
2024 NGA

Building
Community
Trust

NATIONAL CONVENTION
CENTRE CANBERRA



AUSTRALIAN
LOCAL GOVERNMENT
ASSOCIATION



2 - 4
JULY
2024

**BUSINESS
PAPERS**



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CONTENTS

NATIONAL GENERAL ASSEMBLY DEBATING RULES - 2024	4
VOTING PROCEDURES	9
NOTES	10
SECTION A	19
MOTIONS CONSISTENT WITH ALGA POLICY	19
Motion number 1 Berrigan Shire Council NSW	19
Motion number 2 Northern Beaches Council NSW	19
Motion number 2.1 North Burnett Regional Council QLD.....	19
Motion number 2.2 Mitchell Shire Council VIC	19
Motion number 2.3 Murray River Council NSW.....	19
Motion number 2.4 City of Canterbury-Bankstown NSW	20
Motion number 2.5 Redland City Council QLD	20
Motion number 2.6 Snowy Monaro Regional Council NSW	20
Motion number 2.7 Tenterfield Shire Council NSW.....	20
Motion number 2.8 Forbes Shire Council NSW	20
Motion number 2.9 Shellharbour City Council NSW	20
Motion number 2.10 Newcastle City Council NSW.....	21
Motion number 2.11 Cootamundra-Gundagai Regional Council NSW	21
Motion number 3 Broken Hill City Council NSW	21
Motion number 3.1 Camden Council NSW	21
Motion number 4 Narrabri Shire Council NSW	22
Motion number 5 Bega Valley Shire Council NSW	22
Motion number 6 Snowy Valleys Council NSW	22
Motion number 7 Western Downs Regional Council QLD	22
Motion number 8 Tamworth Regional Council NSW	22
Motion number 9 Tamworth Regional Council NSW	22
Motion 9.1 South Burnett Regional Council QLD	22
Motion number 10 Strathfield Council NSW	23
Motion number 11 City of Greater Geelong VIC	23
Motion number 11.1 Cabonne Council NSW.....	23
Motion number 12 City of Greater Dandenong VIC	23
Motion number 12.1 Port Phillip City Council VIC.....	23
Motion number 12.2 Tweed Shire Council NSW	23

Motion number 13 Blacktown City Council NSW	24
Motion number 14 Tweed Shire Council NSW	24
Motion number 15 City of Melville WA	24
Motion number 15.1 Surf Coast Shire Council VIC	24
Motion number 15.2 Shire of Dundas WA	24
Motion number 16 South Burnett Regional Council QLD	24
Motion number 17 Inner West Council NSW	25
Motion number 18 Tamworth Regional Council NSW	25
Motion number 19 Toowoomba Regional Council QLD	25
SECTION B	26
INTERGOVERNMENTAL RELATIONS	27
Motion number 20 Mornington Peninsula Shire Council VIC	27
Motion number 21 City of Canterbury-Bankstown NSW	29
Motion number 22 Newcastle City Council NSW, Upper Hunter Shire Council NSW, Cessnock City Council NSW, Singleton Council NSW, Mid Coast Council NSW, Lake Macquarie City Council NSW, Dungog Shire Council NSW and Muswellbrook Shire Council NSW	30
Motion number 23 City of Canterbury-Bankstown NSW	32
Motion number 24 South Burnett Regional Council QLD	34
Motion number 25 Murray River Council NSW	34
Motion number 26 Newcastle City Council NSW	36
Motion number 27 Ku-ring-gai Council NSW	37
FINANCIAL SUSTAINABILITY	38
Motion number 28 Lake Macquarie City Council NSW	38
Motion number 28.1 City of Greater Geelong VIC	38
Motion number 29 North Sydney Council NSW	39
Motion number 30 Glen Eira City Council VIC	40
Motion number 31 Hepburn Shire Council VIC	41
Motion number 32 Shire of Campaspe VIC	42
Motion number 33 Cessnock City Council NSW, Singleton Council NSW, Mid Coast Council NSW, Lake Macquarie City Council NSW, Dungog Shire Council NSW, Muswellbrook Shire Council NSW, Newcastle City Council NSW, and Upper Hunter Shire Council NSW	44
Motion number 34 Tamworth Regional Council NSW	45
Motion number 35 Bega Valley Shire Council NSW	46
ROADS AND TRANSPORT	47

Motion number 36 Cootamundra-Gundagai Regional Council NSW	47
Motion number 37 Penrith City Council NSW.....	47
Motion number 38 City of Stirling WA.....	49
Motion number 39 Brimbank City Council VIC	50
Motion number 40 Wakefield Regional Council SA.....	51
Motion number 41 Federation Council NSW	52
Motion number 42 South Burnett Regional Council QLD.....	53
Motion number 43 Moree Plains Shire Council NSW	53
Motion number 44 Cessnock City Council NSW, Singleton Council NSW, Mid Coast Council NSW, Lake Macquarie City Council NSW, Dungog Shire Council NSW, Muswellbrook Shire Council NSW, Newcastle City Council NSW, and Upper Hunter Shire Council NSW	54
Motion number 45 Macedon Shire Council VIC	55
Motion number 46 Warnambool City Council VIC	56
Motion number 46.1 Paroo Shire Council QLD.....	57
Motion number 47 City of Kingston VIC	58
Motion number 48 Moonee Valley City VIC.....	60
Motion number 49 Albury City Council NSW	61
Motion number 50 City of Darwin NT	62
Motion number 50.1 Berrigan Shire Council NSW	63
Motion number 50.2 Bega Valley Shire Council NSW.....	64
Motion number 50.3 Tenterfield Shire Council NSW.....	65
Motion number 51 Nillumbik Shire Council VIC	65
Motion number 52 Redland City Council QLD	65
Motion number 53 City of Greater Geelong VIC	67
Motion number 54 District Council of Tumby Bay SA	67
Motion number 55 Lake Macquarie City Council NSW	68
Motion number 56 Mornington Peninsula Shire Council VIC	69
Motion number 57 Forbes Shire Council NSW.....	71
Motion number 58 Snowy Valleys Council NSW	72
Motion number 59 Tenterfield Shire Council NSW.....	72
Motion number 60 Snowy Valleys Council NSW	73
Motion number 61 Western Downs Regional Council QLD	73
Motion number 62 Forbes Shire Council NSW.....	75
EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT	77
Motion number 63 East Gippsland Shire Council VIC	228

