivering Net Zero 3

3. Sectoral Insights from Canada Bay Local Government Area 5

Emissions Reduction 5

Energy 5

Transport 7

Circular Economy 8

4. Community, Growth and Development 9

Urban Development 9

Community Transition and Equity 10

5. Data, Modelling and Evidence 11

Methodology Alignment 11

Offsets 12

6. Funding and Capacity 13

Funding 13

Workforce Capability and Skills 14

7. Summary Recommendations 14

1. Introduction

City of Canada Bay Council welcomes the opportunity to contribute to the NSW Net Zero Commission's Call for Evidence and support the development of NSW's first decarbonisation pathways. These pathways will play an important role in identifying practical, evidence-based actions across sectors to achieve the State's legislated emissions reduction targets. Local government plays a critical role in enabling the transition to a low-emissions economy, acting as the interface between state policy and place-based implementation.

Climate change mitigation is a key priority for the City of Canada Bay and is embedded throughout Council's strategic planning framework, including the Our Future 2036 Community Strategic Plan. Council's recently adopted Environmental Strategy 2025 provides a roadmap for delivering a sustainable, resilient and thriving environment, with Net Zero Community identified as one of the Strategy's five priority themes.

Council is also updating its Emissions Reduction Action Plan to reflect an ambitious new community emissions reduction target adopted in June 2026. Council unanimously resolved to align its emissions reduction pathway with a science-based, equity-led approach consistent with the C40 Cities methodology and the objectives of the Paris Agreement.

Under this approach, emissions reductions are guided by a finite carbon budget. For a high-income community such as Canada Bay, the pathway is expected to achieve net zero emissions around 2040, while prioritising deep emissions reductions this decade. Key milestones include:

- Approximately 70–75% reduction in community emissions by 2030 from a 2016–17 baseline.
- Five-yearly reviews and interim milestones aligned with the Paris Agreement's "ratchet" mechanism.
- Ongoing monitoring and adaptive governance to respond to emerging science, policy and technology developments.

The adoption of this target reflects strong community support for ambitious climate action. During the development of Council's 2020 Emissions Reduction Action Plan and Environment Strategy review, residents, businesses and stakeholders consistently expressed a desire for Council to take a leadership role in reducing emissions and ensuring Canada Bay remains a healthy, liveable and resilient place for future generations.

Achieving net zero emissions across the Canada Bay community will require transformative change across energy, transport, buildings and waste systems. This includes a fully renewable electricity supply, widespread electrification of homes and businesses, the progressive phase-out of fossil gas, improved building energy

performance, increased uptake of zero-emissions vehicles, enhanced active and public transport options, and continued improvements in waste avoidance, recycling and organics recovery. While priority must be placed on reducing emissions at source, some residual emissions are likely to remain and may require complementary carbon removal activities over time.

Council currently measures and tracks community emissions using the Resilient Sydney Platform, which applies the Global Protocol for Community-Scale Greenhouse Gas Emissions Inventories (GPC) BASIC standard. This framework provides a consistent methodology for measuring emissions from stationary energy, transport and waste across local government areas. By using a city-induced approach, the framework helps identify emissions sources that can be influenced through local action and informs evidence-based decision-making at both local and regional scales.

This submission draws on Council's experience delivering emissions reduction initiatives and identifies opportunities, barriers and recommendations to support a coordinated and equitable decarbonisation across New South Wales.

2. Role of Local Government in Delivering Net Zero

Local government is central to delivering emissions reductions on the ground. Councils influence emissions outcomes through a range of functions, including:

- Strategic land use planning and place-making.
- Management of community infrastructure, facilities and public assets.
- Delivery of waste, recycling and resource recovery services.
- Transport planning and advocacy.
- Community education, engagement and behaviour change programs.
- Partnerships with community organisations, businesses and other levels of government.

Importantly, local government serves as the interface between government policy and community action. Councils have established relationships with residents and local stakeholders and are therefore well positioned to support the behavioural changes required to reduce emissions at scale.

