



AUSTRALIAN  
LOCAL GOVERNMENT  
ASSOCIATION

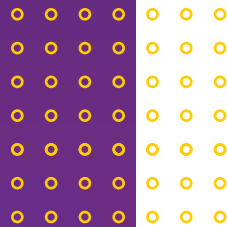
# 2023 NGA

**OUR COMMUNITIES  
OUR FUTURE** ▶▶▶

## **BUSINESS PAPERS**

**13 – 16 JUNE 2023**

NATIONAL CONVENTION  
CENTRE CANBERRA



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# RULES

# National General Assembly Debating Rules – 2023

## 1 - Interpretation

- 1.1 “Assembly” means: The National General Assembly of Local Government as constituted by the delegates present in person or attending virtually by the approved digital technology.
- 1.2 “Member” means: any local government council which is a financial member of and recognised by a state or territory local government association within the Commonwealth of Australia.
- 1.3 “Delegate” means: any person who has paid the designated administration fee.
- 1.4 “Voting Delegate” means: any person nominated as the delegate to speak on the behalf of a Member at the Assembly - each Member to be entitled to appoint one voting delegate only for each debate session.
- 1.5 “President” means: The President for the time being of the Australian Local Government Association who will act as President of the Assembly, or in his or her absence the Vice Presidents of the Association or a person appointed by the President to preside over the Assembly.
- 1.6 “Debate on Motions” means: Plenary or concurrent debating sessions of the Assembly which are held in accordance with these rules.
- 1.7 “Meeting” means: Plenary or concurrent debating sessions, forums and symposia of the Assembly which are held in accordance with these rules.

## 2 - President to Preside

- 2.1 The President shall preside over the Assembly.
- 2.2 A delegate wishing to speak shall direct comments to the President.
- 2.3 A voting delegate moving or seconding a motion or amendment or delegate taking part in a discussion thereon shall address the President.

## 3 - Resolutions

- 3.1 Motions will become Resolutions when passed by a majority of voting delegates at the Assembly.
- 3.2 Resolutions shall be permanently recorded and forwarded to the Australian Local Government Association for consideration and action as deemed to be appropriate.
- 3.3 Resolutions will be recorded and will be considered by the ALGA Board and used by the President for any purpose in the interest of local government.

## 4 - Priority of Speakers

If two or more delegates wish to speak at the same time the President shall decide who is entitled to priority.

## 5 - President to be Heard

Whenever the President signifies a desire to speak during the Assembly, any delegate speaking or offering to speak is to be silent so that the President may be heard without interruption.

## 6 - President may Call to Order

The President shall preserve order and may call any delegate to order when necessary.

## 7 - Ruling by President

The President shall decide all questions of order or practice and his or her decision shall be final and be accepted by the Assembly without argument or comment unless in any particular case the Assembly resolved that a different ruling shall be substituted for the ruling given by the President. Discussion shall be permitted on any motion of dissent from the President's ruling.

## 8 - Point of Order

A delegate who is addressing the President shall not be interrupted except on a point of order, in which event the delegate shall wait until the delegate raising the point of order has been heard and the point of order has been determined after which the delegate so interrupted may, if permitted, continue.

## 9 - Limitation of Debate

- 9.1 Except for a mover of a motion who may speak for two (2) minutes, a delegate shall not speak upon any motion or amendment or in reply for a period longer than one-and-a-half (1.5) minutes without the consent of the President.
- 9.2 No delegate shall speak more than once on any motion except for the mover who may exercise a right to speak in closing the debate.
- 9.3 Any delegate of the Assembly who has not already spoken on the motion or amendment under discussion may formally propose: 'That the question be now put'.
- 9.4 The President shall not accept the motion 'That the question be now put' until at least one delegate has spoken in favour and one delegate has spoken against the motion or amendment.
- 9.5 If formally seconded, the proposal shall be put without further discussion and, if carried by a simple majority of the voting delegates of the Assembly present, the mover of the question shall have the Right of Reply, after which the motion must be put to the vote.
- 9.6 The mover of a motion shall be entitled to a Right of Reply. At the conclusion of the reply, the debate shall be deemed to have closed and the President shall put the question to the vote.
- 9.7 No delegate of the Assembly, other than the mover of a motion when exercising a Right of Reply, may speak more than once to each motion, amendment, or substantive motion unless with the permission of the Assembly and/or the President. A delegate

may be invited to speak by the President to explain a matter of a personal nature, or to explain him/herself in regard to some material part of his/her speech which has been misquoted or misunderstood but shall not introduce any new matter or interrupt any delegate in possession of the floor.

## 10 - Resolutions

Except as otherwise provided in these Rules:

- 10.1 only voting delegates may move or second a motion or an amendment. (Refer 11: Moving an Amendment)
- 10.2 motions concerning the affairs of the Assembly shall be passed by a simple majority of those voting delegates present.
- 10.3 motions on which there is an equal division of votes will be declared lost.

## 11 - Moving an Amendment

- 11.1 After a motion has been moved and seconded, any voting delegate of the Assembly representing a member may move an amendment. If such amendment is seconded, it shall become the subject of discussion.
- 11.2 Limitations  
Where the Assembly is conducted under a Covid Safety Plan, or other provisions or approved Plans required by the ACT Government that restrict voting delegate movement and access to microphones to be heard, members are required to submit amendments to motions in writing and in advance to the ALGA Secretariat at least 72 hours prior to the debate on the motion.
- 11.3 An amendment must be relevant to the motion and so framed that it forms a sensible alternative proposal. It must not be a direct negation of the original motion.
- 11.4 No Right of Reply to Amendment  
The mover of an amendment shall not have the Right of Reply to the debate on such amendment.
- 11.5 Substantive Motion  
Should the amendment be carried, it then becomes a substantive motion upon which further amendments may be moved, always providing that there shall not be, at one time, more than one amendment before the Assembly.
- 11.6 Foreshadowed Amendment  
Any delegate during his/her speech on an amendment shall have the right to foreshadow a further amendment but such foreshadowed amendment shall not formally come before the Assembly until the motion or amendment before the President has been dealt with. The President may request the substance of the foreshadowed amendment.

## 12 - Debate

Where there is no debate on a motion that has been moved and seconded, the President may put the motion to the Assembly.

### 13 - Permissible Motions During Debate

When a motion is under debate, no further motion shall be moved except the following:

- that the motion be amended
- that the speaker no longer be heard
- that the question now be put
- that the Debate on Motions proceed with the next business.

### 14 - Method of Taking Votes

14.1 The President shall, in taking a vote on any motion or amendment, put the question first in the affirmative, and then in the negative. Voting will be by use of electronic keypads or by the approved technology. In the event of a technical failure of the electronic keypads manual voting cards will be issued to the holders of electronic keypads and a vote will be determined on a show of voting cards.

14.2 At the conclusion of a vote the President must declare the question resolved in the affirmative or the negative.

### 15 - Division

In the event of the use of voting cards, upon a vote being taken, a voting delegate may call for a division.

### 16 - Withdrawal of a Motion

A motion or amendment may be withdrawn by the mover, with the consent of the Assembly, which shall be determined without debate. No delegate shall speak on a motion after it has been withdrawn.

### 17 - Quorum

17.1 Determination of a Quorum - A quorum for debate on motion sessions at the 2023 National General Assembly will be set at half the number of voting delegates plus one. The quorum (number) will be declared by the President at the commencement of the debate on motions. This quorum will be determined by the ALGA Secretariat based on the number of councils registered by mid night Saturday immediately prior to the commencement of the NGA. It shall be equal to the number of eligible votes divided by 2 plus 1. For example, if there are X councils registered by mid night Saturday immediately prior to the commencement of the NGA, the quorum will be set at  $x/2$  plus one. A majority of the quorum will be required to pass a resolution.

17.2 A Quorum Present at Commencement - At the commencement of each debate on motions session the President will determine if the quorum is present. At the commencement of each debating session, the President will invite all voting delegates to record a 'test' vote. A total number of 'test' votes will be displayed by the system and the President will determine whether a quorum is present for that session. If the



number of 'test' votes is equal to or more than  $x/2$  plus one, a quorum will be declared, and voting will proceed.

17.3 Voting to Proceed - If a quorum is not present, a debate on motions will proceed at the discretion of the President. Outcomes of debate on motions when a quorum is not present will be considered as 'indicative only of the NGA' rather than a resolution of the NGA when the ALGA Board what determine the action to be taken on Resolutions.

## 18 - President's Right to Vote

For the purposes of these Rules the President, subject to having been nominated as a voting delegate by a Member, shall have one deliberative vote only.

## 19 - Rescission of Resolution

The Assembly, by two thirds majority, may rescind or alter an adopted resolution.

## 20 - Special Urgent Business

At any time during Debate on Motions a voting delegate may, with the approval of a two-thirds majority of voting delegates present, introduce a motion relating to special urgent business which calls for an expression of opinion from the Assembly. In presenting an item of special urgent business a voting delegate shall have sufficient copies of the motion in writing for distribution to all voting delegates present at the Debate on Motions and give prior notice to the President of such intention.

## 21 - Suspension or Amendment of Rules

21.1 In case of urgent necessity any of the Rules may be suspended on a motion duly moved and seconded, but that motion shall not be declared carried unless a two-thirds majority of the delegates of the Assembly voting on the motion have voted in favour.

21.2 Any voting delegate moving the suspension of a Rule shall state the object of the motion, but discussion shall not otherwise take place thereon.

## 22 - Motions

### Strategic Motions

For the purpose of efficient and effective debate, motions that have been submitted for debate by councils that are similar in subject matter have been compiled into composite motions. The strategic motions have either been drafted by ALGA or are based on a motion submitted by a council which best summarises the subject matter.

Debate will focus on the strategic motions numbered X. Motions numbered X.1, X.2 and so forth (that is, 1.1, 1.2 etc.) are associated motions and will be debated by exception only. If the motion is carried, associated motions are considered to be redundant unless they have been highlighted in advance of the debate and debated by exception.

### 23 - Resolutions

Motions that are carried at the National General Assembly become resolutions and will be referred to the ALGA Board to inform future policy initiatives and for consideration in the development of future work programs.

### 24 - Business Paper Notes

At the discretion of ALGA, shall be organised to expedite debate on motions. In some instances, motions that are generally consistent with ALGA current policy may be grouped in a separate section of the business papers and may be voted upon en bloc to save time to focus debate on motions that re-affirm core ALGA policy or deal with new matters.

# Voting Procedures

Electronic Keypads will be issued from a separate desk at the registration stand at the assembly at the following times:

Wednesday 14 June 8:00 am – 5:00 pm

Thursday 15 June 8:00 am – 6:00 pm

For debate on motions in debating sessions councils must select one voting delegate, as only one keypad will be issued per council. To facilitate issuing of keypads, councils should decide in advance who their voting delegate will be and appoint a representative to collect the keypad on behalf of the council.

Electronic keypads that are lost will incur a \$100 charge.

Please note that only councils that are financial members of their relevant state or territory association are entitled to nominate voting delegates.

Virtual delegates will be forwarded a separate package of information which will include voting instructions prior to the event.

## NOTES

Please note:

- All notices of motions submitted by councils have been considered and appear in these papers with the exception of motions that did not meet the criteria.
- To assist the Assembly to deal with more than 260 Motions in the time available these Papers have been organised along the following lines:
  - Section A includes motions that have been reviewed by the ALGA Board's NGA Sub-committee and deemed to be consistent with current national policy and/or resolved by recent NGAs, and are recommended to be moved en block without further debate.
  - Section B: Please refer to rule 22 of the National General Assembly Debating Rules – 2023 contained in these papers.
- Debate on motions is intended to focus on motions assigned with a whole number (strategic motions).
- Motions that appear with a decimal point are deemed to be an associated motion, i.e., the same or similar matters are substantially dealt in the previous motion with the whole number.
- Associated motions will only be debated by exception.
- Once a strategic motion is passed, associated motions are considered to be consistent and therefore don't require separate debate.

Thank you for your cooperation.

# 2023 MOTIONS

## **SECTION A**

### **MOTIONS CONSISTENT WITH EXISTING ALGA POLICY**

#### **Motion number 1 Brimbank City Council VIC**

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to:

1. Recognise the importance of Financial Assistance Grants to all councils;
2. Recognise ALGA's long-standing position that the current quantum of the Financial Assistance Grants are well below what is required for councils to effectively deliver a wide range of necessary services; and
3. Increase the pool of funds available for the Financial Assistance Grants so that this equates to at least 1% of Commonwealth tax revenue.

#### Motion number 1.1 Redland City Council QLD

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to restore local government Financial Assistance Grants to a level equal to at least 1 percent of Commonwealth taxation revenue.

#### Motion number 1.2 East Gippsland Shire Council VIC

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to restore funding for local government Financial Assistance Grants to a level equal to at least one (1) percent of Commonwealth taxation revenue, to enable a focus on initiatives that support climate change resilient infrastructure and/or renewable energy initiatives.

#### Motion number 1.3 Newcastle City Council NSW

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to return funding for local government Financial Assistance Grants to a level equal to 1 percent of Commonwealth Taxation Revenue as a matter of priority and directly to local government.

## Motion number 1.4 Tenterfield Shire Council NSW

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to increase funding for local government Financial Assistance Grants to a level of at least 1% of Commonwealth taxation revenue.

## Motion number 1.5 Blacktown City Council NSW

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to work through the National Cabinet and the Council on Federal Financial Relations to ensure councils receive sufficient revenue to support their future financial sustainability and the wellbeing of their communities.

## Motion number 1.6 Central Highlands Regional Council QLD

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government, via the Productivity Commission to:

1. Review the percentage of Commonwealth revenue allocated to Financial Assistance Grants, noting that:
  - a. The local government sector raises or is a recipient (through Financial Assistance Grants) of 3.6% of Australia's total taxation revenue, but is responsible for managing 33% of public non-financial assets; and
  - b. The local government asset management responsibility translates to between \$8.5 billion and \$11.3 billion in capital maintenance and further amounts in operating maintenance per annum, compared to only \$2.9 billion in Financial Assistance Grants received; and release the report to the local government sector.

The review undertaken by the Productivity Commission should include:

- c. A recommendation to the Australian Government as to the necessary increase in Financial Assistance Grants as a proportion of Commonwealth Revenue from its current historically low base of 0.53%; and
- d. In addition to a percentage increase, a recommendation that Financial Assistance Grants be indexed annually.

## **Motion number 2 Tamworth Regional Council NSW**

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to urgently address the critical shortfall in Financial Assistance Grants to local government, with a particular focus on a significant increase in road funding following the intense climatic and weather events of the past two years.

## **Motion number 3 Central Highlands Regional Council QLD**

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to assist the local government sector to respond to the aging state of local government infrastructure and the impending infrastructure cliff by:

1. Introducing federal funding programs for local government to undertake asset management planning; and
2. Revising the intent of, and associated eligibility criteria within, funding guidelines for untied grant programs such as the Local Roads and Community Infrastructure Program, to allow local government to apply funding towards projects which are forecast within local government work plans (asset management plans and long-term financial plans).

## **Motion number 4 Frankston City Council VIC**

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to provide overall increased funding to metropolitan and regional councils to manage the current risk of long-term sustainability. The cumulative impact of prolonged rate capping, COVID, construction cost escalations, interest rate rises, cost of living increases and cost shifting from other levels of government places all Victorian councils in an impossible position.

## **Motion number 5 City of Stonnington Council VIC**

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to greater access to funding of local government to enable the building and/or renewal of necessary infrastructure for local communities.

## **Motion number 6 Darebin City Council and Kingston City Council VIC**

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to establish a community infrastructure program to:

1. Provide funding to local governments in delivering major capital works in the face of significant inflationary pressures and reduced delivery capacity in the market;
2. Drive shared use arrangements of regional (serving multiple municipalities) community, sporting, arts, and cultural facilities across local, state, and federal assets.



## **Motion number 7 Brisbane City Council QLD**

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to extend the Local Roads and Community Infrastructure (LRCI) Program, or similar program, beyond 30 June 2025.

## **Motion number 7.1 City of Mount Gambier Council SA**

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to commit to sustain the current provision of Roads to Recovery (R2R) and retain the Local Roads and Community Infrastructure (LRCI) funding programs to local government.

## **Motion number 8 Tenterfield Shire Council NSW**

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to provide grants for local government for asset renewal/infrastructure replacement rather than only new infrastructure/assets.

## **Motion number 9 East Gippsland Shire Council VIC**

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to support the urgent need to upgrade critical infrastructure to respond to the impacts of climate change through investment in detailed modelling, setting of new design standards and infrastructure upgrades.

## **Motion number 10 Mornington Peninsula Shire VIC**

The National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to invest equitable and recurrent funding for the better delivery of resilience building projects and programs. This would allow councils to more effectively equip local communities affected by the increasing number and severity of natural disasters and to upgrade local infrastructure during reconstruction, so that it can better withstand natural disasters and climate change.

## Motion number 10.1 South Gippsland Shire Council VIC

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to introduce road betterment with disaster funding: That the funding arrangements through Disaster Recovery Funding Arrangements (DRFA) for recovery of roads and related infrastructure from natural disasters, allows for the road to be improved to a more resilient standard.

## Motion number 11 Huon Valley Council TAS

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to provide financial support for council projects that pre-emptively safeguard against threat to life and property due to increasing severity and regularity of bushfires, flooding, drought, wind events and coastal erosion.

## Motion number 12 Blue Mountains City Council NSW

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to improve community resilience to natural disasters by significantly increasing investment into the following:

1. Planning of public infrastructure that is resilient to and mitigates the impact of future natural disasters;
2. Public infrastructure projects that mitigate the impacts of natural disasters and are more available during and after an emergency; and
3. Broaden the scope and the amount of recovery funding to enable public infrastructure directly affected by disasters to be 'Built Back Better' to withstand future events.

## Motion number 13 Mitchell Shire Council VIC

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to provide funding which will actively support a range of new programs, investments, reviews, or other initiatives which aim at increasing a community's resilience to future natural disasters. In part this would also include any requests to review relevant planning or building controls or standards in order to future proof how properties can be built to better alleviate any impacts of a disaster on the structure and its fixtures and fittings. The increased funding should be widely available in order to ensure a diversity of initiatives and outcomes.

## **Motion number 14 Shoalhaven City Council NSW**

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to include betterment funding in the natural disaster funding arrangements to allow councils to repair or build-back an asset that can better withstand future natural disasters. Alternatively, that the betterment fund become a permanent arrangement to allow councils to take proactive measures regarding resilience.

### Motion number 14.1 Macedon Ranges Shire Council VIC

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to:

1. Simplify the methodology and data inputs required in Victoria to prove councils' eligibility for disaster recovery funding, bringing it in line with other states and ahead of any national unification of claims processes;
2. Financially support local government to ensure post-disaster funding programs enable betterment to improve assets beyond the previous condition to provide resilience against future damage resulting from disaster events;
3. Financially support local government with an ongoing betterment program to upgrade existing public infrastructure in readiness for increased exposure to future disaster events.

### Motion number 14.2 Brisbane City Council QLD

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to support betterment funding programs and consider the opportunity for improvements to increase support. This motion proposes an ongoing betterment funding program be implemented to increase the resilience of assets and communities in the event of future natural disasters.

## **Motion number 15 Berri Barmera Council SA**

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to increase the Disaster Ready Fund or establish a country wide Flood Preparedness Fund to support critical infrastructure being upgraded for disaster prevention and preparedness phases before flood strikes.

## **Motion number 16 Wagga Wagga City Council NSW**

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to provide funding of immediate and ongoing maintenance of flood prevention infrastructure.

## **Motion number 17 Greater Bendigo City Council VIC**

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to provide greater investment in telecommunications and digital connectivity in regional and rural communities to support increasing populations and industries, growth in jobs and investment and remove the technological divide.

## **Motion number 18 East Arnhem Regional Council NT**

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government for tangible action from its response to the 2021 Regional Telecommunications Review and to implement its recommendations, to ensure that the digital divide between Australians living in regional, rural, and remote areas and those living in metropolitan communities is reduced.

### Motion number 18.1 Berrigan Shire Council NSW

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to ensure any future roll out of digital connectivity upgrades ensures rural, regional, and remote communities do not continue to be relegated to the old and outdated delivery models.

## **Motion number 19 Gunnedah Shire Council NSW**

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to conduct an audit of regional Australia to determine which areas have mobile black spots and which areas do not provide adequate data, so the problem can be identified and fixed.

### Motion number 19.1 North Burnett Regional Council QLD

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to expand the Mobile Black Spot Program funding for regional and remote communities and create an equitable distribution of funding across states.

## **Motion number 20 Bayside Council NSW**

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to provide targeted funding to enable local government areas with low levels of public transport infrastructure to install additional bus shelters and bus infrastructure, thus increasing public transport accessibility and better enabling Australia to meet its carbon emission reduction goals.

## **Motion number 21 Gunnedah Shire Council NSW**

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to increase funding for regional airports.

## **Motion number 22 Brimbank City Council VIC**

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to establish a policy framework under its Aviation White Paper that outlines a compensation scheme for airport-impacted communities. This should be provided either by means of a noise amelioration program or to owners of dwellings and buildings accommodating sensitive land uses (i.e., schools, places of worship, childcare centres, and hospitals) adversely affected by aircraft noise. Such a compensation scheme aligns with the legislated requirement under the Aircraft Noise Levy Act 1995 which aims to recover the costs incurred in providing noise amelioration programs to airport-impacted communities.

## **Motion number 23 Blacktown City Council NSW**

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to provide increased support to councils to address cybersecurity deficiencies as part of our national response to this critical issue.

## **Motion number 24 Mid-Coast Council NSW**

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to make representations to the Australian Taxation Office to increase the current maximum tax deduction of \$1000 to \$3,000 for the cost of an election campaign for a successful local council candidate.

## **Motion number 25 Leeton Shire Council NSW**

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to hold a referendum to amend the Constitution to recognise local government as an important, legitimate, and essential element in Australia's system of government.

## **SECTION B**

### **TRANSPORT AND INFRASTRUCTURE**

#### **Motion number 26 City of Darwin NT**

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to increase the Roads to Recovery Program funding from \$500 million to \$1 billion and extend the program beyond 30 June 2024.

##### **NATIONAL OBJECTIVE**

Local government manages a significant amount of the road network in Australia, yet does not raise funds for road construction and maintenance through direct charging like other levels of government. This places a significant burden on local ratepayers, and further federal government support is required to ensure the continued development of the road network. Without this funding, underinvestment in roads will continue affecting safety, economic development and the movement of essential goods and services. This will continue to impact the development, productivity, and strategic interests of Australia.

##### **KEY ARGUMENTS**

Local government infrastructure assets include local roads, stormwater drainage and community assets such as sporting, arts and cultural facilities, parks and gardens, and public libraries. These public assets contribute to national productivity and are critical for ensuring our cities and regions are great places to live, work and play.

One of the largest categories of infrastructure that local government has responsibility for funding, planning, constructing, operating, and maintaining is the road network in their local areas. According to the ALGA National Local Roads Data System, locally controlled roads account for approximately 77% of total road length in Australia, or 678,000 kilometres. The National Transport Commission estimates 36% of all kilometres travelled in Australia are on local roads.

With continued cost shifting from state and federal governments, contributed road assets from continued urban development, and development by local governments in response to local needs, this asset base will continue to grow.

Local government owners of infrastructure face increased competing demands for their revenue base, including essential infrastructure such as roads. Ratepayers are often left to fund roads used by non-ratepayers and profit generating commercial operators with no contribution to maintenance and development of the road network. In addition to maintenance requirements, local government face increased costs of compliance due to the requirement to upgrade roads to modern lane widths, safety standards or load-bearing

capacities that cater for higher-productivity freight vehicles, higher traffic volumes and congestion. This is amplified for local governments who have freight corridors impacting local roads. For regional and remote councils, including in the Northern Territory, local governments with small population centres often support large road networks and have limited capabilities to raise revenue from their communities.

Historically, local government has relied on financial support from the federal government, however this has been declining in real terms since 2000. Whilst local government expenditure has increased by an estimated 6.7% year on year since 2000, Financial Assistance Grants have slipped from 1% of federal taxation revenue to approximately 0.55%. Programs like Roads to Recovery help to close that gap, however, are not keeping pace with need. The Roads to Recovery program is also scheduled to end in June 2024, leaving local government without \$500 million annually to service the road network.

City of Darwin joins with its fellow local governments from across Australia, in both metropolitan and regional areas in calling on the federal government to increase this vital funding to restore the growing funding gap and commit to continuing the Roads to Recovery Program beyond its current deadline of 30 June 2024. This is consistent with previous adopted policy positions of ALGA and will assist all local governments to support their communities in providing safe, reliable, and fit for purpose roads to connect people and commerce.

## Motion number 26.1 Frankston City Council VIC

**This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to provide additional funding to metropolitan and regional councils through a Building Australian Roads Network fund, or expanded Roads to Recovery Program, to address the increasing budget needs for current upgrade and operational issues.**

### **NATIONAL OBJECTIVE**

- With the extreme weather events occurring across much of Australia over the past twelve months or more, the issues associated with the ongoing and repetitive damage to roads and infrastructure are such that impact on many if not all councils across the nation.
- Roads to Recovery is a funding program that is now essential for many councils to support day to day provision of road asset services, however with additional funding being sought, all councils could see real benefit in a Building Australian Roads Network fund being initiated.
- With potential economic benefits at regional and metropolitan level, an industry-based approach is required.

### **KEY ARGUMENTS**

- Increased extreme weather events across Australia has seen more rainfall events, increasing the likelihood of the road network being affected by unexpected flooding



and storm event. Additional funding is necessary to ensure road condition, maintenance and construction is prioritised.

- Community concern in regard to road conditions has heightened. Whilst damage may not be catastrophic in itself, the cumulative impact of ongoing events needs to be adequately resourced. Local governments in both metro and regional areas need to have adequate funding to prioritise road upgrades and repairs in line with community expectations.
- Increased funding for the road network is essential to support regional and metropolitan economic development. Safe and useable roads for freight and business accessibility are essential for ongoing economic growth.
- Federal government of the Local Roads and Community Infrastructure Program will better support local government in its stewardship of community infrastructure.

## Motion number 26.2 Gunnedah Shire Council NSW

**This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to provide regional councils with an additional one-off Roads to Recovery grant equal to 50% of the annual funding for the maintenance, repair, and renewal of roads.**

### **NATIONAL OBJECTIVE**

The Australian Government will have provided \$6.2 billion funding to local councils under R2R between the 2013-14 financial year to the 2023-24 financial years. ALGA study released in 2010 into local road funding estimated that to simply maintain, rather than improve Australia's local roads up to 2025, an addition \$1.2 billion annually is required. Without this additional funding, underinvestment in local roads will continue. This funding shortfall hinders local and regional social and economic development, and ultimately affects the development and productivity of the nation. ALGA has called for the federal government to increase R2R funding to \$800 million per annum.

### **KEY ARGUMENTS**

Transport and infrastructure are significant areas of expenditure for all councils. Roads to Recovery Program (R2R) is essential to help councils address the maintenance backlog on local roads. R2R is a true partnership between the Australian Government and local government. This funding is greatly valued by all councils and their local communities. On 6 November 2019, the government announced \$138.9 million additional Roads to Recovery funding in the 2020 calendar year for the 128 local government Areas eligible for the Drought Communities Programme Extension. All Drought Extension funding has been paid to the relevant councils.

Since the federal government recognised the impact of drought on local communities and roads, there has been severe bushfires, mini cyclones, hailstorms and flooding. There has also been the impact on the economy of the global pandemic.

Such disruptions to the economy and the impact of climate change on road maintenance and systems are extraordinary and an additional investment in Roads to Recovery for councils will assist in addressing the maintenance backlog, and opportunities for business development and employment.

## Motion number 26.3 Flinders Shire Council QLD

**This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to allocate special funding packages to fund the betterment of freight routes and key connecting roads in the regional and remote areas to ensure the corridors are resilient to support growth and economic diversification by providing uninterrupted access during the wet and adverse conditions.**

### **NATIONAL OBJECTIVE**

The freight routes and key connecting roads service the nation by providing access to the agricultural products that feed every community and mining resources, which are the backbone of the nation's economy. These routes also support the economy by supporting the tourism industry and the day-to-day commuting of the rural and remote communities who need to access the nearby towns for essential services such as health and education and support our local businesses; for some, their vehicles are their workplace, which they cannot operate if the roads are not accessible.

### **KEY ARGUMENTS**

During the wet season, the gravel sections become wet and boggy and are unpassable and unsafe for usual passage. Due to these weather impacts, most road networks in these communities are generally closed, limiting their day-to-day access and opportunities to distribute their products or to receive any services.

- The gravel sections of the corridors are particularly dusty during the dry season. This makes it unsafe whilst travelling behind road trains as it impairs drivers' vision and increases the risk of incidents.
- The nature of the soil during dry conditions. These include deep wheel ruts and potholes, creating dangerous conditions for all vehicles. Not only does this cause high maintenance requirements, but it also creates stress for cattle transport or impacts the quality of fresh produce.
- Generally, we see a long stretch of unsealed sections in the network mentioned above. These stretches do not provide any scope for overtaking; this is primarily an issue when travelling behind road trains.

The desired outcomes:

- Special focus on building resilient road networks in rural and remote communities
- Focus on using the locally available resources and focus on achieving more with less. Use the local knowledge, adopt proven techniques and methods that offer value for

money; avoid gold plating the delivery scope and try not to reinvent the wheel; adopt simple betterment approaches such as laying gravel on the unformed roads, concrete floodways for the gullies that regularly wash away, and lay bitumen on small sections at regular intervals to provide overtaking opportunities on long stretched unsealed roads to improve safety.

## Motion number 26.4 Newcastle City Council NSW

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to:

1. Note the historical under-funding and lack of investment into maintaining our local roads servicing our populations across the country;
2. Note the high level of destruction of local roads across the country as a result of the multiple flood events in 2022, estimated at a total cost of \$3.8 billion;
3. Invest in research and development into more resilient road building materials, techniques, and technologies; and
4. Continue the Local Roads and Community Infrastructure Program to ensure local government is adequately supported to continue the ongoing maintenance and additional replacement and renewal of the local road network further affected by flooding and like disasters.

## Motion number 27 City of Wanneroo WA

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to;

1. Allow Infrastructure Australia to consider business cases submitted by groupings of local governments for the coordinated delivery of priority sporting facilities infrastructure; and
2. Provide an appropriate level of funding to support local governments in the delivery of identified priority sporting facilities.

### NATIONAL OBJECTIVE

Local governments across Australia are facing many issues related to providing essential infrastructure that impacts directly on community wellbeing. The ability to acquire and develop land for recreational and sporting facilities has a proven direct impact on community wellbeing measured in physical, social, mental, and cultural outcomes.

### KEY ARGUMENTS

Attention has been given to this issue by a collective of local governments in Western Australia working together to develop an evidenced based business case to demonstrate the return on these investments in sporting and recreational facilities. The results have been shared with WALGA who have been central in focussing energy on demonstrating the value of such investment and in supporting the collective to proceed to tabling the business case

with Infrastructure Australia (IA) and more recently Infrastructure WA (IWA). This work over the last five years is now in jeopardy as the review of IA is calling to have less focus on social investment. With federal government now taking a more strategic look at wellbeing nationally it is proposed that the time to include social investment by working with local government is now. We call on members to support this motion.

## **Motion number 28 Whitsunday Regional Council QLD**

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to establish minimum road (quality) standards for the national highway (HWY 1) to improve road safety and to ensure accessibility is maintained throughout the nation especially during major weather events.

### **NATIONAL OBJECTIVE**

The motion seeks to establish standards for the national highway to improve road safety and ensure that minimum standards exist for all communities linked by the national highway.

There is limited comparison across the nation on the standards for the national highway in terms of road surface or quality and the measures are generally geared to traffic volume and not necessarily quality of surface and all-weather accessibility. This leads to different road constructions that are not comparable to set standards.

### **KEY ARGUMENTS**

It is becoming all too frequent that the national highway is being cut due to weather events and that produce, and freight/supplies cannot get to major cities, and these are being isolated for days at a time which has both an economic and social impact on communities. Through establishing standards there is consistency in approach that communities have equitable and safe access for most weather events. The standard is about the type and quality of the road, not the volume of traffic, which may be guided by population and vehicle movements. The intent is not to establish a four-lane highway throughout the country, but that the construction is to a standard that is the same wherever you are in the country.

The National Highway in North Queensland is regularly cut through weather events which isolates major cities and delays freight and produce to markets. By setting minimum standards this could be minimised or avoided. It is also noted that not every weather event can be accommodated but that the minimum standards need to be improved for equity to exist on the national highway and its useability.

Council acknowledges the work undertaken by Austroads who provide advice across government for Australia and New Zealand, but it is not clear that standards exist to ensure equity in the quality/standard of road surfaces (services) for the national highway (HWY 1).

## **Motion number 29 Gunnedah Shire Council NSW**

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to delay any cut or suspension of the current fuel excise tax arrangements until such time as a genuine reform package can be legislated to replace the tax with a mechanism which distributes this vital road maintenance funding across all road users regardless of fuel type.

### **NATIONAL OBJECTIVE**

The core funding stream for roads, which drive productivity and connectivity of all our LGAs, must be secured for longer than the immediate future. As the increasing trend of EVs and other road going vehicles not powered by fossil fuels takes hold across the nation the fuel excise tax will become a less effective means of capturing a 'user pays' funding stream. Genuine reform is urgently needed to preserve our roads into the future.

### **KEY ARGUMENTS**

According to the Electric Vehicle Council of Australia's research report, state of Electric Vehicles, EVs represented approx. 1% of new vehicle sales in 2020. This was a near doubling from 2019 where EVs accounted for 0.6% of new vehicle sales. Crucially, more than 56% of respondents to their market research surveys indicated EVs would be considered in their next vehicle purchasing decision.

The marketplace is moving, and this is being driven by consumers. 2022's fuel price crunch is only going to accelerate this transformation of our nation's main form of personal transport energy use.

FY20's fuel excise revenue collected by the ATO reached just over \$11 billion. The fuel excise level is a flat tax rate applied on top of the bowser price of fuel, so has not moved up in line with the increase in the cost of fuel. Rather, the increasing trend of EV's (granted, minor compared to COVID-19 impacts felt in FY21) will work to reduce the revenue generate from the user pays tax scheme. So, whilst the fuel excise rate increases, lower than CPI, and inflationary pressures rapidly increase the national bill for road construction and maintenance, the principle means of spreading this burden across road users will become less effective - an increasing share of road users will receive a free drive via the use of EVs on the road network.

This will lead to a clear shortfall of funding and in turn a reduction in the level of service able to be provided to road users.

We need to act now and secure real reform in the area by introducing a replacement for fuel excise which has a future proof link to road usage.

## **Motion number 30 Shoalhaven City Council NSW**

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to implement fuel efficiency standards that will secure a pipeline of affordable lower and zero emissions vehicles for Australian communities, councils, and business fleets. These standards must:

1. Be mandatory and deliver at least equivalent settings to those in other major markets to ensure Australia does not stay at the back of the queue for cleaner vehicles;
2. Give Australian drivers more choice and affordability than they have today by bringing a wider range of vehicle types to our shores;
3. Support 100% of new vehicles sold in Australia to become zero emissions as soon as possible - sending a strong market signal that Australian communities, businesses, and government agencies are ready for zero-emission vehicles; and
4. Be reviewed and updated approximately every five years. Technology changes fast and it is imperative we have a continued supply of quality vehicles equivalent to our global peers.

### **NATIONAL OBJECTIVE**

We urge the federal Government to support our access to electric vehicles by legislating strong fuel efficiency standards.

### **KEY ARGUMENTS**

Transport is a significant source of emissions at all levels of government - and is the third highest source of emissions nationally behind only electricity and stationary energy. Local governments are doing what we can to switch to electric vehicles (EVs), but our hands are tied. A lack of supply to Australia, and the strong federal policy to drive it, makes it difficult to transition our fleet, therefore limiting the availability of second-hand vehicles to communities. World-class fuel efficiency standards would bring more low and zero emissions vehicles to Australian shores. This will accelerate the transition for councils - and with fleet vehicles entering the second-hand market after three to five years, this ensures communities have access to the best technology at a fair price.

## **Motion number 30.1 Lake Macquarie City Council NSW**

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to support local government organisations to access electric vehicles by legislating strong fuel efficiency standards.

### **NATIONAL OBJECTIVE**

Reducing the cost of low and zero emissions vehicles will make it easier for councils to transition their fleets and reduce their carbon footprint. This will also allow local government organisations to take a leadership role in their communities, demonstrating the economic, environmental, and social benefits of lower emissions transport.

## KEY ARGUMENTS

Road transport is one of the main sources of Australia's carbon dioxide emissions, with cars and light commercial vehicles accounting for more than 60 per cent of the country's transport-related greenhouse gas emissions. Fuel efficiency standards have been adopted in about 80 per cent of the light vehicle market internationally, including in the United States, the European Union, Canada, Japan, China, South Korea, and India. The implementation of fuel efficiency standards in Australia will help drive supply and uptake of electric vehicles in Australia. Legislated fuel efficiency standards provide incentives for car makers to supply low and zero emissions vehicles, as experience in other countries has demonstrated. Reducing the cost of low and zero emissions vehicles will make it easier for councils to transition their fleets and reduce their carbon footprint. This will also allow local government organisations to take a leadership role in their communities, demonstrating the economic, environmental, and social benefits of lower emissions transport.

## Motion number 31 Maribyrnong City Council VIC

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to work with state and local governments to support the transition of industry, freight, and motor vehicles to low or no emission methods of operation. Including:

1. Implementing low emission zones in freight and industry heavy areas, near residential and other sensitive uses;
2. Providing grant programs and funding to support business transition to zero emission methods of operation;
3. Undertaking initiatives to greater separate trucks from where people live and learn;
4. Initiating a heavy vehicle buy-back scheme to incentivise more fuel-efficient heavy vehicles;
5. Greater investment in air quality monitoring stations;
6. Greater investment in active and public transport projects; and
7. Low emission standards for heavy vehicles.

## NATIONAL OBJECTIVE

Research by the Grattan Institute (2022) revealed that key contributors to poor air quality include industry and freight, particularly older and inefficient trucks. Fourteen percent of trucks on Australian roads were manufactured before 1996 and another 12 percent before 2002. This means that more than a quarter of the Australian freight fleet has not been required to satisfy minimum pollution standards.

## KEY ARGUMENTS

Victoria's Air Quality Strategy (2022) states that without continued action, exposure to air pollution will deteriorate, costing Victoria more than \$1 billion per year (2021 prices). Air pollution is taking a significant toll on Victorians, particularly those who live in Melbourne's inner west. Every year, 27,519 healthy years of life are lost by Australians from exposure to

air pollution. A number of studies estimate that between 2,616 to 4,884 people in Australia die from air pollution exposure every year.

## **Motion number 32 Manningham City Council VIC**

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to:

1. Develop an electric charging network program whereby critical infrastructure can be installed nationally and efficiently through a single standardised rollout;
2. Provide grant funding and a group of preferred providers to construct and maintain EV charging stations for local governments to draw from as they install chargers as part of this network;
3. Note that local governments are best placed to understand their communities and regions in identifying these locations. Many have already begun installing this infrastructure as the owners of many public car parking locations. However, this can place a significant cost burden on local governments and results in a mishmash of different providers, technologies, payment platforms, and availability of charging stations; and
4. Note the anticipated critical labour needs and ensure there are skills and supplies for timely maintenance and repair of EVC through the appropriate supply chain and training opportunities.

### **NATIONAL OBJECTIVE**

Australia's transport sector includes one of the most emissions-intensive road vehicle fleets in the world (cars account for half of these national transport emissions, emitting about the same as Queensland's entire electricity supply).

While in most sectors, emissions are declining, transport emissions are increasing. This trend must be reversed to achieve the net zero emissions targets adopted by federal and state governments.

Alongside improving public transport, the electrification of cars, buses, trucks, etc with 100% renewable energy is a key climate solution that local governments are promoting.

Following global trends, EV registrations are increasing in Australia, having doubled these past few years. However, most EV charging occurs in private households and with the high cost of EV models, only those on higher incomes and with space or adequate infrastructure for private charging can afford EVs.

With more affordable EV models due to reach our market in the coming years, there will be a growing demand for public charging stations, which the current supply is insufficient and inadequate to support.



Greater investment is needed in the development and construction of Electric Vehicle Charging (EVC) infrastructure and support services, to ensure there is a reliable functioning network enabling the EV transition.

## **KEY ARGUMENTS**

The National Transport Commission estimates that if Australian consumers purchased low emission vehicles, average greenhouse gas emissions for new cars would be 60% lower. In Victoria, there is a target for 50% of light car sales to be EVs by 2030, supported by the Zero Emissions Vehicle subsidy. Councils are looking to enable the transition to EVs through the installation of EV charging infrastructure however, this can place a significant cost burden on local governments and results in a mishmash of different providers, technologies, payment platforms and availability of charging stations. An electric charging network program, procurement framework and legislation supporting the standardisation of systems are essential to delivering a coherent network.

Further, investment and measures are required to ensure the charging network can be effectively and competently maintained; in the current environment drivers may find themselves out of charge due to EV chargers being out of order, across large areas, for long periods of time.

In metropolitan areas, EV owners who live in apartment buildings, units and townhouses that do not have off-street parking or are in developments built without electric vehicle charging facilities will require public EV stations. In Regional areas, demand is coming from local EV owners and a desire for more equitable EV access and as a means to support inter-regional travel, tourism, and visitors.

A national strategy is required to provide consistency across all regions of Australia, and in 2022 Manningham was part of a consolidated response to the first National Electric Vehicle Strategy consultation coordinated by the Victorian Greenhouse Alliances ([https://eaga.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/National-Electric-Vehicle-Strategy\\_Victorian-Greenhouse-Alliances\\_FINAL\\_Nov-2022.pdf](https://eaga.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/National-Electric-Vehicle-Strategy_Victorian-Greenhouse-Alliances_FINAL_Nov-2022.pdf)). Electric vehicles also bring other environmental and social benefits: they are cheaper to maintain, reduce noise and air pollution and can play a role in addressing increasing fuel insecurity in Australia.

A local electric vehicle market can create construction, electrical trades, and infrastructure manufacturing jobs. PwC found that building infrastructure to support three million electric vehicles is estimated to generate a net increase of 12,000 jobs in 2030 compared to 2020.

## **Motion number 32.1 City of Whittlesea Council VIC**

**This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to support the transition to electric vehicles including personal e-mobility devices to help communities transition to lower carbon lifestyles.**

## **NATIONAL OBJECTIVE**

On-road transport contributes 16 per cent of the total national emissions profile. Supporting the rapid transition to electric vehicles and personal mobility devices, provides a tangible solution to reducing this emissions profile.

However, we need to ensure that the transition occurs equitably for all Australians. We need to ensure we take the one-in a generation opportunity this opportunity provides us supporting people to shift out of single occupant cars, to e-bikes, e-scooters, public transport, and car-share. This mode shift will reduce the pressure on our road networks and support more compact and liveable cities and towns.

## **KEY ARGUMENTS**

Electric vehicles, including personal e-mobility devices, are important to help communities transition to lower carbon lifestyles.

Currently there is an inconsistent supply of EV vehicles particularly heavy vehicles to support major services of council to transition, such as the waste service. The Australian Government could support councils with access to these vehicles by incentivising importation of suitable trucks and equipment.

While the federal government has provided investment to support public charging infrastructure, via the ARENA program, it is not occurring at a sufficient scale to address community expectations for charging.

The government is aware that within the community, there is a need for chargers at key locations such as train stations and activity centres. At a community level, it is anticipated that charging of electric vehicles would be done from home. However, it is unclear how this will occur for people with additional barriers such as renters and within certain houses and development types. This includes apartments, medium density sites, properties without off-street parking.

Funding should be made available to ensure the housing built, owned, and facilitated by the federal and state government has equitable access to EV charging, thus reducing this barrier to vulnerable communities.

Investment into walking and cycling networks is going to be critical to supporting the transition to personal e-mobility. The federal government can help address lag in delivering key infrastructure, such safe and separated walking and cycling networks across the nation. Connecting people using walking and cycling to major employment areas, train stations and airports. Delivery of an integrated safe network is critical to support lower on-road emissions.

## **Motion number 33 North Sydney Council NSW**

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to issue national standards for electric vehicles to be required to be fitted with some form of audible signal to alert pedestrians to the presence of the vehicle.

## **NATIONAL OBJECTIVE**

To improve the safety standards for electric vehicles. The national safety standards for electric and hydrogen-fuelled vehicles is a federal issue. It is the responsibility of Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications, and the Arts.

## **KEY ARGUMENTS**

As we move to electrification of private vehicles across the nation, it is important to ensure that pedestrians may be alerted to the presence of electric vehicles to protect pedestrian safety. Electric vehicles are silent and there is no audible signal that one is approaching.

Other countries have ensured that there are standards to protect pedestrian safety and Australia ought to adopt similar standards as such vehicles become more common on congested local roads.

# **Motion number 34 Mitchell Shire Council VIC**

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to develop, prioritise and appropriately fund major infrastructure for communities in Australia's rapidly growing urban fringe including road, transport, and social infrastructure.

## **NATIONAL OBJECTIVE**

The National General Assembly calls on the federal and state governments to ensure the appropriate funding and timing of delivering for vital infrastructure in outer urban growth areas. There should be a significant focus on jobs, social infrastructure, transport and health, community and educational services which are equally accessible for all people across the life stages.

## **KEY ARGUMENTS**

Many emerging communities in greenfield developments in outer urban growth areas face substantial challenges related to place-making, community building and resilience. Often communities within growth areas are made of residents from diverse range of backgrounds having moved from neighbouring areas, cross-city, inter-state or from overseas. As local councils we celebrate and embrace the exciting opportunities to grow and learn which are presented by our new residents.

These communities, however, often suffer from a lack of extant infrastructure and services for many of their formative years. It is vital that social and community infrastructure, accompanying health, community, and educational services, along with transport and other basic infrastructure, is provided early and comprehensively.

It is well researched, that the early delivery of infrastructure and services help to nurture a community, improve their resilience, future proof their liveability and promote placemaking. Federal government investments are urgently needed to unlock the significant backlog of

infrastructure projects which are impeding the development of health, connected, and sustainable communities.

## Motion number 34.1 Baw Baw Shire Council VIC

**This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to provide more critical infrastructure and services for fast-growing peri-urban regions of Australia as it is important that the same amenity and effective connectivity - both digital and transport are readily available to community members that moving from the city into peri-urban communities.**

### **NATIONAL OBJECTIVE**

Without the critical infrastructure, workers in these fast-growing peri-urban regions look back to the city for employment. This has productivity impacts across Australia as the link between long (> 1-2 hour) commute times and loss in productivity has been well established.

### **KEY ARGUMENTS**

Many peri-urban regions in Australia are amongst the fastest growing areas in Australia yet lack the critical infrastructure that people moving from the cities expect and the region require to be attractive to new business. The lack of high-speed digital connectivity within these areas (many still with only 3G access) and no business grade NBN in the regional cities impacts the attractiveness of new business to these areas. The lack of employment leads to workers to look back into the cities for opportunities which ultimately means long commute times. The productivity loss of the long commute is well documented. While some workers may be able to tele-commute, the lack of high-speed connectivity is a drawback. While on the fringe of metropolitan areas, peri-urban regions contribute almost 25% of Australia's total agricultural production. The improvement in both digital and transport connectivity provides opportunities for a growth in agrotech, and furthering local job opportunities while boosting the local economy.

## Motion number 34.2 Mornington Peninsula Shire VIC

**The National General Assembly calls on the Australian government to support councils to deliver on large infrastructure projects, that will contribute to productive capacity and community wellbeing of local government areas and the broader Australian economy. Councils are in an incredibly challenging position to find projects that are both ready and competitive enough to attract Commonwealth grants and to source funding that is significant enough to support strategic regional projects and call for:**

- Adequate funding for regional projects to the tune of \$50-100million, so projects can be fully funded removing the matched funding obligation placed upon councils
- Allowing regional projects to be assessed on their merit and benefits as opposed to comparing them to high profile, metro, politically driven projects
- Having a specific category in each funding program for planning (including feasibility, concept and detailed design)

- Allowing more flexibility and broadening project scope requirements to fund supporting infrastructure, including amenity blocks, footpaths, carparks and even infrastructure maintenance
- Funding projects that are already in the early stages of construction
- Allowing adequate time during the grant application process and providing councils with the fund details and criteria, with enough time to prepare the right projects for submission
- Allowing more time between milestones and factoring in increasing costs and realistic timelines to deliver given market and supplier conditions.

## **NATIONAL OBJECTIVE**

Adequate and flexible funding from the Australian Government, including specific funding for planning stages, will allow councils to plan, design and build our most important and strategic infrastructure projects.

Australian and Victorian governments could make it more feasible for council to plan and build these ambitious infrastructure projects by:

- Reserve adequate funding for regional projects to the tune of \$50-100million, so the project can be fully funded;
- Removing the matched funding obligation placed upon councils;
- Allowing regional projects to be assessed on their merit and benefits as opposed to comparing them to high profile, metro, politically driven projects;
- Having a specific category in each funding program for planning (including feasibility, concept, and detailed design);
- Allowing more flexibility and broadening project scope requirements to fund supporting infrastructure, including amenity blocks, footpaths, carparks and even infrastructure maintenance;
- Funding projects that are already in the early stages of construction;
- Allowing adequate time during the grant application process and providing councils with the fund details and criteria, with enough time to prepare the right projects for submission; and
- Allowing more time between milestones and factoring in increasing costs and realistic timelines to deliver given market and supplier conditions.

## **KEY ARGUMENTS**

The Australian Government could improve its funding models and criteria by providing whole of project funding and removing matched funding criteria for strategic infrastructure projects, such as an iconic trail network and Performing Arts Centre on the Mornington Peninsula, to ensure they can be constructed.

The implementation of well-designed funding programs would assess projects on their merits and enable councils to deliver projects of this scale, which are outside of their regular infrastructure and maintenance funding.

Major projects like the Performing Arts Centre and Peninsula Trail will support productivity not only for the region, but for greater Melbourne and Victoria

The Peninsula Trail project will connect critical walking and cycling infrastructure across the Mornington Peninsula and greater metropolitan Melbourne network. Interest in trails, biking and outdoor recreation maintains elevated levels of community interest after a surge during the pandemic. Continued investment will help provide a safe, sustainable, and active transport system.

We are working closely with the Traditional Owners to help shape trail design, visitor information and stories that will help promote a sense of place and cultural identity.

When complete, the trail has the potential to generate \$111 million in economic benefits. With an estimated total project cost of \$62.5 million (current estimates), this a sound investment with a \$2 return for every dollar invested.

The project vision is to build a world class cycling trail from Port Melbourne to Port Phillip Heads and to Western Port, rivalling trails such as the Route des Vins on the French-German border, Britain's South Downs Way, and the Otago Peninsula trail in New Zealand.

The Performing Arts Centre project is a cultural infrastructure project to support the growing arts community, address community and business demand for a dedicated performing arts precinct, as identified in the Shire's Arts and Culture Plan 2020-2024.

The Bureau of Communications, Arts and Regional Research (BCARR) found that prior to the pandemic (2018-19), cultural and creative activity contributed \$115.8 billion to Australia's economy.

Locally, the arts industry is a significant contributor to productivity in the region with the heritage, creative and performing arts sectors contributing \$55 million to the Shire's economy annually.

Despite the significant economic contribution of the industry nationally, recently released national Cultural Policy, Revive, notes funding cuts for arts have made it difficult to support Australia's artists and organisations.

Additionally in Closing the Gap refresh 2018, the Australia council for the Arts recommends collaboration with First Nations stakeholders to address the growing body of evidence showing participation in arts and culture supports outcomes across the Closing the Gap framework as culture has been the missing element from this framework to date.

This project team will work with Traditional Owners and First Nations performers, to embed a sense of place and cultural identity.

The project will revitalise Hastings, attract visitors and investment and support businesses directly involved in the arts and auxiliary business such as retail, hospitality, and accommodation.

## **Motion number 35 Shoalhaven City Council NSW**

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to support infrastructure such as high-speed rail to support regional growth.

### **NATIONAL OBJECTIVE**

National investment in high-speed rail would assist the nation in reducing emissions and ensuring that regional areas are liveable, sustainable, productive, and resilient.

### **KEY ARGUMENTS**

Regional Australia is referred to as the engine room for the national economy, which includes the agriculture, tourism, mining, and manufacturing sectors. It is essential that these sectors are continued to be supported to enable growth and employment in Regional Australia. The provision of adequate infrastructure to regional areas is a key factor in delivering significant and sustainable economic benefits.

Infrastructure projects in regional areas not only create jobs during the construction phase, but they also can support long-term growth in employment with subsequent benefits to the economy. Integrating high-speed rail to Regional Australia can alleviate supply issues, while supporting regional economic development, improving connectivity, driving prosperity, and providing social equity. High-speed rail stimulates long term benefits to the economy, specifically from commercial, residential, and industrial developments that arise along rail lines.

In addition, high-speed rail can significantly boost tourism by reducing travel time and making regional destinations more accessible.

## **Motion number 35.1 Wentworth Shire Council NSW**

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to provide Prime Minister The Hon. Anthony Albanese and The Hon. Catherine King, Minister for Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Local Government their position regarding Motion Number 18 from 2017 National General Assembly: That this National General Assembly call on the Australian Government to support and prioritise the transcontinental rail network, so that the potential of inland regional centres can be brought to bear, maximising efficiency in getting people, freight and produce right around the country and beyond as well as directly into the great interior, increasing access to tourist destinations and improving liveability in remote regions.

### **NATIONAL OBJECTIVE**

The Australian freight task has grown more than four-fold over the past five decades, from around 127 billion tonne kilometres in 1970 to nearly eight hundred billion tonne kilometres in 2019-20 an average rate of growth of around 3.6 per cent per annum. Over that period, road freight volumes have increased eight-fold, from around twenty-six billion tonne

kilometres in 1970-71 to around 223 billion tonne kilometres in 2019-20. Rail freight has increased more than ten-fold, propelled in large part by the recent extraordinary growth in iron ore and coal exports, from around forty billion tonne kilometres in 1970-71 to nearly 450 billion tonne kilometres in 2019-20.

(Australian aggregate freight forecasts 2022 update Nov 2022, Bureau of Infrastructure and Transport Research Economics Research Report 154).

### **KEY ARGUMENTS**

Not only does rail play an important role in the agricultural sector, but it also has a significant role in the movement of mining commodities for processing and export. Tourism, particularly to more regional and remote areas that are not serviced by commercial airlines can also benefit from improved rail infrastructure. To remain competitive in the global market, industry needs to be able to readily move freight across and between port, rail, and road networks to access markets. Wentworth Shire Council welcomes recognition by the Australian Government of the need to further invest in rail and road networks for the future. However, it is hoped that current plans in targeted areas are expanded across the nation to address not only first and last mile issues, but also recognise that as our population increases, solutions to address the emerging increases in conflicts between passenger vehicles and heavy vehicles due to increased vehicle movements on our current road network need to be planned and budgeted for now.