Motion number 63.1 South Gippsland Shire Council VIC	77
Motion number 63.2 Maranoa Regional Council QLD	79
Motion number 63.3 Corangamite Shire Council VIC	80
Motion number 64 Forbes Shire Council NSW.....	82
Motion number 64.1 East Gippsland Shire Council VIC	83
Motion number 64.2 Shire of Campaspe VIC	84
Motion number 64.3 Forbes Shire Council NSW.....	84
Motion number 64.4 City of Greater Geelong VIC	85
Motion number 64.5 Cabonne Council NSW.....	86
Motion number 64.6 Mitchell Shire Council VIC	86
Motion number 65 Shire of Ashburton WA	87
Motion number 65.1 Maribyrnong City Council VIC	88
Motion number 66 Gladstone Regional Council QLD	89
Motion number 67 Forbes Shire Council NSW.....	90
Motion number 68 City of Darwin NT	91
Motion number 69 Knox City Council VIC	92
Motion number 69.1 Snowy Monaro Regional Council NSW	93
Motion number 70 Maranoa Regional Council QLD	94
Motion number 71 Narrabri Shire Council NSW	95
Motion number 72 Murweh Shire Council QLD.....	96
Motion number 73 Tenterfield Shire Council NSW.....	97
Motion number 74 Cabonne Council NSW.....	97
Motion number 75 Tenterfield Shire Council NSW.....	98
HOUSING AND HOMELESSNESS	99
Motion number 76 Narrabri Shire Council NSW	99
Motion number 76.1 Berrigan Shire Council NSW	100
Motion number 76.2 Waverley Council NSW.....	101
Motion number 76.3 Randwick City Council NSW	103
Motion number 77 Tweed Shire Council NSW	103
Motion number 78 Tamworth Regional Council NSW.....	104
Motion number 79 Murray River Council NSW	104
Motion number 80 Inner West Council NSW	106
Motion number 80.1 City of Sydney NSW	107
Motion number 81 City of Onkaparinga SA.....	108

Motion number 82 Singleton Council NSW, Mid Coast Council NSW, Lake Macquarie City Council NSW, Dungog Shire Council NSW, Muswellbrook Shire Council NSW, Upper Hunter Shire Council, and Newcastle City Council NSW	111
Motion number 83 Ku-ring-gai Council NSW	113
Motion number 83.1 City of Greater Geelong VIC	113
Motion number 83.2 Cabonne Council NSW.....	114
Motion number 84 Lake Macquarie City Council NSW	115
Motion number 85 Gladston Regional Council QLD	115
Motion number 86 Snowy Monaro Regional Council NSW.....	116
Motion number 86.1 Leeton Shire Council NSW.....	117
Motion number 86.2 Tenterfield Shire Council NSW.....	118
Motion number 87 City of Holdfast Bay SA.....	119
Motion number 87.1 North Sydney Council NSW	120
Motion number 87.2 Mornington Peninsula Shire Council VIC	121
Motion number 87.3 Mornington Peninsula Shire Council VIC	123
JOBS AND SKILLS	125
Motion number 88 City of Canterbury-Bankstown NSW.....	125
Motion number 88.1 Tenterfield Shire Council NSW.....	126
Motion number 88.2 Tamworth Regional Council NSW	126
Motion number 88.3 Forbes Shire Council NSW.....	127
Motion number 89 Bega Valley Shire Council NSW.....	128
Motion number 90 City of Stirling WA.....	128
Motion number 91 Bega Valley Shire Council NSW.....	129
Motion number 91.1 Tenterfield Shire Council NSW.....	130
Motion number 92 Gladstone Regional Council QLD	130
Motion number 93 Forbes Shire Council NSW.....	131
Motion number 93.1 Tenterfield Shire Council NSW.....	132
Motion number 94 Snowy Valleys Council NSW	132
Motion number 95 Leeton Shire Council NSW.....	133
Motion number 96 Forbes Shire Council NSW.....	134
Motion number 97 City of Mount Gambier SA.....	134
Motion number 98 Brimbank City Council VIC	137
COMMUNITY SERVICES	138
Motion number 99 Orange City Council NSW.....	138
Motion number 100 City of Onkaparinga SA.....	138
Motion number 101 Break O’Day Council TAS.....	139

Motion number 102 Adelaide Hills Council SA	140
Motion number 103 Tamworth Regional Council NSW	142
Motion number 104 City of Greater Dandenong VIC, Borough of Queenscliffe VIC, and City of Kingston VIC	143
Motion number 105 Newcastle City Council NSW	145
Motion number 105.1 Maribyrnong City Council VIC	146
Motion number 106 Blacktown City Council NSW	146
Motion number 107 Narrabri Shire Council NSW	147
Motion number 107.1 Shoalhaven City Council NSW	148
Motion number 108 City of Kingston VIC	149
Motion number 108.1 Camden Council NSW.....	151
Motion number 108.2 Mid Coast Council NSW	152
Motion number 109 Narrabri Shire Council NSW.....	154
Motion number 110 Blacktown City Council NSW	154
Motion number 111 Hawkesbury City Council NSW	155
111.1 Merri-bek City Council VIC.....	156
Motion number 112 Penrith City Council NSW	157
Motion number 113 Shire of Dundas WA	158
Motion number 113.1 Narrabri Shire Council NSW.....	159
Motion number 114 Snowy Valleys Council NSW	160
Motion number 115 Knox City Council VIC	160
Motion number 116 Lake Macquarie City Council NSW	161
Motion number 117 Tenterfield Shire Council NSW.....	162
Motion number 118 Shire of Ashburton WA	162
Motion number 119 City of Melville WA	164
Motion number 120 Shoalhaven City Council NSW	165
CLOSING THE GAP AND ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER RECONCILIATION.....	167
Motion number 121 City of Kalgoorlie-Boulder WA.....	167
Motion number 121.1 Waverley Council NSW.....	167
Motion number 122 Bega Valley Shire Council NSW	168
Motion number 123 Redland City Council QLD	169
Motion number 124 Newcastle City Council NSW	170
DATA, DIGITAL TECHNOLOGY AND CYBER SECURITY	172
Motion number 125 Shire of Campaspe VIC.....	172
Motion number 125.1 Blacktown City Council NSW	173