The City of Canada Bay recognises that local government has unique strengths in climate action arising from its close connection to communities and its ability to influence both operational practices and community behaviour. Councils can demonstrate leadership through their own operations, share knowledge, and build local support for decarbonisation initiatives by communicating the benefits of

decarbonisations. Local government also has an important role in ensuring the transition is equitable and inclusive by ensuring climate actions are accessible and affordable.

However, while councils can influence outcomes through planning, advocacy, programs and partnerships, most community emissions are driven by factors outside local government control. As a result, achieving net zero will require coordinated action across all levels of government, industry and the community. Council's role is to lead, enable, advocate and facilitate local action rather than directly deliver all emissions reductions. Success will depend on supportive policy settings, investment certainty, access to low-emissions technologies and strong uptake by households and businesses.

There is currently a significant gap between state-level policy and local implementation. If local government is to play its full role in delivering NSW's emissions reduction objectives, councils require:

- Clear alignment between State emissions reduction policies and local implementation pathways.
- Stronger coordination across levels of government.
- Consistent emissions data, methodologies and reporting frameworks.
- Increased funding for local decarbonisation programs and infrastructure.
- Greater legislative and regulatory support for councils to accelerate emissions reduction within their communities.

A stronger partnership between the NSW Government and local government sector will be essential to accelerate emissions reductions, maximise community benefits and deliver a practical, place-based pathway to net zero.

Recommendations:

- Align NSW decarbonisation policies with local implementation pathways through stronger coordination mechanisms, recognising local government as a core delivery partner in NSW's net zero transition.
- Partner with local government to deliver equitable, place-based community engagement and decarbonisation programs, by providing councils with legislative support, long-term funding and implementation tools.

3. Sectoral Insights from Canada Bay Local Government Area

Emissions Reduction

Council seeks to lead by example, being a priority theme of Council's Environment Strategy 2025–2035. Since 2017–18, Council has reduced operational emissions by 83%, surpassing its interim target of a 77% reduction by 2025.

Community-wide emissions have fallen from 772,220 tonnes CO_2-e in 2016–17 to 670,966 tonnes CO_2-e in 2023–24, representing a 15% reduction over seven years. While this trend is encouraging, substantially faster reductions will be required to meet Council's newly adopted climate targets and align with a 1.5°C pathway. While councils can directly manage their own emissions, reducing community-wide emissions requires coordinated action across all levels of government, industry and households.

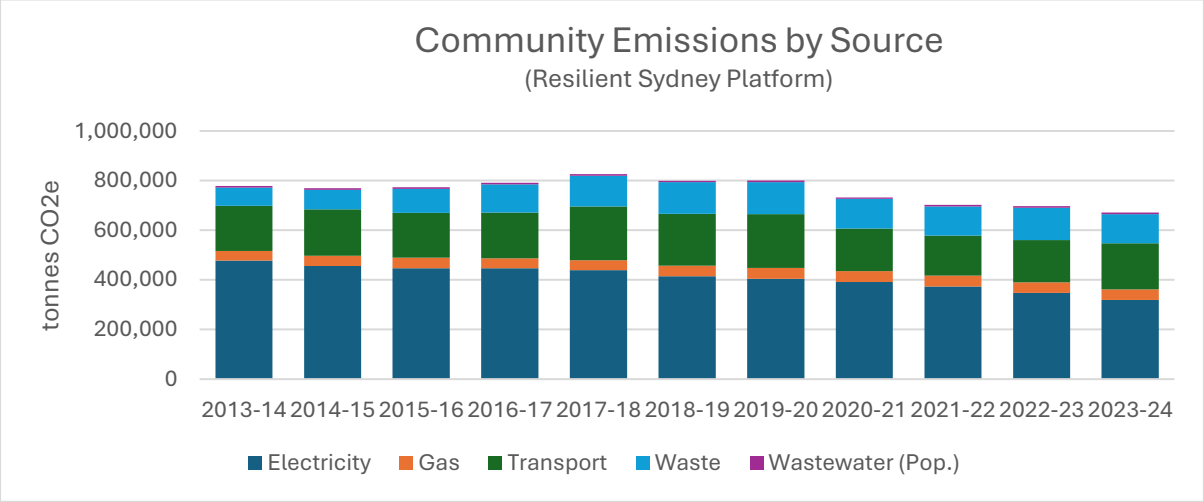

Figure 1 Community emissions by source, by year. Source: Resilient Sydney

Under Council's current inventory methodology (GPC), community emissions remain concentrated in three key sectors:

- Electricity and gas use in residential and commercial buildings
- Transport
- Waste

Energy

The transition to renewable energy is beginning within Canada Bay and demonstrates the potential for accelerated decarbonisation with supportive policy settings. Locally, rooftop solar adoption has grown rapidly, with installed capacity increasing fourfold since 2018.