## **Motion number 35.2 Wyndham City Council VIC**

**This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to support closing the gaps in the active transport network through:**

- 1. Partnering with councils on council lead projects; and**
- 2. The construction and upgrade of active transport links on federal government land.**

### **NATIONAL OBJECTIVE**

Improved access to active transport can reduce traffic congestion, reduce pollution, and improve community health. However, councils, both metropolitan and region, face budgetary constraints and that limit the ability to invest in active transport infrastructure.

### **KEY ARGUMENTS**

The importance of walking and cycling for a range of health, environmental and economic reasons is increasingly being acknowledged in Australia and around the world. There are numerous strategies and innovative projects being developed and implemented globally to get people active and enable people to walk more.

It is critical to have a connected network with high quality infrastructure and no missing gaps for walking and cycling to become preferred options in our community. Even small gaps in the network can reduce utility and use of walking and cycling as a journey is only as good as



the weakest link. Similarly, a better-connected cycle network would encourage more Australians to cycle, or cycle more often, to destinations close to where they live. Benefits of moving more people from cars to public and active transport modes include:

- Improved air quality due to a reduction in fuel usage and greenhouse gas emissions;
- A vastly more attractive service, resulting in better cost recovery; and
- Decreasing pressure on suburban railway station carparking by ensuring commuters have alternative means of accessing the station throughout the day.

Investment in cycling infrastructure is a cost-effective way of improving accessibility between activity centres, employment centres and public transport stations/interchanges.

## **Motion number 36 Bayside Council NSW**

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to invest in more infrastructure for active transport in the 2024 federal budget by providing targeted funding to local governments.

### **NATIONAL OBJECTIVE**

Local government infrastructure

### **KEY ARGUMENTS**

Transport emissions are rising faster than any other sector in Australia. To reverse this, we must electrify our transport and shift from car dependence to clean, active transport. Shifting from car dependency to active transport can slash emissions much quicker than electrifying the petrol car fleet.

Many studies show that people ride more if they are safe from cars, so a national investment in active transport infrastructure will enable a significant mode shift to active travel. Local councils struggle to afford this infrastructure alone but can quickly roll it out if supported by a federal grant program. Infrastructure could provide safer active transport routes to schools, shops, and public transport hubs, and as part of '15-minute cities' plans.

With many Australians facing a dangerous mortgage cliff in the next 18 months, high fuel prices and energy bills, the cost-of-living crisis provides a powerful unifying reason for the federal government to provide incentives to enable more Australians to shift from car dependency to active transport.

## **Motion number 37 City of Launceston Council TAS**

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to provide local government with access to a funding pool which is exclusively dedicated to the construction and/or maintenance of off-road bike and pedestrian pathways.

## **NATIONAL OBJECTIVE**

The objective of this motion is to make it easier for local government to secure Australian Government funding for the construction and/or maintenance of off-road pedestrian and cycle networks to accelerate efforts to provide universal access across cities, towns, and regions.

## **KEY ARGUMENTS**

The Australian Government currently provides the Roads to Recovery Program to support the construction and maintenance of the nation's local road infrastructure assets, which facilitates greater accessibility and improves safety, economic and social outcomes for Australians. The Program provides funding to all local governments, and to state and territory governments in unincorporated areas. Flexibility is built into the program, with funding recipients responsible for choosing road projects on which to spend their Roads to Recovery funding, based on their local priorities.

From 2019-20 to 2023-24, the Australian Government will provide \$2.6 billion under Roads to Recovery, with an ongoing commitment of \$500 million each year following.

The current Roads to Recovery Program supports funding being provided for the construction or maintenance of bike paths which are associated with a road; however, it cannot be utilised for the construction and/or maintenance of off-road bike and pedestrian pathways. Accordingly, pathways which generally run within the road corridor and follow the road alignment are eligible for funding, while off-road pathways are not.

Many Community Plans from across Australia, such as the Greater Launceston Plan, are seeking greater transport connectivity to support the effective and efficient movement of people, goods, and services within and beyond their region including connections to other regions in the state. A key focus area is facilitating the planning and development of pedestrian and cycle networks that provide universal access across cities, towns and regions linking the central area and suburbs to key destinations, parks, and recreation areas and to schools, communities, and residential areas.

While there are opportunities for the funding of off-road pedestrian and cycling pathway projects through different grants programs that are offered, they are typically general in nature, are heavily contested and it is difficult for shared pathway projects to compete in terms of metrics like jobs creation and economic impacts. Accordingly, it is submitted that if there were more funding exclusively dedicated to the construction and/or maintenance of off-road bike and pedestrian pathways, there would be significantly more infrastructure provided by local government for this purpose.

It needs to be considered that even if off-road pathways were eligible for Roads to Recovery funding, Councils would not be any better off unless the total funding amount was increased.

For instance, the City of Launceston currently fully expends its Roads to Recovery funding on its asset management projects, almost exclusively on road reconstruction. If we were to allocate some Roads to Recovery funding to construction of off-road paths, the council would

have to either increase its own source funding for road asset management or decrease our level of service. Accordingly, the motion is seeking additional funding rather than a redistribution of current funding.

## Motion number 37.1 Brisbane City Council QLD

**This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to facilitate harmonisation of road rules as they apply to personal mobility devices (PMDs) across Australia.**

### **NATIONAL OBJECTIVE**

State and territory governments are enacting conflicting legislation to regulate PMDs. As the industry is maturing and operating across the country, harmonisation of road rules is needed.

### **KEY ARGUMENTS**

Although the National Transport Commission has developed a model regulatory framework, individual states across Australia are adopting different road rules for PMDs. Differences include riding on footpaths, use of bicycle lanes and maximum speed.

Different requirements in different jurisdictions may cause confusion for users, shared scheme operators, importers, retailers, and enforcement agencies.

The Australian Government can play a lead role in resolving these inconsistencies taking into account the different needs of cities and regions.

## **Motion number 38 Brisbane City Council QLD**

**The National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to review how importation regulations are being enforced in regard to non-compliant personal mobility devices (PMDs) being imported and used in Australia.**

### **NATIONAL OBJECTIVE**

The take-up of PMDs, most particularly electric scooters (e-scooters), in Australia has largely been through the permitting of shared schemes to operate in Australian cities and regions with clear specifications. The popularity of PMDs has generated a rapidly expanding retail industry for private PMD ownership, which is importing a range of devices, many of which are non-compliant with state, territory and Australian road rules.

## KEY ARGUMENTS

The Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications, and the Arts (the Department) regulates the importation of road vehicles for use on public roads in Australia under the Road Vehicle Standards Act 2018 (the Act).

Subordinate to the Act is the Road Vehicle Standards (Classes of Vehicles that are not Road Vehicles) Determination 2021 which defines what a PMD is. However, there are many PMDs being imported into Australia and sold that do not comply with this definition.

There is a further role for the Australian Government to enforce regulations in regard to non-compliant devices being imported and ridden on Australian streets.

## **Motion number 39 District Council of Lower Eyre Peninsula SA**

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to:

1. Amend the Aviation Transport Security Amendment (Security Controlled Airports) Regulations 2019 to ensure any port that triggers screening should require all departing passengers be screened, regardless of the service they are using; and
2. Implement ongoing grant funding to regional airports impacted by security screening legislation or revise the national screening funding model in recognition of the inequitable cost imposition on regional airports relating to the operational cost of providing security screening meeting the new federal regulations.

## NATIONAL OBJECTIVE

Amendments to the Aviation Transport Security Amendment (Security Controlled Airports) Regulations 2019 have disproportionately impacted regional communities by imposing unforeseen operational costs on some airport operators, a number of which are local government, across the nation which has resulted in costs being passed onto passengers via airlines. This impost was recognised by federal government at the time and funding provided via the Regional Airports Screening Infrastructure Program (RASI) to assist, but the program has ceased and will not be extended. The Objective is to seek funding support whilst investigating, and the implementation of, a more equitable model across the national aviation network. The intent is to average out and spread the cost implications of the enhanced security measures to minimise commuter (and therefore regions) impact.

## KEY ARGUMENTS

The Motion seeks changes to legislation and further funding support to cover the new costs associated with security screening and directly aligns with the top three (of the eight) priority areas for this year's ALGA and eligibility criteria of Motions, being:

Productivity - The Motion addresses the need for affordable access to regions via air ensures connectivity between regions and the cities for doing business and sustaining and growing the visitor economy of the regions.

Local Government Infrastructure - The Motion supports the efficient provision of airport infrastructure by minimising the large costs associated with operating airports.

Community Wellbeing - The Motion addresses the need for affordable access to frequent, accessible air travel being vital for regional communities to access timely medical and health services, visiting friends and relatives' social wellbeing and the like.

Furthermore, the Motion supports the intent of the federal government's changes to legislation, to keep communities safe, but under a more equitable 'cost sharing' model that does not unfairly disadvantage the regions.

Despite advocacy work undertaken to date, the Minister for Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and local government advises RASI funding will not be extended and an Aviation White Paper will be developed with a consideration for aviation in regional Australia. This will take some time to develop and enact any recommendations regardless of whether it resolves a more equitable funding model etc. and in the meantime the cost implications to regional travel remain a critical issue.

## **Motion number 40 Wagga Wagga City Council NSW**

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to:

1. Work with the few local councils who still operate airports that are owned by the Australian Government to develop airport masterplans in collaboration with each other, stakeholders, and the local community;
2. Fund all necessary infrastructure agreed to in the masterplans as they are the owners of these assets; and
3. Recognise the essential role airports owned by the Australian Government and operated by local governments provide and offer lease arrangements that reflect this essential role.

### **NATIONAL OBJECTIVE**

Airports that do not belong to council are run by the federal government.

This is a federal issue, and we need ALGA to utilise their influence to get better results.

### **KEY ARGUMENTS**

Many airports throughout Australia were gifted to councils for \$1 over two decades ago. There are some airports that remain owned by the Australian Government and are leased to local councils to operate for a substantial figure. This arrangement has created a situation in which those airports are rarely eligible for grant funding as they often prohibit state or

federal assets to be improved with the funds. Some arrangements also require the local council to fund all infrastructure upgrades, which in turn increases the rent due to an increase in value of the airport.

During Covid these airports received no extra assistance outside of rent relief which lead to significant deficits. The previous Australian Government provided little to no support pre-covid as well. In the circumstances described the Australian Government needs to improve its role as the asset owner, invest in the necessary infrastructure, and work with local councils to ensure the airports meet the needs of the community now and in the future.

## **Motion number 41 Broken Hill City Council NSW**

**This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to provide funding to financially support local councils in the restoration and remediation of local cemeteries that have been severely damaged from climatic and environmental conditions.**

### **NATIONAL OBJECTIVE**

Cemeteries are an important part of Australia's history. The monuments of our ancestors provide a history of the Nation's growth and a valuable insight into its development.

All cemeteries have social and historic value and potential cultural significance.

A cemetery is generally considered to be of cultural significance if it has historic, social, artistic, religious, genealogical, creative/ technological, landscape, botanical or representative significance.

Some cemeteries are significant to the nation at large, some to a religious or ethnic group or a region and all to their families.

The Broken Hill Cemetery dates back to 1886 and is the final resting place of over 50,000 persons and one of the most significant historical sites in Broken Hill- (Australia's First Heritage Listed City) and is an important Tourism destination.

### **KEY ARGUMENTS**

The conservation of cemeteries is essential for the survival of Australia's local history, regional history, and national history. There is an incredible amount of history in cemeteries, and it is important that historic grave sites and their surrounding grounds are maintained. Historic monuments and graves represent the last public memorials of many people, both famous and unknown, who were intimately involved with the growth of the local area in which they are buried. In this way the headstones themselves, through the names, occupations, dates, and epitaphs, provide a largely unique social, literary, and economic record of the district. The Broken Hill Cemetery dates back to 1888 and is the final resting place to many significant history makers including George Urquart, June Bronhill, Kevin (Pro) Hart MBE and Albert Morris (to name a few), along with over eight hundred men that were killed on the Broken Hill mines. Restoration and remediation of graves and gravestones at all

local council cemeteries is a major concern to all local government areas that have suffered major damage due to the age of the grave sites, climatic conditions, severe drought, and severe floods. All local government areas would benefit from federal government funding to provide financial support for the restoration and remediation of historic graves and gravestones that would preserve the history of all local areas.

## **Motion number 42 North Burnett Regional Council QLD**

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to provide funding increases towards the construction of new and augmented water infrastructure projects across regional Australia to improve water security and deliver long-term, bulk water sources for regional communities.

### **NATIONAL OBJECTIVE**

The federal government's intervention is sought to mitigate against the escalating cycle of drought and flood, assist in alleviating costs of living, and to support the food bowls of Australia.

### **KEY ARGUMENTS**

Such intervention has the potential to assist agricultural pursuits to expand and become more intensive, freeing up vital land for energy alternatives including solar and wind farms.

Greater funding, targeted intervention, and greater state/federal partnerships will encourage more innovative and private enterprise solutions.

## **Motion number 42.1 Berrigan Shire Council NSW**

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government and state government water authorities to ensure funding is available for local councils to meet the needs of their communities where water utility supply forms part of their service delivery requirements.

### **NATIONAL OBJECTIVE**

The rationalisation of various councils' water supply networks, to ensure efficiencies are identified and targeted upgrades of infrastructure are implemented, are needed to ensure the continued deliver of high-quality water supply to our communities. Delivering suitable infrastructure in this way, meets the national objectives of providing high quality urban infrastructure that is fit for the future needs of our communities.

## KEY ARGUMENTS

The Berrigan Shire council is one of 92 NSW Local Water Utility providers and services for communities utilising four separate water treatment facilities; one for each township. All water utility providers are required to meet the needs of the community through the provision of safe, potable drinking water. The Productivity Commission White Paper of 2021 outlined some of the issues facing small rural councils in continuing to provide water to the standards required, particularly with what is often aging infrastructure. Councils, however, generally agree that local management of water supply provides far better outcomes for communities than privatisation does in the long term. Councils are better positioned to provide water because we are more able to provide services to rural areas and respond to the needs of our growing communities more quickly than would be possible through a privately managed or state-run network.

Council, however, recognises the difficulties in taking on such a role. Difficulties include adequately providing water that meets the health requirements, community expectations and staffing capability. Much of this council's current water infrastructure is more than 50 years old, and we suspect so are many others. Although currently coping with most requirements upgrades are needed and need to be supported through state and federal assistance.

## Motion number 42.2 Mornington Peninsula Shire Council VIC

**The National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to increase investment in infrastructure to support access to adequate supplies of recycled water, which is central to feed, provide amenity and protect communities against climate change impacts:**

### NATIONAL OBJECTIVE

The provision of access to recycled water for the agricultural sector is a significant economic and productivity issue across Australia. Appropriate infrastructure will support the circular food economy, benefitting businesses, the community and environment by reducing the impacts of production and consumption, through more productive use of natural resources.

Current gaps and barriers to securing federal funding include:

- Perception - water is not often seen as appealing, compared to high visibility infrastructure projects. However, it can be a significant game changer for many industries and communities;
- Current Infrastructure Australia programs involve several submission stages and approval does not come with funding. Projects are assessed and advice is provided to relevant federal ministers;
- Federal government discussion could better recognise and re-focus towards the substantial benefits of water investment, rather than being perceived as technical, unseen, and complex;



- Increased recognition by federal policy that the ongoing viability of agriculture/horticulture is linked to affordability, availability, quality, and certainty of water supply, which is the foundation of growth, productivity, and sustainability in the sector. This in turn supports the national markets of retail, forestry, landscape, manufacturing, and agriculture, with positive environmental benefits.

## KEY ARGUMENTS

Water is a key issue in Mornington Peninsula for the expansion and development of farming operations. Large volumes of class A water are currently being piped to Gunnamatta to be discharged into the ocean.

Access to this water resource is regarded by many as critical to the security and potential expansion of agriculture on the Peninsula, not to mention the role it could play in food security, employment, tourism, fire prevention and climate change policies.

The Tyabb-Somerville Recycled Scheme project has the potential to realise new horticulture opportunities in highly productive land currently limited by the availability of water.

The Eastern Treatment Plant discharges about 350 million litres per day of high-quality recycled water at Gunnamatta, via a large pipeline running the length of the Peninsula. Tapping into that recycled water would greatly increase our resilience to climate change, boost food production, deliver social outcomes around health and well-being through the further development and maintenance of green spaces and strengthen the region's resilience to bushfires.

The opportunity to increase economic productivity and make better use of recycled water produced by the Eastern Treatment Plant and local wastewater treatment plants, has been widely embraced by industry stakeholders and the wider community.

Investment in the Tyabb Somerville recycled water scheme would deliver two distinct groups of direct and indirect benefits. The direct benefits relate to the increased water security and affordability for both agriculture and green spaces, for community sporting and recreational facilities across the area that require water throughout the year. Local emergency services will also have access to more water, across a bushfire prone area.

Mornington Peninsula Shire Council is currently working with the Greater Southeast Melbourne (GSEM) partnership of eight LGAs, across one of the fastest growing regions, in Australia's fastest growing city and is one of the country's most important economic centres.

To achieve future water security in the Southeast Melbourne region, there is a need to develop climate-independent water resource opportunities. Recycled water supplies are largely independent of rainfall, making them a more reliable source in an uncertain climate.

During the Millennium Drought, demand for recycled water grew as severe water restrictions limited the use of drinking water supplies for essential needs. As cities and towns grow, more wastewater and recycled water will be produced and available for particular purposes.

An increased supply of recycled water may act as an incentive for businesses to locate and invest in a local government area. The property sector is also interested in recycled water at a project level, for irrigation and household use. Civil construction also requires water which is a key consideration for population growth corridors.

## Motion number 42.3 Flinders Shire Council QLD

**This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to allocate special funding programs to assist regional and remote water service providers in upgrading, renovating, or building new water and wastewater infrastructure in these communities.**

### **NATIONAL OBJECTIVE**

Rural and remote communities deserve equal services and treatment compared to city residents. Most of these communities need high-quality drinking water and access to reliable wastewater infrastructure compliant with the relevant guidelines and supports good health and best practices. The reason being the assets are aging, inappropriate and past by the use of data. Due to the lack of revenue for the rates, the service providers cannot catch up with the asset backlog and cannot adopt new technologies or models.

People living in rural and remote areas are more likely to die at a younger age than their counterparts in Major cities. As per the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW), around seven million people, or 28% of the Australian population, live in rural and remote areas, encompassing many diverse locations and communities (ABS 2022c). These Australians face unique challenges due to their geographic location and often have poorer health outcomes than people living in metropolitan areas. Data show that people living in rural and remote areas have higher hospitalisations, deaths, and injury rates and poorer access to and use of primary health care services than people living in major cities.

### **KEY ARGUMENTS**

With a low-rate base in these small communities and a lack of access to required funding, the providers still need to provide adequate services and comply with relevant guidelines and standards.

Low standards of living; unable to attract new families and workforce due to lifestyle issues and challenges

The health of populations in Australia's rural and remote areas is worse than those in capital cities and other metropolitan areas. Mortality and illness levels increase as the distance from urban centres increases. Relatively poor access to health services, lower socioeconomic status and employment levels, and exposure to comparatively harsher environments and occupational hazards contribute to and may explain most of these inequalities.

The water and wastewater assets in these communities could be more reliable. They fail due to age, lack of required maintenance, or lack of funding to maintain them to the relevant standards.

## Motion number 42.4 Tamworth Regional Council NSW

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to:

1. Fund, in conjunction with state government, community education of direct and indirect reuse of effluent;
2. Work with state governments to improve regulation of indirect and direct potable reuse and recycled water for industrial uses, including across jurisdictions; and
3. Fund investigation of methods to better dispose of the waste stream generated by current reverse osmosis water treatment technologies in inland areas.

### NATIONAL OBJECTIVE

The impact of climate change is being felt across the country. One of these forecast impacts is the reduction in water security for regional noncoastal communities Australia wide. Noncoastal communities do not have access to seawater for use in desalination, which limits the number of viable options for increasing water security.

One such option is recycling of effluent water for industrial and /or potable uses.

### KEY ARGUMENTS

There is no technical reason effluent water cannot be recycled for potable purposes; however, three critical issues need to be addressed;

- Better community acceptance of water recycling, particularly for potable use. Governments need to invest in community education programs to educate the wider community of the benefits of direct or indirect potable reuse and the risks;
- Regulation. State governments are not ready to regulate recycling effluent water for industrial and/or potable use; and
- Waste Streams. The most common recycling process at present is reverse osmosis. This process produces a waste stream that is high in salt. In coastal areas this waste stream can be directed to the sea but in inland areas the most common disposal option is evaporation ponds, which tie up considerable land area and present a long-term waste issue. More research needs to be undertaken in this area to improve the disposal of the waste streams from Reverse Osmosis processes.

## Motion number 43 Noosa Shire Council QLD

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to formulate a national policy on ocean sewerage outfalls that:

1. Aims at no new ocean and estuarine sewerage outfalls to be built/developed along the Australian coastline; and
2. Dedicated funding is provided to support local regional governments and wastewater providers with existing ocean and estuarine outfalls, to develop new methods/technologies and make every effort to recycle 100% of all treated

**wastewater generated within their localities and avoid the need to discharge in the ocean.**

## **NATIONAL OBJECTIVE**

Our beaches and coastline are some of our most important public places. It is unacceptable that in 2023, treated and untreated sewage is still being discharged into our oceans. Our environment and community demand a better way of managing waste.

Wastewater creates a management problem for local regional governments and wastewater providers that has environmental, socio-economic, and public health consequences.

Advocating for a National Policy and Strategy that aims at no new Ocean and estuarine sewerage Outfalls to be built/developed along the Australian coastline and dedicated funding to develop new methods and technologies and make every effort to recycle 100% of all treated wastewater generated to avoid the need to discharge in the ocean, will also improve the long-term sustainability of council's and wastewater providers infrastructure to communities across Australia.

Data gathered in 2016 from 165 of the 175 ocean and estuarine outfalls provide the first national snapshot of wastewater discharges to Australia's coastal environment.

The total volume of wastewater discharged to Australia's oceans in 2016 was 1350 gigalitres: equivalent to 2.7 Sydney harbours.

The potential value of this water would have been more than more than \$1 billion, had as little as 20% been recycled (based on \$1.95/kL recycled water charge by Victoria's Southeast Water). \*Clean Ocean Foundation, Outfall Database

## **KEY ARGUMENTS**

This is what is happening in our backyard in Noosa. We have a sewage Treatment Plant at Burgess Creek that discharges treated effluent directly into the Coral Sea at Sunshine Beach. The significant volume of discharge and CONSTANT outflow of treated effluent (including stormwater) going into Burgess Creek and our oceans is (imo) causing erosion to our dunes and coastal ecosystems that are threatening road infrastructure and private homes. I question and will continue to question why an activity of dumping treated wastewater and contaminated stormwater into our oceans is tolerated, and in fact legal.

Are we tolerating practices that compromise the environment, are reasonably foreseeable and preventable?

Is it environmental best practice?

Is the 'permitted use' and environmental practices that were ok twenty plus years ago to dump treated effluent directly into the ocean still relevant?

And if we are ok with it, and the water quality has met recycled water quality criteria, then why aren't we reusing it?

In October 2022, I travelled to Cairns for the LGAQ Conference to get Wastewater Reuse on the state's list of priorities. Upheld by almost all councils (201 for and fifteen against).

We need to create a state and a water industry that supports less wasteful distribution and use of water as well as water treatment and recycling.

And that requires legislative changes and governmental support and incentives for the utilization of reclaimed wastewater.

As a state, Queensland recycles approximately 15% of treated wastewater. In Noosa it is less than 1% of treated wastewater that is being reused.

The remainder is being dumped into our oceans and rivers, causing environmental damage, pollution, and erosion.

According to Department of Environmental Science, that is about 290 gigalitres per annum.

Treated wastewater is an underutilised resource and it is bankable.

It is time that it is re-evaluated for its worth not only in capital costs, but full costs to councils, community, and most importantly environment.

UNESCO has made it clear that climate change and water quality is one of the biggest threats to the health of our environment and community.

Therefore, we need to formulate a National Policy that aims at NO new ocean and estuarine sewerage outfalls to be built/developed along the Australian coastline, and that dedicated funding is provided to support local regional governments and wastewater providers with existing ocean and estuarine outfalls, to develop new methods/technologies and make every effort to recycle 100% of all treated wastewater generated within their localities and avoid the need to discharge in the ocean.

People and Planet before Profit.

## **Motion number 44 South Gippsland Shire Council VIC**

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to develop minimum consultation requirements for projects that achieve Major Project Status: That the Australian Government, in partnership with state and territory governments, develop a community engagement framework, which includes local government authorities, to be imposed on proponents of projects that achieve 'Major Project' status.

### **NATIONAL OBJECTIVE**

Projects achieving major project status almost always have significant impacts on the communities they are located in. It is important that these communities feel major projects are happening with them, rather than to them.

There is an opportunity to improve and stipulate the requirements of consultation and engagement with these communities. This community connection also has the potential to improve and support these projects, potentially saving time and money.

The Australian Government, in partnership with states and territories, must develop a community engagement framework imposed on the developers of projects which receive major project status. The framework should detail expectations for all three levels of government (federal, state and local) to collaborate and participate in this engagement in a meaningful way.

#### **KEY ARGUMENTS**

This motion specifically relates to South Gippsland's current experiences and concerns relating to offshore wind development, which has received, 'Major Project' status from the Australian Government as well as being a focus of the Victorian state government, including achieving renewable energy targets and transition planning for Latrobe Valley and surrounds.

## **Motion number 45 North Burnett Regional Council QLD**

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to partner with rural and remote local governments to reimplement the rural and remote area television program to ensure the provision of the necessary infrastructure to rural and remote communities to guarantee the provision of free to air television services to all communities.

#### **NATIONAL OBJECTIVE**

There are currently multiple small communities without access to free to air television which is only obtainable by individuals who commit significant funds to sourcing their own satellite dish to ensure free to air coverage. The Commonwealth program which provided such infrastructure free of charge has ceased.

#### **KEY ARGUMENTS**

The cessation of this program by the federal government was premature and leads to inequity and affects many communities with a low Index of Relative Socio-economic Advantage (IRSAD) SEIFA scores.

The Australian Government should reinstate the infrastructure programs whilst there are rural areas without coverage.

## **Motion number 46 Broken Hill Council NSW**

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to introduce television licence conditions that require regional broadcasters to produce regional news programs.

### **NATIONAL OBJECTIVE**

Introducing a requirement on regional broadcasters to produce relevant regional news content will ensure that viewers informed regarding matters that are likely to affect their daily lives and/or regions. The issues and concerns of people in regional areas often differ from metropolitan areas, and it is important that coverage and promotion of these issues is undertaken by regional broadcasters. The introduction of licence conditions to produce regional news would ensure other regions do not suffer job losses and loss of access to relevant information as has occurred in Broken Hill and across regional South Australia.

### **KEY ARGUMENTS**

Southern Cross Austereo recently cancelled its regional news program that covered issues affecting the Mid-North and Eyre Peninsula regions of South Australia, as well as Broken Hill in New South Wales. This was done without warning and without consultation with the community.

This has left Broken Hill with no TV news coverage of regional issues and resulted in local job losses. The loss of this program has resulted in a greater sense of isolation and residents feeling uninformed on local issues. The elderly population who are accustomed to receiving their news via free-to-air television have been particularly affected.

Television is a key medium for regional and isolated communities to receive information, and the axing of television news services has a larger impact than would be felt in a metropolitan area where there is easier access to information.

Safeguards should be implemented to prevent other regional stations axing their news services to cut costs. Regional stations operate on advertising revenue sourced from the communities they service; therefore, it is only reasonable to demand that they provide a regional news service to keep their viewers informed with relevant information.

Without the introduction of licence conditions to compel regional stations to provide their communities with a news service, we could see similar job losses and restricted access to news and information in other regional and isolated areas of the country.

# FUNDING AND FINANCE

## Motion number 47 ALGA Board

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to revise the administrative arrangements for tied grants to local government to allow councils the financial autonomy and flexibility to achieve the objectives of the grants.

### NATIONAL OBJECTIVE

Council autonomy to spend grants to achieve the grants' purpose while maintaining accountability.

### KEY ARGUMENTS

Grant funding to assist councils to provide infrastructure and services is critical. However, administrative conditions placed on the expenditure of some grants by other levels of government effectively limit the ability of councils to spend grants funding as well as their own funding in the best way possible to achieve the councils' objectives. A range of specific proposals are identified in motions that follow. The aim of the motion is to achieve greater flexibility for councils to deliver projects without being too prescriptive.

## Motion number 47.1 Lithgow City Council NSW

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to include in its Inquiry processes into Commonwealth grants administration;

1. A return to policy driven grant funding programming;
2. Direct outcomes-based funding to local government where possible;
3. Include flexibility to manage the needs for extended timeframes and contingency to manage increasing costs; and
4. Minimisation of red tape.

### NATIONAL OBJECTIVE

The Joint Committee of Public Accounts is reviewing Commonwealth Grants Administration. At the time of writing, the Inquiry is receiving submissions. This motion seeks to assist the Committee (and the Australian Government) in identifying some key challenges and opportunities for improvement with respect to council delivery of local infrastructure funded by the Australian Government.

The overwhelming majority of infrastructure used by communities is delivered and maintained by councils. Councils know how to deliver the right local infrastructure, on the ground. We are often the delivery agents for other levels of government.



Australia and Australian communities cannot afford anything but optimal delivery of critical local infrastructure. The lived experience of local government in delivering grant funded infrastructure and programs is that there is the potential for delivery to be more productive, more effective, and more efficient.

## **KEY ARGUMENTS**

The Joint Committee of Public Accounts is reviewing Commonwealth Grants Administration. At the time of writing the Inquiry is receiving submissions.

Councils across Australia have been significant partners through Covid, natural disasters and day to day in maintaining a robust economy and delivering a better quality of life for Australian communities. In light of the profound financial challenges for local government, especially in regional and rural locations, the provision of infrastructure is often greatly assisted by Commonwealth grant funding. This motion is intended at ensuring the grant processes are more efficient and more effective.

There is a substantial cost to local government and all other applicants in grant preparedness and preparation. This has led to significant growth in grant support resource in both the public and private sector. Grant applications are not always successful, and this causes 'sunken costs'. The administration of successful grants can be extraordinary. For this reason, it is imperative that funding programs are informed by well-articulated policy so applicants can make decisions about the intention to apply based on alignment with local priority. Further, these substantial program costs should be interrogated to ensure they are as lean as possible. Grantees report extraordinary amounts of assurance required, and this is currently worsening. Local government needs to be treated as a trusted partner in program delivery. Surely the various local government acts in the states across Australia offer a sound regulatory framework to assure accountability and transparency.

As an alternative to complex micromanagement by grants administrators, recognition should be given to local government as being able to deliver funding on an outcome's basis. There is a tendency to ask for outcomes that can realistically be delivered in the longer term pushed into 12-18 months programs and then measure success based on 'things that can be measured' like clicks on websites. This all adds up to a gross waste of everyone's time and losing sight of the outcome.

As a trusted partner for other levels of government, pathways to direct funding of councils should be explored where possible. Administration through the state for programs to be delivered locally should be avoided as much as anything else as it doubles the administrative burden. This is particularly important for resilience and drought funding. Finally, these are public monies for community priority that have been through what ought to be a rigorous selection process. But there are real time on ground challenges of project delivery, "especially escalating costs and variations in time to manage supply chain and other input issues, as are being experienced at the moment. The introduction of flexibility into the funding framework to allow for contingency is strongly recommended.

## Motion number 47.2 Hawkesbury City Council NSW

**This National General Assembly calls on state and Australian Governments to enact changes to relevant legislation around grant funding, to allow councils to quarantine and utilise a percentage of funds received, to be used for future operating costs, maintenance and renewal of facilities provided by that grant funding.**

### **NATIONAL OBJECTIVE**

Where federal grant funding is available to assist councils with infrastructure development, the subject of the motion has the potential to impact eligible councils nation-wide. It is also a national issue to the extent that state funded grant funding opportunities are available in various states for the benefit of councils in those states.

### **KEY ARGUMENTS**

Capital investment via grant funding (for example, WestInvest funding in the Western Sydney area) enables new and improved assets to be built. However, there is generally no provision for the costs of operating, maintaining and renewing these assets in the future. Even if an amount for contingencies is included in original costing this is allocated to the phase of construction or upgrade, not for future use.

If a council does not have sufficient funds in general revenue to fund the operating costs, or any maintenance, repairs or upgrades required, the burden will fall on ratepayers either via special rate variations, or borrowings which will have to be paid back, potentially by future generations. Principles of local government decision-making include ensuring best outcomes for the local community including future generations.

The existence of rate capping, particularly in NSW where it currently sits below inflation rates, restricts the amount of own source revenue generated by councils. In smaller councils with limited scope to grow, this can be an issue. If provision were made for a percentage of grant funding for capital expenditure to be quarantined and invested for future use, the risk of burdening ratepayers to fund operational and maintenance costs would be minimised.

The motion is consistent with the National General Assembly theme 2. Local Government Infrastructure.

## Motion number 47.3 Tenterfield Shire Council NSW

**This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to either cease the practice of expecting council co-contributions when applying for federal government grants or allow council's in-kind contributions to be eligible as the co-contribution from councils.**

### **NATIONAL OBJECTIVE**

Motions i), ii), and iii) tie in directly to the questions raised in the Discussion Paper under the heading of local government Infrastructure/Community Wellbeing and Natural Disasters:

In order for councils, particularly regional and rural councils to become more financially sustainable, these motions need to be adopted and accepted by the federal government.

Local governments are not in a very positive financial position overall, and co-contributions just draw poor and smaller councils who rely upon grant funding further.

#### **KEY ARGUMENTS**

Motions i), ii), and iii) tie in directly to the questions raised in the Discussion Paper under the heading of local Government Infrastructure/ Community Wellbeing and Natural Disasters:

In order for councils, particularly regional and rural councils to become more financially sustainable, these motions need to be adopted and accepted by the federal government.

Local governments are not in a very positive financial position overall, and co-contributions just draw poor and smaller councils who rely upon grant funding further.

### **Motion number 47.4 Fraser Coast Regional Council QLD**

**This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to index current grant approvals to reduce the financial burden on communities from significant cost escalations caused by inflation and adversely impacted supply chains, which have been experienced within the last 12 months.**

#### **NATIONAL OBJECTIVE**

Local governments rely on federal government grants to assist in providing the necessary suite of services and infrastructure relied upon by their communities.

Grants that have been committed to local governments for planned projects need to be indexed to meet the escalation of building costs due to the current unprecedented conditions that are being experienced including high inflation, nationwide skills shortages, and cost increases in material, labour, and distribution.

Local governments seek an index in current grant approvals to share the burden of increased project costs as local governments are unable to bear the whole of the costs without significant impacts on the communities they serve.

#### **KEY ARGUMENTS**

A recent technical paper undertaken by Fission Consultants analysed project cost escalations over the past two years for the Queensland Government Main Roads Department, finding an average project budget escalation of 25% to 35% for large government projects with an expectation that smaller projects face similar cost increases.

The significant escalation of building costs is being experienced nationwide due to;

- the annual inflation rate in Australia climbed to 7.8% in the last quarter of 2022, “the highest since 1990;

- shortage of materials due to impacted supply chains;
- increased costs of material, for example, some building material costs have increased by at least 40%;
- shortage of workers; and
- increased borrowing costs.

Without additional funding, by way of indexing committed federal grants, local governments may need to;

- wind back the original scope of projects;
- reduce spending in critical budget areas;
- reduce the number or scale of other planned community infrastructure projects;
- increase borrowings and/or increase rates;
- limit opportunities for economic growth; and/or
- spread the financial impact by staging projects over a number of years.

This will see an impact on the assets and services that serve to support the development and growth of communities and will have a negative impact on the liveability and productiveness of communities.

## Motion number 47.5 North Burnett Regional Council QLD

**This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to provide local government communities classified as regional, rural or remote which have limited capacity to raise or increase own source revenue outside current rating streams to have access to federal grant funding with a co- contribution of 10% or less for capital works projects to renew or replace essential water, wastewater, roads and waste management infrastructure.**

### **NATIONAL OBJECTIVE**

To ensure that critical and essential infrastructure in regional, rural, and remote areas, which supports economic growth and development, agriculture and tourism is renewed or replaced as required.

### **KEY ARGUMENTS**

Many regional, rural, and remote LGAs do not have the financial capacity to meet grant funding co-contribution requirements currently available.

If grants are not available many LGAs do not have the financial capacity to fund the renewal or replacement of critical infrastructure.

High levels of regulatory compliance to ensure the safety and wellbeing of both staff and the community drive up the cost of renewal and replacement and it is critical that works to renew or replace critical infrastructure satisfy such requirements.

In some instances, such as waste facility capping LGA's did not know when the facilities were established what the cost of safe treatment at the end of life would be.

Additionally, the effects of continuing and worsening natural disasters, the modernisation of road transports mean that much of the road network in rural and remote areas is insufficient to meet current and future needs, as it was never designed or constructed to meet today's need.

Fit for purpose essential infrastructure is key to economic development and growth in rural and remote areas and without federal support for the renewal and maintenance of those systems agriculture, mining and tourism in these areas is at risk.

## Motion number 47.6 Kiama Municipal Council NSW

**This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to write to all state and federal ministers responsible for local government calling for changes to the funding conditions for all future state and federal government grants to local government for projects above \$250,000, to allow grant funds to be used in the administration and project management of grants.**

### **NATIONAL OBJECTIVE**

Refer to summary of key arguments

### **KEY ARGUMENTS**

All councils in Australia are reliant on and grateful for external funding provided by the state and federal governments to support both core services and community facility improvements. However, the majority of councils are under-resourced to administer or manage grant-funded projects. At present, the funding conditions for most grant programs either prevent or limit the grant value able to be allocated to project management. This places undue pressure on councils' limited resources and results in the delivery of many funded projects being delayed or not completed as planned. It also results in council choosing not to apply for funding opportunities due to a lack of available resources to administer or manage the projects.

Increasing the amount of grant funding able to be allocated to administration or project management of the grant will increase the viability and success of the state and federal government's funding program objectives.

## **Motion number 48 Fraser Coast Regional Council QLD**

**This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to review the assessment criteria for evaluating grant applications to provide priority to those local governments who have both a low SEIFA index and high growth.**

## **NATIONAL OBJECTIVE**

The federal government's assessment criteria for evaluating grant applications should prioritise local government areas experiencing high levels of disadvantage in conjunction with high levels of growth to assist in ensuring equitable availability of services and infrastructure independent of socio-economic factors.

## **KEY ARGUMENTS**

The 21 Australian Infrastructure Plan highlighted that there has been a 200% increase in net growth to regional centres and regional areas during the Covid 19 pandemic. This has placed significant pressures on local government services and infrastructure which need to grow to meet the increased demands. However, funding sources for local governments are finite and are primarily raised through rates. There is varying ability between the local government areas to absorb the increased rates due to the differing socio-economic factors between communities.

The Socio-Economic Indexes for Areas (SEIFA) is a product developed by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) that ranks areas in Australia according to relative socio-economic advantage and disadvantage in terms of people's access to material and social resources, and their ability to participate in society. A lower score indicates that an area is relatively disadvantaged compared to an area with a higher score.

Communities with a lower SEIFA score have an extremely limited ability to meet increased rates or other fees.

It is also noted that local governments in regional areas servicing disadvantaged communities often do not have the available resources to adequately compete for the relevant grants thereby putting them at a further disadvantage.

It is for these reasons that it is submitted that local government areas with lower SEIFA scores alongside high population growth be given priority through an appropriately merit based process, for federal grants.

## **Motion number 49 Ballina Shire Council NSW**

**This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to promote the enabling of tax-deductible donations from members of the community to local government for a broad range of essential council services.**

## **NATIONAL OBJECTIVE**

As taxation is a federal government responsibility it is important that there is an agreed Australian Local Government Association position on this matter to ensure consistency between the states and Australian Government.

## KEY ARGUMENTS

Council understands that there are currently opportunities to claim tax deductions for donations to council related services such as cultural, heritage and environmental programs. However, there are many other essential council services, such as roads, footpaths, community facilities, playgrounds etc, where residents may have an interest in donating funds to help their local council with service delivery. Philanthropy continues to grow and with many councils struggling with a lack of revenue to provide essential services, it would be beneficial for the federal and state governments to undertake a review of the current taxation donation provisions and determine whether there are opportunities to provide further tax incentives for local residents to donate to a wider range of council services than is currently allowed in the taxation legislation.

Any framework would need to ensure that donations do not come with a sense of obligation from the council to the donor. This is a given. Ballina Shire has benefited from a multimillion-dollar bequeathment of a commercial arcade to council in the 1960s which has generated millions of dollars to council during the last 50 years. In more recent times we have had donations/ bequeathments of hundreds of thousands to assist with the construction of a community centre and a synthetic hockey field. These are examples at the upper end of contributions that might be made, however the funding provided has allowed these community-based projects to proceed without any sense of obligation from the donors. Changes to the taxation system to provide incentives, with the necessary checks and balances, may help provide a supplementary funding source, for some councils, when we are all struggling with ever diminishing revenue bases, and substantial increases in operating and construction costs.

## Motion number 50 Inner West Council NSW

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to work with ALGA and the Australian Banking Association to convince all banks to offer investment products to local government that will not contribute to further climate change. Reasons for this include:

1. Local governments across Australia often hold significant funds that have been allocated for future use, but may struggle to identify sustainable and ethical investment options that align with community values and meet permitted forms of investment set by state and territory governments;
2. Many councils are particularly interested in identifying investment opportunities that will not contribute to climate change;
3. In NSW, LGNSW has raised this matter with the NSW Minister for local government, who encouraged councils to prioritise sustainable investments that are in accordance with the NSW Ministerial Investment Order;
4. LGNSW has also written to the Australian Banking Association (ABA) seeking to encourage banks to offer more investment products to councils to meet this objective;

5. The ABA has now sought a meeting with LGNSW which is expected to take place shortly; and
6. Given this is a common issue for councils in all states and territories and that banks operate nationally, ALGA may consider adding their voice to this advocacy.

#### **NATIONAL OBJECTIVE**

National objective outlined in the motion.

#### **KEY ARGUMENTS**

Key arguments are outlined in the motion.

### Motion number 50.1 Greater Bendigo City Council VIC

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to promote and incentivise local governments to redirect funds over and above operational cash towards Authorised Deposit-taking Institutions (ADIs) that do not invest in fossil fuel industries. This would enable councils to show leadership by further reducing indirect carbon emissions by giving preference to divestment of these investments (eventually moving towards 100% divestment). It would apply to any company for whom the extraction, production, refining, or distribution of fossil fuels forms a core part of their business strategy.

#### **NATIONAL OBJECTIVE**

The local government policy priority area in the ALGA 2020 - 2030 Strategic Plan relating to this motion is 'Addressing the Risks of Climate Change' with an outcome of action by all levels of government to mitigate climate change and adapt to unavoidable change.

Support for divestment of local government finances can assist the federal government's commitments to reduce emissions. Moving towards 100% divestment of investments from entities that fund fossil fuels would have an indirect impact on emissions.

There are numerous benefits for councils in making positive decisions related to Climate Change, across a range of local government functions and forward planning strategies. Savings can be made, as in Victoria with the Victorian Energy Collaboration (VECO) with energy savings of 100% renewable power purchased by 51 councils now, paying an estimated 25% less for power than by sourcing electricity individually, saving an estimated 260,000 tonnes of carbon emissions.

In the investment space, research by Australian Ethical Investments has shown that moving \$50,000 to a lower carbon ethical or responsible fund could equate to 2.8 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub>e lower carbon footprint. Extrapolating this to investments by Australian councils alone provides opportunity for extremely powerful and timely indirect effects on carbon emissions.



## KEY ARGUMENTS

The Victorian Local Government Act 2020 mandates considerations of climate change risk in council decision-making processes, but also requires councils to manage risk appropriately alongside 10-year Financial Plans. Investments of surplus funds are largely restricted to deposits at Authorised Deposit-taking Institutions (ADIs).

To maintain a balance in cost (interest foregone) and risk (portfolio credit risk) investment policies can give preference to ADIs that do not finance fossil fuel projects where the rate of investment is within 0.05 (or other) percentage points when compared with other investments available at the time. There are other controls that can manage portfolio and credit risks, alongside this positive screening process codified in relevant policies.

Over the past four years the City of Greater Bendigo's Investment Policy's positive screening approach has allowed for a substantial divestment of investments over and above operational cash from lending institutions that were involved in fossil fuel financing to partner with non-fossil fuel aligned institutions, thus influencing the investment profile and conversations with financial institutions (including banks). The result has been a higher level of investments that are not fossil fuel related, currently around 33%, or \$20 million, divested.

This can be factored into emissions reduction actions in future. There is nothing to stop councils using their Investment Policies as an important starting point. It is by starting somewhere, with support of education, guidance and possibly incentives from both state and federal government - that even more substantial progress can be made.

The City of Greater Bendigo's Climate Change and Environment Strategy 2021 - 26 endorses more than 60% of councils' funds to be divested by 2026, with 100% by 2036, It has also endorsed the Zero Carbon Plan for council Operations 2023 - 2030 with the ambition for zero emissions to be achieved by actions including recommending investing in zero carbon climate solutions.

Research done by Victoria's Eastern Alliance for Climate Action in 2017 found that councils can substantially divest without significantly affecting returns, despite the availability of products from financial institutions with a required credit rating being a major limitation on the extent of divestment that is occurring. Extrapolating this to investments by Australian councils alone provides opportunity for extremely powerful and timely indirect effects on carbon emissions.

Over the next few years new, more compliant investment options may be available to councils. This should include those certified by the Climate Bonds Standard and be associated with a defined pool of eligible assets and/or projects such as renewable energy, low carbon transport, low carbon buildings and water infrastructure.

By giving preference to and divesting from lending institutions, and with support of education and incentives from the federal government, substantial environmental progress can be made. Thus, we can ultimately keep a substantial portion of fossil fuels in the ground in this country.

## Motion number 50.2 Inner West Council NSW & Randwick City Council NSW

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to:

1. Actively encourage local government super funds to divest from companies engaging in the extraction of fossil fuels, native forest logging, gambling, weapons manufacturers, and tobacco;
2. Take immediate action to ensure the integrity and accountability of carbon offset programs, while supporting and funding councils to directly reduce operational and community emissions through the roll out of local renewable energy infrastructure and other greenhouse gas reducing initiatives; and
3. Ban the practice of 'greenwashing' in local government super funds, ensuring that local government super funds that invest in companies engaging in the extraction of fossil fuels, native forest logging, gambling, weapons manufacturers, and tobacco are not able to promote their funds as being environmentally friendly or ethical investors.

### NATIONAL OBJECTIVE

This motion addresses the following key questions in the 2023 discussion paper:

- Climate Change and Renewable Energy: Noting the government's commitment to reducing emissions, are there programs and initiatives that the Australian Government could develop to assist councils in their work to address climate change and reduce emissions?

### KEY ARGUMENTS

Local government is constantly on the frontlines and doing the heavy lifting when dealing with severe weather events. We now accept that climate change contributes to more severe weather events which occur more frequently than previously. From the recent floods in the Kimberley and those that shattered the north coast of NSW in March 2022, to the east coast bushfires of the 2019/20 summer, the reality of climate change is upon us. In this context it is no longer acceptable for the retirement savings of local government sector employees to be invested in fossil fuel entities which are continuing to contribute to, and make worse, the effects of climate change. At the time of writing 117 Australian local government jurisdictions have declared a climate emergency representing well over eleven million residents and over 45% of the Australian population.

Historically each Australian state has had a superannuation fund associated with its local government sector. Those arrangements have morphed into the current situation which is:

- NSW - Active Super (formerly Local Government Super) an industry fund currently in merger negotiations with Vision Super (Victoria). Clause 15 of the Local Government (State) Award 2020 requires NSW local government employees to contribute to the Local Government Superannuation Scheme (which is now known as Active Super) and no other scheme.

- Victoria - Vision Super formerly known as Local Authorities Superannuation Fund, Vision Super has been providing servicing since 1947. It is currently in merger negotiations with Active Super.
- South Australia - State Super which merged with Local Government Superannuation Scheme in 2012
- Queensland - Brighter Super, LGSuper became LGIA Super in 2016, which then merged with Energy Super and acquired Suncorp's superannuation business. It then renamed itself Brighter Super in July 2022
- Western Australia - Aware Super, WA Super (originally established for local government employees in Western Australia) merged with Aware Super in 2020. Aware Super is itself a merger between First State Super (NSW) and VicSuper (Victoria)
- Northern Territory - Hostplus

Ethical status of funds - Each of the State funds offer a range of superannuation products ranging from, 'conservative' to 'growth'. Some of the funds offer an 'ethical' or 'socially responsible' option. These funds are:

- Brighter Super <https://www.brightersuper.com.au/investments/investment-options/socially-responsible>
- Aware Super - <https://aware.com.au/member/investments-and-performance/our-approach-responsible-ownership/socially-responsible-investment-options>
- SA State Super - <https://www.supersa.sa.gov.au/investments/how-your-investments-are-managed/responsible-investing/>
- Vision Super (Victoria) and Active Super (NSW) do not appear to have a socially responsible option.

Investment in fossil fuel companies - The Market Forces website identifies that most of these super funds invest in the some of the 180 publicly listed companies included in their Climate Wreckers Index. The superannuation funds above are identified by Market Forces as having an exposure to the companies on the Climate Wreckers Index as:

- Active Super - Accelerator - High Growth - 6.08%
- Aware - High Growth - 3.5%
- LGIA (Brighter Super) - My Super - 6.01%
- Vision Super - Balanced Growth - 4.22%

Companies included in the Climate Wrecker Index include the following companies which are found in the investment disclosures of these super funds (although not all companies).

## **Motion number 51 Mid-Coast Council NSW**

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to make representations and present a case to a selection of Australian banks whereby a loan offset facility be extended to local councils throughout Australia.

### **NATIONAL OBJECTIVE**

This issue affects all councils in Australia.

### **KEY ARGUMENTS**

The offset arrangement is common amongst financial institutions whereby the funds held by a borrower in a savings account is offset against a loan principal to reduce the interest charged against the variable rate loan to which the offset account is linked.

Extending this to councils throughout Australia will enable deposit funds needed to be invested for short term or to be liquid, to reduce loan costs.

The benefit to a financial Institution who offers such a facility to councils, is increased loyalty by councils when determining where they will do business, as well as increase fund flows to such an institution.

## **Motion number 52 Wagga Wagga City Council NSW**

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to clarify Section 11CAA of the Banking Act 1959 to ensure bank deposits cannot be bailed in and assure councils that all Australian bank deposits are secure.

### **NATIONAL OBJECTIVE**

There is growing instability in the global financial system, with the collapse of banks in the United States and Switzerland. It is prudent for every nation to be wary of contagion and look to the stability of their own banking systems. The Reserve Bank of Australia has announced they are monitoring Australia's banks closely. Local governments are collectively custodians of tens of billions of dollars of public funds, which are largely held in the Australian banks. In the 2008 global financial crisis, dozens of local councils around Australia lost hundreds of millions of dollars on AAA-rated investments they were assured were sound. Local government should be proactive, on behalf of their constituents, in seeking assurances from the Australian government that their bank deposits are secure, including from policies such as bail-in.

### **KEY ARGUMENTS**

In February 2018, the Turnbull-Morrison Liberal-National government passed the controversial Financial Sector Legislation Amendment (Crisis Resolution Powers and Other Measures) Act 2018. The law amended the Banking Act 1959 in a way that critics -including

legal experts and a former Principal Researcher at the bank regulator APRA - warned could be used to write off a percentage of bank deposits, or convert them into shares, in order to keep a failing bank afloat. This is known as a 'bail-in', as opposed to a bank bailout using taxpayer's funds. The Act amended Section 11CAA the Banking Act 1959 to extend the provisions that allowed APRA to order the conversion or write off of Tier 1 and Tier 2 Capital, to 'any other instruments'; by definition, bank deposits are financial instruments.

The concern that this clause could facilitate a deposit bail-in stems from the fact that, following the 2008 global financial crisis, the G20 nations, including Australia, commissioned the Financial Stability Board (FSB) at the Bank for International Settlements to devise a policy to avert future banking crisis in a way that did not involve government bailouts. The FSB devised the bail-in policy, which many of Australia's partner nations have adopted into law, including the USA, UK, EU, Japan, and our closest neighbour New Zealand. It is noteworthy that in NZ, bail-in applies to the deposits in banks that are all owned by Australia's major banks.

The Turnbull government and then-Treasurer Scott Morrison denied that the 2018 amendment was a bail-in law. In 2020 the Morrison government repeated that denial to a Senate inquiry into a bill, the Banking Amendment (Deposits) Bill, which sought to clarify the law by amending the Banking Act 1959 to specify that 'any other instruments' could not apply to deposits. A former advisor to Prime Minister John Howard and Foreign Minister Alexander Downer who was also an official at the Australian Banking Association, Nick Hossack, agreed in a submission to the inquiry that the law needed to be clarified, but he advocated that deposits should be bailed in. Former Liberal Party leader and banking expert Dr John Hewson declared that passing the amendment to clarify the law to protect deposits was a 'no brainer'. Nevertheless, the Morrison government stopped the amendment bill from coming to a vote, and the uncertainty remains.

The government's Financial Claims Scheme (FCS) guarantee of deposits up to \$250,000 per account per bank is not a protection against a possible bail-in. Under the current law the FCS can only be activated after a bank fails, whereas a bail-in is implemented before a bank fails, to avert a possible failure.

The current global banking instability again raises concerns over the possibility of bail-in. With a new government, ALGA has an opportunity to seek clarification of the law to be able to reassure ratepayers that the substantial local government deposits held in banks around Australia are secure.

## **Motion number 53 Lake Macquarie City Council NSW**

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to facilitate the expansion of salary sacrificing options to council employees by allowing local government to access Fringe Benefits Tax (FBT) exemptions extended to other service organisations.

## **NATIONAL OBJECTIVE**

With more than five hundred councils across Australia, local government is a major employer in Australia, providing employment for more than 190,000 Australians across an array of occupations. Councils are facing increasing challenges in retaining and attracting talent in the post-pandemic era, with record low unemployment rates creating a highly competitive job market and skilled council staff proving attractive to other employers. Expanding access to more salary sacrifice options will improve the ability of councils to recruit and retain the best candidates for their organisation, ensuring a high quality of service delivery to their communities.

## **KEY ARGUMENTS**

Salary sacrifice options for local government employees are limited compared with public, private, and not-for-profit organisations in other sectors, such as health, disability, and aged care, which can offer a greater range of salary sacrificing benefits due to their classification as FBT-exempt organisations or FBT-rebatable employers. (These matters are dealt with under Fringe Benefits Tax Assessment Act 1986). These classifications allow these organisations to extend salary sacrifice options for employees to areas including home mortgage and rental, credit cards, school fees, childcare, tertiary education, health insurance and travel. This motion seeks changes to the taxation system that would provide parity for local government with these organisations in their ability to offer salary package benefits that will help attract the best candidates.

# **Motion number 54 Newcastle City Council NSW**

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to:

1. Note that in some jurisdictions, councillors, mayors and Lord Mayors are not automatically entitled to the Superannuation Guarantee Contribution, despite councillors in other jurisdictions being paid the appropriate superannuation entitlements;
2. Note that in some jurisdictions, councillors, mayors and Lord Mayors have the option of "opting-in" to receive the Superannuation Guarantee Contribution but only following the successful endorsement by that council, allowing the politicisation of the issue;
3. Note that superannuation should be a universal mandatory system to support all workers and taxpayers in Australia; and
4. Rationalise the Superannuation system for local government elected representatives and amend Section 12(9A) of the Superannuation Guarantee (Administration) Act 1993 to mandate that all councillors across Australia automatically receive the Superannuation Guarantee Contribution.