Motion number 125.2 City of Greater Geelong VIC	173
Motion number 126 Maribyrnong City Council VIC	174
Motion number 126.1 City of Greater Geelong VIC	174
Motion number 127 Western Downs Regional Council QLD	174
Motion number 127.1 Cabonne Council NSW.....	176
Motion number 127.2 Tenterfield Shire Council NSW	177
Motion number 127.3 Balonne Shire Council QLD	177
CLIMATE CHANGE AND RENEWABLE ENERGY	179
Motion number 128 Inner West Council NSW	179
Motion number 129 Maribyrnong City Council VIC	179
Motion number 130 Moyne Shire Council VIC	180
Motion number 130.1 South Gippsland Shire Council VIC	181
Motion number 130.2 Dubbo Regional Council NSW	182
Motion number 131 Yarra City Council VIC	183
Motion number 131.1 Newcastle City Council NSW.....	184
Motion number 132 South Burnett Regional Council QLD	185
Motion number 132.1 Tenterfield Shire Council NSW	186
Motion number 133 City of Cockburn WA	186
Motion number 134 Nillumbik Shire Council VIC.....	187
Motion number 135 Shoalhaven City Council NSW	189
Motion number 136 North Sydney Council NSW	189
Motion number 137 Newcastle City Council NSW.....	190
Motion number 138 Mornington Peninsula Shire Council VIC.....	191
Motion number 139 Leeton Shire Council NSW.....	193
Motion number 140 Maranoa Regional Council QLD.....	193
Motion number 141 City of Adelaide SA.....	194
Motion number 142 Murweh Shire Council QLD	195
Motion number 142.1 Maranoa Regional Council QLD	197
Motion number 143 Glenelg Shire Council VIC.....	198
ENVIRONMENT	200
Motion number 144 Wakefield Reginal Council SA	200
Motion number 144.1 Noosa Council QLD.....	201
Motion number 144.2 Tamworth Regional Council NSW	202
Motion number 145 Logan City Council QLD	202
Motion number 146 Waverley Council NSW.....	203
Motion number 147 Tamworth Regional Council.....	205

Motion number 148 Maranoa Regional Council QLD	205
Motion number 149 Redland City Council QLD	206
Motion number 150 City of Greater Bendigo VIC	208
Motion number 150.1 Redland City Council QLD	209
Motion number 151 City of Melbourne VIC	211
Motion number 152 Blacktown City Council NSW	212
Motion number 152.1 North Sydney Council NSW	213
Motion number 153 Eurobadalla Shire Council NSW	213
CIRCULAR ECONOMY	215
Motion number 154 Yarra City Council VIC	215
Motion number 155 Town of Bassendean WA	216
Motion number 156 City of Holdfast Bay SA	218
Motion number 156.1 Bayside Council NSW	219
Motion number 157 Narrabri Shire Council NSW	220
OTHER ISSUES	221
Motion number 158 Noosa Council QLD	221
Motion number 159 Broken Hill City Council NSW	222
Motion number 160 City of Onkaparinga SA	223
Motion number 161 Bega Valley Shire Council NSW	225

RULES

National General Assembly Debating Rules – 2024

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. The President will rule on points of order.

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 14: 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 2024 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 midnight Saturday night 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. Special urgent business will be considered at the end of the Debate on Motions session.

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 organized to expedite debate on motions. In some instance 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 3 July 8:00 am – 5:00 pm

Thursday 4 July 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 used 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 member 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 deal with more than 160 motions in the time available, these Papers have been organised along the following lines:
 - Section A includes motions that have been reviewed by the AGLA Board's NGA Subcommittee and deemed to be consistent with current national policy and/or resolved by recent NGAs, and are recommended to be moved en-bloc without further debate.
 - Section B: Please refer to rule 22 of the National General Assembly Debating Rules – 2024 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 with in the headline strategic motion.
- 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.

2024 MOTIONS

SECTION A

MOTIONS CONSISTENT WITH EXISTING ALGA POLICY

Motion number 1 Berrigan Shire Council NSW

This National General Assembly calls upon the Australian Government to address the limitations in the intergovernmental financial transfer system, particularly Commonwealth transfers to local government, by undertaking a comprehensive review to provide for reform of the current system. Any review should specifically include consideration of the practice of cost shifting to local government and assess the implications for service delivery as a direct result of cost shifting practices.

Motion number 2 Northern Beaches Council NSW

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to:

- a. Restore funding of the Financial Assistance Grant program to at least 1% of Commonwealth taxation revenue.
- b. Review the annual indexation methodology for Financial Assistance Grant to reflect all cost drivers for councils including significant issues such as cost shifting and climate change.
- c. Reset the payment cycle in the Commonwealth's budget to deliver a full year's Financial Assistance Grant in each year, with an additional one-off payment to address the practice of bringing forward the payments.

Motion number 2.1 North Burnett Regional Council QLD

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 2.2 Mitchell Shire Council VIC

This National General Assembly call on the Australian Government to immediately increase the Financial Assistance Grants provided to councils in order to ensure the long-term financial viability of councils and their ability to adequately support their local communities.

Motion number 2.3 Murray River Council NSW

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to restore the Federal Assistance Grants to 1% of Commonwealth taxation revenue.