As of December 2025:

- Approximately 4,894 solar photovoltaic systems had been installed across the municipality.
- Around 24.6% of residential properties have rooftop solar.
- Total installed solar capacity exceeded 40 MW.
- Rooftop solar systems are estimated to offset approximately 37,900 tonnes of CO_2 emissions annually.
- Households with solar are estimated to collectively save more than $6.2 million annually in electricity costs.
- Total energy consumption has also declined, with combined gas and electricity use approximately 3% lower than 2016–17 levels.

The growth of distributed renewable energy demonstrates strong community willingness to invest in decarbonisation when technologies are accessible and provide direct economic benefits.

Despite notable progress, opportunities remain to increase solar uptake in medium and high-density housing. Approximately 159 strata buildings in Canada Bay have installed solar (map linked here), representing 12.2% of strata buildings across the local government area, which is the second-highest penetration in metropolitan Sydney.

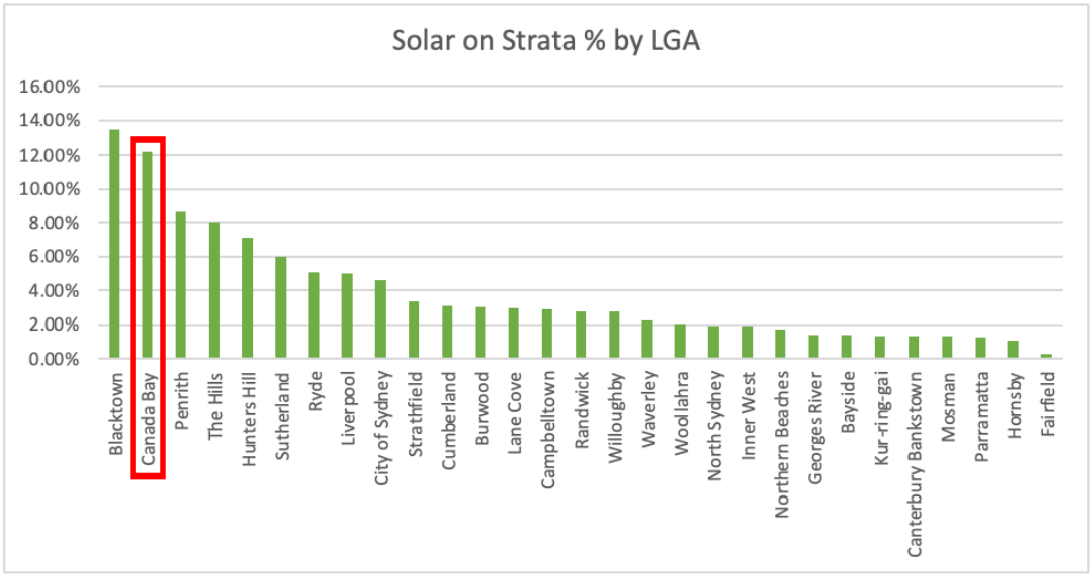

Figure 2 Solar on strata % by LGA. Source: Wattblock

Given the prevalence of apartment living, overcoming barriers to solar deployment in strata and multi-unit developments represents a significant opportunity for emissions reduction in NSW.

Transport

Transport remains one of the largest and most challenging emissions sources within Canada Bay.

The transition to electric vehicles has commenced, with registrations increasing from approximately 1,340 vehicles in early 2024 to 2,104 vehicles in mid-2026. While this growth is positive, electric vehicles still represent a relatively small proportion of the overall vehicle fleet and further policy support will be necessary to accelerate uptake.