## **NATIONAL OBJECTIVE**

The Superannuation Guarantee Contribution is a universal system of world's best practice when it comes to ensuring adequate support for all workers in retirement. The compulsory payment to all mayors, Lord Mayors and councillors across Australia would encourage diversity and ensure local councils reflect their communities.

## **KEY ARGUMENTS**

The Superannuation Guarantee (SG) contribution is compulsory for all employers in Australia. This applies to all employment in the private sector, not-for-profit or government related roles and all remunerated board roles where an individual earns more than \$450 in a calendar month. Despite this, in NSW, mayors and councillors that serve on local government are excluded by the operation of section 251 of the Local Government Act 1993, which provides that mayor and councillor fees "do not constitute salary for the purposes of any act" unless in accordance with section 254B(4)(a), "the council has previously passed a resolution at an open meeting to make superannuation contribution payments to its councillors".

The federal government has the opportunity to take the non-payment of superannuation very seriously, with the Treasury Laws Amendment (2018 Measures No 4) Bill 2018 allowing the ATO to instruct an employer to pay the superannuation guarantee amount and outstanding liabilities or face severe financial penalties and up to 12 months imprisonment, or both. The current position in NSW is inequitable and could be a deterrent for young people and women standing as candidates for council elections. Research shows that, on average, women retire with 47% less superannuation than men and introducing superannuation on these earnings is recognition of this commitment and will help encourage the broadest cross-section of the community to stand for office.

Other jurisdictions, including Victoria and Queensland, mayors and councillors are paid superannuation entitlements. Many mayors and councillors rely solely on the income they derive from their duties on local government, and their legislated entitlement to superannuation should not be allowed to be used as a partisan, political plaything in the council chamber.

## **Motion number 55 Central Highlands Regional Council QLD**

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to introduce protections which apply to contracts between local government and technology providers with respect to software as a service or software escrow services to address the imbalance in bargaining power and risks to service delivery that unfair contract terms currently present.

## NATIONAL OBJECTIVE

Contracts produced by many technology companies delivering software as a service (SaaS) or software escrow services (services that help protect all parties involved in a software license wherein a neutral, third-party escrow agent holds any source code, data, and documentation until a mutually-agreed-upon event occurs) are plagued with contractual terms which favour the provider and have significant impacts on local government service delivery. Despite obtaining legal advice and seeking to negotiate such contracts to reflect fairer terms, local governments have little to no bargaining power.

Introduction of Competition and Consumer Act 2010 (Cth) protections which apply to contracts between local government and technology providers with respect to SaaS or escrow services would begin to address the imbalance in bargaining power.

## KEY ARGUMENTS

SaaS and escrow contracts frequently contain the following terms, which favour often unwieldy technological service providers:

- Requirements to only endeavour or aim, not actually, provide the services or rectify defects;
- No warranties and no representations that the product or services:
  - Contain no defects;
  - Are fit for the purpose the local government is acquiring the services for; or
  - Function in accordance with the technology provider's own documentation;
- Non-committal or non-existent service levels and carve outs to service levels where unscheduled maintenance occurs or third-party software is used;
- Fees charged from signing of a contract, rather than when the services are fully implemented;
- A lack of price certainty;
- Right to vary fees or the services unilaterally;
- Requirements on local government to provide uncapped indemnities in favour of the technology provider;
- Indemnity provisions applying to third party intellectual property infringement by the technology provider, which state that the technology provider will only be liable for amounts awarded to the third party, excluding any loss to local government as a result;
- Liability caps in favour of the service provider;
- Insufficient privacy obligations and data security obligations, including hosting data offshore; and
- In the case of escrow agreements, restrictions on modification and operation of the escrow material and right to register personal properties securities interests over the escrow material.

In parallel, despite many local governments being sophisticated contracting parties and seeking legal advice, technology providers often refuse to negotiate contractual terms, and



this is a common phenomenon across the technology provider market. As a result, local government has little to no bargaining power in technology contract negotiations, particularly in the face of a need to maintain technological systems supporting critical service delivery functions to the public.

Such unbalanced contractual provisions are resulting in significant and often realised risks to local government and could be addressed through the introduction of Competition & Consumer Act 2010 (Cth) protections for local government.

Pursuant to section 2 of the Competition and Consumer Act 2010 (Cth) (the Act), the purpose of the Act is to, inter alia, promote fair trading. The introduction of the protections as suggested would be consistent with the scope of the Act and would enable greater regulation of the technology sector, which presently lacks significant regulatory oversight, such as that which exists in the financial services and insurance sectors.

## **Motion number 56 Ku-ring-gai Council NSW**

**This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to work with states and territories to reform planning and local government regulations to set development assessment and other fees in line with cost recovery to reduce cross-subsidisation and ease cost pressures on councils.**

### **NATIONAL OBJECTIVE**

In 2022, ALGA engaged SGS Economics and Planning to undertake research to support its submission to the Productivity Commission's inquiry into Australia's productivity performance and provide recommendations on productivity enhancing reform. This research included the observation that some fees and charges imposed by local governments are determined by state governments through legislation. Fees set in in this manner do not reflect the cost of providing the service because of lack of indexation, lack of regular review or lack of a transparent methodology based on appropriate cost recovery levels. A nationally consistent approach to setting caps on fees and charges for development assessments based on cost recovery would deliver the following benefits:

- Enable councils to recover the costs of their regulatory functions under planning laws;
- Allow councils to manage their own finances, adjust charges depending on local factors (e.g., demand for services, labour costs, other revenue streams and willingness to pay) and compete across councils;
- Make council more accountable to the local community and ratepayers;
- Enable councils to resource their development assessment functions with the staffing and expertise required to reduce backlogs, deliver a higher quality service, and reduce processing timeframes; and
- Encourage state and local governments to work together on reforms and efficiencies to realise genuine cost savings, rather than relying on cross-subsidisation from ratepayers.

## KEY ARGUMENTS

There are a number of factors impacting on the long-term financial sustainability of the local government sector, and councils across Australia are experiencing increasing financial stress. On average, councils generate around a quarter of their revenue from user charges. Some fees and charges imposed by local governments (such as development assessment fees) are determined by state governments through legislation. ALGA's research commissioned for its submission to the Productivity Commission's inquiry stated that, 'since local governments do not have direct control over the determination of fees set by legislation, this revenue leakage is recovered from rate revenue. This means all ratepayers are subsidising the activities of some ratepayers and developers.' (p.22)

The Productivity Commission Inquiry into Assessing Local Government Revenue Raising Capacity (April 2008) similarly found that, 'state governments impose legislative and regulatory constraints on the raising of revenue by local governments that affect the ways in which councils raise revenue' and included information and views from different states on the statutory capping of development assessment fees and other charges (p. 122).

Development application fees are currently capped by state governments in NSW, Victoria, and South Australia. They are capped based on cost recovery in Western Australia and Queensland. They are uncapped in Tasmania.

## **Motion number 57 Upper Hunter Shire Council NSW**

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to set local government Financial Assistance Grants to a 3% fixed share of national taxation revenue.

### NATIONAL OBJECTIVE

This is a national issue for all LG across Australia as we see rising operating costs including fuel, material, and contractors.

### KEY ARGUMENTS

Without surety of financial support many councils will be unable to meet their operating costs.

# SKILLS AND WORKFORCE

## Motion number 58 Campaspe Shire Council VIC

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to strategically address local government skills shortages.

### NATIONAL OBJECTIVE

Investment in addressing skills shortages across local government especially in regional areas is a national issue that needs to be debated at a national level. Without a skilled workforce, local government struggles to attract new talent to fill gaps in a variety of skillsets which impacts their ability to deliver essential services to their communities.

Regional areas often experience higher rates of unemployment and underemployment compared to major cities and a coordinated sector wide strategy and investment is needed to address local government Skills shortages. In addition, the Australian Government needs to assist by promoting employment opportunities through university courses, promoting and assisting people to work at council and the benefits these positions offer to the community.

Addressing skill shortages across local governments will improve economic and social prosperity as well as allowing more ore efficient and effective delivery of essential services to local communities nationally.

### KEY ARGUMENTS

Local government has experienced years of staff shortages and fails to attract applicants in various skill sets such as planning, building, engineering, environmental health, and human resources. It is recognised that there are industry shortages which is why advocating that change or assistance needs to occur.

Many of the skilled industry shortages are not considered as attractive/desirable vocations. The Australian Government needs to assist by promoting employment opportunities through university courses, promoting and assisting people to work at council and the benefits these positions offer to the community.

- Local government calls on the following:
- Greater support for university courses in fields where there are local government industry shortages and a dedicated career path for graduates.
- Assisted funding (education fees) associated with specific courses.
- Funding for local governments to enter into agreements with the universities for traineeships/student placements and reviewing options of appropriate pay (based on skill sets) to retain staff within the industry.

- Development and promotion of coordinated sector-wide strategies to address local government Skills Shortage issues and secure funding opportunities for the implementation.

## **Motion number 59 North Burnett Regional Council QLD**

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to develop innovative programs to attract and incentivise professional, skilled, and unskilled local government workers to regional and remote areas.

### **NATIONAL OBJECTIVE**

The federal government could adjust policy settings to support and encourage skilled and unskilled local government workers to take up roles in rural and remote regions.

### **KEY ARGUMENTS**

Jobs are available but attraction and retention is difficult.

Some policy levers available include.

- \* Forgive or reduce HECS debts.
- \* Incentive payments based on skills sets and years of commitment to a rural remote area.
- \* Increased Tax concessions
- \* Affordable Housing programs linked to rural remote employment.
- \* Visa schemes targeting areas of skill shortage commitment to rural remote placements for a specified period of time.
- \* Traineeships open only to rural and remote placements in local government.
- \* Guarantee of portability of local government benefits

Any of the above policy settings would increase liveability outcomes and encourage for family friendly environments in favour of drive-in drive out arrangements.

## **Motion number 59.1 Berrigan Shire Council NSW**

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian and state governments to work with local councils to assist with the identification of existing skills and the types of on-the job training in local government that might meet micro-credentialing requirements and assist local councils to take up these options at the leading edge.

## **NATIONAL OBJECTIVE**

Local governments have the unique opportunity to provide significant career paths for local talent and to grow that talent in the regional, rural, and remote areas where people come from. Local governments provide a broad range of career opportunities from civil construction to client engagement to engineering and other professional services. The ability of local government to therefore anchor the community by supporting the economic benefits of harnessing local talent and embedding community cohesion cannot be underestimated. If councils are able to viably partner with TAFEs, Universities and other education providers real community benefits are possible. Access to funding that provides incentives to employ locally, like those that incentivise shopping locally, can only improve the economic and social outcomes for regional, rural, and remote communities.

## **KEY ARGUMENTS**

One of the primary recommendations of the National Productivity Commission's 2021 findings is that industry work towards a framework that allows for micro-credentialling within the current Vocational Education Framework. The rules governing Registered Training Organisation (RTO) management are onerous and beyond the scope and resourcing facilities of most local governments. Allowing relevant partnerships with TAFEs, universities and other RTO service providers to assess the skills developed through the various streams of local government work will assist local government to not only work towards attaining relevant qualifications, but it will also provide the opportunity for communities to understand the broad and flexible career opportunities offered by councils across the nation. Block chain technology advancements may make micro-credentialling a reality where input data can be verified and matched against requirement outcomes in a closed and uniquely managed and monitored system. Allowing for micro-credentialling as a credible source of education and attainment of recognised skill sets would assist greatly with the attraction and retention of staff and would provide unique opportunities for local governments to showcase the depth of skills in the sector and acknowledge the range of skills accessible in these environments.

## **Motion number 59.2 Wagga Wagga City Council NSW**

**This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to explore ways to improve Universities' ability to develop and provide quality courses in a timely fashion to address professional shortages in our communities.**

## **NATIONAL OBJECTIVE**

Why is this a national issue - Universities are funded by federal government.

Why should it be debated at the NGA? - Because it is a federal issue, and we need ALGA to utilise their influence on this issue.

## KEY ARGUMENTS

With skill shortages occurring throughout the country, especially in the local government sector, exacerbated by Covid, it has revealed that the current ability for universities to adapt to these needs is limited. For example, Charles Sturt University now offers an engineering course that took over 10 years to develop. We need a more agile university sector, especially in regional areas where the shortages appear as no services or applicants.

## Motion number 59.3 North Burnett Regional Council QLD

**This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to work with local councils to assist with the identification of existing skill shortages and the types of on-the-job training in water and wastewater treatment that might meet micro-credentialing requirements and assist local councils to take up these options to fortify these essential services.**

## NATIONAL OBJECTIVE

There is currently a lack of RTOs who provide the training required for local government water and wastewater delivery.

A national program of transferable skills is required to ensure shortages of qualified staff are managed and minimised.

## KEY ARGUMENTS

Currently there is little structure, support, or investment for Registered Training Organisations to provide nationally recognised water/wastewater training programs.

A national program recognised by each state would ensure the mobility of a qualified workforce delivering to regulatory standards.

## Motion number 60 Dubbo Regional Council NSW

**This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to undertake a scope analysis and develop an action plan for the settlement of skilled and non-skilled migrants in regional areas.**

## NATIONAL OBJECTIVE

Skilled and non-skilled migrants provide economic diversity to regions and regional councils have the capacity to effectively engage with migrants to improve outcomes for individuals and their communities. Whilst individual states aim to improve. NSW aims to improve settlement outcomes for refugees, the federal government retains ultimate responsibility for Australia's migration program, including the allocation of available places across program streams and making decisions on visa applications. Given the federal government's

responsibility for the migration program, a federal scope analysis is integral for supporting regional councils around Australia for migrants. Greater federal support through data collection would allow community leaders to achieve meaningful outcomes for the migrant populations sooner. Support for such a national scope analysis and action plan would assist in the shortened time frames for achievable outcomes and provide tangible benefits for individuals and regional communities across Australia. In a period when workforce is critical across Regional Australia, skilled and non-skilled migrants into regional areas would not only ease this shortage but provide a diverse social fabric across communities.

## **KEY ARGUMENTS**

Through the NSW Settlement Strategy, the NSW Government is developing a comprehensive mechanism to capture data consistently and effectively, within and across settlement domains, to monitor and evaluate settlement outcomes. That strategy also states The Australian Government has primary policy and operational responsibility for settlement matters, including assessing and granting protection visas and managing on-arrival orientation and support. In NSW, the NSW Government is responsible for ensuring that state services are accessible, equitable and responsive to refugees, and for contributing to cross-sector work that supports community welcome and social cohesion. Local government coordinates community, services, and industry at a local level to undertake place-based action to prepare for, welcome and support new arrivals. The strategy recognises the requirement of all levels of government to work effectively to ensure outcomes for individuals, for communities and for Australia.

Regional Australia grew by 832,000 (11%) during 2021 census data and regional areas rely on regional economic diversity which is impacted directly by internal and external/overseas migration to the area. As the NSW Settlement Strategy is only for two and a half years, a national collaborative approach for the access to data and evidence would allow some of the short-term outcomes to be achieved. In addition, NSW Government Regional NSW: A demographic and economic snapshot paper outlined that Functional Economic Regions vary substantially from one another, ranging from high-density communities on the outskirts of major centres to remote areas with substantial agricultural and mining activity. FERs also differ in their adaptive capacity, or resilience to national and global change. Factors affecting this resilience include the skills and education of regional workforces, access to infrastructure and services, availability of natural resources, financial resources available to businesses and individuals, and industry diversity. A nationwide approach to data analysis will allow a thorough understanding for different areas that will inform state and local levels of government action strategies in shortened time frames. There are currently 52 Regional Development Australia (RDA) committee's undertaking programs across the RDA national network of Australia and greater federal support in gathering data will allow local government to action and achieve outcomes on a national basis.

## Motion number 60.1 Leeton Shire Council NSW

**This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to provide financial support directly to regional and rural areas to streamline the delivery of settlement support for new settlers/comers and the retention of workers in our communities.**

### **NATIONAL OBJECTIVE**

The objective is to provide direct funding support to regional and rural areas to target the challenge of retaining newcomers/settlers to fulfil workforce shortages

### **KEY ARGUMENTS**

- Greater attention needs to be placed not only on attracting migrants to regional areas, but also on facilitating their retention in those areas over the long-term;
- A more coordinated and scaled-up approach across government in providing training and matching skills of incoming refugees to regional needs is vital;
- New arrivals need to be better supported within rural and regional areas with a focus on facilitating pathways to permanent resettlement. An overarching focused strategy is required to achieve this, and this must be developed in partnership with local communities;
- It is apparent that for some newcomers/settlers a regional town may present a temporary rather than a permanent home due to the lack of access to affordable housing, transport, tertiary education, and health services;
- Presently, financial support is domiciled in metropolitan areas, and we are asking that funding comes to regional areas particularly if the settlement pathway has linkages to rural and regional areas;
- It is acknowledged that there is some financial support being provided in major centres, however, rural/regional areas should also be provided with direct funding to support settlement on a practical local level.

## Motion number 60.2 Surf Coast Shire Council VIC

**This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to permanently extend the Working Holiday Maker visa to a 12-month period and give hospitality jobs Specified Worker status to enable such workers to apply for extensions to visas in subsequent years.**

### **NATIONAL OBJECTIVE**

Hospitality and tourism-based businesses have long relied on international workers to fill workforce shortages. Yet, numbers of international workers have yet to return to pre-Covid levels. Workforce shortages are threatening the viability of regional businesses and by extension the sustainability of communities that have a high reliance on the visitor economy.

Earlier this year the Australian Government extended current Working Holiday Maker visas until July 2023. This temporary extension should become a permanent policy change allowing



international workers to remain with one employer for the full 12 months of their visa, benefitting both parties.

A change in the definition of Specified Work would enable Working Holiday Makers to stay for a second and third year of work in Australia. Currently hospitality-based jobs are not given Specified Worker status except in northern and remote Australia.

By including all hospitality jobs in the definition of Specified Work, tourism and hospitality-based businesses would be able to re-employ workers who apply for a second- or third-year visa.

## **KEY ARGUMENTS**

The economies of many regional local government Areas are heavily reliant on tourism visitation. However, the characteristics that make these areas popular tourism destinations make it exceptionally difficult for businesses to attract and retain workers.

The example of Surf Coast Shire Council illustrates the issue. Surf Coast Shire encompasses coastal townships on the Great Ocean Road including Torquay and Lorne. In a survey of seventy-one businesses operating along the Great Ocean Road, the top two stated reasons for businesses being unable to attract and retain workers were, 'no local workers' and 'a lack of affordable accommodation'.

Businesses said they needed an additional 361 skilled staff, 761 frontline staff and 330 support staff to operate at capacity. Fifty percent of survey respondents identified the workforce shortage to be a year-round issue.

The Great Ocean Road Regional Tourism Visitor Economy Master Plan identifies 35% of all jobs in the Surf Coast Shire are dependent on the visitor economy (more than 3,300 jobs). By comparison 6% of jobs in Melbourne are dependent on the visitor economy. Prior to the pandemic \$500 million was expended in the Surf Coast Shire by visitors annually. To enable recovery, it is critical businesses are able to access staff.

The Lorne Business and Tourism Association reported that a third of Lorne based hospitality businesses were either having to stay closed one or two days more than planned or not open altogether during the 2022-2023 summer due to a lack of staff.

Hospitality and tourism-based businesses have long relied on international workers to fill workforce shortages. Yet, numbers of international workers have yet to return to pre-Covid levels.

In January 2022, the Australian Government relaxed a condition of the Working Holiday Maker visa that had limited the amount of time a visa holder could work for one employer to 6 months. The relaxation, allowing a worker to stay with one employer for up to 12 months, has been extended until 30 June 2023.

If this extension were to become a permanent policy change, international workers could remain with one employer for 12 months, benefitting both parties. Working Holiday Makers would be able to enhance their professional development and employers would have more

reliable access to motivated and skilled workers. The policy change would address the sustained worker shortages being experienced by hospitality and tourism business in regional economies that are highly tourism dependent.

A change to the definition of Specified Work would further ease workforce shortages. Currently a limited number of industry sectors enable Working Holiday Maker visa holders to apply for a second and third-year permit. Currently, hospitality jobs are not considered Specified Work except in remote and northern Australia.

By including hospitality jobs in the definition of Specified Work at a national level, tourism and hospitality-based businesses would be able to re-employ workers who apply for a second and third-year visa.

Businesses would benefit from an experienced workforce and the security of having sufficient staff numbers for multiple seasons.

## Motion number 60.3 Maribyrnong City Council VIC

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to review entry visa requirements for immigrants seeking to work in the local government sector.

### NATIONAL OBJECTIVE

Local government is facing unprecedented issues in attracting and retaining quality staff, with significant staffing shortages in skilled and qualified professional positions being of considerable concern.

### KEY ARGUMENTS

It is requested that the Australian Government review visa entry requirements, to incentivise, attract and facilitate skilled workers in the local government sector.

## Motion number 61 Central Highlands Regional Council QLD

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to support regional and local government employees with parenting responsibilities to participate in the workforce, by:

1. Working with state governments to introduce nationally an additional pre-school year and outside school hours care within the education system;
2. Subject to review of the capacity of childcare centres by the Productivity Commission, providing targeted capital funding to identified at or nearing capacity areas to construct additional early education and childcare centres to meet community need; and

### **3. Implementing taxation and educational incentives to address skills shortages and high vacancy rates for early childhood, childcare and outside school hours care educators in regional, rural, and remote Australia.**

#### **NATIONAL OBJECTIVE**

National Cabinet has endorsed twelve priorities, including increasing parental workforce participation. In addition, the Treasurer recently recognised that childcare limitations were a significant factor driving the population decline.

The childcare accessibility challenge is more pronounced in regional, rural, and remote Australia - a Mitchell Institute report released in March 2022 found families in regional, rural, and remote areas are the most at risk of suffering from poor access to early learning.

Action is required to address the availability of places and childcare skilled worker shortages in the early education and childcare space in regional, rural, and remote Australia, which are impacting on the ability of local governments in those areas being able to attract and retain staff, despite the increased offering of flexible work arrangements.

Addressing childcare challenges will increase GDP and female workforce participation. A barrier to women returning to work is the cost and accessibility of childcare. Women make up just 37.7% of full-time employees and 68.2% of part-time employees indicating that there is a significant under-tapped female employment market. KPMG estimates even halving the gap between male and female workforce participation would increase annual GDP by \$60 billion over the next two decades.

#### **KEY ARGUMENTS**

Council welcomes the recent budget announcement to deliver cheaper childcare to:

- Ease the cost of living for families and to reduce barriers to greater workforce participation;
- Increase the maximum childcare subsidy rate from 85% to 90% for families; and
- Task the ACCC to undertake an inquiry into the cost of childcare and the Productivity Commission to conduct a comprehensive review of the childcare sector.

However, targeted solutions are also required for regional, rural, and remote Australia.

Accessibility challenges:

The budget measures will go some way toward addressing childcare challenges in Australia, however additional measures are required to address childcare challenges in regional, rural, and remote Australia.

A recent report titled, 'The Deserts and Oases: How accessible is childcare in Australia?' identified that just over 30% per cent of families living in major cities live in areas the researchers classified as a childcare desert, compared with 42.6% and 62.6% of people living in inner regional and outer regional neighbourhoods. The report further identified that:

- The contrast is even more stark with remote and outer remote areas having the highest levels of childcare deserts at 87.5% and 79.9%; and
- Approximately 453 remote towns did not have a childcare centre within a 20-minute drive.

In the Central Highlands (CH) experience, many CH employees are required to register their unborn child for childcare at the beginning of their pregnancy, with only no or limited days of availability open to the family when returning from maternity leave, preventing a return to full time work. Many employees have registered their children at the start of their pregnancy and remain on waiting lists for three centres for three years and counting. For a new centre which is opening in April 2023, 260 families registered their interest and have since confirmed that 180 families are still seeking placements for which they can only accommodate ninety-six. A lack of accessibility of childcare has resulted in many situations when recruiting for technical roles where potential candidates have professional partners and due to the lack of childcare in the region have either decided not to apply or have withdrawn their application further in the process, accessibility and availability of childcare places is therefore a major barrier when trying to attract families to relocate to regional areas.

Affordability challenges:

In addition to accessibility challenges, a working family in Emerald (Qld) will pay \$20.83 more per day for childcare when compared with the national daily average.

Local government action:

As a provider of last resort and beyond core business, many local governments are either incentivising the development of childcare centres through planning mechanisms or directly owning and operating childcare centres to address identified community need.

In addition, the local government sector is increasingly offering flexible working arrangements (FWA) to retain staff at least in a part time capacity however despite this, childcare and outside school hours care availability is preventing full female workforce participation in regional, rural, and remote areas.

## **Motion number 62 Central Highlands Regional Council QLD**

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to:

1. Include water treatment plant and wastewater treatment plant operators (ANZSCO Code 712921) on the Short-term Skilled Occupation List, Regional Occupation List and Regional Sponsored Migration Scheme List; Reflect within the Australian and New Zealand Standard Classification of Occupations (ANZSCO) the requirement for a

Certificate III in Water/Wastewater Operations or Water Industry Operations, or equivalent international competency; and

2. Reflect within the Australian and New Zealand Standard Classification of Occupations (ANZSCO) the requirement for a Certificate III in Water/Wastewater Operations or Water Industry Operations, or equivalent international competency.

## NATIONAL OBJECTIVE

Workforce shortages in the water and wastewater treatment business is a challenge which is experienced across the local government sector across Australia.

Nationally, in a 2022 survey carried out by the Water Services Association of Australia, over 50% of respondents identified that they were 'not very confident' in delivering business objectives with current skills and capabilities over a 6-to-10-year horizon a significant increase from 3% of respondents indicating their lack of confidence in the 2019 survey.

In Queensland alone, a Local Government Skills Shortage Survey 2017 reported the following findings:

Rank    Technical/Trade Occupation    Percentage

Current shortage      Forced to recruit less skilled applicants'      Future shortage

- Wastewater Treatment Operator      28.3%    13.2%    35.8%
- Water Treatment Operator              22.6%    9.4%    30.2%

The challenge is more pronounced in regional, rural, and remote areas of Queensland, however commentary at a Water Skills Partnership Meeting on 6 December 2022 highlighted that water and wastewater treatment operator recruitment issues are also being experienced by major utility providers in the metropolitan areas of the state.

## KEY ARGUMENTS

Water treatment plant and wastewater treatment plant operators are essential workers, responsible for delivering safe drinking water to the communities they serve and undertaking treatment of sewage to ensure optimal environmental and public health outcomes.

Local government recognises that it has a role to play in workforce attraction, development, and retention, however the efforts of the sector have been insufficient to meet the growing skills shortage being experienced broadly by the sector.

The Australian Industry Standards Water Industry Reference Committee (IRC) in the 2021 Water Industry Outlook noted a 'shortage of training providers and individual trainers with necessary proficiencies to meet the Australian Skills Quality Authority's requirements to deliver training'. The IRC reports that, 'limited training opportunities to deliver the national water training package are affecting attainment of skills and qualifications for new and existing employees', and the long-term ability for water utilities to provide safe and essential water and wastewater services in remote and regional areas'. In addition, the IRC reports that, 'the ageing rate of the Water Industry workforce is 1.5 times faster than all industries, and around 36 per cent of workers are aged fifty or over', when combined with the shortage

of training providers, the aging workforce is exacerbating the skills shortage. The 2022 Skills Priority List delivered by the National Skills Commission identified a shortage of wastewater and water plant operators in New South Wales and Queensland.

In the Queensland experience alone, it is anticipated that the existing workforce shortage will be exacerbated by an aging water skills workforce, with 35% of the workforce aged over 50 years in 2020 and therefore approaching retirement over the forthcoming decade. As a matter of concern, the 2020 Queensland Water Workforce Composition Snapshot highlighted that only 11% of the workforce is under the age of thirty.

To fill the skills gap, Central Highlands Regional Council has recently requested tenders for water and wastewater treatment plant operators, the lowest tendered rate was over three times the cost of a full-time equivalent employee (including oncosts), with other tendered rates significantly higher.

Skilled migration is one mechanism that can be utilised to address the skills shortage. The addition of water and wastewater treatment plant operators (ANZSCO Code 712921) to the Short-term Skilled Occupation List, Regional Occupation List and Regional Sponsored Migration Scheme List will open up eligibility for skilled water and wastewater treatment plant workers to apply for the following visas:

- Regional sponsored migration scheme visa (subclass 187);
- Temporary skills shortage visa (subclass 482);
- Skilled regional (provisional) visa (subclass 489);
- Skilled work regional (provisional) visa (subclass 491); and
- Skilled employer sponsored regional (provisional) via (subclass 494).

## Motion number 62.1 North Burnett Regional Council QLD

**This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to support increased investment in skills training, supply chain improvements, and initiatives that further fortify the economy and improve Australia's self-sufficiency in treatment and delivery of potable water, wastewater collection and treatment.**

### **NATIONAL OBJECTIVE**

There is currently a lack of RTOs who provide the training required for local government water and wastewater delivery.

National supply chains are failing to support maintenance and replacement of critical infrastructure whilst the services are not considered essential in emergency management circumstances.

### **KEY ARGUMENTS**

Currently there is little structure, support, or investment for Registered Training Organisations to provide nationally recognised water/wastewater training programs.

In the post-COVID era rural supply chains are challenged to source mechanical and electrical equipment, including computer chips, and chemicals required to maintain these essential services.

The delivery of water and wastewater services are not considered essential services during emergency situations and as such fuel and other consumables can become difficult to source.

The aged infrastructure which delivers water and wastewater services across much of rural and remote Australia is not fit for purpose, does not meet regulatory standards and is at risk of catastrophic failure impacting adversely impacting communities and businesses.

## **Motion number 63 Latrobe City Council TAS**

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to work in collaboration with local government to determine a minimum standard of Seasonal Worker Program (SWP) accommodation and to mandate compliance with state, territory, and local government legislation by:

1. Strengthening the assessment of accommodation approval processes, including third party (LGA) confirmation that the property/building being considered for accommodation is compliant with all the codes administered by the relevant local government Authority including:
  - a. Ensuring the property is connected to a reticulated waste treatment system or alternatively, has an approved, suitably sized, functioning, private waste treatment system suitable for the number of SWP participants being accommodated at the site;
  - b. Requiring provision of a Plumbing Certificate of Compliance authenticated by the local Plumbing Authority;
  - c. Requiring the provision of a Building Certificate of Completion and current Certificate of Occupancy stating the approved maximum number of residents;
  - d. Mandating the provision of LGA confirmation that there are no outstanding building code or environmental health violations; and
  - e. Requiring an approved standard application under the relevant planning authority, confirming an existing habitable building's suitability as visitor accommodation (in states and territories where applicable).
2. Acknowledging and negating the use of individual tenancy agreements to usurp the Australian Government's legal, moral, and ethical responsibilities in relation to the provision of fit for purpose housing for seasonal workers; and
3. Incorporating regular monitoring and reporting on the condition and suitability of SWP accommodation in SWP Plans.

### **NATIONAL OBJECTIVE**

Seasonal workers are engaged in various sectors across Australia. It is understood that approved employers under the Seasonal Worker Programs are required to have an

Accommodation Plan as part of the Deed and Seasonal Worker Program (SWP) Plan, as specified in the Approved Employer Guidelines. There have been instances of properties being used to accommodate seasonal workers, which have exceeded safe occupancy limits, not had sufficient plumbing fixtures, or suitable wastewater systems, are not regularly monitored, or reviewed, which have resulted in environmental health violations, unsafe, and unsanitary living conditions. Granting approval for up to seventy-seven seasonal workers to be accommodated in a property with only a residential waste treatment system is a case in point. Recent experience highlighted fire safety concerns relating to the failure to provide alarm systems, firefighting equipment, and emergency exit points, which collectively posed an unacceptable level of risk to the occupants. A minimum standard of accommodation is therefore sought to protect the health and well-being of seasonal workers, and to ensure compliance with state, territory, and local government legislation.

## **KEY ARGUMENTS**

The Latrobe Council municipal area in northern Tasmania has a population of almost 12,000 residents. Agriculture is a key contributor to the regional economy with dairy, fruit and vegetable production placing demands on the local labour force and requiring seasonal worker support. Within and around the Latrobe Council area are several large fresh-produce businesses including Costa, Harvest Moon, Sumich and Premium Fresh, in addition to smaller-scale operators. The council acts as the local planning authority, ensuring adherence to the Tasmanian Planning Scheme and defining and regulating land uses.

Together with responsibility for the Building Act 2016 and associated legislation, the council issues planning and building and plumbing permits and retains records of construction, waste treatment, plumbing and other compliance and occupancy certificates, and acts upon reports of National Construction Code and/or environmental health violations. Recently, council has had several complaints regarding sanitation, occupancy numbers, and living conditions at properties within the municipality used to accommodate seasonal workers. Concerns have been raised about wastewater treatment systems, odours, number of tenants, and fire safety standards.

Two investigations resulted in council issuing emergency evacuation notices for the premises, leaving staff from the Department of Employment, Skills, Small and Family Business, having to assist the residents to find alternative accommodation. These evacuations caused considerable angst for all those involved, and consequently undermined Australia's relationship with the Pacific Nations from which these workers were recruited. It is council's understanding that farming enterprises and/or labour hire firms operate as an approved employer under Seasonal Worker Programs and are therefore required to have an Accommodation Plan as part of the Deed and Seasonal Worker Program (SWP) Plan.

Unfortunately, in recent iterations, individual tenancy agreements have been used to circumvent compliance regimes designed to ensure departmental oversight of the accommodation provided for seasonal workers. As such, the current documentation requirements for accommodation, referred to in a SWP Plan, are grossly insufficient. These schemes should reflect the basic right to fit for purpose housing, to enshrine the health and



wellbeing of our seasonal workers as a priority and to ensure the risk to public health and the environment is removed. SWP Plans should include statutory-recognised documents, endorsing the adequacy and appropriateness of the accommodation for the approved number of occupants.

It is our intent that SWP Guidelines be revised to ensure accommodation is compliant with relevant state, territory, and local government rules, and include independent verification of statutory compliance such as: waste treatment system suitable for the number of SWP occupants; Plumbing Certificate of Compliance; Building Certificate of Completion and Certificate of Occupancy stating the maximum number of residents able to be safely accommodated; no outstanding building code or environmental health violations; and where applicable, an approved Standard Application under the relevant Planning Authority, confirming an existing habitable building's suitability as visitor accommodation. Furthermore, there is a need for increased proactive monitoring of properties included in accommodation schemes.

# EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT

## Motion number 64 Moreton Bay Regional Council QLD

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to establish baseline funding for local governments to support disaster response, relief, and recovery operations across Australia.

### NATIONAL OBJECTIVE

This motion supports the natural disasters priority area outlined in the 2023 NGA discussion paper. The lack of standardised funding for local governments to support disaster response, relief, and recovery operations across Australia is a significant challenge for the country.

The Royal Commission into National Natural Disaster Arrangements identified roles for both state and federal government in ensuring local government has capability and capacity for their delegated responsibilities in preparing for, responding to, and recovering from natural disasters, as well as establish accountability and assurance mechanisms to promote continuous improvement and best practice in natural disaster arrangements.

A sustainable and ongoing line of funding to support local governments in delivering preparedness and response activities is needed, along with standardised and expanded training and development for emergency management practitioners.

This issue should be debated at the General Assembly of the Australian Local Government Association (ALGA) to raise awareness and develop a national strategy for addressing the challenge. The ALGA's National General Assembly provides an opportunity for local governments across Australia to come together, discuss and prioritise issues affecting them, such as disaster management and resilience, and propose solutions for national consideration.

### KEY ARGUMENTS

This motion recognises the lack of baseline funding for local governments to support disaster response, relief, and recovery operations across Australia and calls for establishing a baseline. The lack of an accepted baseline or standard for funding local government disaster operations across Australia is highlighted as a significant challenge for local governments, which are often the least well-resourced level of government but are primarily required to lead disaster response and recovery.

This motion emphasises the need for a sustainable and ongoing line of funding to support local governments in delivering preparedness and response activities and the need for standardising and expanding the training and development of emergency management practitioners.

The federal government needs to take these concerns seriously and implement existing recommendations for adequate funding, staffing, and training in disaster management and resilience to give local governments of all sizes the tools to be effective.

## Motion number 64.1 Newcastle City Council NSW

**This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to urgently increase funding available under the Disaster Ready Fund (DRF) to provide local governments with the resources needed to mitigate the current and longer-term impacts of extreme weather events on local physical and social infrastructure.**

### **NATIONAL OBJECTIVE**

To combat the impacts of extreme weather events. Now and more recently, local governments have been significantly impacted by bushfires, droughts, and floods. We must look at ways for local government to recover from these extreme weather events but also ways to mitigate their impacts moving into the future.

### **KEY ARGUMENTS**

While climate change is a global issue, it is felt on a local scale. Extreme weather events such as heavy rainfall, storms, floods, or forest fires can considerably damage roads, railways, communication systems and power lines. Cities and municipalities are therefore at the frontline of mitigation, adaptation, and recovery. In the absence of national or international climate policy direction, cities and local communities around the world have been focusing on solving their own climate problems. They are working to build flood defences, plan for heatwaves and higher temperatures, install water-permeable pavements to better deal with floods and stormwater and improve water storage and use. According to the 2014 report on Climate Change Impacts, Adaptation and Vulnerability (page 8) from the United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, governments at various levels are also getting better at adaptation. Climate change is starting to be factored into a variety of development plans: how to manage the increasingly extreme disasters we are seeing and their associated risks, how to protect coastlines and deal with sea-level encroachment, how to best manage land and forests, how to deal with and plan for reduced water availability, how to develop resilient crop varieties and how to protect energy and public infrastructure. But extreme weather events are also costly. A report from the Climate Council (<https://www.climatecouncil.org.au/resources/hitting-home-compounding-costs-climate-inaction/>) finds the cost of extreme weather in Australia has more than doubled since the 1970s and totalled \$35 billion over the past decade. By 2038, extreme weather events driven by climate change, as well as the impacts of sea-level rise, could cost the Australian economy \$100 billion every year.

## Motion number 64.2 Shoalhaven City Council NSW

**This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to amend its Disaster Recovery Funding Arrangements (2018) in order for advance payments to be provided up front for regional and rural councils, and not in arrears, within one month of a declared natural disaster, so as to avoid impacting unfavourably on councils' cash flow.**

### **NATIONAL OBJECTIVE**

In recovery, there is an urgency to getting funding into areas as soon as possible. For example, announcements of funding availability were made by the federal and state governments quickly after the fires impacted significant areas of NSW in 2020 and these were most appreciated. However, in some instances, the application process has resulted in substantial delays in being able to respond.

### **KEY ARGUMENTS**

Local government has the ability and responsibility to restore the community to, 'normal' including all individuals, businesses, industry, and tourism following natural disasters. Local government is the level of government closest to the community. One of the functions of local government is to coordinate the implementation of federal and state government laws and regulations and so is used to disseminating information from a wide variety of sources in a cohesive manner. Therefore, local government is best placed to manage the delivery of a variety of services and support from the start. A readily available funding base will assist in facilitating local government to provide urgent assistance to the community.

## Motion number 64.3 Campaspe Shire Council VIC

**This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to review and strengthen traditional emergency management structures nationally, to be more unified, coordinated, and reflective of current and future community vulnerabilities.**

### **NATIONAL OBJECTIVE**

Emergency management planning, collaboration, coordination, and training is a critical national issue that should be debated at a national level as it affects all communities across the country.

Emergency management planning and coordination requires consistent participation and cooperation at all levels of government, the community, and key stakeholders to plan, lead and respond in a coordinated way to reduce the impact of emergencies and ensure communication and resources are distributed before during and after natural disasters and emergencies.

National debate and discussion about emergency management planning and coordination is critical to identifying and addressing key challenges and to implement strategies and policies that will protect the safety and well-being of all people across the county in times of crisis.

## KEY ARGUMENTS

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to review and strengthen traditional Emergency Management structures to deliver a unified nationally coordinated plan.

As a nation we are experiencing more frequent, intense, and concurrent disasters creating significant strain on local communities and resources. The capacity to respond to and recover from these events is becoming increasingly challenging as we continue to see heightened risk and vulnerability across community including increased poverty, inequality, climate change, poor land management and non-risk informed policies.

The Emergency Management sector nationally relies on individual and varying structures that are not equipped to manage the 'new normal' for natural disasters and emergencies and lack a unified, coordinated approach to disaster management and risk reduction. As a sector, it is acknowledged that disasters have no boundaries, making it challenging and complex to navigate across state and territory borders. Lack of consistency in approach to disaster management and risk reduction reduces the focus on consequence management, impacting community relief and recovery.

Local government advocates for the best way to support local communities during natural disasters or emergencies and calls on the Australian Government to:

- Review, strengthen and coordinate the current disparity between state and federal emergency management agencies to plan, lead and respond, particularly during campaign style events;
- Ensure trust and focus of all agencies is concentrated on building community resilience through robust planning/management through all phases of an emergency;
- Review, learn and strengthen traditional emergency management structures nationally to ensure they are reflective of current and future community vulnerabilities to deliver a consistent and inclusive service model for all emergencies; and
- Create continuity in agency structures nationally and focus on cross agency collaboration and training to support a strength-based approach to risk reduction, response, and recovery.

## Motion number 64.4 Byron Shire Council NSW

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to urgently implement the eighty recommendations of the report by the Royal Commission into National Natural Disaster Arrangements, acknowledging:

1. The many extreme climate-related disasters that have occurred since the report of the Royal Commission into National Natural Disaster Arrangements was tabled in parliament in October 2020;

2. The unprecedented nature of these disasters and the shortfall in capacity of local government, communities, emergency services and rescue services to respond to them effectively;
3. That communities in rural and regional areas have been most affected by the recent climate related disasters;
4. The extreme lack of resources, funds, equipment and personnel required to respond to such disasters; and
5. That in regional communities it has predominantly fallen to volunteer services to be the frontline responders to disasters and that this is no longer a tenable situation given the increased frequency and intensity of climate-related disaster events.

## **NATIONAL OBJECTIVE**

This is a national issue and should be debated for the following reasons:

- The many extreme climate-related disasters that have occurred since the report of the Royal Commission into National Natural Disaster Arrangements was tabled in Parliament in October 2020;
- The unprecedented nature of these disasters and the shortfall in capacity of local government, communities, emergency services and rescue services to respond to them effectively;
- That communities in rural and regional areas have been most affected by the recent climate related disasters;
- The extreme lack of resources "funds, equipment and personnel" required to respond to such disasters; and
- That in regional communities it has predominantly fallen to volunteer services to be the frontline responders to disasters and that this is no longer a tenable situation given the increased frequency and intensity of climate-related disaster events;

## **KEY ARGUMENTS**

It has been, for several years, an accepted fact that climate change is already causing unprecedented 'natural' disasters and that these will continue to occur with increased intensity and frequency. The apocalyptic 2019-20 bushfires were the prompt for a Royal Commission into National Natural Disaster Arrangements. Had the calls of Fire Chiefs and Scientists around the country been heard and actioned by the federal government in advance of the fires then there may have been an opportunity to mitigate the disaster. Similarly, the disastrous floods of 2022 in our region, and elsewhere across the state in recent weeks, has demonstrated the lack of preparedness of those regions affected. Resolutions from various, and dispersed LGAs, at the last two ALGA conferences regarding 'natural disasters' have largely been about funding for disaster-affected areas to recover after these severe events. Notably, in recent years, government funding of communities affected by disasters has focused on recovery rather than preparation and prevention and that this has been a lost opportunity. Given the high probability that we will soon see more disasters like the floods and fires of recent years, is imperative that the federal government takes immediate action on measures to deliver funding to make regions prepared for, and to enable, proper and

effective responses to climate caused disasters. The blueprint for action exists in the report of Royal Commission into National Natural Disaster Arrangements. It needs to be actioned, urgently.

## **Motion number 65 Shire of Mundaring Council WA**

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to urgently provide a sustainable grant funding model that enables local governments to deliver on their shared responsibility for disaster risk reduction, resilience, and recovery. The sustainable grant funding model should be supported by a network of grants officers located in each state local government association to facilitate the development of strategically aligned projects and successful grant applications.

### **NATIONAL OBJECTIVE**

This motion aligns with ALGA NGA Discussion Paper Priority Area 7 Natural Disasters.

Recommendation 11.1 Responsibility for local government disaster management capability and capacity of the Royal Commission into National Natural Disaster Arrangements states that state and territory governments should take responsibility for the capability and capacity of local governments to which they have delegated their responsibilities in preparing for, responding to, and recovering from natural disasters, to ensure local governments are able to effectively discharge the responsibilities devolved to them.

The federal government, through the National Emergency Management Agency provides Grant funding through the National Disaster Risk Reduction (NDRR) program, the Disaster Recovery Funding Arrangements (DRFA), and the newly established Disaster Ready Fund (DRF).

### **KEY ARGUMENTS**

Local governments in Western Australia experience a range of challenges in accessing federal government funds to support their emergency management activities including:

- Limited capacity to complete the amount of work required to prepare a project for an application;
- Issues with the timing and communication of grant rounds and how this matches internal timelines for approval and budgets;
- Mismatch between local priorities / needs and grant eligibility criteria, including the need for increased funding for the replacement or restoration of damaged assets to a more resilient standard following an event;
- Competition with state level projects, which may be prioritised as more strategic;
- No processes to coordinate similar applications across a range of local governments; and
- Difficulties meeting co-contribution requirements, particularly for smaller and regional local governments.

As set out in WALGA's Emergency Management Advocacy Position 8.3 Sustainable Grant Funding Model for Emergency Management, a Sustainable Grants Funding model would enable local governments to:

- Undertake proactive approaches to prevention, preparedness, response, and recovery;
- Supports the resilience of local communities through capacity-building activities and programs;
- Be responsive to the variations in local government resourcing and context;
- Develops the skills, capacity, and capability of the emergency management workforce; and
- Would be consistent, flexible, timely, accessible, scalable, strategic and be underpinned by comprehensive guidance and support.

A grants officer located in each state local government association would enable local governments to develop strategically aligned projects, projects that meet the needs of a number of local governments and help local governments to prepare successful applications.

## **Motion number 66 Mitchell Shire Council VIC**

**This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to establish an investigation into the role and effectiveness of the insurance industry in natural disaster recovery, with a view to improving the future outcomes.**

### **NATIONAL OBJECTIVE**

The National General Assembly calls on the federal government to establish an investigation into the role and effectiveness of the insurance industry in natural disaster recovery, with a view to improving the future outcomes. This scheme could help to add a layer of protection and resilience for communities, businesses, and individuals in the wake of future natural disasters.

### **KEY ARGUMENTS**

Research has shown that many communities in Australia will be significantly impacted by climate change over the coming decades. With climate change increasing the intensity and frequency of extreme weather events including fire, flooding, and extreme temperatures all possible avenues for increasing community resilience should be adequately explored and considered. The recent flooding events across Eastern Australia have highlighted issues related to inadequate, overly expensive, or needlessly restrictive insurance cover. Many communities, businesses, and individuals have found themselves left un- or under-insured. An investigation into the role and effectiveness if the insurance industry could add a layer of protection to ensure that in case of future natural disasters appropriate and adequate insurance cover is either in place, or available.



## Motion number 66.1 Cabonne Council NSW

**This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to fast-track initiatives from the Hazards Insurance Partnership and Strategic Insurance Project, and also urgently investigate a federally funded national disaster insurance scheme to enable residents and businesses in areas impacted by climate change.**

### **NATIONAL OBJECTIVE**

A publicly funded national insurance scheme to ensure premiums remain affordable for property owners and small business.

### **KEY ARGUMENTS**

Natural disasters are becoming more frequent and intense due to climate change making insurance premiums unaffordable. The Hazards Insurance Partnership, announced in February 2023 was developed to establish a work-plan to ensure that the Australian Government and insurance industry were collectively working to ensure Australians have access to affordable and appropriate insurance. Comparably, the Natural Disaster Insurance Review was commissioned by the Treasury following Brisbane's devastating 2011 floods. The Review focussed on insurance arrangements for individuals and small businesses for damage and loss associated with flood and other natural disasters. The Inquiry examined ways to ensure that individuals and communities at risk of extreme weather events are aware of the risks but are able to obtain suitable protection against those risks, including having access to insurance. Twenty-seven recommendations related to mandatory flood insurance and the flood reinsurance pool and later this led to the establishment of a \$10 billion taxpayer-backed underwriting scheme in northern Australia. The Northern Australia reinsurance pool underwrites 880,000 residential and small business property insurance policies for the risk of cyclone and related flood damage. Politicians from both sides of politics have urged the federal government to consider expanding the reinsurance scheme.

## Motion number 66.2 Berri Barmera Council SA

**This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to raise awareness and support advocacy that encourages insurance companies to avoid risk assessments to properties in flood affected areas. Flood risk is better assessed in regional areas by the characteristics of a site and not a postcode.**

### **NATIONAL OBJECTIVE**

As disasters begin to become more frequent, more intense, more impactful and more damaging, insurance companies are pulling out of areas based on a postcode and not offering cover. This behaviour has been referred to as "red lining". In response to parts of these issues the Financial Rights Legal Centre has been lobbying for the government to start thinking of insurance as an essential service. The national objective is to facilitate methods whereby insurance company's assess sites based on specific site risks, and not blanket

postcodes (particularly in regional areas) Regional areas can have kilometres of land separating properties from a potential risk, and this approach can mean the difference between a property being insured or 'red lined' and therefore unnecessarily exposing a company's, individual or family.

## **KEY ARGUMENTS**

Many properties are being made vulnerable for unfair and unnecessary reasons when insurance assessments are based only on postcode(s) and not site-specific physical risks. This occurs in neighbourhoods and localities where some land in an area is flood prone. This triggers the whole postcode to be at risk in regional areas, this approach is more damaging as there can be hundreds of meters or kilometres between a flood risk and a person's property. This results in some properties paying significant premiums unnecessarily or being informed it is ineligible for insurance. The Murraylands and Riverland Local Government Association have developed two motions and requested Berri Barmera Council submit the motion to ALGA on the region's behalf. These motions are to be endorsed by council on 28 March 2022.

## **Motion number 66.3 East Gippsland Shire Council VIC**

**This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to support communities affected by the rapid and excessive rise in insurance premiums by requiring insurers to:**

- 1. Not apply a 'postcode' approach when considering the effects of extreme weather events on a particular property. Rather, undertake a risk assessment of each property; and**
- 2. Fully disclose the basis on which insurance decisions are made.**

**This will ensure undue financial stress from insurance premiums is not placed on affected communities.**

## **NATIONAL OBJECTIVE**

Ensure that landholders in areas of Australia potentially or previously affected by extreme weather events, bushfires and floods are not unreasonably affected by higher property insurance premiums due to inaccurate and or inappropriate assessment tools and/or benchmarks.

## **KEY ARGUMENTS**

The key arguments behind this motion are:

- Insurance premiums have increased in areas affected by severe weather events and/or natural disasters. In some cases, the premiums have increased to unaffordable levels or to the point where they cause real financial hardship;
- While insurance premiums necessarily reflect risk, in some cases it is understood that insurance premiums are set based on the broad application of location and or

benchmarks. This may unfairly penalise landholders as premiums do not reflect the actual risks of a property;

- Anecdotal information indicates a dramatic reduction in the number of insurance companies offering insurance in areas of Australia affected by severe weather events and/or natural disasters, thereby reducing competition and enabling price increases.

## **Motion number 67 Balonne Shire Council QLD**

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to expedite its current suite of reforms to help reduce insurance costs for homeowners, and in addition:

1. Expand the disaster event re-insurance framework for all small, medium, rural and remote area communities impacted by natural disasters;
2. Provide greater support for mental health services for communities including for emergency services workers as well as climate-specific training for mental health professionals;
3. Increase targeted investment in community resilience building initiatives at the regional level; and
4. Invest in increased and sustained infrastructure betterment funding to local governments.

### **NATIONAL OBJECTIVE**

Over recent years many communities have been devastated by natural disasters specifically floods and fires. As a result, homeowner insurance policies everywhere have increased significantly despite councils investing millions in better planning and infrastructure mitigation works to ensure their communities are more resilient. Frustratingly these improved resiliency outcomes have not been reflected in reduced policy holder premiums or acknowledgement by the insurance sector that these actions have, in many situations, prevented significant claims being lodged.

Further, a 2022 Report by the Australian Climate Council, Uninsurable Nation: Australia's Most Climate Vulnerable Communities indicates that 'insurance will become increasingly unaffordable or unavailable in large parts of Australia due to worsening extreme weather'.

The report highlights the top ten most at-risk federal electorates and suggests that a large percentage of properties in these postcodes will become uninsurable by 2030.

A more recent 2023 report by the Climate Council The Growing Toll of Climate Change on the Mental Health of Australians uncovered 'widespread distress as Australians grapple with more destructive and deadly disasters and rising insurance premiums'.

Without immediate action, this situation will worsen and adversely impact the wellbeing, settlement patterns and productivity of local communities.

## KEY ARGUMENTS

Noting the above issues, there has been much debate about whether a universal government-led insurance scheme, similar to the Medicare model, could be the most ethical way of combating the risk of thousands of homes becoming uninsurable because of climate change. The Insurance Council of Australia believes other solutions would be fairer and more effective in ensuring the long-term sustainability of communities in high-risk areas and reducing premium pressures for example, through physical mitigation of infrastructure and improved policy settings relating to building codes, risk-appropriate land use planning, and the removal of state taxes and levies that have a significant impact on insurance affordability.

In response to these debates, the Albanese Government has recently (among other initiatives):

- announced the Independent Review into Disaster Funding to examine how disaster funding can be optimised to provide a system that is fit-for-purpose to support wellbeing, national productivity, prosperity, and economic security and maintains state, territory and local government roles and responsibilities;
- established the Hazard Insurance Partnership and Strategic Insurance Project which aims to address, over time, rising insurance premiums;
- supported the Australian Climate Service to establish an enduring dataset on insurance affordability, underinsurance, and non-insurance issues to help inform policy design;
- commenced development of standard definitions for certain natural hazards in insurance contracts, including reviewing the standard cover regime to improve consumer understanding of insurance products; and
- established the 'Disaster Ready Fund' a commitment of up to \$200 million per year to fund investments that build long term resilience.

Whilst these initiatives are welcome, they must be prioritised and actioned as soon as possible to address the crippling insurance premiums being paid by many householders, including in some cases where insurance is not available due to postcode discrimination.

In addition, the measures above need to be supported by:

- expanding the disaster event re-insurance framework for all small, medium, rural, and remote area communities impacted by natural disasters;
- providing greater support for mental health services for communities including for emergency services workers as well as climate-specific training for mental health professionals;
- increasing targeted investment in community resilience building initiatives at the regional level; and
- investing in increased and sustained infrastructure betterment funding to local governments.

## **Motion number 68 Campaspe Shire Council VIC**

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to provide a national proactive plan to deliver tailored support & services to vulnerable groups or those who may become vulnerable during natural disasters or emergencies.