Motion number 2.4 City of Canterbury-Bankstown NSW

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to:

- a. Respond to repeated and ongoing requests from the local government sector to restore Financial Assistant Grants to the 1996 level of 1% of Commonwealth Tax Revenue.
- b. Remove restrictive conditions surrounding federal tied grants so that councils are provided conditional full upfront funding for federally costed works, projects and programs.
- c. Enshrine these financial protections for local government in a new intergovernmental agreement between the Federal Government and ALGA, on behalf of local governments, to provide councils with increased financial certainty.

Motion number 2.5 Redland City Council QLD

The National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to restore and maintain local government Financial Assistance Grants to at least one per cent of Commonwealth taxation revenue.

Motion number 2.6 Snowy Monaro Regional Council NSW

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to restore financial assistance grants to local government to 1% of government revenue.

Motion number 2.7 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 2.8 Forbes Shire Council NSW

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to ensure that local government be the focus of federal government grants and that the Financial Assistance Grants be increased to 1% of Commonwealth Tax revenue.

Motion number 2.9 Shellharbour City Council NSW

This National General Assembly calls on the Federal Government to meet and finalise by negotiation the return of the Federal Financial Assistance Grant to 1% of Commonwealth tax revenue.

Motion number 2.10 Newcastle City Council NSW

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to:

- a. Acknowledge most local governments' receipt of Financial Assistance Grant income has been reducing in real terms and has been far outstripped by unavoidable cost increases incurred as a large infrastructure manager.
- b. Note the value of Financial Assistance Grants provided to local government has declined over the past three decades from around 1% of Commonwealth taxation revenue to around 0.55 percent.
- c. restore Financial Assistance Grants back to 1% of Commonwealth taxation revenue as a matter of urgency, with an additional once-off payment of \$3 billion to address the practice of bringing forward Financial Assistance Grants.

Motion number 2.11 Cootamundra-Gundagai Regional Council NSW

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to:

- a. Acknowledge ALGA's policy position that the Financial Assistance Grants funding pool is inadequate in the context of community expectations around services required and service levels in today's environment;
- b. Initiate a holistic review of the Financial Assistance Grants framework for local government, inclusive of an increase in the funding pool such that it equates to 1.0% of Commonwealth tax revenue;
- c. Engage with ALGA to seek input to the Terms of Reference for the review mentioned in 2. above; and
- d. Invite ALGA to have representation on the review mentioned in b. above.

Motion number 3 Broken Hill City Council NSW

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to inject the Financial Assistance Grants program with the income that was lost during the indexation freeze that occurred between 2015 and 2017; and ensures that ongoing indexation of Financial Assistance Grants continues into the future in order for councils to become more financially sustainable and can continue to provide consistent level of services and infrastructure to their communities.

Motion number 3.1 Camden Council NSW

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to correct the base level of funding for Financial Assistance Grants to local government across Australia by including indexation from the three-year period of the indexation freeze following the 2014-15 Australian Government Budget.

Motion number 4 Narrabri Shire Council NSW

That the National General Assembly advocate for the Federal Government to recognise local government in the Constitution of Australia.

Motion number 5 Bega Valley Shire Council NSW

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to develop and deliver grant funding programs that support strategic planning and strategy development in addition to funding infrastructure.

Motion number 6 Snowy Valleys Council NSW

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to provide certainty of the security and timing of Financial Assistance Grant payments to enable local government to better manage their cash flows.

Motion number 7 Western Downs Regional Council QLD

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to allocate more funding to road infrastructure to sustainably manage State and Federal transport infrastructure and backlog of work.

Motion number 8 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 accelerated deterioration of the national road network due to ongoing intense climatic and weather events over a sustained period.

Motion number 9 Tamworth Regional Council NSW

That the National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to provide more funding for the delivery of essential infrastructure in rural and regional areas required for new housing, including in-fill housing development.

Motion number 9.1 South Burnett Regional Council QLD

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to develop an infrastructure programme for housing support to address ageing infrastructure that is stifling residential development opportunities.

Motion number 10 Strathfield Council NSW

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to considers appropriate steps including a referendum, to amend the Australian constitution to give the Australian Federal Government the power to fund local governments and to enshrine people’s rights to democratically elect their council.

Motion number 11 City of Greater Geelong VIC

The National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to continue funding for the Local Roads and Community Infrastructure fund as an ongoing yearly funding stream for local government with simplified financial reporting acquittals.

Motion number 11.1 Cabonne Council NSW

This National General Assembly call on the Australian Government to reinstate or replace with a similar program, the Local Roads & Community Infrastructure Program, to provide funding certainty to Local Government to enable renewal and development of vital community and road infrastructure.

Motion number 12 Nillumbik Shire Council VIC

This National General Assembly strongly calls on the Australian Government to increase the resources for local governments to respond to the recognised and stated Climate and Ecological Emergency and prioritise support for communities which are disproportionately affected by climate change, including low-income households.

Motion number 12.1 Port Phillip City Council VIC

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to take leadership to respond to the critical risk of sea level rise; including supporting further infrastructure modelling funding efforts, leading implementation of planning controls, drafting flood resilient design standards and supporting local government engagement to address future residential flooding from climate change, as shown in multiple Coastal Hazard Assessments released across the country.

Motion number 12.2 Tweed Shire Council NSW

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to provide local councils with multi-year funding to prepare and implement climate change action plans.

Motion number 13 Blacktown City Council NSW

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to account for future climate projections in the National Construction Code.

Motion number 14 Tweed Shire Council NSW

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to allocate substantial increased funding for weed control given it is a major contributor to biodiversity loss.

Motion number 15 City of Melville WA

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to take urgent action to implement effective funded, mandatory product stewardship schemes for priority materials (electronic waste, tyres, mattresses and consumer packaging), which requires sustainable design for waste avoidance, increased lifecycle and end of life recovery throughout a product's lifecycle to the 30th National General Assembly of Local Government which calls for product stewardship for priority materials (electronic waste, tyres, mattresses, and packaging).

Motion number 15.1 Surf Coast Shire Council VIC

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to introduce mandatory product stewardship and extended producer responsibility for problematic materials and packaging, including PFAS, soft plastics and textiles. And to align Australian product regulations, policies and standards to global best practice.