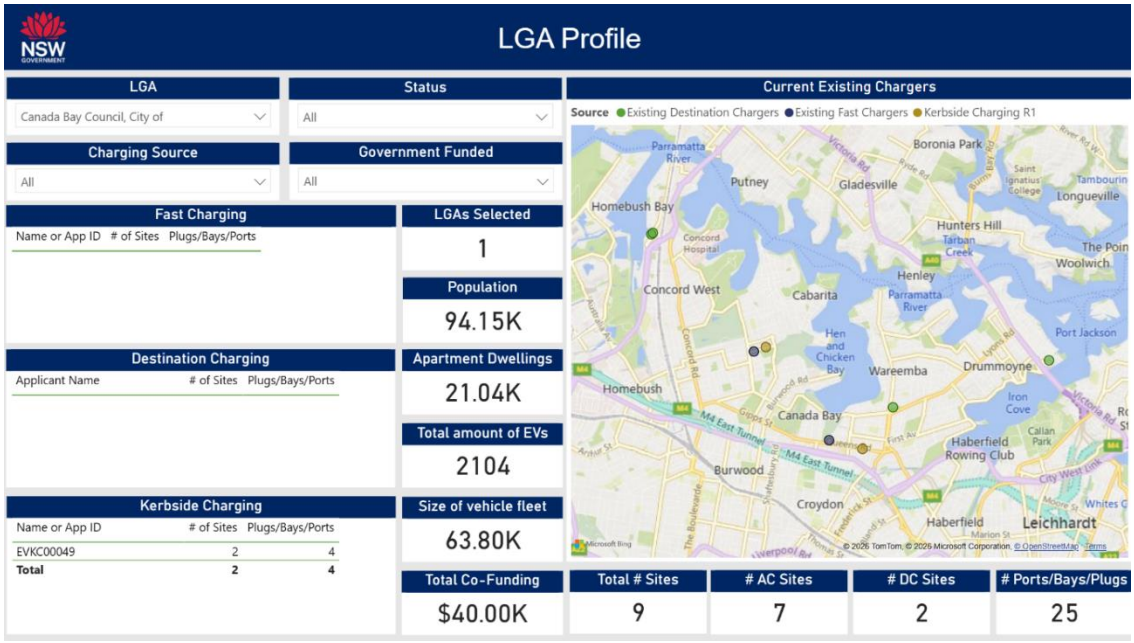

Figure 3 EV Dashboard LGA Profile. Source: NSW Government

Significant transport infrastructure investment is expected to support future emissions reductions. The Sydney Metro West project, including stations at Five Dock, Concord and North Strathfield, will provide improved access to high-capacity public transport and create opportunities for mode shift away from private vehicle use.

Council has also invested in walking and cycling infrastructure to support active transport. However, achieving substantial transport emissions reductions will depend on a combination of:

- Rapid electrification of private and commercial vehicle fleets.
- Expanded charging infrastructure.
- Improved public transport accessibility and service integration.
- Enhanced walking and cycling networks.
- Urban planning outcomes that reduce car dependency.

While local government has an important role in enabling EV uptake through planning, infrastructure facilitation and fleet transition, there remains uncertainty

regarding responsibility for public charging infrastructure delivery. Greater coordination between transport, energy and land use planning, together with clear guidance and infrastructure planning tools, would support more effective deployment of EV charging infrastructure and help address emerging electricity network constraints.

The transport sector illustrates the importance of coordinated action between State and local government. Councils can support active transport and influence urban form, however, major transport infrastructure, vehicle standards and public transport investment are determined by higher levels of government.

Circular Economy

Canada Bay's experience demonstrates the role that improved resource recovery can play in reducing emissions. Waste sent to landfill has declined from 213 kg per person in 2019–20 to 207 kg per person in 2023–24, reflecting ongoing efforts to reduce waste generation and improve diversion outcomes.

Council's Food Organics and Garden Organics (FOGO) program has collected approximately 399 tonnes of organic material since commencement, avoiding an estimated 598.5 tonnes of CO_2-e emissions by diverting organic waste from landfill.

Although councils play a primary role in waste management and resource recovery, they sit at the end of the materials supply chain and have limited market power and policy levers to influence product design, packaging or consumption patterns.