### **NATIONAL OBJECTIVE**

Looking after vulnerable people during a natural disaster is a national issue that needs attention and debate. Addressing the needs of vulnerable people during a disaster can save lives, reduce economic costs, and build more resilient communities. It is essential to have a national debate to ensure that the right resources, policies, and procedures are in place to protect vulnerable people during natural disasters nationally.

Caring for vulnerable people during a natural disaster needs coordination across government agencies, non-governmental agencies, and communities to ensure consistent, integrated messaging and planning as well as greater coordination of services delivery and support.

### **KEY ARGUMENTS**

Amid any disaster, it is known that a person(s) identified within any 'vulnerable' group are less likely to survive the event and or are more likely to face dire long-term consequences. During an emergency response, many agencies who are at the forefront of disaster relief/intervention are not equipped or trained to effectively support, communicate and or engage with vulnerable groups or those who may become vulnerable. Those identified as vulnerable face a vast range of barriers to accessing and comprehending information, many are reliant on external support, family, friends, or service providers. This places these community members at high risk.

Local government continues to advocate for the best way to support local communities and vulnerable groups during natural disasters or emergencies and calls on the Australian Government to:

- ensure there is consistent, integrated messaging across disaster management stakeholders and community partners and greater coordination of services delivery and support;
- undertake critical financial investment and a shared approach to adaptive resources and communication;
- implement a national proactive approach to emergency preparedness and risk reduction, to support vulnerable groups and those who may become vulnerable;
- provide education and training for emergency agencies, providers and support services who work within vulnerable communities to ensure preparedness and planning is robust and person centric;
- implement arrangements and specialised support to care for vulnerable people where public sheltering/relief centres are not suitable e.g., mental health, children, oxygen-dependent individuals etc.

- ensure continuity of vital support systems that people with vulnerabilities rely on such as medical, mental health support etc. which are often disrupted;
- require National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) planning processes to explicitly include a section on safety issues and planning for emergencies with NDIS participants (not opt in but standard process);
- require that NDIS planners/case managers be given adequate training to equip them to support personal emergency planning; and
- note that multiple short term pilot projects funded by state and federal governments have been established with success, however a lack of ongoing funding and support put these projects at risk.

## **Motion number 69 Central Highlands Regional Council QLD**

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government, via the Bureau of Meteorology to:

1. Assume ownership of the existing Flood and Early Warning Network (network), consistent with Recommendation 1 of the 2022 New South Wales Flood Inquiry;
2. Fund on an ongoing basis renewal and maintenance of the network, taking into account the number of gauges and river sensors within the network and the geographic spread of the network;
3. Enter into contract for service arrangements with interested local governments/statutory bodies to undertake planned and reactive maintenance in relation to the network to ensure an ongoing connection with local disaster response and local hydrological knowledge;
4. Allow local government to co-locate additional early warning infrastructure with existing network infrastructure, where a local disaster management need is identified, on existing network infrastructure; and
5. Adequately resource Bureau of Meteorology technical teams to provide network design, operational support and quality assurance pre-season checks across the flood and early warning network.

### **NATIONAL OBJECTIVE**

The local government sector in Queensland, South Australia, Tasmania and Western Australia and statutory bodies in other jurisdictions are the often asset owners of and maintain an extensive network of flood network infrastructure, including but not limited to rain gauges, river height gauges and repeater and field stations (network infrastructure), to ensure preparedness for flooding and disaster situations. The data obtained from the network infrastructure is relied upon by the Bureau of Meteorology (BOM) to forecast flood events.

Many local governments are presently incurring considerable operational expenditure to calibrate and maintain the network infrastructure, recognising that it is of significant value to

disaster preparedness and response well beyond their local government areas. Such operational expenditure is met by respective local government ratepayer bases, which does not recognise the benefit derived by the BOM or downstream local government areas from the network infrastructure. An equitable system to ensure each local government is funded fairly does not yet exist. Ongoing funding which recognises the criticality of network infrastructure to BOM forecasting and the interconnected nature of catchments and therefore reliance on the infrastructure by downstream local government areas is needed.

## KEY ARGUMENTS

On 29 July 2022, a New South Wales Flood Inquiry Report recommended that the government, through the proposed new NSW Reconstruction Authority, work with the Australian Government to improve the rain and river gauge network by:

- working to transfer ownership and maintenance responsibility for as many of the river and rain gauges as possible in NSW to the Bureau of Meteorology;
- upgrading and ensuring there is a maintenance program across NSW for those gauges that remain in state and local government ownership; and
- upgrading radar capability in NSW to ensure overlapping coverage and some redundancy, through upgrades to existing fixed radars, and investment in new fixed and mobile radars.

Catchments that are dynamic, extend beyond the boundaries of LGAs. The extent to which a local government upstream maintains network infrastructure has a direct impact on the performance of the infrastructure and therefore the accuracy of BOM data and local disaster response in separate local government's disaster response downstream, areas outside of the direct local government area can therefore either receive a direct benefit or disadvantage from the maintenance of the upstream network infrastructure via a complex and interconnected network of repeater rain gauges. In addition, much network infrastructure is co-located with third parties (such as dam operators) or located within private property, highlighting the importance of place-based relationships. Network infrastructure therefore needs to be considered in a holistic and whole of catchment sense, in partnership with all stakeholders.

The local government sector is grateful for the assistance provided by BOM in installing network infrastructure in the wake of many flood events that have impacted the nation and for ongoing grant funding for renewal of BOM assets, the support given by BOM in the Central Highlands experience alone has increased the network infrastructure from 5 automated gauges to 95 gauges, however maintenance of such infrastructure is a continuing challenge for the local government sector in some states and statutory bodies in others.

Smaller councils, often inland and upstream of more populace coastal neighbours are struggling with resources and the essential technical expertise required to network infrastructure which has at times resulted in a reliance on outsourcing and sub-standard maintenance of the network. The existing BOM technical teams located within capital cities provide as much remote support to the local government sector as their resourcing allows and the ongoing relationship between capital city teams and the sector is to be commended,

however the BOM technical teams do not have the resourcing to adequately support a robust and geographically disparate network. In short, whilst the network has expanded in response to disaster events, BOM technical resourcing has not kept pace.

Given the geographic spread of the network infrastructure, local teams are required to respond to reactive and often urgent maintenance required to the network. Allocation of untied funding therefore should be representative of the number of assets, the geographic spread of such assets with a small discounting factor applied representative of the local benefit the assets bring to the immediate local government area.

## Motion number 69.1 Maribyrnong City Council VIC

**This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to work with the state and territory governments to release a flood recovery roadmap outlining next steps, future engagement, and potential policy changes in relation to flood recovery.**

### **NATIONAL OBJECTIVE**

Australians have been subjected to many severe traumatic flooding events in 2021 and 2022 in Queensland, New South Wales and Victoria and this motion seeks to mitigate and address future flooding events.

### **KEY ARGUMENTS**

For example, many Victorians were directly impacted by the floods that occurred from October 2022. Many of those impacted are now seeking intervention from all levels of government to mitigate the risk of any future flood events. It is important after this difficult time that the affected communities remain informed and engaged about any upcoming changes.

## Motion number 69.2 Whitsunday Regional Council QLD

**This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to identify standard practices and systems for the management of early warning systems, river height gauges, rain gauges etc to ensure that this information is integrated into a national system that is accessible and maintained through local governments at a local level. A harmonisation or standardisation of systems and approaches, similar to that which happened around Workplace Health and Safety may better prepare agencies and local governments for managing disaster events.**

**By establishing a national approach all local governments may better plan and prepare for disaster events and ensure that information required for decision making is easily attained and can be communicated in a consistent way across state boundaries and jurisdictions.**



## **NATIONAL OBJECTIVE**

The motion seeks to establish standardisation of systems and data to allow for the integration of systems across the states, so that information presented to decision makers is standardised and can operate across boundaries for consistent and repeatable outcomes during periods of natural disasters. Recent weather events have identified that there can be a disconnect between information supplied by different agencies, which could lead to delays in decisions being made in events that are time critical.

## **KEY ARGUMENTS**

At present there are no identified national systems or data standards that exist to manage natural disaster events across the country. This can lead to delays in accessing information or mismatches in information from different systems which if more integrated would allow more efficient flow of information for decision makers.

There are disparate systems that operate across the various data that is collected, whether that be from rain gauges, flood cameras, early warning systems, river height gauges, as well as road closures and other traffic management type systems. By establishing national standards and/or systems, there is less chance of information being either misinterpreted or disconnected from decision making. Having standard data sets or information systems better defined will contribute to more efficient and effective decision making in responses to natural disaster events.

This matter may be addressed through the National Emergency Management Agency and embedded into the work of this agency either through the National Action Plan or the other Frameworks.

## **Motion number 70 Mitchell Shire Council VIC**

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to instigate a national volunteer recruitment campaign to refocus and enhance the surge capacity of Australia's emergency service organisations.

## **NATIONAL OBJECTIVE**

That Emergency Services have the Volunteers and appropriate resources to adequately respond to the increased frequency of major events and disasters linked to climate change.

## **KEY ARGUMENTS**

It is critical that when facing increasingly frequent major emergency events that communities be protected by adequate numbers of trained and equipped volunteers.

Volunteers have been the backbone of emergency response since the European settlement of Australia. Sadly, over recent years the focus has shifted away from volunteers and equipment and the need for enhanced surge capacity within the various emergency service

organisations (Rural Fire Services, SES, Red Cross). Further, it must be recognised that in most recent major emergencies, such as the recent flood events and the 2019/2020 Black Summer fires many of the existing Emergency Response Agencies were completely overwhelmed. Large sections of the population were thrown back on private resources and individual initiative.

In a fire scenario the dramatic decline in volunteer numbers and the growing mean age of those remaining (in Victoria) is not offset by the increase in operational firefighting aircraft with their limited ability to operate at night and in extreme weather conditions.

Community resilience will be enhanced with more trained volunteers out in the community. These volunteers will be able to respond and boost the surge capacity of emergency response organisations to major events. Further this would be a most cost-effective and practical way to respond to Climate Change. Far more can be achieved with a national approach to volunteering rather than the current piecemeal, ad hoc approach to recruitment. A combination of a national campaign to attract volunteers and adequate resourcing with current and up to date equipment will show that volunteers are needed and valued.

# HOUSING AND HOMELESSNESS

## Motion number 71 Cabonne Council NSW

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to fast-track the delivery of its initiatives under its housing reform agenda, including funding to support councils to invest in essential engineering and community infrastructure to support construction.

### NATIONAL OBJECTIVE

The Australian Government to work with state and local governments as well as industry stakeholders to support and fund solutions to improve housing affordability.

### KEY ARGUMENTS

For many Australians finding affordable housing has become a dream as increasing housing prices and mortgage payments overtake incomes. Renters are experiencing increasing rents, low vacancies, and deteriorating conditions. The limited supply and housing stress are especially pressing in regional areas. Safe and affordable housing is central to improving productivity and enhancing the wellbeing of Australians but meanwhile the number of people who are homeless is increasing. Investment in growth of our regions promotes sustainability by increasing opportunities for jobs, small business, and tourism. The rising cost of living and higher interest rates are severely impacting on the ability to afford housing.

## Motion number 72 Newcastle City Council NSW

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to:

1. Increase funding and investment in public, social and affordable housing;
2. Work with all levels of government to undertake a review of all government-owned property to identify suitable sites for redevelopment as affordable housing;
3. Re-view its National Housing Strategy, including to:
  - a. Consider regulating rental and land value increases;
  - b. Consider requirements for affordable housing in all re/development;
  - c. Review the rates for pensions and government support; and
  - d. Ensure that all new public, social and affordable housing at a minimum incorporates the new accessibility standards in the National Construction Code; and
4. Create a National Settlement Plan, working in partnership with state, territory and local governments and communities to meet local need, and deliver post-pandemic economic stimulus.

## **NATIONAL OBJECTIVE**

Housing affordability has been declining across Australia for many years. Rent and purchase costs in the private housing market have outstripped growth in wages and income support, leading to a housing affordability crisis.

We are seeing housing stress and homelessness affect an increasing number of people right across the country. A whole-of-government approach to planning, settlement, infrastructure funding and increased supply will assist in addressing the challenge of ensuring all Australians are obtained to achieve safe and adequate housing.

## **KEY ARGUMENTS**

Access to quality, safe, accessible, and affordable housing is fundamental to wellbeing. It can help reduce poverty and enhance equality of opportunity, social inclusion, and mobility. Affordability is important for both Australians wanting to own or rent a home. Many factors influence the supply and cost of affordable housing in our country. The supply of affordable, accessible housing is not meeting need, including for Australia's growing and ageing population, and the 50,000 Australians waiting up to 15 years to access public or social housing. There has been chronic under-investment in public and social housing by governments (ACOSS 2014).

Government policies around ownership and investment, such as negative gearing, capital gains tax reductions, and Commonwealth Rent Assistance provide stimulus to the private housing market and subsidising investors. There is significant inequity within our population, with many households holding homes as assets to generate considerable wealth, and others unlikely to ever access homeownership. Housing unaffordability has been exacerbated over the last number of years due to the COVID-19 pandemic disrupting construction, displacement due to natural disasters, and the removal of housing from long term availability for short-term leases. We have 3,500 dwellings about to come off the NRAS.

Secure, affordable housing rental or ownership is increasingly out of reach for many Australians. In the early 1990s owner-occupiers made up 80 per cent of lending for housing; by 2015, this had fallen to about 40 per cent (ABS, 2019). OECD, ABS, and AIHW data show that in the last four decades, increases in house prices and rent have far outstripped wage growth. Australians on income support do not receive a living wage. Australians are spending more of their income on housing, and Australia has some of the highest household debt ratios in the global north. There has been a significant decrease in working aged people in home ownership, and growing inequality in accessing homeownership.

There has been a decrease of owners without a mortgage, an increase of owners with a mortgage, a drop in single income ownership, and growth in private rental as a tenure for more diverse households. The proportion of our population housed in social housing is decreasing. These increases in housing costs to our lowest income quintiles who are spending more and more of their income on housing, are further entrenching disadvantage and inequality in our population. Housing not only has a critical social, cultural, and physical function. It also has an important economic and nation-building function in Australia, with

dwelling construction a key economic indicator. Housing and the construction sector are one of the biggest employers in the country, with around 1.4 million people employed in the construction sector, and around 400,000 of those in New South Wales. Increasing construction is an investment multiplier in the sense that every dollar spent in the construction sector increases in value as it works its way through the economy.

There is a complex interplay of geographical, governance, funding, regulatory and taxation arrangements around home ownership, rental, and investment in Australia. The taxation and regulatory frameworks around the supply of housing mean that simply 'increasing supply' does not necessarily lead to lower house prices and more affordable housing.

## Motion number 72.1 City of Stirling Council WA

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to:

1. **Work with state and territory governments to develop a sustainable national funding model to assist low to moderate income owners to access affordable home ownership and affordable rental opportunities in areas close to work, schools and transport;**
2. **Investigate through the National Housing Supply and Affordability Council innovative opportunities to fund the acquisition of properties for affordable home ownership or affordable rental within private sector developments; and**
3. **Investigate opportunities to attract and accommodate skilled workers to address labour shortages associated with the delivery of housing.**

### **NATIONAL OBJECTIVE**

Home ownership is becoming increasingly unaffordable across Australia with housing supply shortages growing demand, increasing interest rates, skilled worker shortages and rising construction costs driving up the cost of housing and rental prices.

As part of its housing reform agenda, federal government established a National Housing Accord to bring together state, territory and local government and representatives from superannuation and construction industries to attract institutional investment and accelerate housing supply.

The Housing Accord has an aspirational target of delivering one million new homes over 5 years from 2024 with funding available through the Housing Australia Future Fund and the National Housing Infrastructure Facility to deliver up to 50,000 social and affordable properties.

A National Housing Supply and Affordability Council is also to be established which, amongst other matters, will be tasked with developing a National Housing and Homelessness Plan (National Plan) to improve access to safe and affordable housing.

The National Plan will consider how funding could be deployed to accelerate delivery of affordable housing which provides an opportunity to investigate innovative approaches to fund delivery of affordable properties within medium to high density private developments.

## **KEY ARGUMENTS**

While the establishment of the National Housing Accord and the National Housing Supply and Affordability Council are welcomed, there is a lack of clarity over how these bodies interact with existing federal and state/territory government agencies tasked with delivery of affordable housing.

The intent of targeting institutional investment to increase housing supply generally and affordable housing in particular is welcomed however this investment is anticipated to be focused on specific high density residential areas where return on investment can be maximised.

This has the potential to miss affordable housing opportunities within the middle suburbs where medium density urban infill development by the private sector is increasingly occurring to facilitate the sustainable growth of our towns and cities.

State and local government can facilitate delivery of affordable housing through the zoning of land and the application of community benefit incentives under the planning framework or by targeted development of government owned land.

A clear and accessible pathway to access federal funding for the delivery, or acquisition, of affordable housing would assist project viability, enabling the private sector to meet lenders criteria and commence project development.

Improved access to funding or low-income loans for eligible purchasers to acquire affordable housing via a shared equity arrangement with an approved housing supplier or to meet the gap between affordable and market rents would also improve access to affordable housing options.

In order to deliver new housing and upgrade existing housing stock, the current labour shortages in the construction industry needs to be addressed. Opportunities to attract, and house, skilled workers should be investigated to successfully deliver affordable housing.

It is recommended that the National General Assembly calls on government to work collaboratively with state and territory governments to develop a clear and targeted pathway to access funding for the delivery and access to affordable housing opportunities.

## **Motion number 72.2 Glen Eira City Council VIC**

**This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to:**

- 1. Ensure that its \$350 million investment in the National Housing Accord prioritises securing land and constructing housing in municipalities with the highest demand for**

public, social and affordable housing and lowest percentage of available public, social housing stock; and

2. Deliver a sustainable, long-term pipeline of federal investment in public, social and affordable housing, noting the unmet need for public, social, and affordable housing in Victoria alone has been estimated to be in the order of 75,000 to 100,000 households, while the Australian Government's \$350 million investment in its October 2022-2023 budget will only deliver 10,000 additional homes by 2029.

#### **NATIONAL OBJECTIVE**

In the October 2022-23 federal budget, the Australian Government announced a \$350 million funding commitment over five years to deliver 10,000 affordable dwellings, in addition to the 30,000 new social and affordable dwellings delivered through the Housing Australia Future Fund. They also announced a National Housing Accord, a group of stakeholders which will collaborate to unlock quality, affordable housing supply. The Australian Local Government Association (ALGA) is a member of the National Housing Accord.

#### **KEY ARGUMENTS**

Affordable housing is integral to the liveability and accessibility of communities throughout Australia. The trend over recent decades for rising house prices and rents with limited investment in social and affordable housing, has led to an increase in the number of households experiencing housing stress. The Australian Government's investment must have clear criteria for prioritisation to ensure new social and affordable housing is built in municipalities that need it most. Given its current investment will only construct an additional 10,000 homes by 2029, a significantly greater federal investment is needed to address the projected gap in social and affordable housing.

### **Motion number 72.3 City of Whittlesea Council VIC**

**This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to reform the funding models for social and affordable housing and state planning systems to ensure they consistently facilitate new social and affordable housing development.**

#### **NATIONAL OBJECTIVE**

Affordable housing is a key pillar of a fair and equitable society. It can help reduce poverty and enhance equality of opportunity, social inclusion, and mobility.

Decreasing housing affordability, long-term shortfalls in the supply of social housing and increasing demand for affordable housing are significant issues for all levels of government.

According to the Australian Council of Social Services, over one million lower income households are paying housing costs which exceed the commonly used affordability benchmark of 30 per cent of household income. The majority of those in housing stress are private renters. Rising rent levels have also increased the pressure on public housing and crisis accommodation services and contributed to the current rate of homelessness.

National policy settings are not favouring investment in social and affordable housing and exacerbate housing affordability including tax incentives such as capital gains discounts and negative gearing.

The federal government can take national leadership for setting a framework that can be applied across all states and planning systems.

## **KEY ARGUMENTS**

Australia has historically low levels of social housing. According to the 2021 census the proportion of dwellings that are social housing has dropped from 4.9 per cent in 1981 to 3.8 per cent in 2021. Supply of social housing in Australia is low compared to similar countries. In England 17 per cent of households live in social housing, 9 per cent in Ireland, 6 per cent in the European Union (median), 4.2 per cent in Canada and 4 per cent in New Zealand.

Australia's low supply is not indicative of low demand. The Productivity Commission reported as of June 2021 there are 216,846 applicants on social housing waitlists across the country. Further, 58 per cent of people renting from a private landlord are spending more than 30 per cent of their gross weekly income on housing costs. This is only likely to grow as rents increase across the nation.

Increasing supply in Australia is difficult under the current system. Government investment is low, securing private sector investment or contributions is difficult and the current tax regime does not support investment in social housing.

The federal government needs to take leadership and reform the system. A permanent funding commitment from federal and state governments would provide certainty and ensure sustained growth in the sector to address critical supply shortages.

A system that includes mandatory contributions toward new social and affordable housing would unlock private investment and provide certainty and clarity for landowners, developers, and planners. Mandatory contributions could require provision of land and/or dwellings for social and affordable housing.

## **Motion number 72.4 Wyndham City Council VIC**

**This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to work with local councils, community groups and developers to facilitate the construct of affordable and social housing close to activity centres and community services.**

### **NATIONAL OBJECTIVE**

Priority area - Housing

Australians in all corners of the country are feeling the pressure of high inflation, higher interest rates and general costs of living. Even before Covid-19 and the inflation spike many of our communities struggled to provide quality and affordable housing. The increased costs of living has made it more urgent for all councils and governments to act.



## **KEY ARGUMENTS**

Safe, adequate, affordable, and appropriate housing is essential for health, well-being, and social and economic security. However, many Australian struggle to obtain the housing they need to be as healthy, well and secure as they could be, and an unacceptable number have no home at all. (Flanagan, Martin, Lawson, & Jacobs, 2019).

The Australian Council of Social Service (ACOSS) argue that social and affordable housing is essential community infrastructure because it supports economic productivity and a range of other non-shelter outcomes.

Australian cities and many regional areas are now among the least affordable anywhere in the world. In the global marketplace, comparatively high housing costs make Australia an expensive place to do business. (Community Housing Industry Association, 2018). Nationally, social housing stock has fallen from 5.8 per cent (1997-98) to 3.1 per cent (2017-18). (Abelson, 2021.)

Affordable housing includes rental and home purchase and depends on subsidy to reduce housing costs and meet the gap between market prices and the price a very low to moderate-income household can otherwise afford. The national housing affordability crisis places greater demand on governments and the community housing sectors to provide affordable housing options for those on the lowest incomes.

## **Motion number 73 Tweed Shire Council NSW**

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to review the taxation system to incentivise the use of untapped existing accommodation within homes. For example, consideration be given to allowing owner of a principal place of residence to nominate a bedroom for board rental to individuals who qualify for rental assistance and in return that portion of their home remains exempt from Capital Gains Tax and does not affect their pension should they be a pensioner provided they register their bedroom for accommodation with Centrelink at a discount of 20% to market rent.

### **NATIONAL OBJECTIVE**

Homelessness and Affordable housing are impacting negatively right across Australia and currently there is a disincentive for homeowners to share their traditional 3-bedroom homes with people outside their immediate family due to the negative impacts that this may have on capital gains tax.

### **KEY ARGUMENTS**

Removing this disincentive would enable more people to open their home to renting rooms or parts of their home to those most disadvantaged. This would provide the potential for an immediate accommodation supply in already existing housing stock.

## **Motion number 74 Shoalhaven City Council NSW**

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to fast-track funding to the states, to enable more financial support to be provided within the state planning framework for frontline homelessness services.

### **NATIONAL OBJECTIVE**

According to the Regional Australia Institute, migration from capital cities to regional Australia increased by 16.6% to reach a new high in the March quarter of 2022. NSW represented 61% of this migration from capital cities, which translated to a 41% inflow into regional NSW. This second highest rate of migration into regional areas is Victoria, with 19% inflow into their regional areas. Regions with a growing population are likely to see increased demand for homes, including rental properties, which in turn create housing competition, pushing up rental prices. The increase in population places pressure on existing housing and homelessness services who struggle to meet the demand of a growing population without a compatible increase in funding.

### **KEY ARGUMENTS**

Housing stocks:

Data from the 2021 census, shows that in Regional NSW for example, 66% of households were purchasing or fully owned their home, 21.7% were renting privately, and 3.8% were in social housing. A high proportion of the population with a mortgage indicates a population with household debt that are vulnerable to changes, including the current significant increases in interest rates which has significantly increased mortgage stress to low-income households. High home ownership in regional towns also means there is lower rental market stock. Shelter NSW have identified that to appropriately support vulnerable communities, social housing stock should represent at least 5% of private dwellings. Regional Australia Institute have found only five LGAs in regional NSW have this proportion of social housing: Wollongong (8.0%), Shellharbour (6.8%), Newcastle (6.3%), Lithgow (5.4%) and Muswellbrook (5.1%). Overall regional NSW does not have the social housing stock to adequately support housing needs for its vulnerable communities and growing populations.

Impact on frontline homelessness services:

With a hugely competitive private housing market and extremely limited social and affordable housing there is major pressure placed on temporary and transitional accommodation providers and frontline homelessness services, with little to no exit options for the people they assist. Since 2011 there has been a 42% rise in demand for Specialist Homelessness Services, according to Regional Australia Institute. Successive years of underfunding and an increase of new clients due to population migration and back-to-back crisis, including bushfires, Covid 19 pandemic and floods, means homelessness services in Regional NSW are in desperate need of funding to meet the current overwhelming demand. The Australian Institute of Health and Welfare have identified that homelessness services are currently supporting 27% more clients than funded for. The homelessness sector has

received one-off injections of funding that recognized the increasing demand. But the Social Sector support Fund of \$50 million, and limited modifications to the Job Saver program cannot address years of underfunded service delivery. There was also a significant funding increase to domestic and family violence, however funding for specific demographics is not enough. Funding for frontline homelessness services, especially in regional NSW who have seen a huge impact from population migration, Covid 19, affordable housing crisis, and natural disasters, needs to be fast tracked and within the state planning framework to provide short and long-term support for frontline homelessness services and the vulnerable individuals and families that they support.

## Motion number 74.1 Logan City Council QLD

**This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to work with state and local governments to develop an integrated suite of national, state, and local government policy reforms that incentivise the return of abandoned houses into the housing market.**

### **NATIONAL OBJECTIVE**

In Australia, high standards of living are a source of pride. However, abandoned, and dilapidated houses diminish the quality of neighbourhoods, attract crime, and are public health hazards. Australian Bureau of Statistics census data showed that in 2021 there were over one million unoccupied private dwellings across the nation. Of that number, a proportion of these had become uninhabitable through abandonment. While there are many economic, and social factors which contribute to this problem, it is often cheaper for investors to let a house become derelict than to maintain it to a habitable standard and rent it out. Local government is poorly placed to tackle the challenge alone. Any solution is likely to be found through initiatives implemented by multiple levels of government.

Internationally, other jurisdictions have tackled such issues through systemic reform at a national level, such as banking industry reform or through the introduction of tax incentives. In a time where there is widespread pressure on Australia's housing supply, the federal government needs to work with state and local government to develop an integrated suite of national, state, and local policy reforms that incentivises the return of abandoned houses into the housing market.

### **KEY ARGUMENTS**

Abandoned and derelict houses are a national challenge that local government cannot tackle alone. Local rates incentives, economic development initiatives or increased regulation may help on a limited basis, however these local efforts are not enough to achieve substantial change. Instead, coordinated action is required across all levels of government to tackle the problem of abandoned houses effectively. If policy reform is successful, this will:

- Positively impact community wellbeing: High standards of living and quality neighbourhoods are the foundations of community wellbeing. Abandoned and derelict houses are a public health hazard and pose significant safety risks. Highly

visible, such houses markedly erode a community's sense of safety and wellbeing. Policy reform would support improved community wellbeing by driving down the numbers of abandoned properties across the nation;

- Increased housing: Australia is experiencing a major housing shortfall and worsening rental conditions. Reform on a national scale that incentivises property owners who own vacant dwellings to bring them up to a habitable state and return them to the housing market would be an important element of national efforts to improve housing affordability.

## Motion number 74.2 Wakefield Regional Council SA

**This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to work with state/territory and local governments across Australia to explore the re-development of existing empty dwellings including residential, retail, and industrial buildings to bridge the gap in the supply of affordable housing for the many Australians experiencing housing stress.**

### **NATIONAL OBJECTIVE**

National Housing Accord

The Accord sets an initial aspirational target of one million new, well-located homes over 5 years from mid-2024 and 10,000 new affordable homes supported by the federal government with the states and territories to contribute up to an additional 10,000 further affordable homes.

### **KEY ARGUMENTS**

The target set by the National Housing Accord is admirable and one strategy to deal with housing stress in Australia. The target is aspirational, and time bound which means it is unlikely to ease stress on people who are currently without a roof over their heads right now. The number of people homeless each night in Australia according to the ABS is 116,000 on any given night. Action on reducing housing stress cannot wait until 2024 to be addressed. It needs to be addressed now.

Throughout Australia residential, retail, and industrial buildings lay empty due to COVID and the current economic climate. Many of these buildings would be suitable for re-development as housing stock if the general interpretation of 'dwelling' were expanded to consider the possibilities. This approach has been taken in other countries to reduce homelessness. Many retail buildings in towns and cities lie empty and create a sense of despair and depression which is not good for the economy and community wellbeing. Empty buildings create costly work for councils having to monitor them for fire safety risks caused by overgrown vegetation and outbreaks from vermin infested buildings due to accumulation of waste materials if left unchecked. Re-development of unused buildings creates work for developers and builders; it reduces the use of new building materials and the disposal of materials in landfill. It could involve people undergoing housing stress by participation in the Habitat for Humanity sweat equity program approach. Most significantly, re-development of unused buildings could

commence in 2023. The stock does not have to be created; it is already available for re-development. This is only one additional strategy that could produce visible results in 2023 and put people who are currently without a roof over their heads into housing. It is less complex than other strategies that need further consideration to deal with some of the intersectional causes of homelessness; however, it is a possibility worth considering.

## **Motion number 75 Frankston City Council VIC**

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to make the following policy reforms to address disadvantage and improve the community wellbeing of our communities:

1. Implementation of the recommendations from the Productivity Commission's recent review of the National Housing and Homelessness Agreement to ensure a fairer and more effective access to affordable housing and housing assistance, particularly for lower income households;
2. Immediate implementation of Recommendation 9.2 to review the Commonwealth Rent Assistance program to better support lower income households in rental stress and at risk of homelessness;
3. Implementation of programs to increase the supply of new and appropriate emergency and crisis accommodation places, focusing on women over the age of 55, young people and models that allow for short-to-medium term stay; and
4. Increasing funding for Emergency Relief services to enable adequate response for lower income households and people experiencing homelessness.

### **NATIONAL OBJECTIVE**

Rising interest rates and inflation are placing households across the nation under greater financial stress, resulting in broader implications for the economy and the wellbeing of Australians. These market factors, coupled with a lack of affordable housing in most local government areas across the country is currently one of the biggest issues for Australian council's, who have statutory responsibilities to create environments that supports the health and wellbeing of communities.

Whereas all communities are being impacted by this issue, it is lower income households already experiencing disadvantage that are being most impacted by these market factors and lack of affordable housing, which is increasing the demand for government funded supports and subsidies. Across Australia, 30.9% of households renting privately are paying more than 30% of their income on rent, placing them in rental stress. This percentage significantly increases for very low-, low- and moderate-income households, placing these households at increased risk of housing instability, homelessness, and poor wellbeing.

The Australian Government must recognise access to safe, stable, and affordable housing as a critical determinant of health and wellbeing that supports improved life outcomes, and when integrated into the urban landscape is beneficial to the wellbeing of all Australians.

## **KEY ARGUMENTS**

The Productivity Commission's recent review of the National Housing and Affordability Agreement found that it is no longer effective in improving access to affordable, safe, and sustainable housing for those Australians who are living in rental stress. A new Agreement is needed that takes these recommendations into account and improves the affordability within the private rental market and the targeting of housing assistance to address disadvantage and support wellbeing within local communities. The data from across most local government areas demonstrates that the need for these reforms is urgent, as not only are more Australians renting than ever before, the increases in the costs of living and renting is placing more households in rental stress and often pricing very low-income households out of the private rental market altogether.

Specialist homelessness agencies are seeing significant increases in demand, reporting that demand is exceeding supply and housing assistance program guidelines are no longer fit-for-purpose in the current environment. This includes Commonwealth Rent Assistance, as the value of payments have declined over time relative to rents. It is not surprising that homelessness rates in Australia are increasing. Older women are the fastest growing group to experience homelessness, with 42% of people experiencing homelessness on census night in 2016 being women, a 10% increase from 2011, and a 25% increase in women sleeping rough, most of whom are aged 55 years and over. There was also an increase in the number of young people experiencing homelessness, with the biggest increase seen in those sleeping in severely overcrowded dwellings.

It is clear that the current supply of government-funded crisis beds is inadequate, with demand constantly exceeding supply. A consequence is that specialist homelessness services are having to invest significant proportions of the Housing Establishment Fund into purchasing private emergency accommodation in hotels, motels, and caravan parks, which are expensive, time limited and hard to find. Further, local councils are having to get involved in a variety of local solutions, including foreshore camping, sleep buses and overnight accommodation in churches during winter.

Programs like the Safe Places Emergency Accommodation program should be replicated to allow for the delivery of new or expanded emergency and crisis accommodation facilities for women over the age of fifty-five increasing the supply of crisis beds for young people. A proportion of these beds need to be available for the short-to-medium term to enable a Housing First approach, allowing services adequate time to provide supports while clients are in stable accommodation, improving the likelihood of successful tenancy outcomes. Local councils would be able to work with providers to plan for expanded and new facilities, improving local community wellbeing outcomes.

Emergency relief providers are reporting that they are unable to fulfil all requests for emergency relief due to increasing demand resulting from increasing costs of living, even

with the support of other partners, charitable groups, and philanthropic donations. As such local councils are having to step in to provide top up funding to fill the gap, placing greater financial pressures on councils.

## **Motion number 76 City of Darwin NT**

**This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to allocate additional funding towards affordable housing and emergency crisis accommodation for people at risk and who are vulnerable to changes in social and economic circumstances.**

### **NATIONAL OBJECTIVE**

This motion recognises the lack of accommodation options across Australia for at risk people, including those in domestic violence situations, those struggling with mental health and those displaced from other communities.

Furthermore, there are vulnerable people across Australia who may be susceptible to negative impacts from social and economic change. Housing affordability also impacts on the ability of regional and remote communities to attract key workers in critical sectors. Further assistance to provide additional housing options is requested from the Australian Government as current activity is not meeting community need.

### **KEY ARGUMENTS**

The housing challenge facing Australia is multi-faceted. Affordable housing to support key workers, particularly in the current challenging housing market, as well as providing emergency housing for at risk Australians needs addressing.

Key worker affordable housing is accommodation for key workers who are unable to afford market rents for housing. A key worker is anyone who is employed in essential industries like health care, education, emergency services, defence, and law enforcement. Whilst in the December quarter 2022, housing prices fell, they still remain 18.4% above the same price two years. This means that it is more challenging for key workers to find housing near their places of employment, especially in the regions where housing volumes and diversity are limited. This also has the impact of increasing the costs of employment for employers, in particular local and state government, who fund housing for essential service providers. This is particularly prevalent in the Northern Territory where local governments and the Northern Territory Government provide housing to support workers providing essential services to remote First Nations communities.

Compounding this issue is the discontinuation of National Rental Affordability Scheme (NRAS) housing funding allocations. With NRAS housing only available for a maximum of ten years, commencing in 2008 and no additional stock being funded since 2014/15, the number of NRAS dwellings will steadily decline until the scheme's conclusion in 2026. With record growth in housing prices and escalating interest rates, it is necessary for the provision of

essential services to all Australian communities that the federal government renew its investment in affordable housing.

These challenges extend to Australians experiencing domestic violence. The Australia Bureau of statistics estimates that 3.8 million people (20%) of Australians aged 18 years and over have experienced violence (physical and/or sexual) by an intimate partner or family member since the age of fifteen, including 27% of women (2.7 million) and 12% of men (1.1 million). This feeds into homelessness as people in these situations represent a significant component of at-risk homeless people.

The 2022 Australian Homelessness Monitor found that the increase in homelessness is greater than the increase in Australia's population meaning the challenge is getting worse. Across Australia, the average monthly number of specialist homelessness service users grew from 84,800 people in 2017-18 to 91,300 people in 2021-22. This represents a rise of 8%, which is double the current growth rate of new households forming each year. It is critical that people in these situations have the ability to escape these situations and therefore have short term crisis accommodation options, as well as long term housing options. Additional funding is required as current resources are not adequate and the need is growing.

## Motion number 76.1 Whitsunday Regional Council QLD

**This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to extend the deadline for the operation of the National Rental Affordability Scheme (NRAS) to allow communities to plan for the future in managing the current circumstances being exacerbated by the national accommodation shortages across the majority of Australia.**

### **NATIONAL OBJECTIVE**

The National Rental Affordability Scheme (NRAS) is part of the Australian Government's long-term commitment to improve housing affordability. The Scheme was implemented in 2008 and will conclude in 2026. There are arrangements that are currently expiring now, and these properties are no longer available for some of the less fortunate members of the community and these people are being displaced with no further accommodation options available in smaller communities.

An extension of the Scheme will provide additional time for alternate accommodation solutions to be identified so that the impact on long term renters can be better managed.

### **KEY ARGUMENTS**

The purpose of the National Rental Affordability Scheme (NRAS or the Scheme) is to help low to moderate income earners to live in affordable rental accommodation. The Scheme operates with the assistance of approved participants (who hold an NRAS allocation that covers an NRAS approved rental dwelling) and investors (who own the rental dwelling covered by the allocation).



Approved participants and investors receive a financial incentive to rent a dwelling covered by an allocation to eligible tenants at least 20 per cent less than the market value rent for the dwelling - subject to other conditions of the allocation being met. The incentive period for an allocation covering a rental dwelling is 10 years. This ten-year timeframe attached to the incentive was an original design feature of the Scheme and was set out in the definition of incentive period.

There have not been any new allocations made under the Scheme since 30 June 2016. This means all rental dwellings in the Scheme will see the 10-year incentive period for the allocation covering the dwelling ending between August 2018 and June 2026.

Contact with local agencies has seen many requests for the program to be extended. Within the Whitsunday region there are currently approximately twenty properties within the scheme some of which will be impacted by the end of the year as the term of the scheme concludes. This will add to the current waiting list of approximately three hundred, and information available advises this includes a resident of 82 years of age, who may be without accommodation.

## Motion number 76.2 Knox City Council VIC

**This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to further address the increasing levels of homelessness through extending programs and funding that will also support social and affordable housing options.**

### **NATIONAL OBJECTIVE**

Councils have noted an increase in homelessness, which has increased since the pandemic. With the current economic crisis, social housing unable to meet growing demand and a significant shortfall of housing for the most vulnerable people in our communities.

Rising rents in the private rental market, and an inadequate supply of social housing means many people on low to very low incomes, are struggling to find somewhere to live. Many rotating between marginal forms of accommodation, like rooming houses, overcrowded dwellings, and homelessness, some with poorer health and wellbeing outcomes that impact on their ability to find secure and affordable housing.

Those that are at risk are single women and children, and single women over the age of 55 years; our seniors, First Nations and individuals experiencing mental health conditions.

### **KEY ARGUMENTS**

Australia has a much-debated housing supply crisis and although the National Housing Supply and Affordability Council was announced in 2022 this is only the first step towards ensuring Australians have secure and affordable housing. Though estimates vary, it is widely acknowledged there is a chronic shortfall of new housing, and of affordable social housing for rent in particular.

Even before COVID modelling for the Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute (AHURI) suggested more than 1.5 million Australian households 'or about one in seven households' were in housing need. That is, these households are unable to access market-provided housing or require some form of rent assistance to afford housing.

This shortfall for affordable housing has grown through the pandemic and with the continued economic environment it is a massive structural problem for our nation. Housing affects our economy, our quality of life, the shape of our cities, and our health and welfare sectors.

## Motion number 76.3 Redland City Council QLD

**This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to address housing pressures including social housing and homelessness support.**

### **NATIONAL OBJECTIVE**

Housing pressures are impacting communities across the country, creating significant social issues and a potential generational gap in home affordability.

The Commonwealth Department of Social Services website states:

Housing is fundamental to all Australians and our housing market has a significant influence on a number of key social and economic aspects of society.

- From a social perspective, housing provides a stable base from which we can participate in society, form families, and enjoy retirement. Housing can determine lifetime education, employment, and health outcomes
- From an economic perspective, housing has a significant impact upon investment, productivity and participation, as well as consumption and saving trends across the economy."

This shows the correlation between housing and social equity and the importance of a national response to the current housing pressures being experienced.

### **KEY ARGUMENTS**

The housing crises being experienced across Australia is resulting in significant flow on social issues including increased homelessness and economic stress. The current housing pressures being experienced are impacting all residential property markets, including social and affordable housing and requires a coordinated and comprehensive response as a matter of priority.

The following opportunities could support a national response to the current housing pressures being experienced:

- social housing tenancies could incorporate a transitional framework to support people to become ready to enter community or private rental accommodation,

increasing the turnover of properties and ensuring long-term tenancies are for the most critical need;

- adequate resourcing of community housing providers to provide wrap around social support to tenants to maintain tenancies and stabilise mental and physical health of residents before they transition into private rentals, rather than return to social housing. Wrap around support may also reduce antisocial behaviours, reducing likelihood of negative interactions with neighbours;
- innovative models of tenancy agreements, in all housing sectors (private, community and social) could be considered as these can provide necessary support for tenants to maintain tenancies. For example, including costs of yard maintenance into rent means that yards will always be maintained and will not contribute to stigmatisation or negative interactions, relieving a common source of escalated disputes;
- models of communal living arrangements for older residents requiring social housing may present value for money on infrastructure delivery as well as reaping enhanced social outcomes and reduced burden on our healthcare system reducing social isolation and loneliness which are becoming recognised as contributors to rapidly declining health; and
- inclusive zoning could ensure that a reasonable proportion of future dwelling stock is supplied to the market and suitable for those on lower incomes. This would support a dispersed model for locating social housing properties and ensure no concentration of social housing and stigma of residents by those paying full market price to reside in the development.

## **Motion number 77 North Sydney Council NSW**

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to continue support delivery of diverse and affordable housing across metropolitan, regional and rural communities to address the housing crisis and provide for inter-generational equity. That the Australian Government partner with local government to identify opportunities for delivery of such housing across the nation.

### **NATIONAL OBJECTIVE**

There is a crisis in housing affordability in Australia. The Productivity Commission has indicated that the current housing crisis has pushed many Australians to poverty of homelessness, with a lack of housing available and an increase in rent prices. This motion asks that ALGA call on the Australian Government to partner with local government to identify opportunities for the delivery of diverse and affordable housing across the nation.

### **KEY ARGUMENTS**

in 2021, 45% of Australians receiving Commonwealth Rent Assistance (CRA) were spending more than 30 percent of their income on rent. Housing stress is typically described as lower-income households that spend more than 30% of gross income on housing costs. The data

indicates that older Australians are the most vulnerable to the price spike in rents. of those receiving CRA, almost one-third paid more than 30 percent on rent.

## Motion number 77.1 Stonnington City Council VIC

**This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to develop a white paper on the existing and emerging models of social and affordable housing and their appropriateness for specific spatial, social, and economic context.**

### **NATIONAL OBJECTIVE**

A lack of both social affordable housing remains one of the biggest issues for Australian communities. There is less social and affordable housing stock available than there was a decade ago, and more low-income Australians are experiencing housing stress.

The shortage and rising costs of rental properties and affordable home ownership are having significant social and economic impacts in cities and towns across Australia, including rural and regional communities. This is due to a range of factors including changes to recent migration patterns, cheap finance and labour and material shortages in the construction sector.

While the provision of affordable housing is not a local government responsibility, councils often facilitate affordable housing within their communities, operating within state/territory planning, financial and other legislation requirements.

Some councils are going further, addressing thin markets, and developing land and housing themselves, delivering local solutions to meet the needs of their communities.

Local government also plays an important role addressing some of the causes of homelessness, including social inclusion programs that can assist mental health and family violence issues, as well as providing support for people currently experiencing homelessness.

### **KEY ARGUMENTS**

Housing affordability is a major issue in Australia, with many people struggling to find affordable housing. In recent years, there has been a significant increase in the number of people experiencing homelessness, particularly in major cities such as Melbourne and Sydney. This has led to increased pressure for the provision of affordable housing options for communities.

To address this issue, the Australian government can help local governments in understanding different approaches to social housing and affordable housing, including emerging models both domestically and internationally. One of the key benefits of this approach is that it can help local governments develop effective strategies to address the housing affordability crisis. By learning from the experiences of other countries and cities, local governments can identify best practices and innovative approaches that can be adapted to their local context. For example, some countries have introduced community land trusts

(CLTs), which are non-profit organizations that acquire and hold land for the benefit of the community. CLTs can be used to provide affordable housing by leasing land to developers or homeowners at below-market rates. CLTs are common in the United States and the United Kingdom.

In addition to addressing the housing affordability crisis, understanding different approaches to social housing and affordable housing can also help to improve social inclusion and reduce homelessness. Social housing plays a critical role in providing stable housing for vulnerable groups, such as low-income families, elderly people, and those experiencing homelessness. By supporting local governments in understanding different approaches to social housing, the Australian government can help reduce homelessness and improve social inclusion.

Furthermore, by sharing best practices and innovative approaches to social housing and affordable housing from around the world, the Australian government can encourage knowledge-sharing and collaboration between local governments. This can lead to more effective and efficient housing policies and programs and help to build capacity within local governments to address the housing affordability crisis.

Finally, supporting local governments in understanding different approaches to social and affordable housing is also crucial to meeting international commitments. Australia is a signatory to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which includes a commitment to ensuring access to affordable, safe, and adequate housing for all. By supporting local governments in understanding different approaches to social housing, the Australian government can help meet its international commitments and contribute to the global effort to address housing affordability and homelessness.

## Motion number 77.2 Berrigan Shire Council NSW

**This National General Assembly calls on the Australian and state and territory governments to work with rural and regional councils and community housing providers on the place-based supply, including financing, and construction of medium to long-term secure tenure rental housing designed for key workers otherwise excluded from home ownership due to their economic circumstances.**

### **NATIONAL OBJECTIVE**

The planning system in Australia is complex and costly to navigate, especially in the face of a crisis such as the housing crisis being felt strongly in regional, rural, and remote communities. Allowing councils to work with housing authorities and planning departments to identify suitable land for key workers, affordable and social housing, and then allowing more streamlined process for changing land use in these cases, will greatly assist councils to urgently ensure the delivery of this urgent need for our communities. Where councils have identified suitable land for housing development, partnership with relevant agencies to deliver the required infrastructure should be possible and prioritised. Further, providing assistance for councils to work with affordable and social housing providers to develop

suitable sites in a timely and cost-effective way will ensure our communities grow and thrive in a supported and systematic way that ensures homelessness is no longer the only option for many struggling in regional, rural and remote communities.

## **KEY ARGUMENTS**

Housing policy in Australia is complex and a multi-layered system of public policy, legislation, taxation laws, housing investment and equity strategies designed to incentivise homeownership and market-based housing supply. In this system local government is not the supplier of housing; rather it is responsible for ensuring an adequate supply of residential zoned land and community infrastructure. Fundamental to the economic prosperity of regional and rural communities is housing for key workers, health care, hospitality, agriculture, and retail. Key workers in retail, hospitality and agribusiness do not attract high wages, nor are many employed on a full-time basis. Key industries in rural and regional Australia tend to be industries that are commodity-based and or seasonal: hence casualised.

The current market-based housing supply model designed to incentivise home ownership or investment in residential property, excludes key workers from home ownership and secure tenure rental housing. Unmet housing demand is a constraint on economic growth.

Therefore, local councils and communities throughout regional and rural Australia need to investigate bespoke and place-based responses designed to alleviate the economic and social consequences of the failure of market-based supply of key worker housing and accommodation in rural and regional Australia.

## **Motion number 77.3 Leeton Shire Council NSW**

**This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to prioritise financial assistance for housing initiatives in rural Australia.**

### **NATIONAL OBJECTIVE**

The objective is to prioritise financial assistance for housing initiatives in rural Australia to enable local government to strategically plan and develop infrastructure to address housing affordability and supply.

### **KEY ARGUMENTS**

There continues to be an unprecedented level of housing demand in rural and regional Australia. The national vacancy rate was at 0.8% in January 2023. This emphasises the highly competitive nature of Australia's rental market, with asking rents at historic highs. Local government can play a major role in facilitating and developing affordable housing, however, due to budget restraints with increasing and unexpected costs, financial assistance is required to develop the initial infrastructure required to deliver new housing. Funding is required for strategic planning. Rural councils lack skills and/or resources for Integrated Land-use planning to provide adequate Town planning, Infrastructure and Transport Strategies to address affordable housing demand. In addition to integrated land-use planning, financial

assistance is required for the infrastructure to develop the land. This aspect is cost prohibitive for most rural councils. Lack of development ready land is a huge problem in rural areas.

Lack of services leads to inappropriate zoning, which do not support affordable housing. Lack of affordable housing has flow on economic impacts including, not being able to fill workplace positions (of all skill levels). Council budgets continue to be restrained by increasing and unexpected costs for example repairing roads due to floods. Rural communities are disadvantaged as private developers tend to operate in major regional centres where there is a better return on investment. This leaves local communities to address housing shortages themselves.

## **Motion number 78 Flinders Shire Council QLD**

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to allocate special housing initiatives or programs valued at least \$50,000 to encourage housing investments in rural and remote communities. The program should be open to building new homes, purchasing existing homes, or substantially renovating homes they own. The funding should encourage both investors and first-home buyers.

### **NATIONAL OBJECTIVE**

In response to growing concern about Australia's high-priced housing and rapidly tightening rental market, which in many parts of the country has a vacancy rate approaching 1 per cent, the federal government announced the National Housing Accord proposal to build one million homes in the October 2022 budget.

The governments have also pledged or announced funding programs to address the housing shortage issue, which is a national issue. Unfortunately, these programs are targeted at the urban centres and will not cater to the needs of Rural and Remote communities that need special consideration for known reasons. Hence, we are calling on the Australian Government to announce special housing initiatives or programs to encourage housing investments in rural and remote communities.

In the populated areas, which cover only a minor percentage of the nation, the housing issues are driven by a lack of residential land availability, a combination of factors driving today's crisis, namely high population growth, urban concentration, and interest rates. In rural and remote communities, housing issues are driven by postcode discrimination by financial institutions and increased construction costs. The communities have access to plenty of residential land with no planning restrictions.

### **KEY ARGUMENTS**

The post-code discrimination of the banks and the lending bodies and high construction costs adversely impact the regional and remote communities' ability to secure loans and achieve their housing dream.

Hence, the grant funding of at least \$50,000 will assist interested parties in obtaining bank loans and help them discount the construction costs impacted by their locality. With this initiative, the government can encourage investments from small to medium investors, who generally play and can play a crucial role in the property market. Due to the quantum of new housing development, which has yet to exist in the regional communities, the communities can attract a wide range of developers to deliver these projects and offer value-for-money outcomes, more migration, and investments to the region.

It is a win-win situation for government and private investors, first home buyers, or an opportunity to attract new investors into the property market and these regions. The funding should be open for any development, including investment homes and existing homes but not be limited to new builds. With this initiation, the government can also address the problem of existing housing stock (old houses) unsuitable for living or renting. Also, dilute the rental market, address the rental crisis, and provide access to affordable homes.

## **Motion number 79 South Burnett Regional Council QLD**

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to implement initiatives and taxation reforms that encourage private investment in increasing housing stocks in regional areas.

### **NATIONAL OBJECTIVE**

Housing

### **KEY ARGUMENTS**

The upsurge in demand for housing and accommodation over the past year has exacerbated homelessness across our state. This issue requires need to focus our lens on this as a matter of priority. In addition to this, a range of options is required for consideration as a matter of urgency including the formation of a community housing action group and partnering with the state government and not-for-profit groups to provide community managed housing.

Dedicated investment, which is stimulated through a taxation incentive, is essential for the development of not only housing stock, but also the core infrastructure to support the development residential housing. This would not only serve as a stimulus for regional communities but would also assist in mitigating the current acute housing crisis. The support and delivery of priority trunk infrastructure is needed to develop new communities across the whole of regional Queensland, not just the larger populations centres. This direct financial assistance combined with associated local government initiatives such as planning scheme amendments to support village developments and working with the community and local estate agents on shared housing initiatives would be pro-active positive steps towards a solution to the current shortage.



## **Motion number 80 Tweed Shire Council NSW**

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to reduce the impact on housing affordability and housing availability attributable to the commercialisation of housing by way of short-term holiday letting (STHL);

1. Reviews tax laws to ensure that taxation of commercialised tourism housing is transparent and enforceable on the property owner;
2. Reviews tax laws to ensure that taxation on commercial platforms operating as booking agents for property owners is transparent and enforceable, so that the cost of combating the impacts on housing affordability and accessibility arising from STHL, at a state and local government level, is offset by those providing the STHL services;
3. Allocates appropriate resources to tackle the spatial land distribution and permissibility of STHL at a local government level to reduce the incidence and severity of STHL impacts in vulnerable housing areas or markets where housing affordability and accessibility is at a critical level.

### **NATIONAL OBJECTIVE**

Whilst Australian states and territories undertake efforts to manage short-term holiday letting through planning-based policy mechanisms, there is also an opportunity to explore scenarios for regulating the issue through changes to the tax laws and spatial distribution control measures.

### **KEY ARGUMENTS**

Tourists holidaying in Australian cities and regions increasingly choose to stay in short-term holiday letting. The supply side of the property market is responding by a rapid growth of dwellings advertised online for short-term holiday stays. Longer term, short-term holiday rental has the potential to impact on local neighbourhoods if not adequately managed through increased noise levels, traffic, and parking, safety and security, but most importantly, through cumulative impacts on housing affordability.

## **Motion number 81 Newcastle City Council NSW**

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to:

1. Note that sexual, domestic, and family violence is the single largest driver of homelessness for women and children;
2. Note that this crisis is exacerbated by limited (and in many cases, no) temporary accommodation, or 'affordable housing' in Australia, intersects with other welfare needs and complexities, and can be exacerbated by the disparate, prohibitive, and unreasonable requirements and regulations of state and territory governments;

3. Note that local domestic and family violence and homelessness services and refuges are at the frontline of this crisis, and in crisis themselves at capacity, underfunded, and overworked;
4. Ensure that all victim-survivors of domestic and family violence have access to a safe home, no matter their gender, age, background, or income, by:
  - a. Developing a national domestic and family violence framework and domestic and family violence housing assistance programme;
  - b. Working with state and territory governments to deliver consistent, safe, and appropriate transitional and ongoing housing and support services for every person woman, man, and child experiencing and recovering from sexual, domestic, and family violence;
  - c. Immediately funding the public housing dwellings needed to house the tens of thousands of people on wait lists (inclusive of both 'priority' and other);
  - d. Immediately increasing the provision of transitional housing to meet the needs of every client presenting at DVF & homelessness services;
  - e. Working with DVF & Homelessness services to understand the needs for women to immediately access safe and secure temporary accommodation, to improve the legal and/or regulatory framework for women experiencing domestic and family violence in accessing temporary accommodation (TA); and
  - f. Extend the national 'Stop it at the Start' programme by working with services and organisations to identify problem behaviours and working with schools and sporting clubs to increase respectful behaviours in youth to reduce domestic violence; to drive a long-term, whole-of-government and community approach to reduce domestic and family violence and to provide necessary housing and support.