Motion number 15.2 Shire of Dundas WA

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to take urgent action to implement effective product stewardship for priority materials, including electronic waste, tyres, mattresses and packaging to include oversize tyres used in the mining industry. These programmes must prioritise waste avoidance, promote end-of-life recovery and encompass all costs associated with recycling.

Motion number 16 South Burnett Regional Council QLD

That this National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to support a funding programme for the development of the circular economy precincts in regional areas.

Motion number 17 Inner West Council NSW

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to urgently standardise bins and include funding for education in schools curriculum and to councils for education in the community (at work and play) about key components of the waste strategy such as what goes into the different coloured kerbside bins but also more generally, where and how the content is processed and other initiatives the Government is taking to reach a circular economy with regard to domestic waste.

Motion number 18 Tamworth Regional Council NSW

That the National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to provide more direction, leadership and funding for increasing the level of recycling being undertaken in Australia.

Motion number 19 Toowoomba Regional Council QLD

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to boost funding for local roads with a \$600 million annual increase (to be indexed annually) in the Financial Assistance Grants to local government and separately fund the current backlog of road maintenance.

SECTION B

INTERGOVERNMENTAL RELATIONS

Motion number 20 Mornington Peninsula Shire Council VIC

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to:

- a. Formally acknowledge that the intergovernmental financial transfer system needs to be reviewed. Other levels of government cannot continue to expect more of councils, but with less budget – this is not a financially sustainable model;
- b. Restore Financial Assistance Grant funding to a level equivalent to at least 1 per cent of Commonwealth Taxation Revenue – but preferably 2 per cent;
- c. Directly allocate Financial Assistance Grants to councils rather than via state governments;
- d. Ensure the indexation methodology of Financial Assistance Grants reflects the real cost pressures on councils;
- e. Renegotiate the 2006 Inter-government Agreement to prevent cost-shifting of federal and state government responsibilities onto already resource-constrained councils;
- f. Thoroughly review the adequacy of the base and indexation methodology of Financial Assistance Grants;
- g. Clarity on federal funding levels over four-year programs and with a longer-term commitment as previously delivered by Roads to Recovery. Non-competitive programs with broad project criteria provide crucial flexibility, such as the Local Roads and Community Infrastructure program;
- h. Work more directly with local government to address the ever-increasing complexity of community needs and expectations;
- i. Achieving a higher level of community trust across all levels of government is a shared inter-governmental responsibility.

NATIONAL OBJECTIVE

Councils are in a fraught funding position facing pressures including reduced federal and state government grants, high inflation and rising costs that far exceed the revenue generating constraints imposed by state government rate caps.

As the level of government that is most closely connected and accessible to communities and with the most direct impact on communities, cost pressures and cost shifting from state government is occurring at a critical time and reaching crisis point, for those who depend on vital council services for their liveability.

ALGA and the individual member local government associations in each jurisdiction have long highlighted that the quantum of Financial Assistance Grant funding is too low for the increasing responsibilities of councils and that the indexation methodology does not sufficiently recognise the true cost pressures across the local government sector.

Local government occupies a particularly unique space with broad and deep levels of community participation. Although governments around the world are facing the lowest level of trust ever, it is local government that often suffers an unfair share of the blame, further

exacerbated by high levels of media interest and public scrutiny of councils. Community trust in government ultimately relies on governments working together.

KEY ARGUMENTS

While all tiers of government have increased responsibilities, following significant economic growth and community demand for better services, the state and federal government revenue base has grown in real terms through economic growth (including PAYG tax, GST tax, company tax, property taxes), local government is the only tier that has not received a real growth in funding through FA Grants.

The flexibility and benefit to communities from other sources of federal funding grants would be improved by an allocation through non-competitive project nomination processes, as opposed to short-notice, competitive grants that require match funding and leave councils to bear the responsibility of all delivery risks.

The provision of FA Grants by the federal government to councils via state governments has been a long standing arrangement, although the funding mechanism has changed over the years.

Councils remain highly vulnerable to changes in approach from other levels of government, best demonstrated by the 2014-15 Federal Budget, when a federal freeze on the indexation of Financial Assistance Grants happened for three years. The impact has been ongoing for the delivery of council services and infrastructure over that time.

Over the years, the share of Shire Financial Assistance Grants has decreased due to being categorized as a metro council and the methodologies used to allocate FA Grants by the Victorian Government and have highlighted to the Victoria Grant Commission the current method of calculating capacity to raise revenue from rates is flawed. It overestimates the rates revenue by 23% or \$38 million based on the FY 2023 assessment. Utilizing budget data instead of CIVs multiplied by the state average rate would more accurately reflect the capacity to generate rates revenue.

The Mornington Peninsula is a mix of urban and rural communities, who need a wide breadth of services, spread across our diverse municipality. The biggest impact of FA Grant freezes have been felt by councils in regional and rural Australia, that most depend and have the least capacity to replace funding from other sources.

The Mornington Peninsula has 10 percent of Victoria's Crown Land coastal area and 8 million tourists visit each year from Greater Melbourne and Australia, placing further significant pressure on council services and infrastructure.

While federal government taxation revenue increases in line with economic growth, funding allocated to FA Grants grows at a lower rate, via the multiplication factor including Consumer Price Index and population growth. As a percentage of total Commonwealth taxation revenue, FA Grants have decreased significantly over time.

The Shire prepared a report to strengthen our evidence base and quantify the impact of Victorian Government cost shifting. The analysis indicates an annual impact of \$44 million, totalling \$272 million over the next five-years. This fiscal reality highlights that our core service delivery is increasingly competing with new responsibilities for limited resources and budget allocations.

With 81 per cent of the Shire's operating revenue generated by rates, council finds itself in a precarious position. The Shire cannot afford the current level of FA Grant funding combined with cost shifting, without curtailing crucial community services and key capital works projects.

An unprecedented number of state government responsibilities are ultimately being shifted onto ratepayers - the communities councils serve across Australia every day, which need and expect local infrastructure and services and which state and national economic productivity relies on. Community trust in government relies on governments working together.