While waste contributes a smaller proportion of community emissions than energy and transport, it remains a sector where local government can have a direct and measurable influence. The progression from traditional waste management towards a circular economy model presents opportunities to reduce emissions while also delivering resource efficiency, economic and community benefits.

Recommendations:

- Provide targeted ongoing support to overcome barriers to energy upgrades in strata developments and rental properties.
- Deliver a coordinated approach to integrated transport, land use and energy planning including increased investment in public and active transport, clarified responsibilities for EV charging infrastructure delivery, and consistent planning guidance and tools for local government.
- Strengthen investment in organics processing, recycled material markets, producer responsibility schemes and infrastructure that reduces waste to landfill.

4. Community, Growth and Development

Urban Development

A key consideration for the NSW decarbonisation pathways is how emissions reduction will be achieved alongside continued population growth and urban development.

The City of Canada Bay is one of Sydney's fastest-growing urban areas. Council's strategic planning anticipates substantial residential growth over coming decades, driven by major transport investments, urban renewal and housing delivery targets.

This planned growth is detailed in the Our Future 2036 Community Strategic Plan, which anticipates a 30% population increase to 125,000 residents by 2036. The strategy prioritises housing supply, new affordable housing policies, and infrastructure around transit hubs. Significant development is already proposed through Transport Oriented Development and precinct planning around the future Five Dock Metro Station, Burwood North Metro Station and multiple State Significant Development projects across Concord West, Rhodes and other strategic locations.

For growing communities such as Canada Bay, there is a risk of total emissions remaining stagnant even while per-capita emissions reduce. If new housing, infrastructure and urban renewal projects are not designed to support decarbonisation, growth in population may offset emissions reduction gains achieved in other sectors, making net zero targets more difficult and costly to achieve. Conversely, well-planned development can provide transformative emissions reductions through higher building standards, electrification, renewable energy integration, and quality transport networks.

NSW decarbonisation pathways should therefore clearly articulate how population growth assumptions have been incorporated into emissions modelling and what level of emissions reduction is expected from new development.

State-level standards, planning settings and incentives are needed to accelerate net zero, high-performance, all-electric, climate-resilient buildings and precincts.

Council encourages consideration of:

- Stronger building performance standards that drive all-electric and net-zero-ready developments.
- Continued strengthening of BASIX requirements and residential energy efficiency standards.
- Embodied carbon reductions in construction materials and building processes.
- Transport-oriented development that maximises public and active transport use.

- Better integration of long-term energy, transport and land use to support growth while minimising emissions.
- Targeted support for local government asset upgrades.

Given the scale of growth anticipated across Greater Sydney, decarbonisation pathways should demonstrate how emissions reductions can be achieved while accommodating new housing, growing communities and increased economic activity.

Community Transition and Equity

A successful decarbonisation pathway must ensure that all households and businesses can participate in and benefit from the transition to net zero. While many emissions reduction technologies provide long-term financial and environmental benefits, access is often unequally distributed.

In Canada Bay, a significant proportion of residents live in apartments or rental accommodation, creating barriers to rooftop solar, battery storage, building electrification and energy efficiency upgrades. Renters, apartment residents, low-income households, culturally and linguistically diverse communities, older residents and small businesses may face financial, information or structural barriers that limit their ability to participate in the energy transition.

Without targeted modelling and policy intervention, there is a risk that the benefits of decarbonisation, including lower energy bills, improved health outcomes and increased resilience to climate impacts, will accrue disproportionately to higher-income households with greater capacity to invest in new technologies. NSW decarbonisation pathways should therefore incorporate equity considerations across all sectors and identify measures that ensure the transition is affordable, accessible, and inclusive.

Recommendations:

- Ensure NSW decarbonisation pathways account for population growth and urban development, including clear assumptions on housing growth, infrastructure delivery and the emissions reductions expected from new development.
- Strengthen state planning requirements to accelerate efficient all-electric and climate-resilient buildings and precincts, including stronger BASIX requirements, improved energy performance standards and reduced embodied carbon.
- Embed equity considerations across all decarbonisation pathways, with targeted support to ensure the transition is affordable, accessible and inclusive for marginalised communities and vulnerable groups.