## NATIONAL OBJECTIVE

This motion addresses the following key question in the 2023 discussion paper:

"Noting the funding arrangements for the provision of local government community services in your area and across the country, are there programs and initiatives that the Australian Government could implement to improve the delivery of these services?"

## KEY ARGUMENTS

Domestic and family violence initiatives and funding are delivered at the authority of Australian states and territories. The approaches are disparate and inconsistent, ranging from zero funding commitment in Western Australia in 2016, to increased mapping and data sharing with other agencies, to single and multi-year packages to address domestic and family violence.

[https://www.aph.gov.au/About Parliament/Parliamentary Departments/Parliamentary Library/pubs/rp/rp1617/Quick Guides/Domestic and family violence initiatives](https://www.aph.gov.au/About%20Parliament/Parliamentary%20Departments/Parliamentary%20Library/pubs/rp/rp1617/Quick%20Guides/Domestic%20and%20family%20violence%20initiatives). New South Wales, for example, in 2016 allocated \$300 million over four years to domestic and family violence initiatives.

Yet, DFV services are overwhelmed and stretched beyond capacity. Increasing incidence of domestic and family violence and insufficient funding means they are being forced to turn away women and children experiencing DFV. There are three domestic and family violence (DVF) and homelessness refuge services for women and children active in Newcastle and the Hunter. Reports from workers at these services, and their Annual Reports (Jenny's Place Annual Report: <https://www.jennysplace.org/annual-report-2021-22/> NOVA for Women and Children Annual Report

<https://www.novawomen.org.au/files/Nova%20Annual%20Report%202021-2022%20Compressed.pdf> show that in 2021-2022, at Jenny's Place 223 women and thirty-five children were unable to be accommodated in JP Family Refuge, and 395 women without children were unable to be accommodated in JP Singles Refuge. Women and families that can be accommodated, are having to stay in crisis accommodation longer than presumed. For example: Most women exceed the standard 28 day stay, and at times, stay at least double the usual 28 days presumed for, 'temporary accommodation'. One service has a family (mum +7 children) in refuge accommodation since May 2022, due to no adequate homes available for transition and unsuccessful pursuit of private rental. For women unable to be accommodated, DVF&H services try to source temporary places to be accommodated. This could be anything from a hotel, motel, or cabin accommodation to a tent on a powered site. DVF&H services advocate for weekly rates if self-funded. DFV services are supporting women who are living in their cars.

This crisis is exacerbated by limited (and in many cases, no) temporary accommodation, or 'affordable housing' in Australia. Women are increasingly presenting with complexities including Mental Health, Alcohol and Other Drugs, Sexual Assault, Domestic and Family Violence, there has been an increase in mature aged women accessing DVF & Homelessness services, and there has been an increase in referrals for clients/children with disabilities (some with NDIS supports, some without accommodation in their NDIS package). This is intersectional with other welfare needs, with women experiencing domestic and family violence facing: a lack of suitable, affordable properties, and approvals, for women with 3 or more children and / or pets, unaffordable rents for those not in paid work and for working single women / single mums / older women, limited to no housing pathways for women exiting custodial sentences, women are being bailed into homelessness (women often stay in temporary accommodation while searching for housing options), further compounded barriers to resolving homelessness are things like finding employment when having a criminal record, and limited to no housing pathways for women exiting mental health facilities.

# CLIMATE CHANGE AND ENERGY

## Motion number 82 Central Highlands Regional Council and Rockhampton Regional Council QLD

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to support the local government sector to transition to net zero emissions through the provision of targeted operational and capital grants programs that enable local government to;

1. Undertake corporate baseline emissions inventory and mapping; and
2. Invest in operational and capital projects which address identified emissions reduction priorities.

### NATIONAL OBJECTIVE

Each Australian state has stated or has made a commitment to reach net zero by 2050, or earlier.

At a federal level, on 16 June 2022, Australia lodged an updated Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC) with the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) secretariat. The updated NDC commits Australia to a more ambitious emissions reduction target of 43 per cent below 2005 levels by 2030 and reaffirms Australia's commitment to net zero emissions by 2050. The Climate Change Act (Cth) and corresponding consequential amendments legislation came into effect on 14 September 2022.

Local governments are well positioned to lead their communities by example in identifying and reducing emissions.

### KEY ARGUMENTS

Local governments are responsible for a range of emissions including those associated with fuels in their fleet and plant, landfill, wastewater treatment and the electricity required to power their buildings, community facilities and street lighting. It is therefore imperative for local governments to reduce their organisational emissions in line with state and federal government targets and to show leadership within their communities as the nation transitions towards a low carbon economy.

The 2021 Australian Local Government Climate Review found that more than 70 percent of responding councils have set or are planning ambitious emissions reduction targets for their own operations, while 80 percent have set or are investigating emissions reduction targets across their entire community. Another recent report indicated that if all the current targets set by local governments were met, Australia would be 96 percent of the way to meeting its current target of a 28 percent reduction by 2030.

Many state government strategies, such as the Queensland Climate Transition Strategy, recognise that, 'local governments have an important role to play in facilitating and supporting progress towards the net zero emissions goal'.

Across Australia, councils are at varying stages of the net zero journey. Some are embarking upon corporate baseline inventory mapping, and many have carried out carbon neutral capital projects, including introducing energy efficient LED streetlights, installing electric vehicle charging stations, capturing biogas, and flaring landfill gas emissions, diverting organic waste from landfill, installing solar and using recycled road construction materials. The Reef Guardian Council Climate Change Initiative Snapshot 2022 illustrates some examples.

Some councils are going even further, investing in renewable energy projects, and supporting local businesses and residents to reduce their emissions. These initiatives are scalable and could be replicated by other councils with sustainable funding support.

Much of the local government sector is already taking great strides in progressing toward net zero, however the provision of operational and capital grant funding will facilitate the local government sector taking a greater leap towards net zero than current budgetary constraints and competing capital and operational priorities may allow. By supporting councils to reduce emissions at a local level, the federal government can deliver on its own emissions commitments, ensuring that no community is left behind as we transition to net zero.

## Motion number 82.1 Logan City Council QLD

**This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to develop guidelines for local governments for calculating their organisational carbon footprint using appropriate greenhouse accounting methodologies. Guidance is particularly sought in the areas of:**

- 1. Defining local government organisational boundaries, and**
- 2. Providing a consistent approach and methodology for the inclusion or exclusion of scope three emissions and emission conversion factors.**

### **NATIONAL OBJECTIVE**

Currently fifteen of Australia's 530 councils have been certified as carbon neutral under the federal government's Climate Active initiative and many more councils are expected to seek carbon neutral certification in the future. National guidelines are needed to help ensure local government carbon accounting and related carbon emission inventories are consistent, comparable, transparent, and accountable across councils. Developing national guidelines will also improve the efficiency of the certification process and increase community confidence in certification standards.

### **KEY ARGUMENTS**

Having recently obtained carbon neutral certification under the Climate Active Initiative, Logan City Council is uniquely experienced in this process and well placed to understand and

recognise the value of additional guidance. Nationally consistent carbon accounting guidance will:

- Reduce reliance on registered consultants which in turn will reduce certification costs for councils and their residents.
- Reduce confusion, debate, and deliberation on scope three source emissions and their conversion factors.
- Help identify opportunities for emission reduction actions and free up resources to undertake these actions.
- Support councils in their efforts to gain carbon neutral status, while at the same time assisting councils with annual carbon neutral certification renewals.

## Motion number 82.2 Darebin City Council and Kingston City Council VIC

**This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to:**

- 1. Partner with local government and invest in climate resilience projects; and**
- 2. Provide funding for a community climate resilience fund, to increase resilience of Australian local government infrastructure and services, and their communities, to the impacts of climate change.**

### **NATIONAL OBJECTIVE**

This is a national issue which is growing in scale, and impacting urban, rural, and regional centres alike. Impacts may differ between areas, from bushfire to flood, and heatwave to sea level rise, however all local governments are required to adapt to the current and future impacts of climate change, as per the COAG 'Roles and responsibilities or Climate Change Adaptation in Australia'.

### **KEY ARGUMENTS**

Heatwaves, storms, floods, and fires are increasing across the country, and predicted to increase in frequency and intensity due to climate change. This alarming trend results in rapidly escalating costs to service to local government which is unaffordable in a resource constrained operating environment. Federal capital works funding is required by local governments to mitigate the impacts of these severe weather conditions, as well as subsequent recovery costs. This funding is essential as it cannot be absorbed by the existing funding system. In addition, this is having a direct impact on the cost of and availability of insurance. The Australian Prudential Regulation Authority has said that for the year to December 2021, homeowner policies rose 8%. The cross-jurisdictional nature of impacts means a partnership approach is warranted, rather than impacts being dealt with on a municipality-by-municipality way.

## **Motion number 83 Gladstone Regional Council QLD**

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to establish a regional transition authority to:

1. Coordinate across all levels of government, industry and community, the transition of the energy sector and resource dependent regions, to renewable energy;
2. Undertake planning that informs effective policies to improve coordination, clarity and mitigate disruptions; and
3. Support regions to strengthen existing long-term industries and seize a range of economic opportunities.

### **NATIONAL OBJECTIVE**

There is a significant need for planning and coordination at a national level to manage the rapid pace of change across the energy sector and mining sectors. Additionally, detailed, and transparent planning at a federal level is needed to ensure better coordination and consistent regulations across the National Energy Market as it adapts to high levels of renewable energy generation.

Coordination between different levels of government is needed to avoid different energy proponents undertaking their own planning or risk mitigation with limited community and industry information, policy understanding and cumulative impact considerations.

Development of a Regional Transition Authority to coordinate efforts across government, industry and community as renewable energy expands and fossil fuel use declines to ensure that changes in the energy sector contribute to broader social, economic, and environmental benefits while minimising negative impacts.

### **KEY ARGUMENTS**

The pace of change in the energy sector has accelerated greatly over the last 12 months, fuelled by a number of factors including ambitious decarbonisation targets set by governments across the world, financial pressures due to rising energy costs and global political instability. While the demand for Australian fossil fuel exports, particularly Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG), has increased due to the Russian Ukraine conflict, this is unlikely to continue long term due to Europe's decarbonisation efforts, as well as better emission reduction targets from China and India, and recently passed climate bills in the United States and Australia.

There is a pressing need for overarching coordination and planning to manage the rapid pace of change across the energy sector, and to enable local government to take effective action now. Successfully transitioning of the nation to safe, reliable, and affordable energy requires the need for a Regional Transition Authority to undertake planning that informs effective policies to improve coordination, lead planning and investment attraction activities, and mitigate disruptions to the energy transition. A lack of planning has the potential to lead to severe disruptions to the energy transition. Lack of coordination between different levels of government and different energy players undertaking their own planning without

transparent and timely information sharing can continue to lead to different agencies and groups attempting to do their own planning or risk mitigation with limited community and industry information, policy understanding and cumulative impact considerations. Detailed and transparent information is needed to be shared along with consistent regulations across the National Energy Market as it adapts to high levels of renewable energy generation.

Important responsibilities of a Regional Transition Authority could include:

- Providing support for long-term regional planning; and
- Prioritising infrastructure to support the renewable energy sector e.g., highways and enabling roads that cater for oversize and over mass vehicle transport to enable the sector to develop social infrastructure to support communities facing the energy transition e.g., health and medical services, liveability for attraction and retention of workforce, education and future proofing skills and workforce:
  - ensuring energy security, stability, and affordability;
  - regional workforce support and planning;
  - economic diversification;
  - attracting investment;
  - infrastructure planning;
  - research and development;
  - land and water management; and
  - community benefit.

## Motion number 83.1 Gladstone Regional Council QLD

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to establish a dedicated fund to:

1. Provide support for communities and regions to transition to renewable energy and a net zero carbon economy;
2. Support other regional economic and community development opportunities as part of the great energy transition; and
3. Provide fiscal stability and long-term sustainability to support inter-generational equity in regions.

### NATIONAL OBJECTIVE

The federal and state governments acknowledge the energy transition with a shift to a less carbon intensive and more renewable based economy. It is important that communities are supported to proactively manage this transition and the associated impacts on the community, economy, environment, and region as a whole. Regional communities are home to many large-scale industrial facilities and resource infrastructure. This potential motion has the opportunity for far reaching affects across the nation. The introduction of a dedicated fund has the power to support resource dependent communities and regions to transition, strengthen and diversify their economy, invest in future workforces, support liveability, and offset the impacts of transitioning to a net zero economy.



## KEY ARGUMENTS

The nation is facing a major economic transformation as we grapple with the decarbonisation of the global economy. Whilst transitioning away from fossil fuels, the impacts and challenges associated with new emerging industries needs to be managed. Despite the challenges, the energy transition presents opportunities for regions to expand and diversify their economic base and take advantage of opportunities, for example, 'green' manufacturing, hydrogen production and other renewable energy production. To harness these potential opportunities, transition planning and support is imperative for long-term resilience and prosperity for regions and communities. The energy shift will have far reaching impacts for communities and require support to ensure a positive transition to renewable energy, and the ability to take advantage of economic opportunities, to safeguard resilient and long-term sustainability.

For the best outcomes for the communities, managing the economic and social impacts of the transition should be undertaken collaboratively by regional communities, local, state, and federal governments. A dedicated fund that:

- Provides for regional economy diversification
- Future proofs skills and education for the new net zero economy, community support services, environmental site rehabilitation and provides for today's communities
- Plans for the future by responsible delivery of infrastructure without creating ongoing financial burdens
- Provides fiscal stability and spreads the fiscal benefits of the resources sector across future generations is needed to manage the nationwide transition to renewable energy.

## Motion number 83.2 Gladstone Regional Council QLD

**This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to provide local government funding to support council's operational and capital expenses in implementing climate adaptation and carbon offset and mitigation initiatives to:**

- 1. Move towards net zero emissions;**
- 2. Minimise the impacts on climate change in our communities; and**
- 3. Minimise and offset emissions across council operations.**

## NATIONAL OBJECTIVE

Australia is already experiencing the impacts of climate change with:

- Warming temperatures and heat events
- Drier conditions in southern parts of Australia, wetter conditions in northern Australia
- Increase in the intensity of heavy rainfall events

- Increase in extreme fire weather
- Sea surface temperatures have warmed with longer and more frequent marine heatwaves
- Sea levels have risen
- Increase in coastal erosion
- Increase in coastal inundation
- Snow depth trends have seen a downward trend
- And further changes are projected.

*(Source: CSIRO's State of the Climate Report)*

The Australian Government's introduction of the Climate Change Bill in 2022 legislates the nation's commitment to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 43% below 2005 levels by 2030, and net zero by 2050. Funding support should be provided to local governments to lead the way in their communities for climate adaptation, mitigation and carbon offset and minimisation.

## **KEY ARGUMENTS**

Local governments have the opportunity and responsibility to play an important role in the nation's response to climate change and are well placed to lead the way for local responses to reducing and offsetting emissions, with global impacts. A dedicated source of finance to fund initiatives that:

- plans and delivers projects and actions that lower council's own carbon footprint and that of their community
- Supports councils to embed climate risk management across the business
- Finances dedicated resource/s to lead projects and action that lower carbon footprint and emissions, including reporting and
- monitoring. Examples of projects that support council's to reduce their emissions may include:
  - Transitioning fleet, plant, and equipment to renewable energy sources e.g., electric vehicles, hydrogen powered plant etc.
  - Converting streetlighting to solar or LED
  - Utilising solar or other renewable energies for council assets
  - Power purchase agreement and renewable energy supply agreements
  - Upgrades to infrastructure for optimised asset performance, reducing emissions and impacts to the environment
- Funding for local government roles to lead and manage actions and projects for councils e.g., Sustainability or Net Zero Officer

The impacts of climate change, if not addressed, will have major detrimental effects to local governments day to day operations and service delivery. For example, the increase in frequency and severity of weather events can be expected to increase insurance costs for councils until assets are not insurable at all. Resulting in recovery and replacement costs

coming at a cost to rate payers or simply not being undertaken. Funding to support council's expenses in implementing climate

adaptation and carbon mitigation initiatives directly align with the federal and state government emission targets. Emissions reducing projects/transitions and upgrades also offer councils the opportunity to reinvest efficiencies and funds saved to continue their climate adaptation journey for the longer term. This funding allows councils the funds needed to implement and realise these efficiencies.

## **Motion number 84 Balonne Shire Council QLD**

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to establish a dedicated funding program and other resources to support councils transition to net zero emissions by 2050.

### **NATIONAL OBJECTIVE**

On 16 June 2022, Australia lodged an updated Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC) with the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) secretariat. The updated NDC commits Australia to a more ambitious emissions reduction target of 43 per cent below 2005 levels and reaffirms Australia's commitment to net zero emissions by 2050.

These commitments are contained in the government's Climate Change Bill which passed the Senate in September 2022 and is now law.

### **KEY ARGUMENTS**

As place shapers, asset owners and purchasers of goods and services, councils have a significant role to play in ensuring Australia meets its net zero commitments.

However, at this point there seems to be very little guidance or support programs at the federal level to assist councils with this transition.

In NSW, the state government has established a Net Zero Acceleration Program which is funding joint organisations of councils to employ a dedicated net zero officer (a grant of \$155,000) to drive emissions reductions across council operations.

Without guidance and funding assistance many councils will struggle to achieve emissions reductions targets, especially in rural and remote councils where adaptive capacity is often quite limited.

As such, we believe that dedicated funding support as well as the development of expert resources is required, not just at the state level, but from the Australian Government so councils can commence or continue to capably progress their net zero journey.

## Motion number 84.1 Isaac Regional Council QLD & Central Highlands Regional Council QLD

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to establish a net zero regional transformation/transition authority at a national level, which works with equivalent bodies at a state level, with statutory powers and offices located within impacted regions, to:

1. Deliver economic modelling and socio-economic impact analysis to determine the impact on coal mining regions and regions producing energy from coal (economic and social) with the move away from fossil fuels;
2. Undertake economic and social transition planning which:
  - a. Identifies economic diversification opportunities, projects, and actions to enable economic diversification, including development of enabling infrastructure;
  - b. Identifies both short-term and long-term government support required to support the transformation and maintain essential;
  - c. social, health and transport services during and post-transition;
  - d. Ensures the continued and long-term liveability and social sustainability of the regions;
3. Manage funding and investments for projects and programs within impacted regions to address outcomes from economic and social transition planning, including seizing economic opportunities;
4. Work across agencies to coordinate big picture government thinking, including coordinating resources and planning and facilitating effective policy changes and changes to regulatory frameworks to enable coordination, clarity, and mitigation of disruptions to impacted communities;
5. Implement or facilitate elements of the various government plans; and
6. Work with bodies established by the state government, including through National Cabinet.

### NATIONAL OBJECTIVE

The effective management of the transition to net zero emissions is critical principally for coal mining regions and regions producing energy from coal, but also for all local government areas supplying to, or reliant on, the economic outputs of coal mining.

The government committed funding under the October 2022-23 budget for the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet to develop of a National Framework for Economic Transformation, which has led to the creation of the Net Zero Taskforce (the Taskforce). The Taskforce has commenced consultation with impacted coal producing and supply chain regions and it is understood that the Taskforce will provide advice to the government this year. Local government is anticipating that such advice will include a recommendation to establish a National Transformation/Transition Authority, aligned with the federal government's transformation principles, working with bodies created at a state level and with regional offices in impacted locations. Any Authority must be:

- Protected from machinery of government changes and with longevity of resourcing;
- Aligned with the Department and Prime Minister & Cabinet to ensure appropriate ownership;
- co-designed in terms of governance with state/local government and;
- Have the power to facilitate coordination and collaboration across departments and with the federal government.

## KEY ARGUMENTS

Mining regions and regions producing energy from coal across Australia are undergoing a social and economic transformation as a result of decarbonisation and natural end of mine life. This change will be beyond the capability of any local government to manage.

The push toward net zero will have trickle-down effects in all local economies on the mining and coal mining for energy supply chain. This subsequently impacts the sustainability of these communities. Without a responsible authority with a clear mandate and statutory powers to manage change, local councils will be fighting for their community's very existence under the pressure of negative social, economic, and environmental impacts resulting from end of mine life (potentially caused by reduced investment confidence in coal) and decarbonisation. Transition bodies have played a significant role in helping regions navigate changes globally - this has included coordinating planning efforts to ensure energy security, economic diversification, industry adaptation, environmental regeneration and positive social outcomes, many international transition examples have been led at a national level.

A co-designed transformation authority/transition authority is critical in ensuring a collaborative approach is utilised in managing the cumulative effects of transformation. Potential roles of this authority could include:

- Managing and coordinating the response to social and economic impacts associated with natural end of mine life and decarbonisation in coal mining regions and regions producing energy from coal.
- Co-designing and delivering a fair and equitable place-based community plan with measurable milestones that are commensurate with the nature and scale of impact that occurs due to imposed, required, or agreed changes. (i.e., the social investment should match/be proportionate to the size of the project).
- Ensuring all stakeholders can meaningfully participate in decision-making processes and in the design of new plans and programs to decarbonise the economy.
- Focussing on all aspects of the coal mining and energy transition to support community and economic transformation by working across agencies and government to facilitate investment and action to implement:
  - regional workforce support and planning well in advance of mine closures, including mines supplying domestic energy production and those with export products unrelated to energy transformation;

- Place-based investment in social infrastructure/services to support the future needs of regional communities;
- Economic diversification to build on strengths of the regions to attract investment and jobs;
- Investment in coal mining regions and catalysing infrastructure development/investment, by providing a vehicle to attract and channel funds into economic diversification initiatives;
- Create and amend legislation and policy for parliamentary review as necessary; and
- Community capacity building to leverage social and economic diversification initiatives.
- Providing advice and recommendations to government and industry which is integrated to ensure coordinated post-mining land use planning.
- Facilitating timely pre-closure planning and applying contemporary social impact assessments across the resource sector inclusive of renewable projects.

The report released by the Productivity Commission in 2017 titled, 'Transitioning Regional Economies' outlines the case for coordinated transition in a general regional sense.

## Motion number 84.2 South Burnett Regional Council QLD

**This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to support local government representation on economic transformation authority/relevant body in relation to climate change/decarbonisation.**

### **NATIONAL OBJECTIVE**

Climate Change and Renewable Energy

### **KEY ARGUMENTS**

The South Burnett Regional Council aims for foster economic development, growth, and regional sustainability by investigating known water supply and demand options. The South Burnett region has highly fertile soils that are suitable for agricultural production through irrigated cropping. Furthermore, the region's existing transport infrastructure and potential labour forces provide a strong avenue for product distribution in both the international and domestic markets.

While South Burnett has several large employment industries including agriculture, utilities, retail, manufacturing (which includes abattoir workers) and health, however unemployment has risen due to a shrinking employment base of key sectors. The closure of the Tarong Power Station represents an additional hurdle for the region. An inclusive and just transition can catalyse transformation co-benefits for the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Our region will invest to move towards net zero agriculture, but this transition will require assistance and support from state and federal governments. Any transitional authority must involve local government as a key stakeholder and equal partner in the process of change and on the importance of delivering nationally significant energy transmission projects and supporting regional communities and workforces to capture the opportunities emerging from Australia's transition to a net-zero emissions economy.

## **Motion number 85 Nillumbik Shire Council VIC**

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to:

1. **Ensure the national energy electricity grid can support our ambitious net zero targets which require rapid transition to all-electric homes, transport and industry based on renewable energy; and**
2. **Legislate ambitious climate targets that align with meeting international Paris Agreement Protocols to keep warming below 2°C global temperature rise. That is, setting net zero emissions for Australia by 2035 in collaboration with local government emissions targets.**

### **NATIONAL OBJECTIVE**

The Australian Government needs to be a leader in enabling renewable energy by ensuring a prepared national grid, in order to enable delivery of Australia's national climate change strategies which are designed to achieve 43% emissions reduction by 2030, and the many more ambitious local government climate action goals. In addition, a national target for achieving net zero emissions is currently lacking.

### **KEY ARGUMENTS**

As Australia becomes more electrified, our ageing national energy grid will require upgrades and investments in ongoing technical improvements. For local government to achieve our ambitious net zero targets, action is required by the Australian Government to ensure that the national grid is able to absorb renewable energy inputs and supply an increased electricity demand. For Nillumbik to achieve our ambitious net zero targets, action is required by the Australian Government to ensure that the national electricity grid is able to absorb and distribute additional renewable energy inputs and supply an increased electricity demand.

This is about ensuring that homeowners can connect their on-site renewable energy generation to the grid; that businesses can develop small to medium scale renewable energy supply without a prohibitive grid connection cost. An ambitious, legislated Australian Government net zero emissions target signals a strong intention to community and business that can accelerate the transition to a clean energy economy.

## Motion number 85.1 Yarra City Council VIC

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to outline how it will work with local governments to achieve its carbon emissions reduction targets under the Paris Agreement including:

1. How emission reductions achieved through local government investments and actions are included in the national reporting;
2. How the regulatory, policy and other barriers to local governments taking decisive action to reduce emissions may be removed or reduced by the federal government; and
3. What sources of federal funding will be available to local government in partnership with the federal government to reduce emissions and achieve our national goals.

### NATIONAL OBJECTIVE

This motion calls on the federal government to instead indicate how that multilevel governance could be achieved in the context of local governments around Australia being willing and ready to contribute significantly to our national goals.

### KEY ARGUMENTS

The 2022 National General Assembly called on the federal government to:

- implement ALGA's call for a Local Government Climate Response Partnership fund of \$200 million per annum over four years to help councils address the impacts of climate change in their communities; and
- to create a local government climate response partnership fund, of at least \$200 million per annum, and work with local governments on existing and emerging local and regional projects to rapidly drive down emissions before 2030. And
- Put in place a climate action regulatory reform working group to remove regulatory, policy and other barriers to climate action for local governments and communities and ensure policy coherence and synchronisation at all levels of government and with relevant industry stakeholders.

This request was based on the expectations of multilevel governance under the Paris Agreement, the high levels of emissions reductions being achieved through local government investments and actions and the lack of an identified and formal partnership between both levels of government to work together to achieve our national emissions reductions goals and protect our communities into the future.

## Motion number 85.2 Banyule City Council VIC

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to provide for an ongoing funding allocation to retrofit existing leisure centres and community facilities to be carbon neutral.



## **NATIONAL OBJECTIVE**

Banyule City Council recognises that we are in a state of climate emergency, which requires urgent action by all levels of government including local councils. Council is part of a joint climate emergency movement and need to continue to act to ensure a safe and sustainable world for future generations.

## **KEY ARGUMENTS**

Electrifying leisure centres and community facilities will remove emissions from onsite operations, and the electric replacement heat pumps. 10 years ago, natural gas produced six times less CO2 emissions than Victorian grid electricity and was therefore considered a far cleaner source of energy. However, grid electricity has become 30% cleaner since then, and with the options of offsetting electricity consumption through solar system generation or green power schemes, it can produce zero net emission. Natural gas on the other hand still produces the same amount of CO2 emissions, making it a far worse power source for the future. Banyule's electricity comes from renewable sources through the VECO program, and therefore does not emit any emissions at all. To achieve our net zero emission target by 2028, it is imperative that all gas consuming equipment be upgraded to efficient electrical equipment.

## **Motion number 85.3 Greater Dandenong City Council VIC**

**This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to outline how it will work with local governments to achieve its carbon emissions reduction targets under the Paris Agreement including:**

- 1. How emissions are reduced through local government investments and actions measured and reported in the national reporting;**
- 2. How barriers (policy, regulatory and funding) to local governments taking decisive action to reduce emissions will be identified and reduced by the federal government; and**
- 3. What sources of federal funding will be available to local government in partnership with the federal government to reduce emissions and achieve our national goals.**

## **NATIONAL OBJECTIVE**

Climate change is a global emergency that goes beyond national borders. It is an issue that requires international cooperation and coordinated solutions at all levels.

To tackle climate change and its negative impacts, world leaders at the UN Climate Change Conference (COP21) in Paris reached a breakthrough on 12 December 2015: the historic Paris Agreement.

The Agreement sets long-term goals to guide all nations to:

- Substantially reduce global greenhouse gas emissions to limit the global temperature increase in this century to 2 degrees Celsius while pursuing efforts to limit the increase even further to 1.5 degrees;
- Review countries' commitments every five years;
- Provide financing to developing countries to mitigate climate change, strengthen resilience and enhance abilities to adapt to climate impacts.

The Agreement is a legally binding international treaty. It entered into force on 4 November 2016. Australia's Paris Agreement commitment, recently made by the Prime Minister in June 2022, is to reduce emissions by 43 per cent by 2030, and to net zero emissions by 2050.

## KEY ARGUMENTS

Communities, along with the councils and services that support them, invariably are impacted the most by climate change. While individual councils may be in a strong position to provide local knowledge and connections, the broader issue is beyond their direct sphere of influence. Local governments across Australia will require significant resources and support from the federal government to meet the expectations of its contributions to reducing emissions and achieving our national goals.

## Motion number 85.4 Newcastle City Council NSW

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to:

1. Acknowledge over one hundred local councils, including Newcastle, representing nine million Australians (as well as over two thousand jurisdictions worldwide) have declared a climate and biodiversity emergency, acknowledging that urgent collaborative action at all levels of government is necessary to protect our environment and community for future generations;
2. Consider the banning of gas from all new housing developments;
3. Consider assisting households and business to make the switch from existing gas-fuelled items to electrification;
4. Continue its important work to urgently develop a gas decarbonisation roadmap for the electrification of local communities, setting business, industry, and households up to be resilient and sustainable in a decarbonising world, while safeguarding jobs in important manufacturing industries.

## NATIONAL OBJECTIVE

This motion addresses the following key question in the 2023 discussion paper:

"Noting the government's commitment to reducing emissions, are there programs and initiatives that the Australian Government could develop to assist councils in their work to address climate change and reduce emissions?"

## KEY ARGUMENTS

The gas industry is responsible for 19% of Australia's GHG emissions. Recent modelling of decarbonisation targets by CSIRO and ClimateWorks for AEMO has projected substantial reduction in demand for natural gas under three scenarios consistent with strong action towards Australia's net zero by 2050 target.

Analysis by Dr Saul Griffith and The Australia Institute demonstrates that by 2030 Australian families could be saving \$5,000 per year by replacing their current cars with electric vehicles, switching their natural gas heating systems (water heating, space heating, or kitchen) to electric heat pumps, and furnishing their electricity with solar from their rooftops. A July 2021 study by Northmore Gordon and companion report from the Climate Council illustrates a potential pathway for NSW to reduce its gas consumption by 25% within 5 years, 70% in 10-15 years, and entirely eliminate gas use by mid-century. Dr Griffith and Rewiring Australia are working towards launching a pilot program in the Illawarra (NSW) region and if supported by government may provide a roadmap for the electrification of communities right across Australia, resulting in the lowering of electricity bills, cost of living and carbon emissions.

## Motion number 85.5 City of Sydney Council NSW

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to:

1. Recognise local governments are on the front line of the climate transition and that climate related floods and bushfires have left many councils with huge damage to roads and other infrastructure;
2. Recognise that thriving in the new economy requires communities to adapt to a changing climate, rapidly cut emissions, as well as educating local communities about the impacts and causes of climate change;
3. Encourage low emissions consumption nationally through public information campaigns, Australian Consumer Law, the Greenhouse and Energy Minimum Standards Act 2012 (Cth) (GEMS Act) or other relevant Commonwealth powers; and
4. Open a fund to allow councils to sponsor community, education, sporting, and cultural groups that currently take funding from the coal, petroleum, or gas industry.

## NATIONAL OBJECTIVE

Local government is on the front line of climate impacts and yet is not given the funds or powers required to diversify local economies and prepare communities for the changes ahead. It is like fighting climate change with a hand tied behind our back.

While the federal government has a legislated target of 43% emissions reduction by 2030, it is not yet implementing the wider measures needed to bring communities on the journey.

Just like campaigns against smoking or littering, national action is required to educate about climate mitigation and impacts and to encourage consumers to make low emissions choices.

These measures are a small but urgently needed component of wider emissions reductions plans, and it is necessary for local governments to urge the federal government to use its powers and resources to help communities tackle the changes they are facing.

## KEY ARGUMENTS

Evidence is growing that changes in community behaviour are needed to achieve greenhouse gas reduction goals.

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) Sixth Assessment Report said that two-thirds of greenhouse gas emissions are directly or indirectly linked to household consumption and that information campaigns and legislation are needed to drive behaviour change.

The UK's Environment & Climate Change Committee found that one third of greenhouse gas emissions reductions up to 2035 require decisions by individuals and households to adopt low carbon technologies and choose low-carbon products and services.

France has legislated the transformation of its social, legal, and economic life to reduce emissions. Following community recommendations, its 2021 Climate Bill mandated restrictions on advertising high emissions products as well as carbon labelling.

In Australia, the federal government's 2022 Annual Climate Change Statement recognised that standards and regulations need to be implemented to support industry, businesses, and households to reduce energy use.

However, hundreds of millions of dollars are spent advertising high emissions products and companies every year, and there are no restrictions on this promotion.

Nationally, more than five hundred community groups are sponsored by petroleum, gas, and coal companies. This is a barrier to changing community attitudes and entrenches the influence of legacy industries that are hindering renewable energy uptake.

The motion offers simple and relatively inexpensive solutions to help communities.

### 1. Public information campaigns

Public health and safety campaigns save money and lives by encouraging behaviours that prevent future harm. The Department of Finance found that the federal government spent \$127.9m on advertising in 2019-2020, including defence force recruitment, COVID-19 information, and advertising government programs. A campaign to make lower emissions choices would not only reduce emissions but also save people money on energy bills.

### 2. Advertising restrictions and labelling

Australian Consumer Law and the GEMS Act both provide easy avenues to encourage low emissions choices. This can be implemented through carbon warning labels, clean energy messages or carbon information on products and advertisements. There are many precedents including warnings on gambling commercials and energy ratings labels on appliances.

### 3. Sponsorship fund

Nationally, more than five hundred community groups are sponsored by petroleum, gas, and coal companies. This is a barrier to changing community attitudes and entrenches the influence of legacy industries that are hindering renewable energy uptake. A national fund, dispersed by councils, would give smaller community, sports, and arts groups the option of diversifying their income. Councils already a wide range of grants. This plan would allow councils to give a larger pool of money. A similar scheme was done in Western Australia in the 1990s, where organisations were paid to drop tobacco sponsors through the Western Australia Health Promotion Fund (Healthway).

## **Motion number 86 North Sydney Council NSW**

**This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to partner with local government via grants and education campaigns to actively assist communities to electrification in order to meet Net Zero targets.**

### **NATIONAL OBJECTIVE**

Australia's whole-of-economy Long-Term Emissions Reduction Plan is to achieve net zero emissions by 2050 and this is the responsibility of the Department of Climate Change, Energy and Water.

### **KEY ARGUMENTS**

A report from the Australian Sustainable Built Environment Council (ASBEC) confirms full electrification is the lowest cost, fastest emissions reduction pathway for Australia's built environment.

The report titled *Unlocking the pathway: Why electrification is the key to net zero buildings*, finds electrification would save \$49 billion between 2024 and 2050 over the 'business as usual' strategy of electrification, gas and offsets.

The report states that 100 per cent electrification is the lowest cost option to decarbonise our built environment, but lowest cost doesn't mean no cost.

As the level of government closest to local communities, local government is best placed to assist communities to convert to electrification. By partnering with local government via grants and education campaigns, the Federal Government can be assured that this assistance will go directly to local communities as they move towards electrification.

## Motion number 86.1 Cumberland Council NSW

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to:

1. Work closely with the local government sector to ensure community led responses for the reduction of carbon emissions and promotion of clean energy sources; and
2. Implement measures to improve the affordability of batteries, solar banks, and electric vehicles so they can be adopted at a faster rate within the community.

### NATIONAL OBJECTIVE

Reduce carbon emissions. Ensure affordable and reliable energy supply for communities.

### KEY ARGUMENTS

With more than five hundred councils across Australia, local government organisations have great potential to actively participate in energy transition and help Australia reach its net zero targets. Local councils can actively work with local communities to lower carbon footprint of local communities, sourcing renewable energy, maximise local

ownership and help sharing the financial benefits widely, match energy production to local usage, thus reduce greenhouse gas emissions and address the impacts of climate change.

## Motion number 86.2 Greater Dandenong City Council VIC

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to join with all councils across Australia to recognise the disproportional impacts of climate change on disadvantaged and marginalised communities and advocates to both state and federal governments for greater support for climate resilience and social justice work across these communities.

### NATIONAL OBJECTIVE

Climate change is a global issue; however, the impacts of climate change are not proportional. Disadvantaged and marginalised communities are impacted first and most severely.

The link between climate justice and social justice is well established and refers to the intersection between equal economic, political, and social rights for all people as well as action to address higher levels of exposure to environmental and climate risk in marginalised communities.

Socially disadvantage communities are already being disproportionately impacted by the climate emergency. Heatwaves, localised storms and flooding and smoke from bushfires and grassfires are of particular concern. With severe weather events associated with climate change becoming increasingly frequent and powerful, it is clear that further work is required to prepare these communities for the challenges and risks of a changing climate.

Recent research by community organisation Sweltering Cities found that during heatwaves, people of lower socioeconomic status suffered a higher level of discomfort and distress due to poorer housing stock which was more likely to be uninsulated. The respondents were also less likely to have access to air-conditioning, and even in cases where air-conditioning was available, respondents were less likely to utilise this due to inability to afford the resulting electricity bills.

## **KEY ARGUMENTS**

In addition to groups of low socioeconomic status, cohorts such as elderly people, people experiencing homelessness or housing insecurity, people with a disability or chronic health conditions and Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) people are all at greater risk of climate stress. These cohorts are well represented across many Victorian and Australian councils.

Recognising the above, Jesuit Social Services have established the 'Centre for Just Places' (in Victoria), which seeks to enable place-based approaches to social and climate justice through collaboration, research and knowledge exchange while working directly with local communities.

As an example, Greater Dandenong City Council has an existing and strong relationship with Jesuit Social Services and the Centre for Just Places, having partnered to deliver:

- 'municipal scan' of current and projected climate change impacts to the health and wellbeing of the Greater Dandenong community;
- a series of community workshops exploring the cascading impacts of disruption to community services during periods of extreme weather, piloting an organisational resilience building exercise with a neighbourhood house and community leaders; and
- a Disability Inclusive Emergency Planning forum (DIEP) which was attended by people with lived experience, carers, emergency services and disability service providers. The DIEP forum was delivered in partnership with University of Sydney's Centre for Disability Research and Policy, Greater Dandenong City Council and Casey City Council.

Many councils across Australia have declared a Climate and Ecological Emergency and have an obligation to facilitate urgent and appropriate action to increase their communities' resilience to the impacts of a changing climate. In Victoria in particular, under the Local Government Act 2020, councils are required to consider climate change in all decision-making and operational processes.

Communities, along with the councils and services that support them, will invariably suffer the worst impacts of climate change, which is why enabling more socially just and resilient communities is critical. While individual councils may be in a strong position to provide local knowledge and connections, the broader issue is beyond their direct sphere of influence and requires significant support from both state and federal governments.

Recognising the above, the following motion calls on the ALGA and all Australian councils to join in recognising the intersections between social justice and climate change, and to

advocate for greater support of the existing work of the Jesuit Social Services Centre for Just Places and similar organisations, through the direction of the Australian Local Government Association (ALGA).

## **Motion number 87 City of Onkaparinga Council SA**

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to make a strong national commitment to coastal adaptation planning, funding, hazard data collection and analysis, and coordinated action to mitigate the increasing risks of predicted sea level rises and more regular and intense storm surges.

### **NATIONAL OBJECTIVE**

Australia must take a proactive approach to making coastal communities more resilient to coastal risks.

Coastal councils around Australia are at the forefront of managing coastal risks but lack the resources and national framework needed to address them effectively.

The enormous scale of the challenge requires a collaborative, coordinated national approach to coastal adaptation planning and action.

Councils need national leadership, funding, and a long-term commitment from the Australian Government to tackle this problem now and into the future.

### **KEY ARGUMENTS**

Australia's coastline is being adversely impacted by extreme weather events, storm surge, natural disasters, and other coastal hazards. Sea level rise associated with climate change is exacerbating the effects of coastal inundation and erosion.

The frequency and damaging impact of such events on our coastlines is expected to increase in severity over time.

Some steps have been taken at the state and national level to understand coastal hazards and develop adaptation strategies. While this is welcome, understanding the problem and developing adaptation strategies is only the first step in tackling this national issue.

Coastal councils around Australia are the level of government closest to what is happening to our coastline, on the ground, and are spearheading efforts to address and manage coastal risks.

In South Australia, local government has led the charge in securing funding for a state-wide coastal adaptation capacity building program to be administered by the local government association, in partnership with the state government. The program, worth more than \$6 million, will accelerate the development and use of adaptation strategies by establishing a state-wide foundation of quality data and ongoing monitoring to underpin disaster risk and vulnerability assessment. It will also deliver capacity building for the local government sector.



However, more resources and support are needed. With this, councils could undertake detailed planning, implement mitigation measures such as nature-based defence structures, sea walls, levees, and floodway. They could also develop and deliver proactive community education programs.

The \$50 million in funding announced in 2021 for the federal Coastal and Estuarine Risk Mitigation Program was a welcome step towards addressing coastal risks. But more is needed.

A commitment must be made by the Australian Government to national leadership, funding, and a long-term approach to coastal adaptation. This would enable councils confronting these challenges to take positive and coordinated action, to the direct benefit of Australian communities and the environment.

This motion aligns with the coastal policy proposals being advocated for by the Australian Coastal Councils Association (ACCA).

The ACCA proposals, which are based on existing policy frameworks and draw upon recommendations of the productivity commission, insurance council, and coastal councils, include:

- Developing a National Coastal Hazards Adaptation Plan based on funding and implementing the Australian Government's National Climate Resilience and Adaptation Strategy
- Incorporating the existing Coastal and Estuarine Risk Mitigation Program in the new National Coastal Hazards Adaptation Plan (above) and extend the program's funding (\$50 million in 2022-23) over the next four years of the budget cycle
- Establishing a National Resilience Adaptation Coordination Office to ensure effective governance for Australia's adaptation plans.

The City of Onkaparinga has 31km of coastline of high environmental and social value in our local government area. We are committed to managing coastal risks and have recently commenced a Coastal Adaptation Planning process. We are members of the Adelaide Coastal Councils Network and the Australian Coastal Councils Association.

## **Motion number 88 Cabonne Council NSW**

**This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to urgently implement the objectives of the National Climate Resilience and Adaptation Strategy.**

### **NATIONAL OBJECTIVE**

The increasing frequency of severity of natural disasters such as bush fire and floods has been highlighted over the last few years. The impact of these natural disasters and the long-term recovery comes at a high cost both economically and socially and challenges the economic prosperity of regions and wellbeing of communities. The National Climate

Resilience and Adaptation Strategy sets out what the Australian Government will do to support efforts across all levels of government, businesses, and the community, to better anticipate, manage, and adapt to the impacts of climate change.

### **KEY ARGUMENTS**

As reported by NEMA, the 2022 Disaster Impact there were forty-six disasters declared in Australia, 315 local government areas impacted, 524 number of disaster support declarations and \$3.5bn Australian Government disaster payments made. The impacts of climate change will continue to increase over the coming decades.

Adapting and building resilience is vital to future prosperity of regions. The social costs of natural disasters are equal or even sometimes higher than the economic costs. Natural disasters have social impacts both immediately and into the long-term including health and wellbeing, education, employment, and community networks. Resilient and prepared communities are more likely to withstand the negative impacts of natural disasters and experience a more effective recovery.

## **Motion number 89 Moyne Shire Council VIC**

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to establish national wind farm development guidelines including provisions that infrastructure to support renewable energy transmission be developed using existing easements, be located where practicable underground and require co-location of connecting lines to reduce the impact on agriculture, the visual landscape, recognise risks of bushfire and protect amenity.

### **NATIONAL OBJECTIVE**

Draft National Wind Farm Development Guidelines were developed in 2010. As a result of the consultation on the draft, it became apparent that jurisdictions had developed, or were developing planning application, assessment, and approval processes within their own planning frameworks to manage community concerns about wind farm developments. Consequently, the guidelines were not finalised and remain a reference document only. State based assessment and approval processes have proven to be inadequate in addressing community concerns. A national approach will ensure connectivity issues across state borders are well planned.

It should also provide a consistent approach to landholder, community and social investment and benefit. The federal government must establish National Wind Farm Development Guidelines that, inter alia, address the concerns of above ground transmission lines for renewable energy projects.

### **KEY ARGUMENTS**

Council has advocated strongly to government on a range of issues associated with renewable energy development including:

- Lack of strategic planning and associated cluster siting of windfarms and the associated cumulative impacts on local communities.
- Safety and amenity impact of transmission lines to connect to the electricity grid and the need to utilise underground transmission.
- A lack of local community benefit from the wind farm developments.
- No mandating of local content in the supply of wind farm equipment so as to maximise the economic benefits from these large-scale investments.

This motion seeks ALGA support to address the increasing impacts of transmission lines. The transition to renewable energy needs to be supported by appropriate transmission infrastructure. Grid reliability and security of power is key to community safety and the economic prosperity of Victorians. The current approach by state governments and authorities such as AEMO needs to take a strategic approach, consider the lifetime costings and balance social and environmental factors, as well as the economics of supplying power.

## **Motion number 90 Town of Gawler Council SA**

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to support councils through the Clean Energy Regulator (CER) in the development of local government specific guidance for 100 kW to 5MW solar power and battery storage systems to produce and consume larger amounts of renewable electricity, store renewable electricity, and share and trade surplus renewable electricity via the grid to serve the needs of councils and their communities.

### **NATIONAL OBJECTIVE**

#### **CLIMATE CHANGE AND RENEWABLE ELECTRICITY**

Many councils across Australia have made commitments for renewable electricity and carbon reduction pledges and are seeking improved ways to meet their own renewable electricity needs and link to or assist in community schemes for local renewable electricity.

For solar systems greater than 100 kW in size, the regulatory requirements become significantly more complex with a need for licensing as an accredited power station and to align with carbon accounting frameworks on how to manage who can claim use of the renewable electricity and under what contractual arrangements.

There is currently a lack of clear and consistent guidance for councils to navigate these requirements with confidence and in a cost-effective manner.

Councils have limited funding and seek improved and consistent guidance prepared in collaboration with the CER on how to establish larger 100 kW to 5 MW systems in the most effective manner that meets regulatory requirements and assurance of both on-site and off-site environmental claims.

## KEY ARGUMENTS

### TARGETED GUIDANCE FOR COUNCIL NEEDS:

This initiative will result in a practical outcome, a targeted fit-for purpose guidance by the Australian Government to assist councils in their work to unlock significant new investment opportunities as councils and their communities transition to renewable electricity, addressing climate change and reducing emissions.

Councils across Australia have installed solar systems on their buildings, improved energy efficiency and undertaken projects such as LED public lighting replacement programs and smart lighting in buildings. With fewer rooftop solar opportunities now being available, councils are actively seeking opportunities for ground mount solar systems at a larger scale. For councils to share their own renewable electricity created at a site with another nearby council owned facility is complex set of regulatory barriers to overcome and in some cases new site to site power transmission cabling has been recommended as an alternative, but at significant cost. There are also some clearly definable scenarios where the guidance could assist councils in preparing 100 kW to 5 MW solar projects for financial evaluation, tendering and negotiating with potential providers and partners including:

- On site production and consumption of electricity or renewable electricity and sale of surplus electricity or Large-Scale Certificates (LGCs);
- On site production of renewable electricity and transfer via the grid to a nearby site for consumption of electricity and/or renewable electricity;
- On site production of renewable electricity and sharing across the electricity grid to other participating councils or external customers (including local community and business customers) via a retailer for electricity and/or renewable electricity;
- Regulatory and project guidance for solar power and grid integration requirements;
- Regulatory and project guidance for battery storage opportunities and grid integration requirements; and
- Carbon accounting guidance in relation to making claims for use of renewable electricity.

### CARBON ACCOUNTING GUIDANCE IN RELATION TO MAKING CLAIMS FOR USE OF RENEWABLE ELECTRICITY:

Current government guidance under the NGER Determination enables corporations to produce and consume large scale renewable electricity on site behind the meter. Separate legislation under the Renewable Energy (Electricity) Act 2000 enables LSCs to be created and sold from these systems. There is no specific guidance on whether LGCs should or should not be created and sold for large scale renewable electricity that is produced and consumed behind the meter.

There are a number of scenarios for councils relating to options for renewable electricity accounting and claims which require guidance in order to assure claims and prevent double counting or perceptions of greenwashing. These scenarios include:

- Guidance on creating and managing LGCs where renewable electricity is claimed on site.
- Guidance on creating and selling surplus LGCs where electricity is transferred via the grid.
- Guidance on management of LGCs where renewable electricity is claimed on a nearby site or by a third-party customer.

## **Motion number 91 Balonne Shire Council QLD**

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to introduce legislation and supporting policy which requires proponents of renewable energy projects to make a local benefit contribution to the communities in which these projects are located through the following measures:

1. Mandatory notification process to local government for all renewable energy projects occurring within their area;
2. Robust community engagement frameworks which are inclusive of councils, community organisations and local leaders;
3. A community contribution fee, based on capacity, for all renewable energy projects to support better community outcomes; and
4. Access to Renewable Project Decommission Bonds in order to protect prime agricultural land and support better decommissioning of projects at an acceptable standard for the community.

### **NATIONAL OBJECTIVE**

The government's Powering Australia Plan is focused on creating jobs, cutting power bills, and reducing emissions by boosting renewable energy. Under this Plan a further \$1.9 billion Powering the Regions Fund will support Australian industry to decarbonise, develop new clean energy industries and help build Australia's new energy workforce.

In the October 2022-23 federal budget, record funding of approximately \$25 billion was committed to clean energy spending and projects to ensure the government can meet its net zero commitments by 2050.

### **KEY ARGUMENTS**

Driven by global commitments to emissions reductions and government policies and incentives, not surprisingly, there has been a surge in the number of renewable energy projects being developed across Australia. For example, in Queensland alone, there are over two hundred renewable projects in the planning phase which will deliver a 20-fold increase in renewable energy production. Whilst supportive of the economic stimulus these projects can bring, the number and scale of projects can quite often have unintended adverse impacts on local communities especially from a cumulative and social impact perspective.

The emergence of the resources sector in certain parts of Australia is a prime example of this challenge. A key lesson learnt is that emerging industries, such as the renewable energies industry must be able to co-exist with traditional industry sectors and support broader regional development goals such as workforce participation, population retention and growth as well as community cohesion.

As such, it is critical that government legislative and policy frameworks include adaptive measures which address any disbenefits that could occur over the lifecycle of renewable energy projects. Whilst it is hoped that the renewable energies sector will leave a positive legacy across all communities, at this point, there seems to be limited detail or substantial engagement with councils as to how this is to occur.

## **Motion number 92 North Sydney Council NSW**

**This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to provide grant assistance to councils to target increasing urban forest and tree canopy cover to address urban heat island effect, provide habitat and address net zero emissions targets.**

### **NATIONAL OBJECTIVE**

Australia's whole-of-economy Long-Term Emissions Reduction Plan is to achieve net zero emissions by 2050 and this is the responsibility of the Department of Climate Change, Energy and Water.

### **KEY ARGUMENTS**

Urban tree canopy is a form of green infrastructure providing shade, which reduces ambient temperatures and mitigates the heat island effect.

According to a recent RMIT report, more than half of Sydney's councils have lost urban forest cover since 2013. The loss of urban forest cover is consistent across the country. The decline in tree canopy has been attributed to development pressures, state government infrastructure projects, poor planning and a failure to value trees.

Protecting and increasing tree canopy has multiple benefits which include reducing summer peak temperatures and air pollution, providing wildlife corridors and habitat, protecting and enhancing biodiversity, providing visual relief and aesthetic benefits, and improving community well-being.

Whilst many councils in NSW and across Australia have developed urban greening strategies, local communities cannot do it alone. By working in partnership with local councils, the Federal Government will be able to move more quickly and effectively to develop and deliver initiatives to address to impacts of climate change and the increasing urban heat island effect which are being felt across the country.

## **Motion number 93 Gunnedah Shire Council NSW**

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to remove restrictions preventing the development of Nuclear Energy as a viable option in the production of base load electricity following the decommissioning of coal fired power stations throughout Australia.

### **NATIONAL OBJECTIVE**

To ensure the security of reliable base load electricity supply across the nation.

### **KEY ARGUMENTS**

Australia is rapidly transitioning to renewable energy sources and at the same time, decommissioning most of its coal fire power stations. These renewables are unable to deliver reliable base load power 24/7 thereby putting at risk our social and economic wellbeing due to potential power outages to domestic supply but more importantly disruption to Australia's manufacturing industries. In keeping with reducing Australia's carbon emissions, modern nuclear energy power stations offer efficient low emissions base load power and have a small footprint compared to all the renewables. Australia has an abundance of uranium as the fuel source. Nuclear power production has development exponentially since its early days and is now considered to be safe and reliable with nations such as Germany and France leading the way. In the first instance, it is time Australian Government allowed an informed and mature debate on the subject. Further the federal government needs to remove legislative restrictions so that investment proposals and opportunities can be explored within our shores.

## **Motion number 94 Leeton Shire Council NSW**

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to partner with state and territory governments to provide greater assistance with energy expenditure in rural, regional, and remote Australia, including regulating the energy market and improving the financial criteria of grants to make them more achievable for local government to deliver projects.

### **NATIONAL OBJECTIVE**

The objective is to increase the regulation of the energy market to ensure it is accessible and financially viable for all communities and provide financial assistance via grants that ensure energy savings projects are achievable for local government.

### **KEY ARGUMENTS**

- Currently, federal government provides significant funding to state and territory governments, however, the funding grants released often require substantial co-

contributions from councils and/or restrict the scope of the work the council can undertake;

- The energy market has seen unprecedented rises over the past twelve months and is expected to continue to rise regulation is required to ensure energy markets are affordable to councils and residents and should be developed in a way to protect the consumers;
- Accelerating Australia's shift to renewable energy and energy storage is the key to putting downward pressure on wholesale electricity costs, contributing to cost-of-living relief, and ensuring our nation meets its CO2 reduction targets. Currently grants made available to local government to deliver on these projects do not provide enough financial buy in to support the completion of the projects; and
- Enabling councils to reduce their energy related financial liabilities will put local government in better positions for supporting, growing, and maintaining the respective communities.



# COMMUNITY WELLBEING

## Motion number 95 Brimbank City Council VIC

This National General Assembly acknowledges the Australian Government's support of constitutional recognition for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders through a Voice to Parliament and recognises what the Uluru Statement and the Voice to Parliament will mean for Australia's First Nations peoples and the broader Australian community.