Trust in governments is highly correlated with the ability to fulfill the social contract between government and citizens by keeping promises. The reality and impact of reduced state and federal funding is cuts to services, which damages the social licence of councils and reduces the sector's ability to demonstrate the positive difference we make for the community.

Motion number 21 City of Canterbury-Bankstown NSW

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to maintain a national register of planning approvals and final dwelling completions by local government area to inform policy decisions on affordable housing and other intersecting policy matters such as migration and education at local, state and national government levels.

NATIONAL OBJECTIVE

To enhance evidence based and informed multilateral and intergovernmental discussions with the aim of creating better outcomes across broad policy areas to increase new affordable housing supply nationally.

Current narratives concerning the lack of affordable housing often concentrate on the number of planning approvals and not the number of completed dwellings. Planning approvals can only be converted into increased affordable housing supply when approvals are backed by the skilled workers required to build new dwellings, the finances to pay for the new construction and the resources to convert approvals into final dwelling completions.

While planning approvals are a State and Local Government responsibility, the ability to build a certain number of dwellings is predicated upon these resources that are nationally in short supply. The Australian Government can influence better outcomes in this area by:

- Providing priority preference to migrant workers skilled in building, construction and the trades.
- Increasing vocational training funding for TAFE and similar for pipeline and existing industry workers.

KEY ARGUMENTS

The lack of affordable housing for low to middle income households is a systemic and worsening problem across Australian cities, towns and regions and presents an ongoing and complex problem across the tiers of governments.

Representatives of the development community continue to mistakenly attribute a so-called drop in housing approvals by local governments as the most significant factor adversely impacting housing affordability.

To favourably impact affordable housing supply, planning approvals must be converted to completed dwellings. The proposed national register of planning approvals and dwelling completions will allow Governments at all levels, developers and the community to properly assess where the barriers to affordable housing lie. It will give all stakeholders the information to know what actions are necessary, such as training and education of a satisfactorily skilled workforce or if the importation of skilled workers is required to bring planning approvals to completion, thereby increasing housing affordability and affordable housing supply.

To cite Canterbury Bankstown Council's experience based on figures from NSW Planning's Sydney Housing Supply Forecast, in the period July 2016 to July 2021 Council approved 12,194 dwellings, or 97% of the target set by the NSW State Government. Over the same period only 8,822 dwellings, or 70% of the target set by the NSW Government, were actually constructed. The balance remained unconstructed approvals.

In NSW "land banking" by the building and construction industry is further adversely impacting housing affordability. Although unconstructed approvals must be completed within 5 years of the approval, s4.53 of the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979 (NSW) (EPA Act) allows for an approval to be activated once it has been "physically commenced" meaning that some action must have taken place to further the development application. Once an approval has been activated, the EPA Act provides that the approval will last indefinitely. The approval may then be "land banked" whereby the owner keeps it within the inventory of the company which acquired the approval and adds to the entity's value. Whether it is converted into dwellings or not is largely a question of whether the developer entity perceives it will make sufficient profit from the proposal. If the extent of the land banking problem becomes known by collating planning approval data across Australia, its true nature can be uncovered and discussed, and solutions proposed.

Motion number 22 Newcastle City Council NSW, Upper Hunter Shire Council NSW, Cessnock City Council NSW, Singleton Council NSW, Mid Coast Council NSW, Lake Macquarie City Council NSW, Dungog Shire Council NSW, and Muswellbrook Shire Council NSW

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to:

Lead the delivery of place-based, whole-of-government policy and planning to drive the evolution of mining-affected regions toward net zero economies. This should include:

- a. A clear vision and plan for each region's economic evolution
- b. A coordinating entity with the necessary authority to influence the focus and coordination of cross government and agency delivery efforts.
- c. Sufficient resources to deliver on the objectives established, including:
 - (i) Supporting communities adversely impacted by the move to a net zero economy.
 - (ii) Exploring city / regional deals as a mechanism for delivery.
- d. Support for and investment in circular economy solutions.

- e. Clear and certain planning pathways for the adaptive reuse of mining and industrial lands to deliver new, high-value jobs
- f. A commitment to local government representation in place-based decision making that affects local and regional communities.

NATIONAL OBJECTIVE

Consistent with global trends and international agreements, ambitious net zero targets to be achieved by 2050 have been established by federal, state and local jurisdictions right across Australia.

Regional areas have historically, through their traditional coal and energy-based industries, been the literal powerhouse of the nation. This will continue to be the case as regional economies evolve to produce and support the renewable energy production and new industries needed to move the nation to net zero by 2050.

However, the evolution of regional Australia to continue to perform this function in a net zero economy, requires a whole of government approach to place-based planning, coordination and investment in the regions. The federal government is best placed to lead this approach to support regional Australia deliver for the nation it's net zero ambitions.

KEY ARGUMENTS

Whole of government, place-based planning, coordination and investment to drive the economic evolution of regions will be critical to achieving ambitious 2050 net zero targets that have been established by the federal government, and by state and local government jurisdictions across Australia.

Regional areas have historically, through their traditional coal and energy-based industries, been the literal powerhouse of the nation. This will continue to be the case as regional economies evolve to produce and support the renewable energy production and new industries needed to move the nation to a net zero economy by 2050.

While substantial efforts and activity to drive the transition to net zero are underway across government, industry, research and investment organisations, there is an overall lack of strategic planning and coordination within and across governments toward how regions will lead this economic transformation. This is leading to sub optimal outcomes around:

- Clarity on the strategic outcomes being sought, and consequently the opportunities, pathways and actions for driving economic change.
- The alignment, coordination and efficiency of government investment
- The engagement of regional communities needed to unlock the human and social capital that will underpin economic transformation in these areas.

This motion recognises that:

- The federal government is best placed to lead the whole of government planning and coordination needed to support regional Australia drive the nation toward our net zero goals.
- Successful economic evolution in the regions requires clear and aligned goals, pathways and actions to guide government, industry and community investment and effort.