5. Data, Modelling and Evidence

Methodology Alignment

Effective decarbonisation pathways require robust data at the local level where decarbonisation measures are implemented. While local governments are expected to play a significant role in delivering emissions reductions on the ground, many councils face challenges accessing the data and modelling needed to support local decision-making.

Council supports the Commission's proposed approach to develop decarbonisation pathways at a regional scale, including modelling at the Statistical Area Level 4 (SA4). This level of analysis provides significantly greater geographic detail than state-wide reporting and will help improve understanding of regional emissions trends, opportunities and constraints.

However, while SA4-level territorial emissions modelling is a positive step, it does not fully address the challenges faced by local government in tracking and reporting emissions. Most NSW councils, including the City of Canada Bay, use the GPC methodology through platforms such as Resilient Sydney and the Ironbark Snapshot tool. These inventories adopt a community-scale, city-induced emissions approach, whereas NSW and Commonwealth emissions reporting is generally based on a territorial approach.

As a result, local governments can face difficulties in directly relating state emissions modelling to local inventories, targets and reporting frameworks. This can create confusion when comparing emissions trends, assessing progress and understanding how local actions contribute to broader state outcomes. While the proposed SA4 pathways will provide valuable regional insights, clearer alignment between territorial and GPC accounting methodologies will be required if councils are to effectively utilise pathway outputs in local planning and reporting.

To improve alignment between State and local emissions reporting, Council recommends that NSW Government:

- Provide clear guidance on the relationship between territorial and GPC emissions accounting methodologies.
- Develop tools or datasets that allow emissions data and pathway outputs to be viewed through both territorial and GPC accounting frameworks.
- Enable "translation" or cross-walks between state modelling outputs and local government emissions inventories.
- Clarify whether local governments should continue reporting under the GPC methodology or whether an alternative reporting framework is intended to support alignment with NSW decarbonisation pathways.

- Provide local government-level data extracts, where possible, to support local planning, reporting and target setting.

Improved alignment between these methodologies would help ensure that emissions data produced by different levels of government can be compared consistently and used more effectively for decision-making.

Regional pathways should also provide sufficient detail to support local implementation, including:

- Major emissions sources and reduction opportunities within each planning region, for use in strategic regional planning such as the Sydney Plan.
- Expected sectoral contributions to emissions reduction targets, drawing on work such as Sydney as a renewable energy zone[1], as the collaborative work done by Resilient Sydney and Greater Sydney Commission on net zero pathways[2].
- Assumptions relating to population growth, housing development, transport demand and technology uptake.
- The role of local government in achieving emissions reduction outcomes.

Providing this level of transparency would improve accountability, support coordinated action across jurisdictions, and help councils understand where local effort can have the greatest influence on emissions reduction outcomes. Examples from international jurisdictions, such as local climate action planning frameworks across the European Union including Sweden's “Viable Cities” program, demonstrate the value of connecting national and state targets with place-based implementation pathways.

Offsets

Consistent accounting principles and reporting frameworks will also be critical as councils work towards net zero targets. In particular, greater clarity is required regarding the role of offsets and carbon removals and how these should be applied across different emissions accounting boundaries. This issue is especially important because commonly used local government emissions inventories based on the GPC framework generally do not include land-use change and sequestration activities. As a result, councils currently have limited guidance on how residual emissions should be addressed when pursuing community-wide (local government area scale) net zero targets.

---

[1] The Committee for Sydney and Arup report highlights Sydney's untapped potential to meet up to 75% of its own annual energy needs through rooftop solar and batteries. By utilizing urban spaces rather than relying solely on regional infrastructure, the city could generate 21 GW of renewable energy.

[2] Resilient Sydney submission to Net Zero Commission, 11 July 2025 Resilient Sydney.pdf

Guidance is needed on:

- The circumstances under which offsets can be used.
- The proportion of emissions reductions that should be achieved through direct abatement versus offsets.
- How offsets and removals should be accounted for at local, regional and state scales.
- Whether carbon removal activities must occur within a local or regional boundary to be recognised against local emissions targets.