### NATIONAL OBJECTIVE

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have a long and continuing connection to the lands and waters of Australia. The community has for many years lobbied government to have their voice represented at parliament. The knowledge of Indigenous Peoples is very important because it assists governments to implement policies and programs that create interconnectedness between people and nature. The Voice would help close the Indigenous disadvantage gap allowing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people determine laws, policies and services that impact on their lives.

### KEY ARGUMENTS

The Uluru Statement from the Heart is an invitation to the Australian people from First Nations Australians. It asks Australians to walk together to build a better future by establishing a First Nations Voice to Parliament enshrined in the Constitution, and the establishment of a Makarrata Commission for the purpose of treaty making and truth-telling. For more information, please visit: <https://ulurustatement.org/the-statement/>.

Constitutional recognition through a Voice to Parliament is a body enshrined in the Constitution that would enable Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders people to provide advice to the Parliament on policies and projects that impact their lives. It is anticipated that the Voice to Parliament will have a total of twenty-four members and include representatives from all Australian state and territories as well as the Torres Strait Islands. For more information, please visit: <https://fromtheheart.com.au/>.

In 2022, the Albanese government committed to implementing the Uluru Statement from the Heart in full. The Prime Minister has advised that a referendum (on an alteration to the Constitution that establishes an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Voice) will be held in the next financial year between July 2023 and June 2024. The federal government will invest \$75.1 million to promote and support the referendum.

The role of local government in the Voice to Parliament is yet to be determined. The Australian Local Government Association (ALGA) and Municipal Association of Victoria (MAV) are yet to release policy statements or make submissions.

## Motion number 95.1 City of Holdfast Bay SA

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to note the local government sector's respectful support for the wishes of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders in relation to the voice to parliament;

1. Provide resources and support to councils to actively pursue and promote community dialogue with their Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities;
2. Meet the requests of the Uluru Statement from the Heart;
3. Ensure the adoption of an anti-racism policy in every federal agency, in line with the work being done by the Australian Human Rights Commission; and
4. Encourage all state and territory governments to adopt anti-racism policies across all agencies.

### NATIONAL OBJECTIVE

Theme 3 of the NGA prospectus asks, 'are there new programs the Australian Government could develop that would support councils to close the gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians?'

In 2017, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people gave an answer to this question. The Uluru Statement from the Heart was issued as an invitation to all Australians, from First Nations Australians to walk together to build a better future by establishing a First Nations Voice to Parliament enshrined in the Constitution, and the establishment of a Makarrata Commission for the purpose of treaty making and truth-telling.

In the 2021 census, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people represented 3.2% of the population, down from 100% prior to 1788. In 235 years, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people went from sovereignty over their country to fighting for basic recognition.

In 2023, Australians will have their say in a referendum on whether to include an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Voice to Parliament. As part of the journey of truth-telling and redressing the ongoing impacts of past events, it is incumbent on all governments to show leadership by supporting and amplifying the voices of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in this dialogue.

### KEY ARGUMENTS

There is evidence of human occupation on the continent of Australia dating back some 65,000 years. Yet our system of government, prevailing cultural norms and social constructs are all much younger. The nation of Australia commenced at the time of federation from 1 January 1901. But prior to our current six states and ten territories, there were some 250 nations and associated languages existing across the Australian continent and its adjacent islands, possessing the land under their own laws and customs. These nations were not acknowledged by the European settlers who landed on their shores, despite having Regal instructions in some places to do so. There is nothing to be gained by judging past actions but in the spirit of Tiati Wangkanthi Kumangka (truth-telling together), it is vital to respectfully acknowledge the truth of actions and their consequences, as well as seeking to redress their

ongoing impacts. Since European settlers arrived, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have been displaced, disenfranchised, marginalised, and decimated.

Cultures have been suppressed and much damage has been inflicted on nations and individuals by successive governments and various organisations charged with the care of First Nations people. Social and physical structures brought in and created by settlers, coupled with policies and actions taken in relation to, 'Aboriginal Affairs' and initially keeping Australia white more generally, have created a legacy of systemic racism and many forms of unwitting discrimination.

Lands, waters, plants, and animals have been used, in many places beyond their capacity, and often without respect for their spiritual and cultural associations. The long-term custodians who never ceded sovereignty were impelled, at times with brutality, at other times with poorly executed good intentions, to give up their culture, identities, and ways of life. But what is some two hundred years in the face of sixty millennia? While there are multiple generations of trauma and attendant disadvantage that need to be addressed, the ancient sovereignty that binds Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island people to their countries cannot be extinguished.

As the Uluru Statement from the Heart states, 'We seek constitutional reforms to empower our people and take a rightful place in our own country'. It is not an unreasonable request for the original inhabitants of the land to be acknowledged as such and have their right to self-determination enshrined in perpetuity.

At its best, government can be the champion of progressive change. Leadership matters - both for what it does and does not do. Reconciliation of the past and a future free from racism must be a joint and collaborative endeavour, undertaken in a spirit of truth-telling together. However, there can be no truth-telling if Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people do not have an inherent, protected, and lasting right to have their voices heard within the fabric of our governance systems, and power over their own destiny.

The dialogue that moves our nation to this state of mature collaboration requires the amplification of the voices of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in all communities. (Many of these arguments are taken from <https://ulurustatement.org>, as the words of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are the most appropriate to represent their interests. Also referenced is the City of Holdfast Bay's Anti-Racism Policy, available online.)

## Motion number 95.2 Merri-bek City Council VIC

**This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to acknowledge the gift of the Uluru Statement from the Heart given by our First Nations communities and so ensuring:**

- 1. A strong campaign is delivered to amend the national constitution establishing an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander voice to parliament and the executive government on matters relating to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, and;**

## 2. 'Makarrata Commission' to supervise a process of agreement-making and truth-telling between governments and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

### NATIONAL OBJECTIVE

Constitutional recognition through a Voice to Parliament will deliver real and practical advice to parliament and the government on how laws and policies can best improve the lives of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. The Uluru Statement calls for real and lasting structural change to our current systems of authority and decision making, rather than surface changes to existing systems. It is a path forward for justice and self-determination for First Nations peoples in this country. All levels of government, including local government, must play a key role in this change.

### KEY ARGUMENTS

The Uluru statement was agreed to in 2017 by a convention of more than 250 First Nations peoples after an inclusive and rigorous process of regional dialogues. It proposes a First Nations Voice to Parliament to guide a passage both to a new, 'coming together' and to the clear articulation of the long-suppressed truth.

It asks for a secure mechanism whereby the voices of First Nations peoples can at last be heard, by each other, by the parliament and by the wider Australian public.

The Voice can lay a foundation for a movement towards reconciliation and truth, and also act as a tool to craft novel solutions to the problems created by the unique circumstances of Australia's history and culture.

The Statement also proposes the Aboriginal concept of Makarrata, which refers to a process of learning from the past to create new ways of interacting with each other based on dialogue.

Establishing the Voice, and Makarrata will lead to immediate, important outcomes. It will set the scene for addressing the centuries of injustice, create an effective process to address the intergenerational disadvantage many communities suffer, help overcome the historical exclusion of First Nations people from public forums, offer an important symbolic gesture of acknowledgement and recognition.

A Voice will also mean the government will have better quality information about First Nations communities and issues, delivered directly by a body of First Nations representatives. Detailed and nuanced information from communities themselves will result in better quality laws and policies. This will mean resource allocation is more accurately targeted. Better laws mean improved outcomes - across all metrics, including health, housing, criminal justice, and education.

## Motion number 95.3 Newcastle City Council NSW

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to continue to demonstrate strong leadership in support of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples by supporting constitutional recognition for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, implementing the 'Uluru Statement from the Heart,' and pursuing a national referendum regarding the Indigenous voice to parliament in the following terms:

"Do you support an alteration to the constitution that establishes an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander voice?"

### **NATIONAL OBJECTIVE**

To give voice to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples by ensuring that government is informed by lived experience, insight, and expertise of ATSI people. To demonstrate the unified support of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, by local government as the closest level of government to community.

### **KEY ARGUMENTS**

The Uluru Statement from The Heart is a call by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people for real and practical change in Australia through the establishment of a constitutionally enshrined Voice To Parliament and the establishment of a Makarrata Commission, to undertake treaty-making and truth-telling. The Uluru Statement From the Heart represents an historic consensus of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. A Voice to Parliament will give Indigenous communities a route to help inform policy and legal decisions that impact their lives. Giving people a say will lead to more effective results. Embedding a Voice in the Constitution would recognise the special place of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in Australia's history, but importantly would also mean that it cannot be shut down by successive governments.

## Motion number 95.4 Maribyrnong City Council VIC

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to better acknowledge First Nation people's experience of January 26, including considering changing the date of Australia's national day and better inclusion of First Nations history in citizenship tests.

### **NATIONAL OBJECTIVE**

For some people January 26 is a time to celebrate all that it means to be Australian. However, for many First Nations People this day signifies the beginning of dispossession, destruction of culture and the separation from families.

### **KEY ARGUMENTS**

Consideration should be given to implementing actions that are more inclusive and respectful of all people's experience of Australia's National Day.

## **Motion number 96 Leeton Shire Council NSW**

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to urgently address the health services crisis in rural Australia and to strengthen/support rural health delivery by:

1. Fast-tracking work visas for doctors, nurses, and allied health workers;
2. Eliminating unnecessary obstacles to doctor eligibility to work in Australia; and
3. Proactively concierging expressions of interest from international doctors who want to work in rural Australia.

### **NATIONAL OBJECTIVE**

The objectives are

- to re-structure the visa regime to prioritise and fast track work visas for doctors, nurses, and allied health workers (like physios) to be deployed in rural/regional areas.
- to streamline processes attending to doctor practice eligibility.
- to reassess Australia's overly stringent requirements for doctors from some countries to retrain before being eligible to work in Australia.

### **KEY ARGUMENTS**

- Streamlining and prioritising medical doctor, nurse and allied health worker visa applications is essential, most especially for those who have secured placements in rural/regional areas but also for those interested to live and work in rural Australia.
- This could be addressed by delegating health visa decisions to state and territory governments or RDAs where applications are complete and medical qualifications are verified could further be strengthened by reimbursing successful applicants and providing additional financial incentives to live and work in rural and remote Australia.
- Incentivising doctor deployment to rural/regional areas through relocation support and tax benefits needs urgent consideration.
- Simplifying the process of overseas doctor skill recognition to quicken the registration process is imperative.
- Currently the system is not 'user-friendly'. While the step of getting medical qualifications approved is relatively simple, registration is complex and there is no direct or simple path of enquiry to guide interested doctors. In Leeton, as an example, we have submitted the CVs of five international doctors to the local health district without any outcome. The Health District expects all doctors to be fully registered and accredited ahead of making application. Instead, there should be a national concierge system that assesses the enquiring doctors' skillsets and tailors' opportunities for them to work safely, including matching their abilities with local needs as well as the health district capabilities to supervise and develop those doctors (where required). Setting up pathways for international doctor professional development after first arriving in Australia will foster and fast track their ability to work more autonomously and independently in small rural towns that are desperate for medical staff.

- While safety is paramount, one has to question why, for example, South African doctors from certain universities can work in Ireland, but Australia requires all South Africa doctors to do additional exams before being allowed to work. This is an impediment to attracting doctors to work and live in rural Australia. After 6+plus years of study, they would rather move to a country that wants them than sit more exams.
- Facilitating regional/rural training networks to broaden avenues for specialist doctor training in rural areas including modelling career paths with incremental rewards is important.
- Structuring cohesive programs to allow rural doctors to work seamlessly across private practice and public hospitals is critical.

## Motion number 96.1 Campaspe Shire Council VIC

**This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to provide long term investment for programming and services to improve the health and wellbeing outcomes for communities in regional areas.**

### **NATIONAL OBJECTIVE**

Long-term investment in mental health services, training, and programs to support regional communities is a critical national issue that should be debated. Mental health problems are on the rise across Australia and in particular with people living in rural and regional communities at a higher risk of developing mental health issues due to unique challenges around access to services, lack of localised initiatives and socio-economic disadvantage.

The economic impact of mental health conditions is significant and investing in long term, localised and sustainable mental health services and programs can help reduce costs, improve outcomes, and reduce the burden on the healthcare system nationally.

It is vital that this issue is given the attention it deserves to ensure that investment in longer term funding models and whole of community resilience and capacity building activities can be delivered for all Australians.

### **KEY ARGUMENTS**

Regional areas have been impacted by the inconsistency of access to services and programming that specifically support and focus on the health and wellbeing of the community. Due to current funding being linked to election cycles, there are limited, to no, long-term investment in activities to support community mental health and wellbeing.

In regional areas it is known that mental health needs are on the rise, the rate of suicide is increasing and is way above the rate of Australia's capital cities. The per capita availability of mental health supports and access to funded mental health services decreases with remoteness. Any intervention that is focused upon the primary health needs of the individual and or the community requires long term investment.

Long term investment builds trust, the ability to create sustainable community networks and a platform for real change.

Often programming and or services, are cut short at the time it is starting to have traction in a community. Groups such as the Aboriginal community must build trust and relationships with any activity prior to deep and real engagement, the current structures in place do not allow for this.

Long term, ongoing investment in upstream preventative programs is the only way that this issue can be addressed successfully.

Local government call on the following:

- Long term investment for programs that deliver mental health services in rural areas and mental health training and education to support regional communities.
- Community wellbeing initiatives that are localised.
- Investments which support communities to build resilience or cope with adversities such as droughts, should not be subject to short-term or episodic investments. Rather, long term investments that assist communities to build a strong foundation of support for current and future adversities are needed.
- Investment in whole of community resilience and capacity building activities helping locals to build skills and identify the local assets, community development to build more local community champions and capacity to act when adversity occurs. Centred around culture change, this can include men sharing feelings, or a change in negative eating habits. All require regularity and consistent intervention.
- Longer-term contracts to Primary Health Networks (PHNs) and non-government organisations will provide consistency and certainty to service providers, enabling them to build trust with community members and make investments which allow the delivery of services efficiently in rural areas and undertake the necessary preparatory work with communities to handle severe or prolonged adversity when it occurs.

## Motion number 96.2 Shire of Morawa Council WA

**This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to urgently address critical shortages of general practitioners in outer metropolitan, regional, rural, and remote Australia and that the interim report of the Senate Community Affairs References Committee inquiry into the provision of general practitioner and related primary health services to outer metropolitan, rural, and regional Australians, tabled in April 2022 be referred to this parliament.**

### **NATIONAL OBJECTIVE**

The distribution of the primary health workforce is a significant issue in Australia's health system, and it is well known that those living in outer-metropolitan, regional, and rural areas have less access to timely and affordable primary health care and experience worse health outcomes than those in metropolitan areas.



## KEY ARGUMENTS

Australians are increasingly accessing primary health care at a rate that is outstripping supply, particularly in relation to appointments with general practitioners (GP). A functioning and well-distributed primary health system can prevent more serious illnesses, reduce presentations at hospital emergency departments, and improve health outcomes for individuals and communities; however, this is failing to occur.

The Senate Committee Inquiry Interim Report recognised that the responsibility for health care is multi-jurisdictional. However, it is clear that the current division between federal, state and territory governments is failing to recognise and meet the needs of communities. Neither the federal or state governments are taking proper responsibility for the provision of GPs and other primary health professionals.

Local governments are being forced to fill the gaps caused by a lack of federal and state ownership being taken for the responsibility to provide primary health services. The costs of providing medical services vary across local governments but the argument remains that local councils should not have to fundraise or impose rate increases on their communities to support these services when there are both federal and state mechanisms in place to ensure the health of the nation.

The Senate Committee received evidence from several local governments, similar to Morawa, and the lengths they have taken to ensure their communities are provided with access to primary health care, as well as programs and incentives they developed to attract and retain health professionals in their communities.

The Committee expressed grave concern that local councils have been left to fill the gaps caused by a lack of federal and state responsibility to provide primary health services.

On 10 April 2022, the Governor-General prorogued the 46th Parliament and dissolved the House of Representatives. After due consideration, and in light of the committee's substantive interim report tabled on 1 April 2022, the Committee determined that it is unable to provide a comprehensive final report at this point in time. However, the Committee considered there is merit for this inquiry to be re-referred to the Committee in the new Parliament.

Given the Shire has recently been through a GP recruitment process and understand the angst and anxiety the risk of not having a GP, places on a community, the Shire of Morawa seems well placed to submit a motion to the NGA on this matter calling for the Australian Government to urgently address critical GP shortages and complete the inquiry report for long term solutions.

# **Motion number 97 South Burnett Regional Council QLD**

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to conduct an enquiry into the primary health care crisis and specifically the decline in the number of general practitioners.

## **NATIONAL OBJECTIVE**

Community wellbeing

## **KEY ARGUMENTS**

Our council has been approached by Medical Practitioners across our region and they have identified the dire need for more General Practitioners and a range of associated issues that are placing the already overloaded primary health care system under greater and increased stresses. Our lived experience is reflected in the AMA 2022 report, 'The General Practitioner workforce: why the neglect must end'. The following is quoted directly from this report:

The projected considerable shortfall in GP supply has been reported to be due to underlying factors such as:

- Negative perceptions and decreasing prestige of general practice among medical students
- Limited opportunities to experience and gain skills in general practice in medical school and pre-vocational training which leads to a lack of interest in GP training programs
- General practice training not being prioritised in medical school over prerequisite prevocational training rotations such as paediatrics
- Disparity in remuneration between GP registrars compared to their hospital counterparts and inadequate Medicare rebates for general practice (attributed to a lack of training and funding reform and years of no or low MBS indexation)
- Ineffectual leave conditions for GP trainees and;
- Inflexibility of general practice training.

An urgent enquiry is needed to explore these issues for the future of our communities.

## **Motion number 97.1 Forbes Shire Council NSW**

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to extend the HELP for rural doctors and nurse practitioners initiative to all health professionals and teachers who commit to working in rural, remote, or very remote communities.

## **NATIONAL OBJECTIVE**

According to the National Skills Commission 2022 Skills Priority List Key Findings Report, health professionals and teachers are amongst the most in-demand professionals in the Australian workforce, nationally. Health and educational services nation-wide have faced increasing recruitment challenges in recent years, particularly in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic.

## **KEY ARGUMENTS**

Students who are Australian citizens, on a New Zealand Special Category Visa or a permanent humanitarian visa are able to access the HECS-HELP loan program if they are enrolled in a Commonwealth Supported Place (CSP) at a higher education institution. HECS-HELP loans are used to pay for the 'student contribution amount' of tertiary education fees.

Compulsory repayments are income based and commence, in 2022-23, when an individual begins to earn \$48,361 gross. If an individual is self-employed, they pay their HECS-HELP debt when they lodge their tax return.

According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics, the average HECS debt balance in the 2020-2021 financial year was \$23,685. As of the 2020-21, 2.9 million people in Australia have HECS-HELP debt. As of 2020-21, 27,238 people have a HECS-HELP debt of more than \$100,000

HECS-HELP debt places a significant financial burden on recent graduates and early-career professionals. Programs to alleviate HECS-HELP debt burdens are therefore likely to be attractive to recent graduates and young professionals.

In February 2023, the Higher Education Support Amendment (2022 Measures No. 1) Bill 2022, the supporting legislation for the national HELP for Rural Doctors and Nurse Practitioners Initiative, passed both houses of federal parliament. The program uses the Modified Monash Model 3 to 7 count to classify locations as rural, remote, or very remote. The program provides incentives including the waiver of indexation of HELP debts and the payment of up to 100% of outstanding HELP debt balances to promote qualified Doctors and Nurse Practitioners to move to rural, remote, or very remote locations.

Difficulties in recruiting and retaining Registered Nurses and Teachers in rural, remote, and very remote locations are well documented. Through extending this attractive program to registered nurses and teachers, the federal government would be able to provide an attractive incentive to recent graduates and young professionals.

## **Motion number 97.2 Cootamundra-Gundagai Regional Council NSW**

**This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to fast track overseas trained doctors to the regions.**

## **NATIONAL OBJECTIVE**

Overseas doctors have for many years served our rural and regional communities well in the past and in many towns are still providing primary health care to smaller rural and regional communities. We are currently facing a severe shortage of GP's, particularly in the regions. We call on the federal government to issue work visas immediately on overseas trained doctors that successfully pass the Australian Medical exams, to fast-track GPs to the regions.

## **KEY ARGUMENTS**

It has been reported that in the next five years 20% of rural doctors will retire. It will take many years to train up local doctors to meet the future shortage. Currently regional practices have to pay up to \$4000 a day for locums to keep their practice open if they want or have to take leave.

## **Motion number 97.3 Tenterfield Shire Council NSW**

**This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to increase priority to visa application processing for rural and regional health and education professional (currently fast tracking these for the cities within 25 days, but for rural and regional areas 18 months).**

## **NATIONAL OBJECTIVE**

Finally motion iv) is a direct result of the shortage of health and professional workforce (including the local government Workforce). As a rural, remote and regional council, Tenterfield is centrally located to other larger centres approximately 2.5 - 3 hrs away. Regardless of the proximity to larger centres we still encounter a shortage in experienced staff in the areas of engineering, workplace health & safety as well as local government. Housing can also represent an issue, as a shortage in suitable rental properties or homes to purchase, have been issues in the past with new staff moving from larger centres to town.

## **KEY ARGUMENTS**

Finally motion iv) is a direct result of the shortage of health and professional workforce (including the local government workforce). As a rural, remote and regional council, Tenterfield is centrally located to other larger centres approximately 2.5 - 3 hrs away. Regardless of the proximity to larger centres we still encounter a shortage in experienced staff in the areas of engineering, workplace health & safety as well as local government. Housing can also represent an issue, as a shortage in suitable rental properties or homes to purchase, have been issues in the past with new staff moving from larger centres to town.

## Motion number 97.4 Shire of Toodyay Council WA

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to:

1. Urgently address critical shortages of general practitioners in regional, rural, and remote Australia;
2. Refer the report of the Senate Community Affairs References Committee inquiry into the provision of general practitioner and related primary health services to outer metropolitan, rural, and regional Australians, tabled in April 2022, to this parliament; and
3. Determine a maximum subsidy amount to be paid by local governments for the provision of general practitioners to halt the increasing burden on regional, rural, and remote Australian communities.

### **NATIONAL OBJECTIVE**

The distribution of the primary health workforce is a significant issue in Australia's health system. It is well known that those living in outer-metropolitan, regional, and rural areas have less access to timely and affordable primary health care and experience worse health outcomes than those in metropolitan areas.

The burden of providing access to medical services in rural and regional areas is increasingly being devolved to local governments and their ratepayers; caused by a lack of federal and state ownership being taken for the responsibility to provide primary health services.

It is imperative that federal decisions regarding funding and services for the provision of GPs consider the additional challenges that regional and remote communities face in attracting and retaining medical services.

The Senate Committee Inquiry Interim Report recognised that the responsibility for health care is multi-jurisdictional. The division between federal, state and territory governments is failing to recognise and meet community needs; pushing the burden to local governments.

Costs of providing medical services vary across local government areas but the argument remains that local governments should not have to fundraise or impose rate increases on their communities to support these services which are the responsibility of the federal government.

### **KEY ARGUMENTS**

This issue is being raised due to the issue of the provision and shortage of General Practitioners (GPs) in outer metropolitan, regional, and rural areas.

The distribution of the primary health workforce is a significant issue in Australia's health system, and it is well known that those living in outer-metropolitan, regional, and rural areas have less access to timely and affordable primary health care and experience worse health outcomes than those in metropolitan areas.

Discussions with GPs and other local governments demonstrate that the burden of providing access to medical services in rural and regional areas is increasingly being devolved to local governments and their ratepayers. Consultation with other local governments has identified that GPs in rural and regional local government areas are seeking the following as a minimum;

- Fully subsidised and maintained premises with furniture, best practice IT, communications and medical equipment included;
- Fully subsidised housing for 1-2 doctors;
- Provision of a fully maintained vehicle for 1-2 doctors; and
- A cash subsidy/income guarantee up to \$200,000 per annum.

At best, this would incur a cost of around \$160,000 per annum for one doctor (not including start-up costs) even if housing were available, which it is not in Toodyay.

Toodyay's population has an average age of 54 years, one of the oldest demographics in Western Australia, consisting mostly of retirees. The importance of access to medical services for this cohort of people cannot be underestimated and yet, to access a GP, they face a rate increase of up to 5% for the provision of a single, necessary service. Located so close to Perth, Toodyay has more chance than most Wheatbelt towns of attracting a doctor. However, like much of the country, Toodyay and surrounds suffer from a chronic lack of available housing. Therefore, even if a GP can be persuaded to start up a practice, there is no accommodation available in town.

The motion is intended to raise awareness of the challenges faced in regional and remote areas and the unsustainable burden being placed on local governments to provide what city residents would consider an essential service. Australians are increasingly accessing primary health care at a rate that is outstripping supply, particularly in relation to appointments with general practitioners (GP). A functioning and well-distributed primary health system can prevent more serious illnesses, reduce presentations at hospital emergency departments, and improve health outcomes for individuals and communities; however, this is failing to occur. Local governments are being forced to fill the gaps caused by a lack of federal and state ownership being taken for the responsibility to provide primary health services.

The costs of providing medical services vary across local governments but the argument remains that local councils should not have to fundraise or impose rate increases on their communities to support these services which are the responsibility of the federal government. The motion has been endorsed by council:

<https://www.toodyay.wa.gov.au/council-meetings/ordinary-council-meetings/ordinary-council-meeting/537>

## **Motion number 98 City of Bayswater Council WA**

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to support the ongoing financial sustainability of local governments by appropriately funding their delivery of infant immunisations to the community.

### **NATIONAL OBJECTIVE**

For appropriate funding to be made available to local governments for the delivery of infant immunisations.

### **KEY ARGUMENTS**

- Infant immunisation services help to reduce the number of cases of disease in Australia which are preventable by vaccination (i.e., Diphtheria, Tetanus, Pertussis, Polio, Measles, Mumps, Rubella, Hepatitis B, Chickenpox, Influenza, Pneumococcal, Meningococcal Group ACWY).
- Local governments are moving towards 'proactive' rather than 'reactive' public health. Immunisations are considered to be an effective 'proactive' measure in protecting public health; particularly in light of the recent COVID-19 outbreak.
- The immunisations administered through local governments with appropriate funding would contribute towards national immunisation targets, especially the service being more convenient for community members resulting in higher presentation rates. This would in turn reduce the pressure on medical centres (and hospitals), enabling them to focus on other healthcare matters.

## **Motion number 99 Cardinia Shire Council VIC**

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to conduct a review into the funding mechanism that addresses financial vulnerability and wellbeing nationally and establish a dedicated fund that councils can access to address the financial vulnerability and wellbeing within communities.

### **NATIONAL OBJECTIVE**

Financial vulnerability is an increasing issue across the Country with the current rate of inflation and increasing interest rates is putting increasing pressures on residents. The national formula for the provision of financial crisis and material aid, Financial Counselling and Financial Capability funding is leaving our communities behind.

### **KEY ARGUMENTS**

Financial security means basic living costs are met for housing, food, transport, health, and education. A household experiencing financial stress is not able to meet basic costs which can affect being able to participate fully in the community, having significant impacts on health and wellbeing.

A third of our population are experiencing some form of financial hardship, but do not have access to supports and services locally:

The national formula for the provision of financial crisis and material aid, Financial Counselling and Financial Capability funding is leaving our community behind.

Of the seventeen organisations Department of Social Services (DSS) funds for Cardinia Shire, less than a third operate directly in our community, and the organisations that do have limited capacity and sporadic presence. The previous federal government extended existing DSS funding arrangements until 2025, without consideration of local need and population growth. Cardinia Shire does not have a service model (such as Community Information and Support Service) that can provide timely advice, referrals and case-management for people experiencing different elements across the spectrum of financial hardship and vulnerability, despite two being funded in our neighbouring municipality.

Residents are currently:

- Expected to present to services outside the municipality
- Faced with inadequate or incomplete referrals
- Experience long waiting periods whilst their situation escalates to crisis
- Dependent on predominately volunteer run, charitable and faith-based organisations, which do not have resourcing, capacity, or training to provide holistic or consistent support.

The previous government's funding approach is not efficient, and a review is now desperately overdue. Our communities need a funding and service model with a prevention lens that builds financial wellbeing and resilience, rather than ad hoc and inconsistent support, which perpetuates the cycle of disadvantage. Particularly in this time of increased cost of living pressure.

Council is seeking:

- Review the federal government's existing regional funding model in place until 2025, with a view to develop a Municipal specific funding model that reflects population growth and local evidence;
- Establish a state-wide service model that aligns to the federal funding model to establish strong partnerships with services across the financial crisis and material aid, financial counselling and financial capability sector.
- Municipal funding model to provide additional funding for the organisations listed under DSS service types of financial crisis and material aid, financial counselling, and financial capability to operate programs directly across local municipalities,

There is currently only one option for people in Cardinia Shire to present for financial crisis and material aid. The program is largely dependent on philanthropic funding and is not sustainably resourced by either the state or federal government to meet the growing complexity of need and diversity in our community. This service currently sees over forty-five presentations each week of people and families in financial and housing crisis.



## **Motion number 100 Shoalhaven City Council NSW**

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to work with state governments on a new approach to addressing the gap in provision and access to mental health and wellbeing services between those living in regional/rural Australia versus those living in metropolitan areas, particularly for young people.

### **NATIONAL OBJECTIVE**

Shoalhaven City Council supports local government NSW's call for 'increased funding for specialised and appropriate youth and community wellbeing and mental health services to bolster resilience, particularly following disaster'. This is a priority issue for regional areas where data indicates, that in regional Australia, and in regional NSW, the mental health experiences of the population are significantly poorer than those in greater cities.

- Regional Australia has 1.2 times the rate of long-term mental health conditions compared with the greater capital cities (10.0% for Regional Australia, 8.1% for the Greater Capital Cities) ABS Census (2021)
- Regional NSW has 1.6 times the rate of long-term mental health conditions compared with Greater Sydney (10.6% for Regional NSW, 6.6% for Greater Sydney) ABS Census (2021)

It is also important to note that these challenges are compounded for young people in regional areas across the country. According to Beyond Blue, mental health conditions are experienced by one in seven young people aged four to 17 years in any given year. Half of all the mental health conditions experienced at some point in our lives will have started by age 14 and over 75% of mental health problems occur before the age of twenty-five.

### **KEY ARGUMENTS**

Shoalhaven City Council's Community Strategic Plan identifies the increased prevalence of mental health issues amongst our community and sets out the key priority area: Resilient, Safe, Accessible & Inclusive Communities through supporting community wellbeing by fostering active and healthy communities. To do this Shoalhaven City Council is committed to advocating for improved resourcing to meet the growing mental health needs of regional communities. Local governments are well connected with local Health Districts and community health services and are at the forefront of responding to community identified needs and gaps in broader service provision. This is a target cohort for intervention service support and yet young people in regional areas consistently report barriers to accessing mental health services. The Office for Regional Youth's Youth Insights Report identified that mental health support was one of the top priorities of concern for young people in Regional NSW, particularly the need to increase the availability and reach of mental health support in the state. Rural and Remote Mental Health (RRMH) identified that there has been increased inequity and disparity between rural/remote and metropolitan Australia's access to mental health support. Roughly a quarter of the population lives outside major cities, but funding is disproportionately allocated to city-centric organisations. Per capita availability of mental

health supports and access to Medicare Benefits Schedule (MBS) as funded mental health services decrease with remoteness, this is further impacted by growing populations in regional areas putting a strain on existing health and wellbeing services:

- In Australia between 2019 and 2021, regional areas close to population centres grew at nearly three times (2.9) the rate of major cities (population for Inner Regional Australia grew 2.96%, compared with 1.04% for Major Cities of Australia) ABS Census (2019-2021)
- In NSW between 2019 and 2021, regional areas close to population centres grew at over five times (5.1) the rate of major cities (population for Inner Regional NSW grew 2.23%, compared with 0.44% for Major Cities of NSW) ABS Census (2019-2021)

## **Motion number 101 Derwent Valley Council TAS**

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to ensure adequate and accessible funding and a nationwide delivery plan for mental health services to persons living in regional and remote areas of Australia.

### **NATIONAL OBJECTIVE**

The Options Discussion Paper for the Tasmanian Future of Local Government review:

The future of local government December 2022 clearly states that supporting wellbeing 'is core business for local government'.

Health and Wellbeing (including Mental Health) are a key focus of local government. A significantly higher proportion of Tasmanians are living with a long-term mental health condition compared to the rest of the country, according to the latest census data, 2021. 8.8 per cent of Australians 'around 2.3 million people' reported to the 2021 census that they had a long-term mental health condition. In Tasmania, that figure is 11.5 per cent, just under 64,000 people. Many people living in rural and remote communities will not have access to face-to-face mental health support services. The census shows the median weekly income in Tasmania is \$701, compared to \$805 nationally.

- At 42, Tasmanians are also 'on average' a little older than the rest of the nation (38) and suffer from other chronic illnesses at a higher rate.
- When we see a higher level of chronic illnesses, it is generally in cohort with a higher level of conditions like anxiety and depression.
- According to the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, the number of Tasmanians accessing Medicare-funded mental health support went from just 4.9 per cent of the population in 2008-09 to 10.2.

## KEY ARGUMENTS

Tasmania's population is one of the most regionally dispersed of any state or territory and has the highest proportion of its population residing outside the greater capital city. The National criteria for remoteness do not necessarily capture the complex demographics of the geography of a small state. 11.5 per cent of Tasmanians reported living with a long-term mental health condition. Experts say Tasmania's de-centralised population makes it harder for people to access support. A shortage of mental health professionals is making it hard to cope with an increase in demand.

Due to COVID, over the past two years, Headspace has seen a significant increase in the number of young people reaching out for mental health support, and more young people than ever before are presenting to Headspace with complex mental health challenges. Many communities across Australia experience long waits to access services. The Australian Government can work in partnership with regional local governments to increase adequate and accessible funding, and therefore services in regional and remote areas of Australia. Currently, access to telephone hotlines is inadequate.

## **Motion number 102 Nillumbik Shire Council VIC**

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to provide funding for the delivery of flexible and dynamic youth outreach and support services for young people aged 12-25 years.

### NATIONAL OBJECTIVE

Community wellbeing

### KEY ARGUMENTS

Nillumbik Shire Council acknowledges the final report of the Royal Commission into Victoria's Mental Health system was tabled in Victorian Parliament on 2 March 2021. This has led to Victoria's new Mental Health and Wellbeing Act (the Act) being passed in Victorian Parliament in September 2022. Acknowledging that the implementation of the new Act is not due to commence until late 2023, local government is in need of urgent, short-term increased funding to address significant gaps and waiting lists in local mental health service provision. A dynamic, engaging, and targeted local youth outreach service to support young people who are at the very start of disengagement would provide the necessary intervention. Early identification, timely and appropriate supports and providing links to greater long-term support and stability will be key to improving mental health outcomes for young people in Nillumbik Shire.

## **Motion number 103 City of Onkaparinga Council SA**

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to address legacy issues in aged care/in-home support services offered through Commonwealth Home Support Programme that cause confusion for users and providers of the service, and that fail to deliver practical supports in the home to older people when they need it.

### **NATIONAL OBJECTIVE**

The aged care system is complex. Some people find it more difficult than others to navigate the system and access the services they need. A multitude of reviews and inquiries over more than 20 years have failed to resolve systemic issues. This is particularly evident in the ongoing failure to deliver practical supports in the home to older people in a timely manner, most notably the provision of cleaning and gardening services.

Operators within the industry have been highlighting an increasing lack of supply in such services for the past decade. The situation is now critical. Councils around Australia are regularly fielding enquiries from desperate older residents and their carers seeking in-home services. Many have been referred by My Aged Care.

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to resolve this issue once and for all, whether that be via solutions identified as part of the current review of in-home aged care or establishing a system for delivery of such services separate to current program structures.

### **KEY ARGUMENTS**

The complexity of the current aged care system makes it difficult for users and providers to navigate. This impedes clients' ability to access, and providers to deliver, the services needed. The situation is compounded by a lack of supply of certain services, particularly cleaning and gardening.

The Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality and Safety (the Royal Commission) provided an overview of 18 major public reports and inquiries since 1997 into publicly funded aged care programs, which it found have, 'not been able to resolve the underlying problems with a system that has failed to provide the Australian community with the assurance of quality and safety in aged care that it expects'. The Royal Commission also recognised that, 'supply does not meet demand' when it comes to aged care services.

My Aged Care is the single-entry point for people to identify and access aged care services. There have been longstanding calls for more localised and face-to-face support to better assist people navigate and access aged care. This was one of the recommendations of the Royal Commission, leading to the establishment of the Care finder program in January 2023.

Care finders should complement, not duplicate, the My Aged Care channels. Care finders specifically target senior Australians needing intensive support who could otherwise miss accessing in-home support altogether. Local councils are part of the Care finder network.

While it is still early days, many local councils have found that older people and referring organisations making contact (e.g., hospital, aged care assessment teams, other providers) are seeking support to find cleaners and gardeners. Local government has become the last resort for increasingly desperate people failed by the current system. Many of the referrals do not meet the Care finder program criteria, however councils feel compelled to assist because clients have nowhere left to turn.

On the day of writing this motion, the City of Onkaparinga was contacted by a customer seeking a cleaner for her elderly mother. The customer had been advised that My Aged Care had no cleaners in South Australia and was told to call her local council.

Although this is one anecdotal example, increasing lack of supply of in-home services has been identified by operators in the industry for more than a decade. An interrogation of data for My Aged Care requests for such services could quantify the issue and pinpoint services facing the greatest shortages. Such datasets could then inform potential solutions to this issue.

While local governments across Australia welcome the Australian Government's efforts to create a new program for in-home aged care, we remain concerned that legacy issues will persist. This is based on successive historical failures to resolve them. We call on the Australian Government to fix aged care once and for all.

Doing so would immeasurably improve the lives of older Australians. For local councils, it would enable a focus on delivery of our core services and functions under the Care finders' program, ensuring precious resources are not redirected.

## Motion number 103.1 City of Whittlesea Council VIC

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to:

1. Ensure providers have access to block/flexible funding to provide timely access to service as part of the in-home aged care program; and
2. Establish a framework and provide appropriate incentives for providers to take on a lead role for care management (care partner).

### NATIONAL OBJECTIVE

The new In-Home Aged care program seeks to address the issues outlined in the Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality and Safety (the Royal Commission), to better support older Australians. Wait times for care are too long, administration fees are too high, program arrangements are confusing, services are not always well targeted, and older Australians do not always get the help they need to support their independence. In addressing these issues, we should ensure that we do not inadvertently create others.

## KEY ARGUMENTS

The proposed In-Home Aged Care Program will see a shift from block funding to unit price funding. Services will be delivered on an activity-based funding basis. The prices for these activities will be set by the government and will cover the full cost of delivering that service. Payments to providers will be made once services have been delivered. The list of services is not comprehensive e.g., it excludes case management and rostering.

Under the proposed arrangement, service providers would have access to an additional pool of funds on top of an individual's budget to facilitate minor tops ups without needing a reassessment (set at around 25 per cent of the total cost of their clients' budgets each quarter). It would be up to the provider how this pool is spent across their clients, based on guidance about how to prioritise needs.

Planning for and retaining a sufficient level of qualified staff without the certainty of funding will be challenging and is likely to drive providers out of the market and reduce the number of providers and therefore consumer choice.

Consultation to date has referred to concepts such as care management functions, care partner role and care/service coordination. It will be important to define these concepts clearly and to outline the scope of practice of each. In addition, appropriate incentives would need to be put in place for providers to take on a lead role for care management in multi-provider support plan arrangements. Key considerations include:

- Appropriate remuneration for care management (grant type approach that can be drawn down upon).
- Established protocols/framework to support a multi-provider environment that amongst other things outlines sharing of proportionate risks in relation to clinical/ support services. This should also include a clear articulation of roles and responsibilities of the lead provider in circumstances where the care and support of the consumer is at risk of being compromised.
- Agreed information sharing arrangements between providers and how this will be facilitated by government. We would suggest that government invest in existing databases via MAC or Services Australia rather than develop additional ICT.
- Sufficient care management hours to cover case conferencing, reviews, follow-ups, care escalation etc...
- Secondary consultation and support via the assessment services to providers where acuity/complexity is high.

## **Motion number 104 Cumberland Council NSW**

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to:

1. Build an affordable, accessible, high quality, universal early education system; and
2. Undertake a broad consultation process with local government organisations in relation to this.

### **NATIONAL OBJECTIVE**

Sets children up for a great start in life. Ensure affordable early childhood education and care for communities. Helps working families to get ahead and builds community's economic prosperity by supporting workforce participation.

### **KEY ARGUMENTS**

A great Universal Early Education System will remove barriers to workforce participation for parents and provide a foundation for our children's future wellbeing and success.

## **Motion number 105 Berrigan Shire Council NSW**

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government and state governments to fund and support the delivery of such educational models as Country Universities Centres throughout regional and rural areas.

### **NATIONAL OBJECTIVE**

One of the noted ways in which the Productivity Commission's report indicated local governments could contribute to the productive capacity of the broader economy was through local government support of local labour markets, specifically by facilitating access to training. Though education is not a core service delivery of councils, our needs for access to professionally qualified staff reflect the needs of our communities. Councils are therefore often best placed in rural and remote communities, to work collaboratively with a range of providers to underpin the education options available to those in rural and remote areas. In rural and remote communities, it is often councils who provide supports such as facilities, advocacy, and even financial assistance to ensure access to education options are available in our communities.

### **KEY ARGUMENTS**

Though there is a growth in people studying at university across Australia, equitable access for those in rural and remote areas in particular is not being met by current models. As a result, rural and remote areas suffer the effects of youth moving from our areas and not returning on a scale not experienced in metro, urban, peri-urban, and even many regional areas. The loss of youth in rural and remote areas only increases the issues being faced in these areas of access to university qualified employees. The requirement of access to professional employees is no less important than it is in more populated regional, metro,

urban and peri-urban areas. Rural and remote communities still need engineers, accountants, nurses, doctors, teachers, etc... The difference is, in these communities we are forced to pay more to not only attract but retain these employees which places additional financial burden on businesses and councils in rural and remote areas. The federal government has previously identified at least 40 per cent of the community will require a bachelor's degree or higher level of education to sustain our economic growth and productivity into the future. The percentage of population with a bachelor's degree or higher when compared to major cities is considerably lower in rural and remote communities. Currently rural and remote areas report just 22.7 per cent attainment when compared to major cities which is at 44.6 per cent and well below the national average of 39.7 per cent. The Country Universities Centre model demonstrates the positive effects this model can have on communities through retention of those between 18 and 24 in local communities, providing access to university education for those in lower socio-economic groups and importantly increasing access for First Nations Peoples.

Country Universities Centres encourage local high value job creation by increasing local knowledge economy, they provide educational opportunities for professionals, partners and families who choose to move to our areas, and they encourage local academic and professional networks. All of these factors lead to stronger, more stable, and therefore more productive rural and remote areas. The Country Universities Centres program takes an innovative approach to improve access to tertiary education for regional and remote students. A Country Universities Centre is a facility that is community owned and operated and can be used to study tertiary courses from any tertiary institution whilst remaining in their local community. Centres have been established around Australia since 2018 and have proven to be sustainable and able to be integrated into existing infrastructure around the regions (council libraries, agriculture colleges, TAFE facilities etc).

## Motion number 105.1 Hay Shire Council NSW

**This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to support the establishment of Country University Centres (CUC's) in regional and rural Australia.**

### **NATIONAL OBJECTIVE**

Productivity Country University Centres contribute to better local labour markets by facilitating access to training. The Country Universities Centres (CUC's) are playing a crucial role in tertiary education and skills development in regional and rural areas. In doing so they are also supporting the supply of local labour into the very tight labour markets of many of the Country's regions, where employers in all industries are competing fiercely for workers in short supply. Anyone who is trying to recruit regionally know too well the shortage of qualified staff. Regional and rural communities deserve quality opportunities to pursue their dreams without the need to relocate. CUC's allow people the opportunity, breaking down barriers and opening doors to tertiary education that may seem out of reach to many. It brings with it the chance to transform lives and shape the future of communities.



## KEY ARGUMENTS

Country Universities Centres (CUC's) are offering over nine hundred different courses through 40 Australian Universities and Colleges, supporting local students to achieve their educational aspirations, and injecting knowledge and qualifications into the local workforce. The 2021 ABS statistics show that regional and rural areas are significantly behind the state in the percentage of the population with a degree or higher formal qualification, while are much higher in the percentage of people with no formal qualifications. The CUC is a dedicated learning and study space that have been designed for regional people by regional people. The students have free access to high-speed Internet, modern technology, and general academic support all delivered in their local CUC, with dedicated staff on hand to provide support. Students can build a network of like-minded fellow students and can take advantage of being part of a nation-wide learning community. CUCs are community owned and governed, with their own local board providing place-based solutions and aligning with regional strengths. Funded by a combination of federal, state and local governments in conjunction with philanthropic and university partnerships, CUC's have seen over \$3.8M in in-kind and community support to-date.

## Motion number 105.2 Isaac Regional Council QLD

**This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to further expand its support for the Regional University Centres Program to strengthen and expand the program to ensure Regional University Centres can be established in key areas where there are fundamental needs. This includes increasing the funding allocated and number of grant places available in the program.**

### NATIONAL OBJECTIVE

The Regional University Centres program aims to:

- Enable students in rural, regional, and remote Australia to access and complete higher education without having to leave their community.
- Meet a demonstrated gap in support for study in a regional, rural, or remote community.
- Support students who wish to stay in their community while they complete their course of study.
- Enhance the experience of students studying within their own community.
- Encourage strong links between the Centres, industry, and other organisations in the area, including other support services that students may access.
- Complement, rather than replace, existing and planned university investments and activities in regional areas, such as satellite campuses and study centres.

In 2022, \$25.6 million was committed to support the continued operation of the first 16 Centres from 2022-23 to 2025-26, however the additional funding for new centres is limited. There is an immediate need for the funding of reskilling, upskilling and support from the

federal government to ensure that the regions can support the changes impacting their regions. Providing improved access and conditions to complete higher education, vocational and further studies will allow residents to embrace new opportunities without having to leave their community.

## **KEY ARGUMENTS**

Regional, remote, and Indigenous communities deserve quality opportunities to pursue study without the need to relocate. Statistics have regularly shown that regional people are 50 per cent less likely to gain a Bachelor qualification compared to their metropolitan counterparts. Successful regional development is led by local communities and aligned with regional strengths. By supporting additional centres under the Regional University Program, the federal government will be supporting regional Australia's social sustainability.

Currently residents wishing to engage in tertiary or vocational education opportunities have to leave regional areas to complete their studies. Many of them do not return, or do not begin studies because they do not want to leave home. By providing opportunities for more Regional Universities, government can support population and workforce retention in these communities.

Each Centre is owned, governed, and driven by its local community through an independent Board of Directors. This framework provides for place-based learning solutions and empowers communities to become resilient. These Centres are able to identify and map the current and future skills in their communities as they are governed by local community representatives who are keen to improve the liveability and opportunities for regional, remote, and Indigenous regions. The local placed-based models ensure that the communities are sustainable and can stop the migration of youth out of their local communities to meet the workforce of the future. Regional University Centres established in areas of need will be critical for the support of current and future industry and current and future communities.

## **Motion number 106 Brisbane City Council QLD**

**This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to provide funding to local governments to prevent drownings.**

### **NATIONAL OBJECTIVE**

Drowning incidents in Australia is a matter of national concern. With an average of 283 deaths annually and a high number of non-fatal drowning incidents leading to hospitalisation, drowning has a profound impact on public health and the economy. The annual Royal Life Saving National Drowning Report (NDR) and the Australian Water Safety Strategy 2030 (AWSS) are initiatives aimed at reducing drowning and increasing water safety in Australia. The NDR provides information and recommendations for drowning prevention, while the AWSS is a national strategy that outlines a framework for action and includes a range of initiatives and actions to achieve its goal. Both make recommendations to improve water safety outcomes for Australians.

Local governments play a critical role on a local level in the implementation of the recommendations in these documents to addressing the issue of drowning. However, the success of these efforts depends on adequate funding. Proper funding will enable local governments to invest in essential water safety initiatives, including education and awareness programs, improved infrastructure, and supervision, and coordinated rescue and emergency response efforts.

## **KEY ARGUMENTS**

The prevention of unintentional drowning is crucial in reducing public health harm and the associated social and economic costs. Australia averages 283 deaths from unintentional drowning annually. For every fatality, three people are hospitalised from non-fatal drowning incidents. For children under five, eight hospitalisations occur for every death. Drownings cost the national economy around \$1.24 billion annually.

The AWSS is a nationally recognised plan overseen by the Australian Water Safety Council aimed at reducing drowning incidents nationally. The Royal Life Saving Society Australia provides annual drowning statistics and recommendations for drowning prevention that may serve as an essential reference point for developing initiatives under the AWSS.

Together, these documents provide valuable guidance and recommendations for local governments to implement measures to prevent drowning incidents:

- **Education and Awareness:** on water safety to local communities, particularly high-risk groups, such as children, seniors, and new immigrants.
- **Infrastructure and Supervision:** work to improve the infrastructure and supervision of swimming pools, beaches, and waterways to minimise the risk of drowning. This may involve installing fencing and signs, ensuring facilities are well-maintained and conducting proactive compliance audits.
- **Rescue and Emergency Response:** develop and implement plans for rescue and emergency response and ensure that appropriate equipment and training are in place.
- **Water Safety Planning:** develop and implement local water safety plans that consider the specific risks and challenges in the relevant local government areas.
- **Collaboration and Partnership:** collaboration with stakeholders, including surf lifesaving organisations, state and territory governments, and the Australian Government, to ensure a coordinated and effective approach to water safety.

Adequate funding for local governments is essential to effectively carry out these recommendations. Without proper funding, local governments may not have the resources necessary to implement measures that promote water safety and prevent drownings. Investing in local governments will ensure they are equipped to play a crucial role in enhancing the safety of the nation's waterways and swimming pools.

## Motion number 106.1 Cumberland Council NSW

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to:

1. Include the local government sector in its Australian Water Safety Strategy partnership;
2. Provide access and equity by funding local council programs to support and develop swimming, water safety and lifesaving skills in our local swimming pools.

### NATIONAL OBJECTIVE

Reduce drowning by 50% by 2030. Learn Swimming, water safety and lifesaving skills.

### KEY ARGUMENTS

- The Australian Water Safety Strategy 2030 aims to reduce drowning by 50% by 2030.
- It aims to do this by encouraging communities to create water safety plans and promote access to swimming and water safety skills for all Australians, including refugees, migrants and those living in regional areas.
- Despite this, in 2021/2022 drownings increased by 24%.
- Royal Lifesaving Australia is concerned that those who missed swimming lessons due to pandemic related health and economic factors may become a generation of non-swimmers.
- As local council swimming pools are the main site for learn-to-swim programs it is vital that funding be provided to boost access and equity to support and develop resident' water safety skills and knowledge.

## Motion number 106.2 Hawkesbury City Council NSW

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to run a multilingual national campaign highlighting the dangers of swimming in inland rivers and waterways and commits to funding local councils to improve signage and conduct water safety campaigns.

### NATIONAL OBJECTIVE

The motion addresses a national issue in that inland rivers and other waterways are a feature of local government areas across Australia. Local government areas are also populated with diverse cultural groups and people for whom English is a second language. The nature of the problem of drownings in rivers and other inland waterways is such that it requires a coordinated national response.

### KEY ARGUMENTS

The Hawkesbury River and other rivers in the Hawkesbury-Nepean Valley are features of the Hawkesbury local government area. The issue of inland waterway safety has been highlighted by incidents of river drownings.

Local government Research undertaken by Royal Lifesaving Australia and published in their Royal Life Saving National Drowning Report 2022 identified rivers and creeks to be the leading location for drownings in 2021-2022. That same report identifies a considerable increase in the number of drowning fatalities for that year compared with both the previous year (15% increase) and the 10-year average (24% increase).

A consistent and whole-of-community approach is necessary to address this national problem. This could include developing coordinated national campaigns in consultation with state and national bodies to ensure that these actions are informed by the most recent research into human behaviour, are consistent with broader campaigns relating to public education.

The motion is consistent the National General Assembly theme 3. Community Wellbeing.

## **Motion number 107 Greater Dandenong City Council VIC & Kingston City Council VIC**

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to:

1. Acknowledge and welcome the federal government's pathway to permanency for over 19,000 Temporary Protection Visas and Safe Haven Enterprise Visas holders;
2. Acknowledge the contrasting federal government policy towards the remaining 12,000 people who have been failed by, or are still subjected to the Fast Track Refugee Status Determination (RSD) process;
3. Acknowledge Greater Dandenong City Council as secretariat of the local government Mayoral Taskforce Supporting People Seeking Asylum on behalf of the following councils that are members:
  - a. Executive Members Brimbank City Council, Casey City Council, Darebin City Council, Hobsons Bay City Council, Hume City Council, Kingston City Council, Monash City Council, Merri-bek City Council, Yarra City Council;
  - b. General Members Ballarat City Council, Banyule City Council, Bendigo City Council, Blue Mountains City Council, Canterbury Bankstown City Council, Cardinia Shire Council, Hawkesbury City Council, Inner West City Council, Leeton Shire Council, Maribyrnong City Council, Melbourne City Council, Moonee Valley City Council, Nillumbik Shire Council, Port Phillip City Council, Randwick City Council, Wagga City Council, Whittlesea City Council, Wyndham City Council; and  
Supporter Councils Bass Coast Shire Council, Greater Geelong City Council, Hobart City Council, Launceston City Council, Macedon Ranges Shire Council, Maroondah City Council, Mornington Peninsula Shire Council, Borough of Queenscliffe, Wellington Shire Council, and Whitehorse City Council; and
4. Apply a consistent approach and to:

- a. **Replace the existing Fast Track system with a single Refugee Status Determination RSD process and an independent, timely and fair merits review; and**
- b. **Continue to invest resources to urgently clear the backlog of asylum applications/appeals in order to create an efficient system.**

## **NATIONAL OBJECTIVE**

The right to seek asylum is a human right and Australia operates a dedicated Humanitarian Program that offers resettlement for refugees and others overseas who are in humanitarian need, and protection for people who arrive in Australia and engage Australia's protection obligations. The Humanitarian Program should not be seen in isolation from Australia's broader Migration Program as research has shown that humanitarian entrants make long and lasting contributions to Australia society and economy.

## **KEY ARGUMENTS**

Local government plays a unique and critical role in the humanitarian settlement program. Local governments engage in actions to promote multiculturalism, social inclusion and ensure equitable access to their programs and services for all community members. Many are undertaking activities to welcome new migrant and refugee arrivals to their community and the wider Australian community, such as through becoming Refugee Welcome Zones.

The federal government has now provided a pathway to permanency for over 19,000 refugees determined under the 'Fast Track' system who held Temporary Protection or Safe Haven Enterprise Visas. There remains 12,000 people who have been failed or are still subjected to the 'Fast Track' process that are denied this pathway to permanency. The large majority of these living for up to a decade in community within local government areas without support or hope for an enduring solution.

As such this motion is proposed for the ALGA National General Assembly.