- Entities established for coordinating efforts across levels and agencies of government need a level of authority and appropriate governance frameworks to influence or hold different agencies to account.
- To support regional evolution at the speed needed to deliver national targets, sufficient resources need to be allocated by government to deliver established place-based plans and priorities.
- City / region deals provide an existing governance framework and mechanism through which collaboration, investment and accountability across all levels of governments could be aligned and delivered to achieve shared goals.
- Significant land and infrastructure assets exist on former and current mining and industrial lands with the potential to be readapted to support the generation of new industries and jobs in regional Australia. However, there is a need for urgent change to legislation and policy currently inhibiting the adaptation and reuse of these lands. Such change needs to provide clear and certain planning pathways for existing owners and incoming investors to reuse and adapt these lands.
- Advancing delivery of the circular economy within and across regional Australia will be a significant contributor to achieving the nations net zero goals, and in creating new and high value industries and jobs to maintain the economic productivity and liveability of regions.
- Genuine local involvement in planning and decision-making is critical to driving the economic evolution of regional Australia to achieve national net zero goals.

Motion number 23 City of Canterbury-Bankstown NSW

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to:

- a. Provide Australian Local Government Association (ALGA) full time membership in the National Cabinet to ensure the local government sector is represented at every National Cabinet meeting.
- b. Establish a Ministerial Council for Local Government that will report to the National Cabinet annually on the key priorities and challenges for local government.

NATIONAL OBJECTIVE

To deliver on the principle of Australian federalism that the three levels of government will work together cooperatively to address complex policy issues while representing their respective constituents to ensure fair and equitable outcomes for all Australians.

That the 537 councils across Australia are therefore represented by ALGA at every National Cabinet meeting, and that the National Cabinet is supported and informed by a Ministerial Council for Local Government, to:

- Recognise the role of local government in the Australian Federation by providing all three levels of government equal representation in Australia's peak intergovernmental decision-making body.
- Ensure all National Cabinet multilateral discussions and decisions are informed by and consider the unique position of and the complex issues facing local government.

- Visibly promote cooperative federalism across the three levels of government thereby engendering community trust in governments to work together to deliver considered and sustainable outcomes across key and intersecting priority policy areas such as housing and homelessness, skills and workforce, health, education, energy and climate change, planning, infrastructure and transport.

KEY ARGUMENTS

Rising cost of living pressures in post-pandemic Australia compounded by economic inequalities caused by generational and socioeconomic divides has seen overall trust in government “to do the right thing” steadily decline in recent years (Mapping Social Cohesion 2023). At the same time, communities are increasingly turning to their councils for information, services, support and representation because local government is the closest and most accessible level of government at the very centre of what is happening across Australia at a grassroots level. As such, local government is best placed to respond directly on important issues across broad policy areas that impact the quality of life of every Australian and resident.

Despite local government’s close proximity to the community and the crucial role it plays in the Australian Federation, full membership of the National Cabinet is only provided to federal, state and territory leaders.

In recognition of the importance of the local government sector, in 2023 the federal government moved to invite ALGA to one National Cabinet meeting per year and reconvene the Australian Council of Local Government. While these are welcome improvements, the lack of local government representation at three out of four National Cabinet meetings annually means that 75% of the National Cabinet’s multilateral discussions and decisions made on matters of national, state and local importance will not have local government and community input.

Furthermore, local government’s rightful place at all National Cabinet meetings must be supported by a Ministerial Council for Local Government. This will provide the formal channel necessary for the federal Minister for Regional Development, Local Government and Territories to work collaboratively across federal and state ministerial portfolios and with ALGA to resolve key priorities for local government and report and provide solutions to the National Cabinet on the key priorities and challenges facing local government.

All Australians expect their governments to work together for their benefit at all levels and across all issues. Including Local Government in every National Cabinet would demonstrate a strong unity of purpose between the three levels of government and a commitment to ensuring the policies and programs of all levels of Government are aligned and working together to achieve the best outcomes for individuals and communities.

Motion number 24 South Burnett Regional Council QLD

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to conduct a National campaign for dedicated support for local government councillors.

NATIONAL OBJECTIVE

Intergovernmental relations and to continue to build community trust in councils.

There is no more valuable measure of the relationship between local councils and their communities than trust. It contributes to everything from ensuring the public acceptance of a budget strategy to keeping lines of communication open during dangerous times of cyclones and fire. But it's a commodity that can be lost very quickly if councils do not remain vigilant. A national campaign combined with a funding initiative to support local programmes that highlights the work the councils do and the important role they play in the fabric of our communities.

Motion number 25 Murray River Council NSW

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to implement remuneration requirements of Councillors:

- a. to be even across all states and across all council categories of councils (metropolitan, regional rural etc.); and
- b. they be set at a level that enables elected councillors devote a substantial amount of time (at least ½ FTE) to undertake council matters.

NATIONAL OBJECTIVE

Across Australia, local government plays a critical role in representing communities, managing local services, and making decisions that directly impact residents. However, one notable issue that has persisted is the significant variance in remuneration for councillors across different states and across different categories of council (e.g. metropolitan vs regional vs rural). This discrepancy has led to concerns regarding equity, fairness, and the potential impacts on the quality of governance at the local level.

KEY ARGUMENTS

Remuneration for councillors varies widely from state to state within Australia. Remuneration also differs significantly even between the different categories of council within a given state.

This inconsistency creates a situation where councils in regions where councillor remuneration is low find it difficult to recruit adequate number of councillors and councillors with the required skillsets. It also makes it very difficult to obtain a decent diversity for a given term of a council.

The current remuneration structure for small regional and rural councils makes it impossible for some requiring a living wage to put themselves up for contention as a councillor, as they would not be able to hold full time employment and undertake council work concurrently. As such, for the most part councillors in such areas tend to be:

- Business owners of a large enough size, that can leave the business to attend to council work without impacting the earning capacity of the business, or
- Retirees

This makes it almost impossible to establish a council with the following diversities:

- Younger Persons: who are in the process of establishing themselves in the workforce,
- Career Professionals: unless they have gone on to establish a business entity or are retired professionals.
- Persons Undertaking Unpaid Work: such as childcare or elder care, as the remuneration is not adequate to source alternate care arrangements.