Providing clear and consistent guidance on these matters would give local governments greater confidence in setting community-wide (LGA-scale) net zero targets, tracking progress and ensuring alignment with NSW's broader decarbonisation framework.

Recommendations:

- Improve alignment, or allow translation, between territorial and GPC emissions accounting methodologies by providing clear guidance, data translation tools and local datasets.
- Ensure regional decarbonisation pathways provide sufficient detail to support local implementation, including major emissions sources, sectoral emissions reduction opportunities, assumptions relating to growth and technology uptake, and the role of local government in achieving emissions reduction outcomes.
- Provide clear and consistent guidance on the role of offsets and carbon removals, including how they should be accounted for across local, regional and state emissions inventories and applied towards net zero targets.

6. Funding and Capacity

Funding

Delivering emissions reductions at the scale required will depend on sustained investment, clear responsibilities and access to emerging low-carbon technologies.

A key challenge is the availability of funding. Councils face competing demands on limited capital budgets. While grant programs provide valuable support, they are often short-term, highly competitive and administratively complex, making it difficult

to undertake long-term planning and investment. Greater funding certainty would enable councils to develop and deliver strategic decarbonisation programs with confidence.

Workforce Capability and Skills

Councils also face challenges navigating rapidly evolving markets for low-carbon technologies and services. Emerging sectors such as electric vehicle charging infrastructure, battery storage and building electrification can present procurement risks due to limited standardisation, changing technology offerings and difficulties comparing suppliers and solutions. Access to guidance, procurement frameworks and shared tools would assist councils in making informed investment decisions and achieving greater value for money.

Council recommends that the NSW Government support local government capability through training programs, shared technical resources, regional collaboration models and access to specialist expertise. Building workforce capability will improve the ability of councils to plan, procure, implement and monitor emissions reduction initiatives and ensure decarbonisation pathways can be delivered effectively at the local level.

Recommendations:

- Establish stable, long-term funding pathways for local government, enabling councils to plan and deliver emissions reduction initiatives at scale.
- Invest in local government capability through training, shared technical resources, procurement guidance and access to specialist expertise.

7. Summary Recommendations

Local government is essential to delivering NSW's net zero ambitions. Council recommends that the NSW Net Zero Commission consider the following priority actions when developing NSW's decarbonisation pathways:

- Recognise local government as a key delivery partner in achieving NSW's emissions reduction targets and clearly define the role of councils within sectoral and regional decarbonisation pathways.
- Develop place-based pathways that connect state-level ambition with local implementation, including regional sectoral emissions reduction trajectories for each planning region.

- Strengthen state support for sectoral decarbonisation through coordinated policy, planning, regulatory reform and long-term investment, including support for energy upgrades, integrated transport and infrastructure planning, EV charging deployment, and circular economy initiatives.

- Improve alignment between territorial and GPC emissions accounting methodologies by providing guidance, data translation tools and local-scale datasets that enable councils to effectively utilise pathway outputs in planning, target-setting and reporting.

- Ensure decarbonisation pathways account for population growth and urban development and leverage new housing and infrastructure as a key opportunity for emissions reduction through stronger building standards, electrification, transport-oriented development and integrated land use, transport and energy planning.

- Embed equity and just transition principles across all decarbonisation pathways, with targeted support for households and businesses facing financial, structural or information barriers to participating in the transition to net zero.

- Strengthen policy settings for buildings and growth areas, including higher building performance standards, all-electric development pathways, improved BASIX requirements and consideration of embodied carbon in construction.

- Provide clear guidance on the role of offsets and carbon removals, including how they should be accounted for across local, regional and state inventories.

- Establish stable, long-term funding pathways for local government, enabling councils to plan and deliver emissions reduction initiatives at scale.

- Invest in local government workforce capability by supporting training, shared resources and access to specialist expertise in areas including energy transition, transport planning, emissions accounting, procurement, data analysis and reporting, enabling councils to effectively implement and monitor decarbonisation initiatives.

The City of Canada Bay supports the development of practical, evidence-based decarbonisation pathways that recognise the critical role of local government in delivering emissions reductions. By strengthening the enabling environment for local government, NSW can accelerate the transition to a low-carbon, resilient, and equitable future.