## **Motion number 107.1 Merri-bek City Council VIC**

**This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to support the Back Your Neighbour campaign by the Mayoral Taskforce Supporting People Seeking Asylum and:**

- 1. Invest resources to urgently clear the backlog of asylum applications/appeals in order to create an efficient system; and**
- 2. Provide consistent access to Medicare, income support, employment support, mental health, NDIS, and other vital services, including revised eligibility for SRSS support; and**
- 3. Ensure people seeking asylum have work and study rights, including access to local fees for university and TAFE; and**
- 4. Replace the existing 'Fast Track' system with a single Refugee Status Determination process and an independent, timely and fair merits review.**

## **NATIONAL OBJECTIVE**

Across Australia there are 90,000 people waiting for their application for protection to be finalised, including people who have waited for close to ten years. The Mayoral Taskforce notes with gratitude the federal government's February 2023 announcement that people with Temporary Protection Visas (TPV) and Safe Haven Enterprise Visas (SHEV) will now be able to apply for a permanent visa however concerns remain around clearing the backlog of asylum seeker applications and the lack of a clear pathway for those that have been rejected through the unfair 'fast track' process. Without access to critical support services, people seeking asylum often rely on local governments and local charities to survive. It is critical that the federal government invest appropriate resources to create an efficient system and replace the existing 'Fast Track' system with a single Refugee Status Determination process and an independent, timely and fair merits review.

## **KEY ARGUMENTS**

Australia is keeping around 90,000 people living in limbo for up to 8 years while their applications for asylum are stuck in a broken system. The overly slow approach prevents individuals and families from gaining the stability that refugee status provides. The result is vulnerable people living on the edge for years, without access to critical support service such as Centrelink, Medicare, public housing, education, mental health, and food. In December 2014, the Australian government amended Australia's migration processes to ensure that people who arrived by boat without a valid visa would no longer be eligible for a Permanent Protection visa.

These people would only be eligible for a three-year Temporary Protection visa (TPV) or a five-year Safe Haven Enterprise visa (SHEV). This change to asylum seeking processes affects approximately 24,500 people who arrived by boat between August 2012 and December 2013. It also affects a further six thousand people who arrived by boat before this period and did not have their applications for Protection finally determined. The process is called, 'Fast Track' and deliberately discriminates against people who arrived at Australia by sea. This is despite Article 31 of the United Nations Refugee Convention stating that refugees cannot be punished or penalised for their mode of arrival into a signatory country. Australia is a signatory country.

People arriving by plane with a valid visa are eligible for a Permanent Protection visa, funding for legal assistance, full and independent merits review, the ability to seek Ministerial Intervention and work rights throughout their legal process. Denying people seeking asylum access to critical support services leaves highly vulnerable individuals and families with nothing to survive on but help from local charities and councils. The federal government has a responsibility to process asylum claims quickly and to support people until they can move forward with their lives in a positive way. While the federal government's February 2023 announcement that people with Temporary Protection Visas (TPV) and Safe Haven Enterprise Visas (SHEV) will now be able to apply for a permanent visa is welcome, concerns remain around the lack of a clear pathway for those what have been rejected through the unfair, 'Fast Track process'.

We encourage the federal government to ensure that the transition to permanent visas is as smooth as possible and that community concerns about separated families and people still at risk are addressed.

## **Motion number 108 Banyule City Council VIC**

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to prepare a strategy that provides for a resilient and sustainable national food secure Australia, able to provide for access to sufficient, safe, and nutritious food to its entire population at all times.

### **NATIONAL OBJECTIVE**

National Food Security motion for ALGA in keeping with the theme of the 2023 NGA: Our communities, Our Future.

At Banyule Council, we have been working on an Urban Food Strategy to advance community awareness and participation in pursuing a sustainable, just, vibrant, and secure food system into the future. While sustainable and equitable food systems are key to achieving many of the UNs sustainable development goals, to which Australia is a signatory, factors including unprecedented urbanisation, climate change impacts, and exposure to shocks and emergencies such as pandemics, have highlighted vulnerabilities around the world including Australia.

### **KEY ARGUMENTS**

While Banyule is working on its plan at a local level, the reality is that Australia currently has no cohesive federal policy platform for individual food security in Australia. According to Foodbank Australia (the largest hunger relief agency in Australia), the aim of the strategy would be to meet the food relief needs of every food insecure person in Australia.

## **Motion number 109 Knox City Council VIC**

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to review the citizenship ceremony process and provide a dedicated funding program to support the ongoing delivery of ceremonies that is currently conducted by a majority of local government councils on behalf of the Australian Government.

### **NATIONAL OBJECTIVE**

Although Citizenship Ceremonies may be conducted by:

- Local government (i.e.: councils);
- The Department;
- Community groups;



Local governments across Australia are the main body that conducts Citizenship ceremonies on behalf of the Australian Government, and this inherently results in a direct cost to councils and their communities.

Councils are seeing a consistent and growing number of people request to participate in citizenship ceremonies, with councils needing to deal with a significant backlog of ceremonies results from the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. Whilst working through the back log councils are still also receiving significant numbers of requests for participation in future ceremonies.

With the notable increase to the cost of living, impact on goods and services and the pressures of rate capping in some jurisdictions, there is an impact on local government's revenue and financial sustainability. The increased costs have had a flow on effect to the cost of conducting ceremonies.

Whilst local Government recognises the importance of the citizenship ceremonies, the Australian Government program needs to consider a dedicated funding program that will ensure the ongoing provision and success of the ceremonies.

#### **KEY ARGUMENTS**

Since the early 1950's local government has had a significant role in Australian citizenship ceremonies and have fulfilled an important symbolic and legal role in the grant of Australian citizenship and have been used to formally welcome new citizens from many backgrounds into the Australian community.

There have been five amendments to the citizenship Act of 1955 in 1986, 2003, 2005, 2015, and 2019 and each of these have had a significant impact on how ceremonies are delivered and has seen a progressive increase to costs involved in delivering the ceremonies.

Local government faces unprecedented challenges in 2023 many of which have financial impacts. It is timely that the Australian Government implements a funding program to appropriately recognise the costs that local governments incur in delivering the Australian Government's citizenship requirements.

## **Motion number 110 Forbes Shire Council NSW**

**This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to extend financial support for students undertaking tertiary study in the health and education sectors.**

#### **NATIONAL OBJECTIVE**

According to the National Skills Commission 2022 Skills Priority List Key Findings Report, health professionals and teachers are amongst the most in-demand professionals in the Australian workforce, nationally. Health and educational services nation-wide have faced increasing recruitment challenges in recent years, particularly in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic.

## KEY ARGUMENTS

Australian students who are enrolled in a Commonwealth Support Place (CSP) are eligible to have the Australian Government pay a portion of their course fees, with the remaining portion referred to as a 'student contribution amount'. In 2023, the maximum student contribution amount per year of study was \$4,124 for Education, \$4,124 for Nursing, \$8,301 for Allied Health and Other Health, and \$11,800 for Medicine and Dentistry.

Student contribution amounts constitute a large financial burden for prospective students. While Australian students are eligible to access HECS-HELP loans to cover their student contribution amount, the prospect of taking on a financial burden in excess of \$15,000 or more may deter prospective students from entering these essential areas of study.

Through further supporting students through reduced student contribution amounts and increased scholarship pathways, more students are likely to pursue these vocations, essential to Australian society.

## Motion number 110.1 South Burnett Regional Council QLD

**This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to increase university numbers for general practitioners.**

### NATIONAL OBJECTIVE

Community Wellbeing

### KEY ARGUMENTS

A combination of a lack of suitable qualified General Practitioners is significantly impacting rural and regional medical services. The AMA 2022 report, 'The General Practitioner workforce: why the neglect must end' identified several necessary reforms to address the decline in general practitioners.

The following is quoted directly from this report:

- Increase exposure to general practice in medical school and prevocational medical training
- Implement reforms to improve access to medical care for regional/rural areas and disadvantaged communities
- Support clear training pathways and solutions to rural medical workforce needs and distribution.

South Burnett Regional Council believe that these recommendations coupled with an increased intake into the university system for General Practitioners would greatly assist with current difficulties being faced within rural and regional communities.

## **Motion number 111 Forbes Shire Council NSW**

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to develop a nation-wide teacher registration program.

### **NATIONAL OBJECTIVE**

According to the National Skills Commission 2022 Skills Priority List Key Findings Report, teachers are amongst the most in-demand professionals in the Australian workforce, nationally. Education systems Australia-wide are facing challenges recruiting qualified teachers, especially experienced teachers; this issue has been further exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic and its effects.

### **KEY ARGUMENTS**

The National Skills Commission 2022 Skills Priority List Key Findings Report outlines that the number of graduates who are qualified as teachers should be able to meet the demand within the Australian labour market. The ongoing recruitment challenges faced in the education sector therefore suggest that a large number of qualified teachers are choosing to pursue other occupations.

One barrier to pursuing a career in the education sector is the absence of a national teacher registration program. While qualified teachers can apply for mutual recognition of their teaching experience and qualifications when moving to another state, this administrative process can pose a barrier to qualified teachers undertaking an inter-state move.

With 368,700 Australians moving interstate annually (2020), the absence of a national teacher registration program therefore imposes serious barriers to retaining qualified teaching staff in education systems nationally.

## **Motion number 112 Manningham City Council VIC**

This National General Assembly calls on Australian Government to address Australia's world-highest gambling losses per capita, and the intolerable harm \$25 billion of annual losses inflict on Australians, local communities and local and regional health and municipal service providers by:

1. Introducing a new dedicated federal gambling regulator, which includes a mandate to implement and oversee a broad tobacco-style ban on gambling advertising;
2. Legislating for the complete removal of cash from Australia's fleet of 200,000 poker machines as a national anti-money laundering measure in light of last year's NSW Crime Commission report revealing widespread money laundering across NSW poker machines where criminal money launderers can still load up to \$10,000 in cash into a single machine;
3. Establishing a national ACT-style buyback and retirement of poker machine licenses with an initial budget allocation of \$500 million and make it conditional on the state

and territory governments and the participating clubs, pubs and casinos agreeing to permanently retire the licenses and remove the attached machines from their venues;

4. Negotiating a moratorium agreement with the Northern Territory government to cease issuing any new low tax digital bookmaking licenses to foreign-owned gambling operators such as Sportsbet, Bet365, Ladbrokes and Betr and instead transfer online gambling licensing and regulation to a new federal Regulator;
5. Legislating to the effect that federally registered political parties are ineligible for federal per-vote political funding if they, or any of their state affiliates, own and operate poker machine venues; and
6. Removing the DGR status of any church or charity which continues to directly own and operate licensed gambling entities, such as poker machine clubs.

## **NATIONAL OBJECTIVE**

Australia has the world's highest gambling losses per capita.

Given these statistics, this motion is relevant to all local governments.

Gambling harm has devastating and long-lasting negative impacts on the very social fabric of our communities. A national strategy is required to provide consistency right across Australia.

Victorian local governments have for many years been at the forefront of advocacy for gambling reform that seeks to arrest the sector's negative impact. Sadly however, positive, and substantive gambling legislation and regulatory reform have stagnated.

Gambling is a public health issue affecting individuals, their families, and entire communities.

The public health approach recognises the complex relationship between social, economic, and environmental factors that contribute to the harmful impacts of gambling.

Many factors contribute to gambling as a public health issue, including social norms, public awareness of gambling issues, accessibility of gambling, legislation around product design, venue operations and advertising, the EGM application process, and the distribution of poker machines in vulnerable areas.

Local government is best placed to understand the impact of gambling harm at the community level.

The proposed actions will have implications at the national level and will improve the capacity of local government to deliver services and infrastructure for the benefit of all Australian communities.

## **KEY ARGUMENTS**

More stringent restraints on advertising of sports betting during sports broadcasts are required. VicHealth worked alongside Monash University and The University of Queensland to examine how alcohol, unhealthy food, sugary drinks, and gambling products are promoted to young people online. The results were alarming.

The 204 participants aged 16 to 25 years sent the researchers 5169 examples of unhealthy food, alcohol, and gambling advertising they saw on their social media feeds in a two-week window.

And on top of this, fifty-four participants aged 16 and 17 years captured 104 alcohol ads, fifty gambling ads, and 737 unhealthy food ads.

Only the federal government can regulate this nationally through radio and TV licenses.

The shift to cashless gambling appears to be inevitable, given the rapidly increasing move across the Australian economy from cash to digital transactions. Legislative frameworks must keep pace with this shift in such a way that harm from gambling is reduced rather than exacerbated.

It is well established that this type of reform is an effective measure to address gambling harm, namely the introduction of mandatory, registered, pre-committed cashless gambling cards for use on poker machines in all gambling venues, including hotels and clubs as well as casinos. Eliminating cash will work to reduce crime and losses from gambling overall and allow gamblers to set a limit. The federal government's involvement can drive this nationally.

## **Motion number 113 Brimbank City Council VIC**

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to:

1. Ban all forms of gambling advertisements on broadcast and online platforms during live sports events; and
2. Significantly reduce the frequency of gambling advertising when live sports events are not being broadcast.

### **NATIONAL OBJECTIVE**

Gambling is a rapidly growing public health issue in Australia and causes significant harm in our communities. Gambling ads during live sports broadcasts, as well as on social media platforms like Facebook, Instagram, and online gaming platforms, are prolific and normalised. These ads are often targeted towards young people and are placed at times and in places where children and teenagers are most likely to see them.

This motion is consistent with advocacy of the Alliance for Gambling Reform, in relation to the following objective: 'Provide National Leadership and coalition building in priority focus areas of land-based gambling, digital on-line gambling and sports betting advertising'.

### **KEY ARGUMENTS**

Banning gambling advertising is critical to holistically addressing and reducing gambling harm. The current restrictions to gambling advertising are not sufficient in protecting against the detrimental impacts on our communities, particularly young people.

In 2018, the federal government introduced a limit on gaming advertisements during live sport before 8.30pm. The ban, which covers all sports broadcasts on TV and radio (except racing), starts five minutes before kick-off and ends five minutes after full time. Despite these measures, sports wagering is the fastest-growing form of gambling in Australia, with losses now exceeding more than \$1.2 billion annually. During COVID lockdowns, wagering companies spent more money on advertising and incentives to gamble, resulting in an increase in the amount gambled online.

In Australia, three-fourths of children aged 8 - 16 years who watch sport think betting on sport is normal and can also name one or more sports betting companies (25% can name four or more). Kids are considered high 'consumers' of the average 374 gambling ads on free-to-air TV a day, nearly half report noticing gambling advertising on television during sports and racing events at least weekly.

## **Motion number 114 South Burnett Regional Council QLD**

**This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to advocate for increased funding for all areas of domestic violence with a specific emphasis in rural, regional, and remote areas.**

### **NATIONAL OBJECTIVE**

Community Wellbeing

### **KEY ARGUMENTS**

Our council has noted that rates of domestic and family violence are higher in regional, rural, and remote areas. Some factors for this include:

- Women living in regional, rural, and remote areas who experience domestic and family violence face specific issues related to their geographical location and the cultural and social characteristics of living in small communities.
- A lack of privacy due to the high likelihood that police, health professionals and domestic and family violence workers know both the victim and the perpetrator.
- Fear of becoming homeless due to the lack of appropriate and safe housing.

It is reported that 1 in 6 women and 1 in 16 men have experienced physical and/or sexual violence by a current or previous partner. 1 in 4 women and 1 in 6 men have experienced emotional abuse by a current or previous partner. Forty-six percent of women and 1 in 10 men have experienced violence from a current partner and do not seek advice or support after the incident. Support is needed in all of our communities to address these statistics.

## **Motion number 115 Northern Midlands Council TAS**

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to implement a policy change to redress the imbalance of sport and recreation funding between high performance and community based, grassroots initiatives that have the potential to significantly improve health outcomes for all Australians, regardless of their ability or background.

### **NATIONAL OBJECTIVE**

Australia has long defined itself in terms of sporting achievements and flowing from that is a vision of a strong, healthy, and athletic nation. The reality is starkly different. The majority of Australians are either overweight or obese, and 23% of children aged five to seventeen are considered overweight or obese. Young Australians in particular are ignoring advice about nutrition, smoking and alcohol, and they are increasingly inactive (Source: Social Policy Section, Parliament of Australia).

Physical inactivity is the second most important risk factor that is contributing to the burden of disease, morbidity, and mortality in Australia. It is widely acknowledged that regular physical activity provides a large range of health benefits and delivers a better quality of life for people of all ages.

Local government has a key role to play in encouraging Australians to participate in active leisure activities through the provision and maintenance of quality parks, open space, shared pathways, outdoor gyms, dog parks, pump tracks and associated infrastructure (toilets, street furniture, drinking fountains etc..). The development and maintenance of such infrastructure comes at a cost and local governments need to be able to access federal funding opportunities to assist with these costs.

### **KEY ARGUMENTS**

Nearly 65% of Australian adults and 25% of children are overweight or obese, and less than 7% consume a healthy diet. Approximately 32% of Australia's total burden of disease can be attributed to modifiable risk factors including physical inactivity, smoking, alcohol abuse, and high blood pressure and blood cholesterol. (Source: Federal Department of Health and Aging).

Just one in five Australians now regularly play competitive sports, down from 27% in 2001. Over the past 15 years more Australians are walking for exercise, jogging, cycling, gymming and/or yoga-ing. Today almost 20 % of Australians do not participate in any other sport or fitness activity except walking. Together this leaves an estimated three in ten Australians who do not do any regular sport or fitness activity at all, not even an occasional brisk walk (Source: Roy Morgan Research).

It is patently clear that Australians are moving away from competitive sport to pursue unstructured active leisure, (walking, cycling, jogging etc...) which research has shown not only contributes to physical wellbeing but also encourages social interaction, improves concentration and learning, increases personal confidence and self-awareness, and reduces feelings of depression and anxiety.

Local government has a key role to play in encouraging Australians to participate in active leisure activities through the provision and maintenance of quality parks, open space, shared pathways, outdoor gyms, dog parks, pump tracks and associated infrastructure (toilets, street furniture, drinking fountains etc.). The development and maintenance of such infrastructure comes at a cost and local governments need to be able to access federal funding opportunities to assist with these costs.

The current federal funding available for sport and recreation is highly skewed towards high performance: assisting elite athletes to achieve sporting greatness, 'the Olympics medal obsession syndrome'. The funding is currently split 87%/13% (\$116M versus \$17M) in favour of high performance over grassroots supports (Source: Ritchie Hinton CEO Sports Industry Australian and International Experience).

Local government is seeking policy change at the federal level to address the burden of chronic disease and improve the health of all Australians. The policy change must as a matter of urgency redress the imbalance of sport and recreation funding between high performance and community based, grassroot initiatives that have the potential to significantly improve health outcomes for all Australians, regardless of their ability or background.

## **Motion number 116 Tamworth Regional Council NSW**

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to recognise the significant contribution made by volunteers across Australia in all spheres of life and the value this contribution makes to local communities. In recognising this contribution, the National General Assembly acknowledges that volunteers are a significant unpaid resource that delivers services that smaller councils and communities would struggle to replace with paid labour.

### **NATIONAL OBJECTIVE**

Volunteering Australia is the national peak body for volunteering, working to advance volunteering in the Australian community. In accordance with Volunteering Australia's vision of a 'strong, connected, and resilient Australian community through volunteering' and its purpose, 'to lead, strengthen, and celebrate volunteering in Australia, we call on the Australian Government to commit to a more strategic, whole-of-government and national approach to volunteering, recognising the crucial role that volunteering plays in enhancing social cohesion and the wellbeing of Australians.

### **KEY ARGUMENTS**

In delivering this commitment we believe that the government must enhance its support of the volunteer sector and partner with state, territory, and local governments to reinvigorate volunteering as Australia adapts to living with COVID-19 into the future.



## **Motion number 117 South Burnett Regional Council QLD**

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to advocate for increased support for the Medicare rebate for private purposes.

### **NATIONAL OBJECTIVE**

Community wellbeing

### **KEY ARGUMENTS**

Feedback from local General Practitioners and our local practices is that they are and have moved away from bulk billing, have staff shortages and are often running their practices at a loss. The majority if not all the practices have stopped taking on new clients and have increased cost to the patient to cover their operating costs and overheads.

The AMA 2022 report, 'The general practitioner workforce: why the neglect must end' identified several necessary reforms to address the decline in General Practitioners. The following is quoted directly from this report:

- Support GPs to spend more time with patients and improve the indexation of Medicare to better reflect the rising costs of providing high-quality medical care and running a medical practice
- Increase funding for after-hours GP care, wound care, and practice incentive payments
- Address disparities in remuneration and employment conditions for GP registrars nationally

Addressing this area, we believe would significantly assist in the provision of medical services.

## **Motion number 118 Hepburn Shire Council VIC**

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to support the 2026 Census topic review being conducted by the Australian Bureau of Statistics and recommends adding the topics of gender, variations of sex characteristics and sexual orientation to help the information collected in the Census remain relevant and strengthen community support for the Census.

### **NATIONAL OBJECTIVE**

This motion will strengthen the ability of all levels of government to plan for and meet the needs of Diverse and Inclusive communities in line with National objectives.

These items were considered for inclusion in the 2021 census with significant support however were not included.

## KEY ARGUMENTS

Questions on gender identity and sexual orientation were not included in the 2021 Census, reportedly due to the influence of conservative politicians and lobby groups.

This has perpetuated a lack of comprehensive data on LGBTIQ+ populations, which is needed to inform government policies, research, grant allocations, and business and community decisions. Local governments require this data aggregated at LGA level to plan and deliver programs for a segment of the population known to have poorer outcomes in mental health, suicide, and violence.

Capturing this important data assists to recognise these communities and without this data there are no statistics to drive policy development, healthcare services and grant funding opportunities as examples.

## **Motion number 119 Penrith City Council NSW**

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to continue to explore tri-government regional partnership opportunities, particularly with councils in growth corridors such as Western Sydney. Through the implementation of city-shaping partnerships, there is an opportunity for the Australian Government to reinforce their commitment to authentic tri-government cooperation and strengthen the local government's role in implementation of regional change.

### NATIONAL OBJECTIVE

The Australian Government is being called upon to give a commitment to ongoing collaboration with other levels of government through the establishment of city-shaping partnerships.

The Western Sydney City Deal is one example of a tri-government partnership that has been successful in delivering initiatives that contribute to the vision of a highly connected, innovative, and liveable City. This unprecedented level of partnership across the three levels of government has contributed to realising the shared vision for Western Sydney. It is important that the inroads and momentum established through this partnership are not lost.

The success and lessons-learnt from tri-government partnerships highlight the value of aligning planning, investment, and governance to accelerate growth and job creation, stimulate urban renewal and drive economic reforms to secure the future prosperity, sustainability, and liveability of our cities. The Australian Government should continue to evolve tri-government regional partnerships through appropriate governance frameworks and funding models.

### KEY ARGUMENTS

A critical component of city-shaping partnerships is the governance framework in which they operate. An effective governance framework should involve all three levels of government,

signifying the importance of local government as an equal partner together with state and federal government. Governance, decision-making and collaboration mechanisms must be established and maintained to successfully deliver shared priorities and outcomes.

It is critical that the Australian Government works closely with state and local governments to improve planning approaches, strengthen decision-making and seek to further improve the way they collaborate so we can make the most of our shared investments and improve liveability. With unprecedented growth forecast for some regions, we call upon on all levels of government to continue their support of tri-government collaboration and explore regional partnership opportunities.

Whilst the tri-governance framework of the Western Sydney City Deal has delivered strategic collaboration, there is room for improvement through further strengthening the role of local government in the implementation of regional change. Improving existing governance arrangements and expanding partnership opportunities will allow greater involvement in city shaping decision-making by communities living in these council areas, representatives of the three tiers of government, and local businesses.

## **Motion number 120 Tamworth Regional Council NSW**

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to fast track the implementation of the Growing Regions Program so that projects previously submitted under the Building Better Regions Fund (BBRF) can be progressed.

### **NATIONAL OBJECTIVE**

The Building Better Regions Program (BBRF) provided a critical funding source for regional communities across Australia and enabled many significant infrastructure and facility projects to be undertaken by councils.

### **KEY ARGUMENTS**

The last round of BBRF was suddenly discontinued following the last federal election despite the fact that many councils had invested significant resources into their funding submissions. While the new federal government has announced a replacement program call the Growing Regions Program, we are still waiting for the launch of the program and as such many community building projects have been delayed.

# **Motion number 121 Canterbury Bankstown Council NSW**

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to:

1. Re-introduce an updated Regional Employment Development Scheme (RED scheme) with the creation of special purpose grants to support local government contribute to infrastructure and regional development goals;
2. Further in support of the above, an increase to the Financial Assistance Grants be provided to local councils to a minimum of one percent of Commonwealth taxation revenue, so councils could focus on key disciplines such as town planning, engineering that will assist in creating a more sustainable community.

## **NATIONAL OBJECTIVE**

The local government sector is experiencing unprecedented sector skills challenges resulting from a tumultuous employment market. In 2022 alone, approximately nine in every ten councils experienced skills shortages, representing a 30 per cent increase since 2018.

These skills shortages come with inherent risks; a shortage, for example, of engineers and planners may delay local projects and investment, while a shortage of asset managers and arborists may pose safety risks to the community. While the sector is not alone in experiencing employment challenges, it is in direct competition with other tiers of government, notably state government, to recruit and retain qualified and skilled staff to occupy critical roles in the sector.

The federal government needs to work directly with local councils to reinforce the need to continue building skills and capacity. The RED scheme is a means to ensure capacity in local councils to appropriately serve their communities through a local workforce.

This is the time where the Australian Government needs to prioritise the financial assistance it provides to local government and increase the Financial Assistance Grants to at least 1% of Commonwealth Taxation Revenue. Councils require financial certainty to meet community expectations, instil resilience, and undertake both short and long-term planning. Only through financial certainty can councils appropriately plan.

## **KEY ARGUMENTS**

Local government requires a diverse workforce of occupations and skill sets to adequately fulfill the range of responsibilities assigned by the state government. Competition for skills with the private sector as well as other levels of government, particularly state, has severely impacted on the sector. This makes it harder for councils to attract and retain the staff they need. Other tiers of government, particularly state government, are shifting expectations back to local government to respond to issues, thus placing immense pressure on councils to manage the increasing costs and responsibilities. state government is also absorbing skilled local government staff, resulting in chronic skills shortages in local government, and increasing vacancies in much needed positions across the country.

Filling engineering, urban and town planning, arborists, human resource roles has been increasingly difficult. Recent evidence shows that approximately nine in every ten local councils are experiencing a skills shortage in 2022, a 30 per cent increase from 2018. This is not unique to Australia with other local governments across the globe experiencing similar skills shortages.

The local government sector can build capacity from the ground up and can effectively deploy people to create a more sustainable community. As one of Australia's leading employers with over 190,000 workers occupying hundreds of roles, local government is a standout employer, that can provide high governance arrangements to ensure the health, safety, and welfare of its staff. Initiatives such as the proposed RED scheme, can assist councils to appropriately contribute to their infrastructure and regional development goals. Historical evidence shows that at its peak, the RED Scheme employed more than 30,000 people and contributed to the development of infrastructure and urban renewal. To assist local councils in these challenging times, the Australian Government needs to dedicate and commit to appropriately funding the local government sector. In the 2021-22 period, the Australian Government provided \$2.7 billion in untied funding to local governing bodies under the Financial Assistance Grant program via instalments.

This equates to only 0.56% of the Commonwealth taxation revenue, well below what should be provided to local government. This continued miniscule financial assistance to councils, which is now provided via quarterly instalments, needs to be reconsidered.

While Commonwealth taxation revenue for the period 2020-21 period was down to \$480 billion from \$552 billion the previous year (largely a result of the impact of COVID-19 on key avenues of taxation such as company income tax and income tax paid by superannuation), it was still \$14.4 billion higher than estimate at the 2021-22 Budget and is higher than anticipated taxation revenue. Increasing funding to the local government sector is investing in local workforce planning and employment opportunities for all Australians.

## **Motion number 122 East Arnhem Regional Council NT**

**This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to provide appropriate funding for Australia Post services in regional and remote Australia.**

### **NATIONAL OBJECTIVE**

Communities in regional, rural, and remote Australia play an important role in our economic and social fabric. Over eight million Australians reside in these areas and regional businesses account for around 40% of Australia's economic output.

These communities and businesses span a diverse range of locations, demographics, and industries. While community aspirations vary across different regional, rural, and remote areas, they also have a lot in common. Access to core services such as education, health, and government services being the most important.

In many remote communities across Australia, local governments are often the provider of Australia Post services. Due to the significant costs associated with the provision of these services in remote areas, local governments often subsidise these services, which places a significant burden on their limited resources.

The provision of reliable postal services is essential for the social and economic development of remote communities. The delivery of Australia Post services in remote areas is often complex and challenging, requiring significant investment in infrastructure and resources to ensure that services are accessible and reliable.

### **KEY ARGUMENTS**

Australia Post is the primary provider of postal services in Australia, and it has a legislative responsibility to ensure that all Australians have access to reliable and affordable postal services, regardless of their location. However, many providers are concerned that Australia Post's current funding model does not adequately account for the costs associated with providing postal services in remote areas.

This funding should be provided in a way that recognises the unique challenges associated with the provision of postal services in remote areas and ensures that services are accessible, reliable, and affordable for all Australians, regardless of their location without the requirement of local government or provider subsidisation.

Increased and appropriate funding for the delivery of Australia Post services in remote areas will support the social and economic development of these communities and ensure that all Australians have access to reliable and affordable postal services.

## **Motion number 123 Snowy Valleys Council NSW**

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to set in place appropriate legislation to ensure access to 'face to face' financial transactions through banks and/or building society branches in rural and regional areas across Australia.

### **NATIONAL OBJECTIVE**

A recent Parliamentary Senate inquiry was held in relation to regional bank closures following the termination of hundreds of branches across the country. More than eighty branches have closed around the country since September 2022, and even more have reduced their hours to the point of almost being inaccessible to the average client.

With the closure of branches and the loss of face-to-face financial services, advice and support, clients are forced to either travel significant distances or resort to phone or online services.

It should be noted it is virtually impossible to live in society without a bank account and is definitely impossible to receive any government payments, supports, refunds or even manage tax returns.

## KEY ARGUMENTS

In the Snowy Valleys Council area, the demographic paints a picture of the harsh reality that should there be no access to financial institution Branches (not Post-Office agent) our wider community will struggle, and the wellbeing eroded.

According to data presented by our Primary Health Network (PHN) almost 46% of our population is in the bottom 40% of the income distribution, almost 65% are age pensioners, 26% are not connected to the internet, 5% of dwellings in our LGA do not have a car.

The horrendous 2019-20 bushfires in our region (and many others) and other natural disasters across the Nation, demonstrate all too well services impacted by extended power outages.

The fact that the Senate inquiry into regional banking was the first of its kind in 19 years, highlights concerns shared by all levels of government that access face to face transactions. Support is a vital service not only in metropolitan or larger centres, but also in rural and regional Australia.

Our communities are connected and inclusive. It is through the provision of local services that the health, wellbeing, and identity of local people is nurtured and supported.

## **Motion number 124 Murweh Shire Council QLD**

**This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to call on the immediate cessation of the Carbon Transport and Storage Corporation (CTSCo) Project and further, request state and federal governments to work collaboratively to protect the Great Artesian Basin for regional communities, as it is the only reliable source of fresh water for much of inland Australia.**

### NATIONAL OBJECTIVE

CTSCo is a subsidiary of Glencore. Glencore has been advocating for a significant trial to inject waste CO<sub>2</sub> into the Great Artesian Basin (GAB). The trial project involves capturing waste Co<sub>2</sub> from Millmerran Power Station and compressing the gas into liquid form and transporting it west to Moonie. There is concern from users with regulated existing entitlements relying on different parts of the same aquifer. Users include several livestock enterprises.

The trial sets a precedent for all aquifers in the GAB footprint. Several regional council organisations draw their towns water supplies from GAB bores.

### KEY ARGUMENTS

Carbon capture is a relatively new and the consequences of this are not known. There is insufficient data to be able to have confidence in the safety of carbon capture. The Great Artesian Basin is the main high quality water source for much of inland Australia.

## **Motion number 125 Nillumbik Shire Council VIC**

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to provide immediate short term, adequate funding to support the spike in Regional Assessment Services.

### **NATIONAL OBJECTIVE**

Community Wellbeing

### **KEY ARGUMENTS**

Acknowledging there is a policy review and reform underway for RAS, LGs are in need of short-term increased funding to address the spike in assessment referrals post COVID on the basis that:

- Councils who have not experienced waiting lists in the past, are now experiencing up to 12 week waiting times to undertake an assessment for an older person
- Clients who have been assessed are currently waiting months for services to commence. Extended waiting times at the assessment phase compounds the risk of older people's needs and wellbeing declining more rapidly
- Waiting times to conduct assessments and receive services is resulting in a significant increase in the volume of call coming into the RAS, resulting in further pressure and resources being directed away from conducting assessments
- Additional pressure on RAS officers poses a risk to a workforce that is already fatigued and has ongoing supply shortages
- Inter-office agency support is no longer available with all RAS agencies unable to meet their current assessment demands

Short term funding to increase program resources to address the back log of assessment requests is required whilst the review of the program and funding model continues over the next 12 months.



# CIRCULAR ECONOMY

## Motion number 126 City of Stonnington Council VIC

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to:

1. Co-invest in new major regional waste facilities to help attract and build new markets;
2. Increase Investment to support Australia's transition to a circular economy in order to reduce waste, improve the recovery of precious resources, and create new jobs;
3. Turn off the 'tap' of waste by requiring and creating incentives for higher use of recycled materials and by phasing out problematic and unnecessary waste;
4. Expand the product stewardship schemes and introduce a new materials levy to drive industry change;
5. Ban the import and production of hard-to-recycle materials (except for essential needs such as some medical uses);
6. Prioritise job creation and industry transition through the circular economy;
7. Fund technology and research that leads to an advanced domestic circular economy sector and positions Australia as a leading expert in this new economic sector; and
8. Partner with local government to help guide and inform federal policy and investment decisions around supporting circular economy, recycling, product packaging and waste reform opportunities.

### NATIONAL OBJECTIVE

Australia has implemented several policies, strategies and initiatives aimed at reforming waste management at the national level.

The National Waste Policy outlines five key principles to promote sustainable waste management and transition to a circular economy, including waste avoidance, resource recovery, use of recycled materials, better materials management, and improved information to guide innovation and informed consumer decisions.

The National Waste Export Bans, enacted in 2020, prohibit the export of unprocessed waste, thus driving the development of local waste markets.

The National Food Waste Strategy aims to reduce food waste by 50% by 2030 through various initiatives such as food rescue groups, council food waste collection services, and industry investment in improving on-site processing.

The National Plastics Plan is designed to phase out problematic and unnecessary plastics through better design, increased use of recycled materials, improved labelling and education, and collaboration with global partners, communities, and industries.

Additionally, product stewardship schemes hold producers, importers, and sellers of harmful products responsible for managing their impact, with several materials already collected and

recycled through these schemes, including tyres, paint, mobile phones, televisions, and fluorescent lights.

## **KEY ARGUMENTS**

The adoption of circular economy principles in waste management is becoming an increasingly important issue for local governments across Australia. The benefits of transitioning to a circular economy approach are numerous, ranging from economic benefits to environmental and public health benefits. The federal government has an important role to play in supporting local governments in the future of waste management and the creation of a circular economy for sustainability, climate, economic, health and environmental reasons.

One key argument for supporting local governments in adopting a circular economy approach to waste management is the economic benefits it can generate. By promoting sustainable practices such as waste reduction, reuse, recycling, and product stewardship, waste custodians can create new markets for recycled materials and stimulate economic growth, leading to job creation and contribute to a more vibrant and sustainable economy. Product stewardship, as a key aspect of the circular economy, involves the responsible management of products and materials throughout their lifecycle, including their design, production, use, and disposal. The existing product stewardship scheme needs to be strengthened through the introduction of levies to further drive change away from the use of problematic products and materials.

Additionally, the adoption of circular economy principles in waste management can significantly reduce the environmental impact of waste disposal. This can lead to a cleaner and healthier environment for communities across the country. By reducing greenhouse gas emissions, conserving natural resources, and reducing the amount of waste sent to landfill, local governments can contribute to a more sustainable future for all Australians. Moreover, poor waste management practices can lead to negative health outcomes for communities, including air and water pollution. By promoting a circular economy approach and product stewardship, local governments can help to mitigate these risks and promote a safer and healthier environment for all. This is particularly important in our emerging reality where it is no longer feasible to just, 'bury waste' 'landfill space is scarce, waste volumes are growing, and the practice has detrimental climate, environmental and health implications.

By supporting local governments in adopting circular economy principles, the federal government can also demonstrate leadership in sustainable waste management practices. This can help to set an example for other countries and promote Australia's reputation as a leader in environmental sustainability. The government can provide financial support and policy incentives for local governments to implement circular economy practices, such as providing funding for research and development of new technologies and strengthening national standards and guidelines for sustainable waste management practices.

Ultimately, promoting a circular economy approach to waste management is a social responsibility that all governments have towards its citizens. By supporting local governments in adopting sustainable practices, adopting circular economy principles and product

stewardship, the federal government can help create a more sustainable and prosperous future for Australia, by reducing waste and greenhouse gas emissions, conserving natural resources, and promoting a healthier environment.

## Motion number 126.1 Monash City Council VIC

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to implement the actions below in order to achieve a massive improvement in Australia's plastics recycling rates (from 16% / 4% towards the 80% goal set in the National Waste Policy Action Plan) and achieve this in a timely manner. To that effect, ALGA requests that the Australian Government:

1. Creates a permanent body consisting of federal and state ministers (or their representatives) responsible for plastic waste management and committing to it meeting at least quarterly and once a year holding a Summit along the lines of the 2020 Summit involving all levels of government (fed-state-local) and key representatives of the plastic recycling and packaging industries. Its aim will be to ensure a uniform approach (including legislation) around Australia governing all aspects of plastic waste management, including (but not limited to):
  - a. A tax on plastic packaging (see point two below);
  - b. Financial incentives for industry to build and run plastics recycling plant (see point two below);
  - c. Investment in plastic recycling infrastructure (i.e., capital available to the recycling industry) and by taking a national view attracting companies capable of delivering very large-scale processing plant);
  - d. Processes for collecting plastic waste including soft plastics;
  - e. Commitment to buy products made from recycled plastics (and other recycled materials), such as those made by Replas, whenever possible;
  - f. Commitment to use recycled materials as part of larger constructions in particular roads where a significant proportion can be sourced from recycled materials; and
  - g. Container deposit schemes.
2. In collaboration with the states, introduce a tax on plastic packaging. This could take the form of a bulk tax similar to the UK levied at the manufacturing / import stage (per tonne) or a per item tax levied at the retail level (say 10c per plastic package by the supermarkets). The funds raised would be used exclusively to fund plastic recycling (possibly similar to the UK model guaranteeing a price for materials generated by the recycling process and ready to be used in the production of new packaging);
3. In collaboration with the states and research bodies such as the CSIRO develop guidelines on the efficacy of different alternate (to plastic) packaging materials, for food in particular. By establishing what alternate materials may be available, their properties (in particular their ability to be composted or recycled and how effective they are in prolonging the shelf life of foods) the packaging and food industries may

**be encouraged to move to a non-plastic alternative. At present the use and availability of alternatives lies with a number of very small companies offering innovative solutions, some of which look promising if they could be scaled up.**

## **NATIONAL OBJECTIVE**

Research by the Minderoo Foundation Australia and backed by other research organisations has shown that Australia is the most plastic consumptive nation in the world. Each year Australia produces around seventy billion pieces of plastic (around three thousand pieces, or 60kg per person). Since 2017 Australia has attempted to implement initiatives to support the transition to a circular economy for packaging in particular based primarily on voluntary adoption of the codes by the various industries concerned.

The report by the Australian Packaging Covenant Organisation (APCO) in November 2021 however demonstrates that voluntary schemes and targets are simply not working with the rate of plastic packaging recycling remaining stubbornly low at around 16% and soft plastics at 4% (possibly even lower in light of Victoria's recent experience of soft plastic waste being warehoused). The role of soft plastics in waterway and ocean pollution is worth a special mention, being light it is blown into gutters and then stormwater drains where it ends up in our waterways and oceans.

The federal government has recently attempted to play an active part in improving recycling rates in Australia, where responsibilities lie primarily with the states and through them local government.

## **KEY ARGUMENTS**

The National Plastics Summit (March 2020) a government led initiative with over two hundred delegates from industry, government, and community were ground-breaking in many respects. The resulting goals that resulted were documented in the National Plastics Plan 2021: these were laudable but as the APCO report shows, progress towards these goals is next to nothing.

The primary reason for the lack of progress is the current funding model. Currently state governments, while collecting hundreds of millions of dollars from local government through landfill levies, contribute little, if anything, to recycling costs, which local governments have to pay from their rates revenue. Currently the products from recycling are either not bought or bring in so little revenue that private recycling companies demand three figure sums per tonne from local government to recycle their curb side collections.

While there is so little certainty there are few incentives for private industry to invest the millions of dollars required to install large scale, modern sorting, and recycling plant. Also, while the cost of virgin plastics (both hard and soft) is cheaper than alternative products, or even plastics using recycled material, there is no incentive for the packaging industry (or the food industry) to change.

The only realistic way to change the costing equation is to tax plastic packaging, at or near source, and use the funds collected to support the recycling and alternate product industries.

That would both provide an incentive for packaging to change from plastic and provide the surety of revenue to the recycling industry that would promote investment. That would need to be done at a federal level to be effective and, for legislative reasons, would need the support of the states and territories, so a vital part of achieving this would be the formation of a standing body led by the federal government and including high level representatives from all state and territory governments.

Other countries are already going down similar paths. The UK is in the process of implementing a tax on plastic packaging of two hundred pounds per tonne at the manufacturing or import level and using the funds to guarantee a revenue of one hundred pounds per tonne for recycled materials that can be used in manufacture.

Other countries, like France, are looking at banning plastic packaging altogether on some products. This is an issue that affects all councils and is worthy of submission and support for submission to the ALGA National Conference in June 2023.

## Motion number 126.2 Sunshine Coast Regional Council QLD

**This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to introduce new, more aggressive regulations that set a minimum standard for sustainable packaging and waste responsibilities for all manufacturers, supported by appropriate market incentives to motivate compliance with these standards.**

### **NATIONAL OBJECTIVE**

Australia uses around seventy billion pieces of soft 'scrunchable' plastics including food wrappers each year and it is estimated that one million tonnes of Australia's annual plastic consumption is single-use plastic.

Our use of plastic is increasing and without urgent action, will double by 2040. Currently, around 84% of plastic ends up in landfill and only 13% is recycled.

The Australian Packaging Covenant (the Covenant) is a national regulatory framework under the National Environment Protection (Used Packaging Materials) Measure 2011 (NEPM) that sets out how governments and businesses across Australia share the responsibility for managing the environmental impacts of packaging. The Covenant aims to reduce the environmental impacts of Consumer Packaging and supports an industry-led component of a co-regulatory arrangement underpinned by the NEPM. The Covenant applies to businesses in the supply chain that have a total annual turnover of \$5 million or more, that meet the definition of Brand Owner as set out within the NEPM.

Despite good intentions and exacerbated by the recently suspended REDcycle program, there is little evidence to date that the National Packaging Covenant is on course to meet its 2025 National Packaging Targets.

## **KEY ARGUMENTS**

The 2025 National Packaging Targets were developed and supported by Australian industry to deliver a new and sustainable approach to packaging. The 2025 Targets are:

1. 100% reusable, recyclable, or compostable packaging;
2. 70% of plastic packaging being recycled or composted;
3. 50% of average recycled content included in packaging;
4. The phase out of problematic and unnecessary single-use plastics packaging

For non-APCO members there are no readily available reports regarding progress towards achieving these targets beyond results published on the APCO website for financial year 2019/20. The 2019/20 results indicate:

Target 1. 85%;

Target 2. 16%;

Target 3. 39%;

Target 4. Still in development phase.

To this end, it is considered there is an opportunity to have this proposal encapsulated within the policy and advocacy platform of the Australian Local Government Association through the adoption of this National General Assembly motion.

## **Motion number 126.3 Mitchell Shire Council VIC**

**This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to support the establishment of markets nationally to support a local circular economy that prioritises reuse of our precious resources.**

### **NATIONAL OBJECTIVE**

To advocate to the federal government to facilitate and support the development of genuine markets for the use of recyclable materials to accelerate the establishment of a thriving local circular economy.

### **KEY ARGUMENTS**

See motion above for key arguments.

## Motion number 126.4 Merri-bek City Council VIC

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to:

1. Investigate opportunities to reduce packaging across the whole economy as it moves to a circular economy, using the Internationally recognised zero waste hierarchy (Zero Waste Hierarchy of Highest and Best Use 8.0 - Zero Waste International Alliance ([zwia.org](http://zwia.org)))
2. Introduce a mandatory product stewardship scheme for packaging, including soft plastics;
3. Urgently investigate options for onshore-based soft plastics recycling and manufacturing, including industry best practice and government-led options; and
4. Standardise the soft plastic varieties in use across Australia to ensure consistent standards, simplifying the recycling process; and
5. Investigate safe storage facilities of soft plastics.

### NATIONAL OBJECTIVE

The Australian Government has set ambitious targets for recycling, including a target of 70% of plastic packaging being recycled or composted by 2025. However, Australia is still well short of that target in 2023, with just 16% of the country's plastic packaging recycled or composted in 2019-20, down from 18% in 2018-19.

China's move to stop accepting a wide range of solid waste in 2018 and REDcycle's temporary pause of its soft plastic collection program in late 2022 exposed issues with Australia's soft-plastic recycling and manufacturing across the country, revealing stockpiling of soft plastic waste and lack of demand for recycled plastic products resulting in soft plastics going to landfill.

Plastic created greenhouse gas emissions through its production and disposal contributes to climate change. The Australian Government can positively impact the Australian soft plastic recycling industry by introducing a mandatory product stewardship scheme for packaging, investigating and leading soft plastics recycling, implementing consistent soft plastic standards to simplify the recycling process and investigating safe storage facilities for soft plastics to avoid stockpiles going to landfill.

### KEY ARGUMENTS

The world's growing production of plastics, about one hundred million tonnes annually, is not just clogging landfill sites and threatening oceans and marine life, it is accelerating climate change. Plastic is one of the most persistent pollutants on earth, and through both its production and disposal, plastic creates greenhouse gas emissions that contribute to the warming of our world.

Of the almost three million tonnes of plastic that Australia produces each year, 95% is discarded after a single use. Less than 12% is recycled, which leaves a staggering amount to be disposed of. The good news is that 87% Australians believe that recycling at home is the

right thing to do, according to the 2022 Australasian Recycling Label Consumer Insights Report.

Additionally, the RedCycle program showed that households are willing to take their accumulated soft plastics to central collection points for recycling. The scheme failed not because of its collection system but because of the lack of processing capacity and the limited demand for the end products of soft plastic recycling. This government has a continued and explicit focus on reducing waste, transforming the recycling sector and the deliberate transition to a circular economy. In February 2022, the government announced that it would push for a legally binding international plastic pollution treaty at the upcoming meeting of the United Nations Environment Assembly in Nairobi. At that meeting on 3 March 2022, nearly two hundred nations, including Australia, unanimously agreed to create an intergovernmental committee to negotiate and finalise a legally binding plastics treaty by 2024.

In October 2022, along with the states, the federal government promised to reform packaging regulation by 2025 and aim to create a better circular economy by 2030. The federal government's \$250 million investment in the \$1 billion Recycling Modernisation Fund (RMF), which includes contributions from industry and state governments, is helping with new technology and infrastructure to allow hard-to-recycle plastics such as bread bags, takeaway food containers, and plastic wraps to be fully re-manufactured in Australia. But the Federal Government can do more, by introducing a mandatory product stewardship scheme for packaging, including soft plastics.

Such a scheme would require plastic packaging producers, importers, and retailers to take responsibility for their products without externalising costs onto the environment, community, or government. The Federal Government should also introduce standards for soft plastic varieties to simplify the recycling process, requiring companies to minimise plastic packaging and setting guidelines for products to be made of specific polymers while avoiding others. Australian Packaging Covenant Organisation says 14% of total packaging was still being designed in a way that could not be recycled, reused, or composted in Australia's recovery system.

Federal government intervention - regulations including installing fire warning and suppression systems and around the clock security - could ensure safe storage facilities for soft plastic, ensuring that the more than 12,000 tonnes of soft plastic collected via the REDcycle program stockpiled since 2018 would not go to landfill but instead be recycled as new recycling processes come online.

## Motion number 126.5 Glen Eira City Council VIC

**Noting the challenges local governments across Australia face in sourcing recycled materials for use in public infrastructure and assets, due to a shortage of waste infrastructure and affordability, this National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to:**



1. Set national targets for the use of recycled content in the construction of public infrastructure; and
2. Significantly increase its current \$250 million investment in the Recycling Modernisation Fund, with a focus on boosting market capability to process and manufacture recycled materials.

#### **NATIONAL OBJECTIVE**

Through the October 2022-23 federal budget, the Australian Government announced a further \$60 million for the Recycling Modernisation Fund, 'a national initiative to expand Australia's capacity to sort, process and remanufacture glass, plastic, tyres, paper and cardboard' for a total investment of \$250 million.

#### **KEY ARGUMENTS**

State and federal governments must support the transition to a circular economy through policymaking that influences the actions of manufacturers and other industry makers. While councils actively look to include recycled materials in their assets, we must procure recycled materials that are available, best value, and at an appropriate standard. There is currently limited supply in the market for materials that meet these criteria and greater federal investment is needed to strengthen the supply chain. The vulnerability in the supply chain means issues can escalate rapidly.

### **Motion number 126.6 Yarra City Council VIC**

#### **1. This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to:**

- a. Support the development of a circular economy and take real action to reduce waste by committing to a national ban on food waste to landfill and agreeing to implement stricter national sustainable packaging standards;
- b. Invest in infrastructure to support the development of robust end markets to truly transition to a circular economy. This includes providing increased funding to industry and local government for local repair and processing solutions, sector innovation and market development.

#### **2. This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government and Australian Food and Grocery Council to:**

- a. Mandate and improve producer pay product stewardship scheme for difficult materials and designing problematic and unnecessary materials out of the system;
- b. Ensure that the governance of a mandated stewardship scheme is structured as a true partnership between local, state, and federal government and does not shift the cost and risk to councils.

## **NATIONAL OBJECTIVE**

A national leadership approach is needed to drive the standardised change and compliance. The Federal Government is already driving the evolution to a circular economy through the National Waste Policy Action Plan and the Recycling Modernisation Fund. These schemes are beginning to modernise Australia's recycling infrastructure increasing our circular economy capabilities by finding innovative solutions for onshore recycling and supporting remanufacturing of products with recycled content. This will ensure we can achieve commitments under the National Plastics Plan and support Australians to buy locally recycled products. These motions can be supported through the leadership of the Federal Government by leveraging their existing programs.

## **KEY ARGUMENTS**

A circular economy model employs not only waste management, but designing products for reuse, repair, recycling, and responsible manufacturing, supporting the development of new industries and jobs, reducing emissions, and increasing efficient use of natural resources (including energy, water, and materials).

A more sustainable system is required, one that works with manufacturers to rethink how products are made and reduce the waste that is created during production, reducing excess consumption, reusing items wherever possible and supporting our local recycling industry. Mandatory product stewardship schemes can shift the end-of-life costs of products to those who benefit from them, including manufacturers, retailers and ultimately consumers. In addition to easing the burden of waste management on the general community, that approach would create a clear price incentive for waste reduction. By maximising resource utility and incorporating the concept of circularity during production and consumption (i.e., not just focused on waste management), the circular economy boosts entire economies. For Australia, where currently the value of its natural resources lies only in the raw, unprocessed state, a circular economy is critical in ensuring future prosperity and economic security. These strategies require local, state, federal and international work to ensure a more sustainable system. A national leadership approach is needed to drive the standardised change and compliance.

## **Motion number 126.7 Tweed Shire Council NSW**

**This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to:**

- 1. Establish mandatory soft plastic recycling targets;**
- 2. Place a levy on production and consumption of polymer plastic made from fossil fuel and particularly for single use and packaging;**
- 3. Use of the levy to support urgent establishment of plastic recycling research and facilities; and**
- 4. Mandate government institution use of recycled plastic procurement for single use plastics and packaging.**

## **NATIONAL OBJECTIVE**

The use of single use plastics between 2018 and 2021 increased by 1 kg per person on the planet. By 2050 it is estimated that at current rates there will be more plastic in the sea than fish.

## **KEY ARGUMENTS**

Fish, native birds, and animals are at risk due to ingestion of plastic in the environment. Microplastics are already throughout the food chain. We urgently need the above incentives and government mandates to change this shocking situation.

## Motion number 126.8 Shoalhaven City Council NSW

**This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to collapse soft plastics funding by fast tracking localised projects to combat this and within the strategy include the money taxed to be to be returned to local government entities tasked with full-life cycle waste management.**

## **NATIONAL OBJECTIVE**

The Federal Government National Waste Action Plan (in conjunction with circular economy principles in the National Waste Policy 2018) aim to improve resource recovery, increase the use of recycled materials, and build markets for recycled products.

## **KEY ARGUMENTS**

Councils nationwide assume responsibility for the end-to-end management of waste throughout its lifecycle, from kerbside pickup through to landfill and resource recovery centres, as well as site closure and remediated lands management.

A task no other standalone industry or government undertakes for our communities, and which is done through specific rates and charges levied at a local level. With the advent of the National Waste Export Regulation as of 2021, the need to find more efficient processing of recycling streams as well as re-manufacturing processes is now not just a reality but is critical to ensure circular economy principles can be achieved (including the proposition to recover 80% of all waste by 2030). It is known that for every 10,000 tonnes of waste recycled, 9.2 jobs are created. In comparison, only 2.8 jobs are created where that waste goes to landfill.

The Australian Government, through tax programs imposed on waste generators and short to long term fund allocation, has the ability to assist councils to increase recycled material recovery efficiencies at local and regional scales, bolstering jobs and further cycling both waste stream products and money through our economy.

It is proposed that the Australian Government consider directly allocating specific funding (directly through, or in addition to the Recycling Modernisation Fund) to councils who can prove business cases which adhere to the National Waste Policy 2018 and consider

streamlined approvals processes that will allow councils to manage localised remanufacturing proposals and implement discounted buyback schemes for recycled products.

Additionally, the Australian Government is called upon to collapse soft plastics funding by fast tracking localised projects to combat this and within the strategy include the money taxed be returned to managers to further develop a waste strategy. Help us keep materials in local economies for longer.

## Motion number 126.9 Woollahra Municipal Council NSW

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to:

1. Seek an immediate interim solution to the collection, storage, and management of soft plastics;
2. Seek a long-term sustainable solution to soft plastics collection, recycling, and reprocessing;
3. Support a commitment to ensuring one hundred per cent of plastic packaging is recyclable, reusable, or compostable by 2025;
4. Support a global agreement to end plastic pollution by 2040, including mandating binding targets and design standards to phase out plastic waste products; and
5. Commit funding to support local government in managing soft plastics.

### NATIONAL OBJECTIVE

Climate change and renewable energy priority area to support local councils nationally to help solve the soft plastic waste problem.

### KEY ARGUMENTS

The popular REDcycle's collection of soft plastics by Coles and Woolworths supermarkets was recently suspended when it was revealed that its recycling partners had stopped accepting and processing soft plastics.

Nationally, households were collectively disappointed that soft plastics would no longer be diverted from landfill. Councils were tasked with the burden of collecting increased soft plastic waste whilst attempting to ensure community confidence in recycling generally.

The Federal Government must support local councils nationally to help solve the soft plastic waste problem.

## Motion number 126.10 Break O'Day Council TAS

An EPR policy for soft plastics would align with the Government's commitment to reducing plastic pollution and promoting a more circular economy. It would require producers to take responsibility for the environmental impact of their products, incentivise innovation and

investment in sustainable business models, and create economic and social benefits for communities.

## **NATIONAL OBJECTIVE**

An EPR policy for soft plastics would align with the government's commitment to reducing plastic pollution and promoting a more circular economy. It would encourage producers to take responsibility for the environmental impact of their products, incentivise innovation and investment in sustainable business models, and create economic and social benefits for communities.

## **KEY ARGUMENTS**

The cost to government in dealing with waste is being felt across all levels of government and the cost is growing. With the collapse of REDcycle, it could be argued that the soft plastic part of the waste and recycling system is broken. Intervention in the system is required - something different needs to happen. Currently, the burden of managing plastic disposal typically lies with local councils and municipalities.

As a result, many municipalities worldwide are championing EPR schemes. More emphasis needs to be put on producers to be responsible for the soft plastics they put into the waste stream. Once soft plastic waste reaches government waste streams it is too late for us to do anything about it other than send it to landfill.

Soft plastics must be limited and eventually stopped from entering the waste stream to see any real or meaningful change. If we can incentivise producers to limit their soft plastics, we will be stopping this plastic from entering the waste stream. Aside from the considerably increasing costs to government to deal with waste, we also have a responsibility and duty of care to ensure we are acting sustainably and do all we can to mitigate negative environmental impacts.

WHY an EPR:

- Environmental impact - Soft plastics are a major polluter particularly in the marine environment and a big contributor to landfill where they can take up to one thousand years to break down. These plastics can harm wildlife, damage ecosystems, and contribute to climate change. An EPR policy for soft plastics would incentivise producers to reduce the amount of plastic they use, improve the recyclability of their products, and take responsibility for the end-of-life management of their products.
- Economic benefits - EPR policies can create economic opportunities by incentivising producers to invest in more sustainable and circular business models. By requiring producers to take responsibility for their products, an EPR policy could encourage innovation in product design, improve recycling infrastructure, and create jobs in the recycling and waste management sector.
- Social responsibility - EPR policies can promote social responsibility by encouraging producers to consider the environmental impact of their products and take steps to minimise their negative effects. This can help build consumer trust and enhance the reputation of companies that prioritise sustainability

- Consistency - An EPR policy for soft plastics would create a consistent and predictable regulatory environment for producers, reducing confusion and uncertainty about waste management requirements. This can help streamline compliance and reduce compliance costs for businesses.

It is the responsibility of everyone in the value chain to limit the use of single-use plastic and provide sustainable packaging alternatives for consumers. We need better product design and prevention through legislation.

## Motion number 126.11 Orange City Council NSW

**This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to urgently implement programs and policies that support local councils across Australia to provide soft plastics recycling services to residents and businesses, and support manufacturers to reduce or eliminate soft plastics from their product packaging.**

### NATIONAL OBJECTIVE

This motion relates to important issues affecting community wellbeing and environmental health across Australia. The significant developments in the failure of private soft plastics recycling services during the past year has created an urgent situation that will see an increase in soft plastic waste entering landfill or being stockpiled until a solution to this waste issue is delivered.

### KEY ARGUMENTS

The failure of the REDcycle soft plastic recycling service, which suspended operations in 2022 and had accumulated stockpiles of unrecycled soft plastics through its operations via major supermarkets, has highlighted the urgent need for community-wide public services to recycle soft plastics along with efforts to eliminate or minimise the use of soft plastics. In the absence of a universally accessible soft plastics recycling scheme across all local government areas, more soft plastics will continue to go into landfill and pollute the natural environment. Soft plastics recycling needs to be made available not only to residents but to businesses who deal with soft plastic packaging. And while these services are required to address the urgent challenges resulting from recent events, the ultimate solution is to continue to reduce and seek to eliminate soft plastic packaging with more responsible and sustainable alternatives.

## Motion number 127 Town of Bassendean Council WA

**This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to commit to appropriate funding mechanisms for the establishment of Food Organics and Garden Organics (FOGO) processing facilities, nationally; as an undertaking to co-partner with local governments and their regional associations to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from landfills, closing the loop on a priority waste stream and progressing healthy soils initiatives.**

## **NATIONAL OBJECTIVE**

This motion aligns with the NGA's 6th priority area 'Climate Change and Renewable Energy' and in particular 'lowering carbon emissions and responding creatively to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from landfills'.

The lack of FOGO processing capabilities across the nation is a significant concern as the various states and local governments attempt to reduce methane emissions by diverting organic waste from landfill. Source separation and recycling of household organic waste aligns with federal, state and local government strategies for waste reduction, reuse, and recycling. The development of circular economy processes adds real value to local communities via the production of new circular materials, job creation and economic development.

Municipal Solid Waste (MSW) accounts for one third of the total waste stream and FOGO accounts for approximately 50% of MSW. Lack of FOGO processing infrastructure is a serious impediment to achieving state and national net zero emission targets. Many local governments lack the resources to underwrite the establishment of new FOGO processing infrastructure, upgrade existing GO facilities or to expand existing processing infrastructure to receive increasing volumes of FOGO material. This fact is a significant impediment to the adoption of FOGO programs at a local level.

## **KEY ARGUMENTS**

FOGO is the single biggest high impact emissions mitigation action currently available at a household level. FOGO processing is a joint responsibility of local, state, and federal government, with local government's role as community implementor and catalyst and state/federal government joint role as policy makers, funders, and change-makers.

There is a lack of adequate FOGO processing infrastructure across the nation, to receive the expected volumes of FOGO material once all local governments have introduced a third bin (FOGO bin). FOGO is food organics and garden organics collected from households, which have been separated at the source, to reduce contamination.

FOGO is screened, composted and combined with other organic materials to produce a range of Australian standard soil conditioners and mulch products with the products used in a range of applications from urban amenity to agriculture.

Establishing FOGO processing facilities will result in the production of composted soil conditioner that can be incorporated into topsoil to improve growing properties; and composted mulch to be applied to the soil surface to protect topsoil, retain moisture, prevent runoff, suppress weeds.

Environmental benefits include:

- Greenhouse gas savings equivalent to 0.22 Tco2-e per household pa. as a result of diverting FOGO from landfill
- Building soil health and biodiversity
- Improving soil water retention

- Reducing reliance on synthetic fertilisers
- Using material close to the source to reduce transport emissions
- Returning organic matter to the carbon deficient soils
- Achieving net zero targets, nationally

Key facts about FOGO processing:

- FOGO derived products are processed to meet Australian Standards AS 4454 for composts, soil conditioners and mulches or AS 4419 for topsoils
- The FOGO process removes physical contamination, and pasteurisation eliminates pathogens and weed seed propagation
- Certified fit for purpose FOGO product can be used in major infrastructure projects, used to improve soil health in the agriculture sector and used in landscaping and garden applications, including households.

Investing in FOGO processing facilities will result in:

- Reducing carbon emissions generated from organics decaying in landfill
- Regional prosperity through enduring jobs and growth (National Taskforce extra six jobs per 10kT of material)
- Achieving a typical overall recovery rate of 67% with a 3-bin FOGO system where 95% of the FOGO material is diverted from landfill (an average of 300kg per household per annum)
- Delivering state and federal government targets for Carbon Emissions Reduction and the National Healthy Soils Strategy

The business case for FOGO processing facility investment in Australia is compelling and, with assistance from the federal government, will support local governments to transition to net zero emissions by 2050. Such collaboration will deliver economic and environmental benefits for the nation.

## **Motion number 128 Murweh Shire Council QLD**

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to continue lobbying the federal government to impose a levy on all tyres imported or produced in Australia and highlights the failure of the Tyre Stewardship program. Further, the National General Assembly devises a mechanism to assist with the increased cost of tyre disposals under the state governments waste management. The levy should go directly to the local government authority.

### **NATIONAL OBJECTIVE**

While the industry-led tyre product stewardship scheme has been implemented by Tyre Stewardship Australia for some time now it has not reduced the number of tyres being deposited in local landfills throughout the state with the cost of disposal or recycling being extremely prohibitive, especially in rural and remote Shires. This scheme has only led to



additional revenues for tyre companies with no onus on them to dispose of or recycle tyres with many of those tyres being dumped in council landfills for no cost, or if councils charge, then disposed of in isolated locations around shires without penalty. Owing to the significant number of operators disposing of tyres it is hard to determine the illegal dumper and left for council to then dispose of or recycle at a significant cost.

Increased regulation of the tyre recycling industry is required.

#### **KEY ARGUMENTS**

Waste management facilities are overwhelmed with tyres. The disposal and recycling costs are prohibitive for most LGA's.

The levy will assist in improving the recycling and disposal of tyres.

The ability of waste management facilities to recycle and dispose of tyres will minimise the illegal dumping of tyres in our environment.

## **Motion number 129 Murweh Shire Council QLD**

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to advocate for a solution to the disposal of solar panels. This could include reclamation, recycling, and implementation of a levy mechanism for solar panels to ensure better waste disposal and explore manufacturers liability for the photovoltaic (PV)panels to encourage sustainable management and work with government for industry wide solutions.

#### **NATIONAL OBJECTIVE**

Solar panels are a hazardous waste and limited councils have the facilities to accept this form of waste. There are an estimated 100 000 tonnes of solar panels to be in landfill by 2035. As the move towards decarbonisation continues, many older solar panels are now coming to the end of their 20-year lifespan.

#### **KEY ARGUMENTS**

Our concern is LGA's will not be able to safely handle influx of hazardous materials from solar panels. This will then encourage community to illegally dump - leading to pollution and contamination of the environment.

# ENVIRONMENT AND BIODIVERSITY

## Motion number 130 East Gippsland Shire Council VIC

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to adequately resource the implementation of the recommendations in the State of the Environment Report to ensure that matters of national environmental significance in Australia can be appropriately managed.

### NATIONAL OBJECTIVE

Timely implementation of the recommendations contained within the State of the Environment Report will support the care and protection of Australia's natural resources.

### KEY ARGUMENTS

In the past three years, many councils across Australia have witnessed extreme events that caused significant damage to natural and built environments. These range from (but are not limited to) fires, floods, and algal blooms. Each event, while naturally occurring, can be in part attributed to the increased pressures currently imposed on the environment. As such, urgent action is required to mitigate these pressures.

The key arguments behind this motion are:

- The State of the Environment Report released by the Albanese Government found that overall, the state and trend of the environment of Australia are poor and deteriorating as a result of increasing pressures from climate change, habitat loss, invasive species, pollution, and resource extraction. Changing environmental conditions mean that many species and ecosystems are increasingly threatened. Multiple pressures create cumulative impacts that amplify threats to our environment, and abrupt changes in ecological systems have been recorded in the past 5 years;
- The Report calls for immediate action with innovative management and collaboration to turn things around. Indicating that adequately resourced, innovative, responsive, and collaborative management measures will foster investment and renewed action to turn things around;
- The report also found that Australia currently lacks a framework that delivers holistic environmental management to integrate our disconnected legislative and institutional national, state and territory systems, and break down existing barriers to stimulate new models and partnerships for innovative environmental management and financing; and
- To turn things around as suggested by the Report requires a strong framework and adequate investment. There is an obligation on the federal government to provide both.

# Motion number 131 East Gippsland Shire Council VIC

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to review the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 so that it is more effectively applied without unintended consequences.

## NATIONAL OBJECTIVE

To ensure the key, national environmental protection legislation for Australia is effective and targeted to achieve long term, positive outcomes for the care and protection of the country's unique plants, animals, habitats, and places.

## KEY ARGUMENTS

The Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act (EPBC Act) is almost a quarter of a century old. Whilst its framework for the protection and management of unique plants, animals, habitats, and places is supported, its application requires review and refinement. The EPBC Act was independently reviewed in 2020, but major change has not been implemented.

The key arguments behind this motion are:

- The timeframes used to implement the EPBC Act are unwieldy and can cause substantial delays to the design and implementation of critical public infrastructure projects. There is a need to have more reasonable timeframes for consideration of EPBCA applications - as are set for other authorising and referral agencies
- The EPBC Act does not consider the type of project for which Native Vegetation may require removal and the implications of delays in these projects on public safety, for example vegetation removal to ensure regional airfields meet the changed requirements of other legislations such as the CASA
- The legislation places an unreasonable burden on small rural communities, where native vegetation has been preserved and is often in abundance
- An independent review of the EPBC Act released in 2020 found that, 'the EPBC Act is ineffective, and reform is long overdue. It does not enable the Australian Government to effectively protect environmental matters that are important for the nation. It is not fit to address current or future environmental challenges. The review recommended that fundamental reform of national environmental law is required. This review has not been implemented (source: <https://epbcactreview.environment.gov.au/resources/interim-report/executivesummary>)
- The independent review also found that 'the EPBC Act is duplicative, inefficient, and costly for the environment, business, and the community. The interaction between federal, state and territory laws and regulations leads to duplication. Despite efforts to streamline, significant overlap remains. Reform is therefore required to remove duplication between the EPBC Act and state and territory systems with decision

making to be devolved to other jurisdictions, where they demonstrate National Environmental Standards can be met'

- The same independent review also found that, 'regional (landscape) plans should be developed that support the management of threats at the right scale and to set clear rules to facilitate and manage competing land uses. These plans should prioritise investment in protection, conservation, and restoration to where it is most needed, such as biodiversity hotspots, and where the environment will most benefit'. The present approach does not support this focus on priority areas and leaves many communities and projects inadvertently compromised by the non-discerning nature of the current EPBC Act.

## **Motion number 132 Nillumbik Shire Council VIC**

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to provide direct support to local government in our important work to protect and manage unique plants, animals, and habitats and to manage the threatening processes that negatively impact our biodiversity by:

1. Providing adequate and long-term grant funding for on-ground action, monitoring and collaboration to enable landscape-scale biodiversity outcomes across all land tenures;
2. Supporting opportunities to increase and diversify environmental management and restoration employment; and
3. Supporting local government programs that promote a stronger connection between people and nature, improve the way nature is cared for, and build and share knowledge.

### **NATIONAL OBJECTIVE**

Local government plays an important role in coordinating biodiversity protection action across the landscape, particularly as the number of individual stakeholders is large, as well as having an important role in owning and managing land for conservation purposes. All local governments require adequate Australian Government support to help achieve the objectives within Australia's Strategy for Nature 2019-2030 and as a Party to the Convention on Biological Diversity.

We need the Australian Government to elevate investment in local government programs that:

- Protect biodiversity;
- Identify and monitor the important components of biodiversity that need to be conserved and used sustainably;
- Establish and maintain protected areas to conserve biological diversity;
- Educate and encourage community involvement.

## KEY ARGUMENTS

Biodiversity in the Shire of Nillumbik is a local, state, and national asset and broader support is required to protect biodiversity assets. Direct financial support from the Australian Government is required to assist Nillumbik and other municipalities implement effective on ground biodiversity conservation works including works to protect threatened species and control threatening processes.

With regard to threatening processes operating at a national scale for example feral cats and foxes; greater leadership and investment should be provided at that scale rather than a project-by-project piecemeal scale.

## Motion number 133 Yarra City Council VIC

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to develop and communicate a plan for including the contributions of local government in meeting its targets as expected under the new Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework adopted in Montreal in December 2020.

### NATIONAL OBJECTIVE

The Minister for the Environment Tania Plibersek has announced to ALGA that with Australia's Environment Ministers, there is now agreement:

- to work collectively to achieve a national target to protect and conserve 30 per cent of Australia's landmass and 30 per cent of Australia's marine areas by 2030 and
- to note the Australian Government's intention to establish a national nature repair market and agreed to work together to make nature positive investments easier, focusing on a consistent way to measure and track biodiversity.

## KEY ARGUMENTS

These goals are consistent with the recently adopted post 2020 Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework adopted at the United Nations Biodiversity Conference (COP15) in Montreal, Canada, on 19 December 2022, a landmark agreement to guide global action on nature through to 2030. The new Framework aims to address biodiversity loss, restore ecosystems, and protect Indigenous rights. The plan includes concrete measures to halt and reverse nature loss, including putting 30 per cent of the planet and 30 per cent of degraded ecosystems under protection by 2030.

The Framework also includes:

- A stronger and more ambitious Plan of Action on engaging subnational and local governments in its implementation
- Recognising the role of subnational and local governments within the Framework including for the first time a target specifically directed at local governments
- References to subnational and local governments in several other COP 15 decisions.

This is the only UN Framework to identify a specific role for local governments in its implementation.

A key decision regarding subnational and local governments is on engagement with subnational governments, cities, and other local authorities to enhance implementation of the post-2020 global biodiversity framework and its Plan of Action for 2022-2030.

It is expected that local governments will contribute to the reporting on their national agreement.

With a clear role for local government in contributing to the reporting on our national commitments, and with local government already taking significant action to halt extinctions, protect habitat, restore ecosystems and enhance biodiversity, there is a need for the Federal Government to indicate to local government how their contributions will be collected, provided as input to the global effort under the Convention, and reported on. The UN expectation is that this action starts now. Local government are willing partners in this significant but important task.

## **Motion number 134 Hawkesbury City Council NSW**

**This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to improve the coordination across state borders of biosecurity management and commit to mandatory consultation with local government agencies regarding, risk, spread and containment of invasive species.**

### **NATIONAL OBJECTIVE**

Biosecurity is a national issue due to the importance of border security in controlling invasive species.

The lack of uniformity in invasive species designations and control measures across state borders allows invasive species to be moved around by freight vehicles.

Invasive species that are considered high priority in one state may not be in others. And this has the potential to affect the movement of produce across borders.

### **KEY ARGUMENTS**

Different approaches are taken by councils to the biosecurity management, and this is influenced by whether biosecurity functions are exercised by councils directly or through shared arrangements that apply to some local government areas in NSW for example where councils may be members of a separate statutory county council exercising biosecurity functions.

Organisations exercising biosecurity functions, can find it difficult to muster the resources needed to control noxious weeds and invasive fauna species. This has been experienced in

the Hawkesbury local government area with a containment program for post-flood frogbit infestations.

This is an example of a weed that is likely to be removed from the noxious weeds list in other states, which puts pressure on NSW to remove it as well.

Invasive species such as feral deer are also prevalent in areas such as the Greater Blue Mountains World Heritage Area and surrounding areas.

A request was recently submitted by the Invasive Species Council and the Blue Mountains Feral Deer Working Group for a notice of motion to be put to council, requesting council's support for greater state and federal government action to prevent the spread of invasive feral deer in the Greater Blue Mountains World Heritage Area and surrounding areas.

## **Motion number 135 Shoalhaven City Council NSW**

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to provide increased funding to support on-the-ground council activities aimed at protecting our local koala population, including:

1. Environmental Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 (EPBC) strengthening and direct linkage to State Biodiversity Legislation; and
2. Ecosystem preservation measures empowered at a regional and local scale.

### **NATIONAL OBJECTIVE**

Direct translation of EPBC requirements into state legislative instruments, as well as policy provisions will allow ecosystem preservation along with adequate resourcing to regulate activities that will impact koala populations across Australia.

### **KEY ARGUMENTS**

The triggers from EPBC to protect are based on self-identification and reporting mechanisms, as well as the discretionary provisioning of relevant government departments to administer and regulate applicable biodiversity measures. Ecosystems, including those that house critical koala populations, are best identified, and managed at a regional and local level via state legislative provisions which are drafted through insight into both local ecologies and impacting activities.

## **Motion number 135.1 Redland City Council QLD**

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to consult with and empower local governments, through funding, to deliver on-ground activities that achieve the goals, objectives, and strategies of the National Recovery Plan for the Koala, *Phascolarctos cinereus* (combined populations of Queensland, New South Wales, and the Australian Capital Territory).

## **NATIONAL OBJECTIVE**

Koalas were officially classed as endangered under the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act (EPBC Act) 1999 on February 11, 2022. At the time the Federal Government announced an additional \$50 million investment in koalas including:

- \$20 million in grants and funding to build on existing work, guided by the outcomes and findings of the National Koala Monitoring Program
- \$10 million to extend the National Koala Monitoring Program
- \$10 million in grants for small-scale community projects and local activities including habitat protection and restoration
- \$2 million to improve koala health outcomes through applied research activities and the practical application of research outcomes to address fundamental health challenges such as koala retrovirus, koala herpes viruses and Chlamydia
- \$1 million to expand the national training program in koala care, treatment, and triage.

## **KEY ARGUMENTS**

It is noted that there is limited funding allocated to local government entities to help enhance the current or planned federal government koala conservation initiatives and actions. Additionally, there has been limited consultation with local governments on the National Recovery Plan for the Koala, *Phascolarctos cinereus* (combined populations of Queensland, New South Wales, and the Australian Capital Territory). Local governments have been identified as responsible for and/or as a potential partner for the delivery of a number of actions that achieve the plan's goals, objectives, and strategies and as such, local governments request the Australian Government engage with local governments to identify suitable projects to be delivered, and through funding, empower local governments to deliver them.

# **Motion number 136 Whitsunday Regional Council**

## **QLD**

**That this National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to develop with the state governments a damage mitigation permit process so that flying fox species which have a Queensland Nature Conservation Act Status of 'Least Concern' can be relocated from urban areas where they are creating a significant nuisance.**

## **NATIONAL OBJECTIVE**

There is currently no consistency between the state legislation and Australian legislation in the framework for managing the mitigation of flying foxes from urban areas. This motion seeks a national approach to review and work with the states to identify a truly national approach to management and mitigation of least concern species within the legislation. Whilst the state legislation provides guidance on the operational aspects of managing flying



foxes, the differences in the federal legislation only complicate the processes where inconsistencies arise.

Councils collectively need practical processes that provide the mechanisms to relocate species from urban areas where there is a significant nuisance which may impact public health and amenity.

## **KEY ARGUMENTS**

The Federal Government's Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 (EPBC Act) defines and classifies the conservation status of flying fox species. Each state also classifies the conservation status of flying fox. The different conservation status classifications and application of legislation to the same species can cause confusion and inconsistencies in the management and response to flying fox issues.

There are too many rules and guidelines in place at present through federal and state legislation on the management of flying fox in urban areas. It is not clear how these can be followed to achieve any practical outcomes for the impacted urban communities.

Council is seeking clarity on the process for only those species that are declared 'least concern' by definition, in practical, terms the Black and Little Red species, not all species.

Councils generally would like a clear process to allow for the relocation of some species such as those which have a conservation status of 'least concern' under state legislation (not endangered) from urban areas both public and private lands where the animals are deemed to be causing a significant nuisance in local communities. The current rules are too prescriptive when councils in some instances are seeking to address public health issues in urban areas.

It is not intended to seek unilateral powers but to be able to tailor the mitigation approaches for each community and circumstance that arises to move the flying fox out more easily of urban areas.

## **Motion number 137 Broken Hill City Council NSW**

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to provide funding for regional councils to implement fruit fly exclusion zones and install infrastructure to help reduce the spread of fruit fly.

### **NATIONAL OBJECTIVE**

Fruit flies are one of the world's most destructive horticultural pests and pose a risk to fruit and vegetables grown both commercially and privately. Non-commercial transfer of fruit to regional centres can act as a stepping-stone for the spread of the pest, allowing it to traverse arid and semi-arid areas in which it would not ordinarily survive. The spread of fruit fly (both Mediterranean Fruit Fly and Queensland Fruit Fly) is an ongoing threat to Australia's \$13 billion horticultural industry.

## KEY ARGUMENTS

Mediterranean Fruit Fly and Queensland Fruit Fly pose an ongoing risk to Australia's \$13 billion horticultural industry, but its natural spread inland is thwarted by arid and semi-arid conditions in which it cannot survive. However, if eggs or larvae are transported across this inhospitable environment to regional centres, the pest is often able to gain a foothold in private or commercial plantings. From there it can spread by similar means to other nearby centres. Broken Hill is an ideal example.

The detection of fruit fly in Broken Hill was largely considered an anomaly in the past, however the city now suffers regular and severe seasonal outbreaks of Queensland Fruit Fly. This has raised local concerns about the potential spread of fruit to nearby agricultural centres such as Wentworth and Mildura. The fact that fruit fly has been able to establish a foothold in a city as isolated as Broken Hill shows that a similar issue could occur almost anywhere in Australia.

Given that commercial fruit operations are already subject to industry pest controls and receive government support for pest control, it is important that further control measures focus on the non-commercial movement of fruit.

Support from the Federal Government could allow councils to enforce stricter controls around the non-commercial movement of fruit fly through their LGAs. Regional centres could potentially be empowered to declare their LGAs as fruit fly exclusion zones and enforce fines or other deterrents to prevent the movement of potentially contaminated fruit into and out of their LGA.

Funding for the installation of basic signage and fruit disposal bins at the entry/exit points of all regional centres could help reduce the risk of travellers inadvertently transporting contaminated fruit to other areas.

Mediterranean Fruit Fly is currently contained to pockets in Western Australia, whilst the Queensland Fruit is currently found in large number along the northern and eastern coasts. Further spread of either of species could cause significant damage to the country's agriculture industry. Empowering councils to take a more active role in the control of fruit fly is a simple step to help reduce the risks posed by this pest.

## **Motion number 138 Tweed Shire Council NSW**

The National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to allocate substantial increased funding for weed control given that this is a major contributor to biodiversity loss.

### NATIONAL OBJECTIVE

Weeds are required to be managed at a landscape scale and with shared responsibility and coordination between landholders, community, industry, and government. Control of a weed in one area can quickly be undone by infestation from nearby areas where control has not

been undertaken. Local governments have a statutory responsibility for weed management and must address this in a way that is coordinated and consistent with regional, state, and national efforts.

The following national strategies recognise weed management as in the national interest, including the shared roles and responsibilities of all levels of government:

- The Intergovernmental Agreement on Biosecurity (Council of Australian Governments 2012) aims to improve shared management of risks posed by pests and diseases entering, emerging, establishing or spreading in Australia.
- The Australian Weeds Strategy (Invasive Plants and Animals Committee, Commonwealth of Australia 2017) identifies the strategic framework for collaborative effort and prioritisation of weed management.
- The Australian Biodiversity Conservation Strategy and threat abatement plans under the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 identify the damage from weeds to biodiversity and confirm the requirement for collaborative responsibility and effort.

## KEY ARGUMENTS

Weeds have major economic, environmental, and social impacts in Australia, causing damage to natural landscapes, agricultural land, waterways, and coastal areas. The economic impact of weeds in Australia is estimated at \$8 billion per year across the agricultural, nature conservation and tourism sectors (Australian Weeds Strategy 2017-2027, Invasive Plants and Animals Committee, Commonwealth of Australia 2017).

Weeds impact negatively on native fauna and flora by affecting the structure and function of ecosystems, displacing native species and harbouring pests and diseases. They can also increase the likelihood of more intense bushfires through increasing the biomass and structural complexity of vegetation.

Weeds also have an impact on human health and amenity. This can include causing a range of human and animal health conditions such as allergies, poisoning, asthma, and dermatitis. Weeds also restrict activities including boating and water sports, nature-based recreation, and cultural activities.

Weeds impact more than 40% of NSW threatened species (mostly plants) and about 90% of endangered ecological communities (Stopping NSW's Creeping Peril, Invasive Species Council, 2010).

## **Motion number 139 Break O'Day Council TAS**

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to create a new version of the Green Army Program to support environmental protection and conservation.

## **NATIONAL OBJECTIVE**

Redeveloping and re-introducing a new version of the Green Army Program would allow the Federal Government to deliver environmental and conservation outcomes at a local, grass roots level while ensuring a national approach. It will also facilitate a larger conversation around addressing environmental challenges while highlighting the government's commitment to environmental protection.

## **KEY ARGUMENTS**

The Federal Government created the Green Army Program in 2014 as a part of its commitment to environmental protection and conservation. The program was designed to provide opportunities for young Australians aged between 17 and 24 to participate in environmental projects, develop skills, and gain practical experience in the conservation sector, as well as delivering conservation and protection outcomes at a local level. The program was funded with \$525 million over four years and was managed by the Department of the Environment and Energy. The Green Army Program supported a range of environmental projects, including habitat restoration, coastal conservation, weed and pest control, and heritage restoration.

The Green Army Program was implemented in partnership with state and territory governments, local councils, and community groups ensuring local knowledge was captured and localised outcomes were achieved. The program provided funding for the projects, while the partner organisations identified the projects and provided the necessary resources and support for the Green Army teams. In 2016, the Australian Government announced that the Green Army Program would be discontinued after its funding ran out. Nationally, environmental conservation and protection has only grown in significance, particularly with the effects of climate change now being felt around the nation. With community interest in environmental challenges comes their expectation for all levels of government to deliver outcomes.

This is however not the core business of local government and state and federal support is imperative for work in this space to be meaningful. A new Green Army Project could alleviate some of the resourcing issues already experienced in all levels of government to tackle issues such as: weed control, erosion, rehabilitation and potentially even monitoring.

# **DIGITAL AND CYBER SECURITY**

## **Motion number 140 Cardinia Shire Council, Kingston City Council and Darebin City Council VIC**

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to advocate on behalf of candidates and councillors for additional resources and powers, inclusive of increased penalties, for the eSafety Commissioner and other relevant bodies to address online bullying, harassment and trolling of candidates and councillors on social media platforms, including but not limited to:

1. Expanding the authority of the eSafety Commissioner to remove abuse on online service provider platforms which would either fall under the current threshold of content with the 'intent of causing serious harm' or under a new threshold of unintentionally causing serious harm;
2. Work with local governments to develop specific support and social media management programs available for candidates and councillors through the eSafetywomen program in the lead up to the next elections across Australia.

### **NATIONAL OBJECTIVE**

Social media is a key tool of engagement for both candidates and elected councillors and provides open channels of communication between elected representatives and their constituents. However, social media can often be misused for the purpose of online bullying, harassment and trolling of candidates and councillors. More alarmingly, the increasing levels of online vitriol and attacks on women is a barrier from entering and continuing in politics, thus limiting the ability for local government to be represented by a diverse range of voices as well as simultaneously minimising the gender disparity in politics.

In 2021, 35% of elected representatives in local government nationwide were women, indicating a significant lack of gender representation within the sector. In order to achieve greater equality in elected office, barriers to women running for office must be removed, which includes addressing the online bullying disproportionately faced by women candidates and councillors in local government compared to male counterparts. The Federal Government must review the eSafety Commissioner's Adult Cyber Abuse Scheme authority to enable them to better regulate online bullying, harassment and trolling of women candidates and councillors. The eSafety Commissioner must also work with state electoral commissions and local governments to deliver specific eSafety women training and resources to better equip them to handle and manage vitriolic material on social media platforms.

### **KEY ARGUMENTS**

Since the Covid19 Pandemic, Australia has experienced the proliferation of online campaigning, advocacy efforts and daily communication with candidates and councillors of

local government over social media. Given the increased dependence on candidates and councillors to communicate with the community via social media in the digital age, the proliferation of online campaigning and advocacy efforts require greater regulation by the Federal Government to ensure bullying and harassment is not exacerbated any further. A report by the Local Government Association of Tasmania in 2019 found 60 per cent of women had been bullied and harassed online, including from other elected members. The Parliament of Victoria's Electoral Matters Committee which investigated the impact of social media on Victorian elections heard that women and minority groups can be particular targets, and that the abuse they receive is often gendered, sexual, racial, or otherwise discriminatory.

The current Adult Cyber Abuse Scheme grants the eSafety Commissioner the authority to require online service providers to remove online abuse that targets an Australian adult with the 'intention of causing serious harm and menacing, harassing or offensive'.

Lowering the threshold to a level under an intent of causing serious harm would create a greater opportunity to regulate and remove attacks of online bullying, harassment and trolling to encourage women entering politics at a local level, thus ensuring greater community and cultural representation.

Women entering politics at a local level has been used to gather valuable experience to run at state or federal level; indicating a removal of barriers to fair and equitable participation at local government may in turn positively balance gender equality at higher levels of government (Australasian Parliamentary Review).

An opportunity should exist for the eSafety Commissioner to work with the Australian Electoral Commission, state associated electoral commissions and local governments to expand their eSafety women program to deliver a comprehensive eSafety training program (developed by the eSafety Commissioner or associated Trusted eSafety Providers) tailored to assist candidates and councillors in combating online bullying, harassment, and trolling.

As it is a legislative requirement for a councillor to represent the interests of the municipal community in decision-making, breaking down barriers to ensure a diverse range of voices are represented in council and the election cycle only contributes to communities thriving across Australia; by ensuring female candidates and councillors are not dissuaded by negative and hateful rhetoric on social media, this motion proposes a critical way to encourage women entering politics.

## **Motion number 141 Wagga Wagga City Council NSW**

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to support local governments to improve and upgrade their cybersecurity and Information Technology capacity.

## **NATIONAL OBJECTIVE**

Why is this a national issue - The Federal Government is currently looking at improving cybersecurity and we have to make sure that local councils all through Australia are supported. Why should it be debated at the NGA? - We need ALGA to utilise their influence to ensure local councils are considered when the Federal Government discusses this issue.

## **KEY ARGUMENTS**

There are opportunities for local governments to utilise IT, but many local governments are struggling to provide the necessary IT infrastructure and support to both prevent cybersecurity and improve service delivery for community members. Due to the costs of IT infrastructure including staff training, transition costs to new programs, and ongoing maintenance, many councils are being left behind and are vulnerable to cyberattacks.

## Motion number 141.1 Canterbury Bankstown Council NSW

**This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to amend the Australian Cyber Security Centre (ACSC) Network Partner criteria to include local councils as a government agency which will allow local councils to join the ACSC Network Partnership Program, thus increasing cyber resilience of the sector.**

## **NATIONAL OBJECTIVE**

The local government sector is facing increasing cyber security threats. Similar to other government agencies with limited controls in place, councils are vulnerable in the face of such attacks. The most recent cyber-attacks on key Australian organisations such as Optus, highlight the importance of prioritising cyber security across all sectors in Australia.

Local councils hold vast amounts of sensitive and personal information about their community, staff, local businesses, and stakeholders. It is critical that councils appropriately safeguard this information against cyber-attacks. This requires an extensive arsenal of IT measures and controls, many of which, require substantial financial resources.

Access to the ACSC Network Partnership Program will enable councils to liaise with cyber security professionals across government, academia, research, and industry sectors, share technical expertise and experiences, and collaborate on shared threats and opportunities. Inclusion in this partnership will lift local government cyber resilience across Australia.

## **KEY ARGUMENTS**

Recent evidence from the Office of the Auditor General Western Australia shows that cyber-attacks across governments increased exponentially during the COVID-19 pandemic and will continue to present challenges to governments at all levels. A 2021 report by CyberCX found that local governments are more likely to be targeted by cyber criminals than federal or state agencies. With local government operations becoming increasingly digital, the need to safeguard information is a key priority. Councils provide a myriad of services to their

communities and as a result, hold considerable community data including rate payer information, health related data, payment information, development application and proposal information, and local business data. Councils have been entrusted with this information, so there is an expectation that it will be secure. Local councils have been considered soft targets and weak links in Australia's national security, given many lack resources to protect themselves against routine cyber-attacks. Few councils have the financial means to dedicate the necessary resources to mitigate and manage cyber risks and are vulnerable to theft, loss of data, massive service disruption, data breaches, as well as reputational damage. Evidence released by the Australian Cyber Security Centre (ACSC), in its Annual Cyber Threat Report (July 2021 - June 2022) found:

- an increase in financial losses due to business email compromise to over \$98 million;
- over 76,000 cybercrime reports, an increase of 13 per cent from the previous financial year
- ransomware remains the most destructive cybercrime

With the growing threat of cyber-attacks, local councils need to prioritise cyber security and focus on measures and controls that would protect their information infrastructure. Working with partners across the country through inclusion in the ACSC Network Partnership Program, would build cyber resilience in the local government sector by enabling councils to draw on collective experiences, skills, understanding and capabilities. Local councils would have access to threat intelligence (such as alerts, and advisories) and enhanced situational awareness.

## Motion number 141.2 Moreton Bay Regional Council QLD

**This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to fund the establishment of a collaborative Security Operations Centre (SOC) Model.**

### **NATIONAL OBJECTIVE**

This motion supports the data, digital technology and cyber security priority area outlined in the 2023 NGA discussion paper. With recent data breaches experienced in Australia, the need for a collaborative approach to cybersecurity has become more pressing. Local governments have a vital role in safeguarding sensitive data from cyber-attacks. It is in the national interest for all councils to endorse the establishment of a collaborative Security Operations Centre (SOC) model because it will improve the overall cyber security posture of local governments, leading to more efficient use of resources, better coordination, and communication among different levels of government, and consistency and uniformity across incident response plans.

By endorsing the SOC model, councils can provide valuable intelligence to other levels of government, improve their incident response plans, and ensure the success of various state initiatives. This will ultimately lead to better protection of residents and stakeholders nationwide.



## KEY ARGUMENTS

Local governments play a vital role in safeguarding sensitive data. A shared Security Operations Centre (SOC) model can be used to collaborate on monitoring, detecting and responding to cyber threats in real-time. The shared SOC model will enable governments to improve their overall cyber security posture by pooling resources, intelligence, best practices, and incident response procedures, leading to more efficient use of budget and staff and better coordination and communication among different levels of government.

The SOC model will provide valuable intelligence to other levels of government and ensure consistency and uniformity across local governments and help to deliver standardised incident response plans. Councils can also suggest ways to improve federal and state cyber security strategies and be supported in developing a framework for incident response plans that are regularly tested and updated to ensure they are effective and relevant.

The success of this initiative is crucial in protecting residents and stakeholders, and if supported, it can be adopted as a national approach by the Federal Government. Recent data breaches experienced in Australia have highlighted the need for a collaborative approach to cybersecurity. Local governments have a critical role to play in safeguarding sensitive data from cyber-attacks. By endorsing the SOC model and participating in developing incident response plans, local governments can improve their cyber security posture, ensure consistency and uniformity, and provide valuable intelligence to other levels of government. This will ultimately lead to better protection of residents and stakeholders nationwide. The Australian Local Government Association should debate and support this motion, as it is in the national interest to improve cybersecurity and protect sensitive data from cyber-attacks.

## Motion number 141.3 Knox City Council VIC

**This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to practically invest in cyber security for local governments, including; an independent fully funded & operationally connected network of Regional Security Operations Centres, a Security Information and Event Management (SIEM) solution and a shared network of capable cyber experts.**

### NATIONAL OBJECTIVE

The cybersecurity environment is a constantly evolving and complex issue that affects numerous sectors. Strategic level policies and programs are struggling to keep up with threats as technology rapidly advances.

Government sectors have the highest number of cyber security incidents reports during the 2021-22 financial year (partly due to additional reporting obligations).

A regional SOC and SIEM would be more cost effective and remove the burden from local governments, in particular for those smaller local governments, where the risk is comparable, but the budgets are not. The sector cannot continually afford to work in isolation of itself and from the federal and state governments.

## KEY ARGUMENTS

During the 2021-22 financial year, over 76,000 cybercrime reports were made via the ACSC Report Cyber, an increase of nearly 13 per cent from the previous financial year. One cybercrime report is made approximately every 7 minutes, compared to one report every 8 minutes in 2020-21.

A basic Security Operations Centre and Security Information and Event Management (SIEM) solution in local government costs up to \$300,000 p/annum, not including internal organisational resources. In addition to the financial commitment, finding cyber security talent and attracting them to local government is the most challenging. The private sector pay significantly more than what local governments can afford.

With over five hundred local governments across Australia, it is estimated that cyber security investment p/annum across the sector is between \$100 million - \$150 million, since each local government has their own responsibility to fund, manage and de-risk cyber.

# ARTS AND CULTURE

## Motion number 142 Shoalhaven City Council NSW

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to make a long-term investment in its new cultural policy Revive to better build the health of our people and our economy.

### NATIONAL OBJECTIVE

The Australian Government has recently presented its new cultural policy 'Revive' which provides a five-year plan intended to renew and revive the arts sector. This is a welcome and vital commitment to deliver a better future for creative workers, arts, and culture organisations, but most importantly communities across Australia.

### KEY ARGUMENTS

Rigorous research proves fulsome and strategic investment in the arts provides socio-emotional benefits for individuals and communities, promoting tolerance and understanding, bringing entertainment, engagement, and vibrancy to our lives. Local government contributes 25% of the national spend on the arts and deserves a place at the table to advance the arts.

This is vital to ensure exposure to, and active participation in the arts, continues to build communities and play an important role in preventative health. While arts play a vital role in our economy, local government needs sustained support to leverage its investment to ensure its communities can enjoy the powerful health, social and educational benefits the arts bring to individuals and society.

## Motion number 142.1 Wyndham City Council VIC

**This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to increase needs-based funding for the construction of and upgrades to arts, culture, and community infrastructure.**

### NATIONAL OBJECTIVE

Arts and community infrastructure play a key role in building safe, healthy, and engaged and cohesive communities. But the high cost is prohibitive with councils across the country, both in metropolitan and regional areas, struggling to deliver high quality infrastructure to meet community demands without assistance. ALGA Priority Area- local government infrastructure.

## KEY ARGUMENTS

Arts, cultural and community infrastructure play a critical role in build inclusive, vibrant, and active communities. They boost economic activity and promote a shared sense of identity. Eighty five percent of Australians believe that the arts make for a more rich and meaningful life. (remplan.com.au)

According to, 'LIBRARIES WORK!' The socio-economic value of public libraries to Victorians, for every dollar invested in public libraries generates \$4.30 of benefits to the local community. In 2016-17, public libraries in Victoria generated \$1.1 billion of benefits. After accounting for operational costs, the net community welfare contribution is estimated at \$848 million. The Creative Industries Innovation Centre's report, Valuing Australia's Creative Industries, estimated the industries Gross Product to be \$32.7 billion in 2011-12 (based on IBISWorld estimates) and \$45.9 billion (based on ABS 2008-09 national input output tables).

Arts and cultural infrastructure are jointly funded by councils and state governments. However, funding has not kept pace with population growth and demand for services. They are expensive to build and maintain and as a result, many facilities are concentrated in inner city suburbs where disused public buildings have repurposed. Australian Government assistance in capital funding can ensure that all Australian including those growth areas and regional Australia can have the equitable access to quality arts and cultural facilities.

## Motion number 143 Hobart City Council TAS

**This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to develop a National Heritage Design Guide to support local governments to encourage conservation for the reuse and repurpose of heritage buildings for commercial and residential use, to adapt to a changing climate, and to be more sustainable and future ready.**

### NATIONAL OBJECTIVE

Heritage buildings are a crucial part of Australia's history, culture, and identity. They offer unique architectural, historical, and cultural values that provide a sense of place and community identity. However, many of these buildings are underutilised or left abandoned, which poses a significant threat to their preservation and conservation. Additionally, the changing climate and environmental challenges require innovative and sustainable approaches to address their impacts on the built environment.

The Australian Government recognises the importance of preserving heritage buildings and has established policies and regulations to ensure their protection. However, there is a need for further action to encourage the adaptive reuse and repurpose of heritage buildings, particularly for commercial and residential use, in a sustainable and future-ready manner. This can build on existing policy such as the Burra Charter (1979).

## KEY ARGUMENTS

To address this issue, we propose a motion calling upon the Australian Government to develop a National Heritage Design Guide to support local governments in encouraging the reuse and repurpose of heritage buildings for commercial and residential use. The guide would provide best practice guidelines and standards for the adaptive reuse and repurpose of heritage buildings to make them more sustainable, resilient, and future-ready.

The National Heritage Design Guide would offer guidance on how to adapt heritage buildings to changing climate conditions, incorporate renewable energy sources, improve energy efficiency, and enhance the building's environmental performance. The guide would also provide recommendations on how to create liveable, healthy, and sustainable spaces that meet modern needs and standards.

The proposed National Heritage Design Guide would be an important tool for local governments to facilitate the adaptive reuse and repurpose of heritage buildings, ensuring their long-term sustainability, preservation, and conservation. Additionally, the guide would promote sustainable development practices and encourage the use of existing buildings rather than new construction, thereby reducing the environmental impact of new developments. It could also contribute to the work of existing institutions such as the Australian Heritage Council, the National Trust of Australia, and federal government climate change legislative commitments.

In conclusion, the proposed ALGA motion is an essential step towards preserving Australia's heritage buildings while also addressing the challenges of the changing climate and sustainability. By developing a National Heritage Design Guide, the Australian government can support local governments to repurpose and reuse heritage buildings in a sustainable and future-ready manner, ensuring their long-term preservation and conservation.

## **Motion number 144 Parramatta City Council NSW**

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to;

1. Investigate and implement technological options for Australian Government departments to receive feedback and submissions to proposals, plans and programs in alternate formats including audio recording or transcription recording and;
2. Investigate these alternate options to improve the accessibility and inclusiveness of engagement and consultation conducted by Australian Government departments, for the benefit of culturally and linguistically diverse community members, and people living with disability, who may experience limitations and difficulties with writing or making submissions.

## NATIONAL OBJECTIVE

Community engagement, also known as 'public participation', is about involving people in decision-making and it should be at the very core of democratic processes across all levels of

government. The Australian Government must embed, through its departments and practices, the commitment to engage with our communities on the issues that matter in a transparent, open, and accountable way. The outdated requirement that exists across many Australian government departments for submissions to be in writing only can disadvantage a number of groups of people such as people with vision impairment, with an intellectual disability, or with language barriers. Offering different channels for providing feedback should be considered, including options for providing verbal submissions. The Australian Government should take all reasonable actions possible to dismantle the barriers preventing individuals from participating fully in our communities, placing an important focus on creating more inclusive communities and opportunities.

## **KEY ARGUMENTS**

Effective government engagement and consultation is key to working openly and meaningfully with the communities that we serve. The Australian Government and its agencies must ensure they are utilising tools and channels that facilitate genuine participation with all members of the community to lead to the development and delivery of better policy, programs, and services. The prevailing reliance of Australian Government departments for submissions to be in writing only can disadvantage a number of groups of people such as those living with disability or with language barriers. This is called in to focus by the data of the 2021 Census (<https://www.abs.gov.au>).

According to the 2021 Census, there were 1.46 million people (5.8% of the Australian Population) who reported a core activity need for assistance. That is, they needed assistance with at least one of the core activities of self-care, communication, and mobility. Additionally, in 2021, 5.8 million people (22.8%) reported using a language other than English at home. This was an increase from 4.9 million people (21.6%) in 2016. For those respondents who used another language at home, the Census asked how well they spoke English. A response of, 'not well' or 'not at all' indicate a low proficiency in spoken English. In 2021, 3.4% of the population spoke English not well or not at all. This data demonstrates that there are members of our communities at risk of being unable to effectively participate in the engagement and consultation process through the prevailing practices. The Australian Government must champion improving access for all members of the community to effectively understand and engage with its diverse range of programs and services, helping us all to understand and meet the needs of our diverse communities.

## **Motion number 145 Broken Hill City Council NSW**

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to immediately stop the National Library of Australia's plans to charge increased subscription fees to council run public libraries so that public libraries can continue contributing and accessing Australia's national database and archives, Trove. That the Australian Government further ensures that this indispensable resource is adequately funded to enable further preservation of Australia's historical records.

## **NATIONAL OBJECTIVE**

The continuation of federal funding of the National Library of Australia's online national database and archives, 'Trove' beyond July 2023 is essential to provide free online access to the nation's historical archives for local council run public libraries and to researchers, academics, and members of the public. Ongoing access for public libraries also allows libraries to contribute historical articles and artifacts to the national database and archives well into the future.

## **KEY ARGUMENTS**

Trove is currently a free online resource used by thousands of researchers, academics, and members of the public, receives more than twenty million hits each year.

Trove has previously received substantial support from both government and the cultural sector. Recognising the increasing costs of digital services and other pressures upon library budgets, the Australian Government has allocated funds to support Trove since 2016. The National Library of Australia is currently funded to maintain Trove until June 2023. The future of Trove beyond July 2023 will be dependent upon funding. Without any additional funding, the National Library of Australia may need to charge local council run public libraries to access Trove or may need to cease offering the Trove service entirely.

## **Motion number 145.1 Albury City Council NSW**

**This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to make available sustainable funding to ensure the continuation of free access to the Trove national database and upgrade of the digital archive systems of Trove.**

## **NATIONAL OBJECTIVE**

Trove is a free publicly available database of collections from Australian libraries, universities, museums, galleries, and archives.

Trove is federally funded, with significant funding shortfalls creating a threat to the viability of Trove. Hundreds of organisations, including local governments across Australia, contribute to Trove and pay an annual subscription to share resources. In 2022, Trove introduced a new pricing model for participant organisations which raised serious concerns regarding the affordability and ongoing viability of participation in resource sharing for public libraries.

## **KEY ARGUMENTS**

Trove, the National Library of Australia's (NLA) public digital archive, provides access to the NLA collections and the collections of other cultural institutions, ensuring they are available to all Australians free of charge. It receives over twenty million visits per year. The wider community use Trove in many ways. It provides the platform for uploading and accessing digitised newspapers, allows Libraries and Museums to share collections online, provides resource-sharing and inter-library loans for library members and is used extensively by

historians, researchers, and students. There is concern that without additional funding the NLA may be unable to maintain Trove and therefore people across Australia will no longer be able to search the six billion records on the national treasure trove of artefacts, curiosities, and stories from Australia's cultural, community and research institutions. The National Cultural Policy, launched on January 30, 2023, did not contain additional funding for Trove. However, there was an indication from Hon. Tony Burke, Federal Minister for the Arts, that systemic underfunding of national cultural institutions, including Trove, would be addressed in the May federal budget.

## Motion number 145.2 Kiama Municipal Council NSW

**This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to write to the Hon. Tony Burke, Federal Minister for the Arts and the Hon. Paul Fletcher, Shadow Minister for Science, and the Arts, calling for sustainable funding to ensure the continuation of free access to the Trove national database and upgrade of the digital archive systems of Trove.**

### **NATIONAL OBJECTIVE**

Refer to summary of key arguments

### **KEY ARGUMENTS**

Lack of federal funding to the National Library of Australia (NLA) has led to an increased pricing model for Trove collaborative services which provide resources sharing opportunities for public libraries across Australia. This has led to many libraries withdrawing their contributions as a cost saving measure.

Trove, the NLA's expansive public digital archive is used by local historians, family historians and researchers. Without additional funds the NLA will be unable to maintain Trove, which provides digital access to six billion records.

Trove provides access to the NLA collections and the collections of other cultural institutions, ensuring they are available to all Australians free of charge, regardless of where they live and who they are, receiving over twenty million visits per year.

In 2022, Trove Collaborative Services (TCS) introduced a new pricing model which raised serious concerns regarding the affordability and ongoing viability of participation in resource sharing for public libraries in all states and territories.

Hundreds of organisations, including libraries across Australia, contribute to Trove, to ensure it remains the single national database within Australia. The change in subscription model has seen many libraries withdraw their contributions due to the significant fee increases, resulting in implications for the integrity of Trove. Further funding cuts, due in July 2023, will magnify this situation.

In addition, TCS has indicated that they will no longer support the national Document Delivery system (LADD) for resourcing sharing, raising concerns for library staff about the



longer-term impact on inter-library loans (ILLs). ILLs are a vital and core service of public libraries, allowing open, democratic access to quality information for all community members, resulting in an inclusive, informed and connected communities.

The national database being under threat due to the lack of funding with the last tranche of funding expiring in July 2023 is of serious concern. What a travesty it would be if the single national treasure trove of artefacts, curiosities, and stories from Australia's cultural, community and research institutions is no longer available to a large portion of the Australian community.

## Motion number 145.3 Woollahra Municipal Council NSW

**This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to commit to funding the operations, maintenance and development of Trove and its digital infrastructure on a long term and recurrent basis.**

### **NATIONAL OBJECTIVE**

Data, digital technology, and cyber security priority area to ensure the Trove, an extraordinary historical resource is adequately funded to ensure it remains publicly accessible and properly maintained.

### **KEY ARGUMENTS**

Trove is a world leading history database and resource created by the National Library of Australia. Trove provides free public access to Australia's cultural collections, housing over six billion individual items (including newspapers, photographs, maps, letters, government gazettes and archived websites). It also brings together contributions from over one thousand collecting institutions including libraries, museums, galleries, historical societies, and universities.

Trove is a vital resource in local government and is particularly valuable to librarians, heritage officers, planners, curators, and councillors. It is also a much loved and easily accessible research tool and memory house for many Australians. Trove provides an essential service that democratizes knowledge.

As the journalist and ABC broadcaster Richard Glover recently wrote:

Trove is crucial for professional historians but it's also a trapdoor through which anyone can tumble and learn something new (Sydney Morning Herald, 24 February 2023).

The extraordinary historical resource must be adequately funded to ensure it remains publicly accessible and properly maintained.

## Motion number 145.4 Blue Mountains City Council NSW

**This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to immediately stop the National Library of Australia's plans to charge increased subscription fees to council-run public libraries to contribute to and access Australia's national data-base and archive Trove.**

### **NATIONAL OBJECTIVE**

Trove is a national archive that is maintained and managed by the National Library of Australia. A decade of effective funding cuts to the National Library of Australia and other national cultural institutions, through efficiency dividends, has led to the National Library of Australia announcing in 2022 that it will now charge subscription fees to local government public libraries to be Trove Partners. Being a Trove Partner enables Public Libraries to contribute to and access Trove.

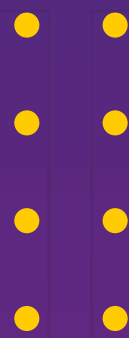
Trove partner subscription fees are now set to increase year on year. This is an example of federal government cost-shifting to local government. If public libraries cannot afford these increases, they will withdraw from being a Trove partner. A survey by the NSW Public Libraries Association has shown that already more than 10% of libraries in NSW have withdrawn from Trove and this trend is likely to continue. Public libraries being able to afford to contribute to Trove will have a significant impact on our national cultural and social history.

### **KEY ARGUMENTS**

Trove is a significant national platform to record and access Australia's history and culture. Many public libraries across Australia are Trove partners and have actively and proudly contributed to Trove. The partnership between public libraries and the National Library of Australia has enabled Trove to become a highly valued and comprehensive single national archive. Trove's expansive public digital archive is a resource used by people of all ages for education and training, for local and family history, as well as life-long learning and development.

The importance of Trove is demonstrated by nearly twenty million visits per year. Up until now, public libraries, run about local councils across Australia, have been able to access and contribute to Trove without significant financial costs. However, the National Library of Australia is now increasing Trove subscription fees for council-run public libraries, with these subscription fees set to increase year on year. The National Library of Australia's plans to charge public libraries to use Trove is a short-sighted example of cost-shifting, which overlooks the fact that public libraries are local community services with tight and finite budgets.

Public libraries do not generate their own income. They are funded by councils with some grant contributions from their state or territory governments. Surveys and consultations with public libraries indicate that some libraries are already considering withdrawing from Trove because of the increases in subscription fees.



AUSTRALIAN  
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