The imbalance in councillor remuneration raises concerns about equity and fairness in the local government sector. Councillors in area with lower remuneration face financial challenges and are discouraged from serving their communities due to inadequate compensation.

Remuneration impacts the quality of governance at the local level. Given the plethora of legislation and regulations that elected councillors need to be across, and the technical and complexities that need to be understood by councillors, being available for half to one day per month for briefings and meeting severely impacts the capacity of councillors to grasp and understand the full spectrum of information necessary to make informed and rational decisions.

Adequate compensation is crucial for attracting qualified and dedicated individuals to serve as councillors and enable them to devote the required time for the function of a councillor. Disparities in remuneration may deter capable candidates from seeking office in regions where compensation is comparatively lower, potentially depriving communities of skilled leadership and representation.

Given the importance of local government in Australia's democratic system, there is a compelling case for benchmarking and aligning councillor remuneration across states and regions. Establishing consistent standards for remuneration can promote fairness, ensure equitable treatment of councillors regardless of geographic location, and contribute to the improved effectiveness and legitimacy of local governance.

Addressing the imbalance in councillor remuneration is essential for promoting equity, fairness, and effective governance at the local level in Australia. By advocating for benchmarking and alignment of remuneration requirements across states, the Australian Local Government Association can play a pivotal role in advancing these objectives and strengthening the integrity of the local government sector.

Motion number 26 Newcastle City Council NSW

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to:

- a. Note that there remains inconsistency across Australian jurisdictions, whereby Councillors, Mayors and Lord Mayors are not automatically entitled to the Superannuation Guarantee Contribution, allowing for the unfortunate politicisation of this important right;
- b. Acknowledges that those most adversely affected by the non-payment of superannuation payments for work performed as an elected representative, is women;
- c. Note that superannuation should be a universal mandatory system to support all workers and taxpayers in Australia; and
- d. 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 as part of their allowance.

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.

In 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 in 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 27 Ku-ring-gai Council NSW

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to allow councillors to voluntarily elect to have tax withheld from their allowance.

NATIONAL OBJECTIVE

Councillors are not deemed to be employees of the Council to which they have been elected. This means that they are not subject to the Pay As You Go (PAYG) withholding tax system, and therefore must make alternative arrangements for remitting tax to the Australian Taxation Office (ATO). Some councillors would prefer to have PAYG tax instalments deducted from their council remuneration, as this can help to manage cash flow and ensure that they are not caught out by a large tax bill at the end of the year.

KEY ARGUMENTS

Councillors are not deemed to be employees of the council to which they have been elected. This means that they are not subject to the Pay As You Go (PAYG) withholding tax system, and therefore must make alternative arrangements for remitting tax to the Australian Taxation Office (ATO). Some councillors would prefer to have PAYG tax instalments deducted from their council remuneration, as this can help to manage cash flow and ensure that they are not caught out by a large tax bill at the end of the year.

It is open to councils under section 446-5 of the Commonwealth Taxation Administration Act 1953 to resolve that councillors are subject to PAYG withholding tax. However, this also makes councillors employees of the council for tax purposes and has a number of other implications, including that councils are subject to fringe benefits tax on expenses paid under the adopted councillor expenses and facilities policy.

Councillors are also unable to register for an ABN and have tax deducted under a voluntary withholding agreement. This is because in order to be able to register for an ABN an individual needs to carry on an enterprise, and there is a specific exclusion for activities undertaken as a councillor. In addition, councillors cannot use an ABN they hold for another enterprise in their role as a councillor.

It is open to councils under section 446-5 of the Commonwealth Taxation Administration Act 1953 to resolve that councillors are subject to PAYG withholding tax. However, this also makes councillors employees of the council for tax purposes and has a number of other implications, including that councils are subject to fringe benefits tax on expenses paid under the adopted councillor expenses and facilities policy.

Councillors are also unable to register for an ABN and have tax deducted under a voluntary withholding agreement. This is because in order to be able to register for an ABN an individual needs to carry on an enterprise, and there is a specific exclusion for activities undertaken as a councillor. In addition, councillors cannot use an ABN they hold for another enterprise in their role as a councillor.

Councillors should have the option to voluntarily elect to have tax withheld from their allowance.

FINANCIAL SUSTAINABILITY

Motion number 28 Lake Macquarie City Council NSW

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to address inconsistencies in the scheduling of the payment of Financial Assistance Grants and maintain a regular schedule.

NATIONAL OBJECTIVE

To establish certainty and visibility in the scheduling of Financial Assistance Grants to enhance the financial sustainability of councils.

KEY ARGUMENTS

The Federal Government supports local government nationally through the provision of Financial Assistance Grants. These grants are paid annually and form a significant and welcome component of local government recurrent revenue. The grants are untied and as they are treated as operational revenue, sustain the financial health of councils year on year.

Commencing in 2016-2017, the Federal Government has progressively brought forward the payment of the Financial Assistance Grants to the point that the grant for financial year 2023-2024 was wholly paid in financial year 2022-2023. While bringing forward FA Grants payments has represented a windfall for councils across the country, and improved end-of-year financial results, it creates uncertainty and a concerning prospect for the future. Specifically, should the Federal Government return to paying Financial Assistance Grants during the year it falls due, it will instantly create a financial shock to all councils.

It would be preferable, from the perspective of prudent financial planning, for the Federal Government to determine a payment schedule and maintain that schedule so councils have visibility and certainty in financial planning.

Motion number 28.1 City of Greater Geelong VIC

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to deliver Financial Assistance Grants at the same time period each financial year to give local governments surety in the budget position.

NATIONAL OBJECTIVE

Councils should be able to be given surety of financial position and should not be impacted by inconsistent timing allocation.

KEY ARGUMENTS

The allocation of Financial Assistance grants at different times each year can significantly impact the financial position of a council - either moving it into deficit or surplus - depending on the assumption made by the council.

Motion number 29 North Sydney Council NSW

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to:

- a. hold a forum to formulate a new funding model(s) for local governments across Australia which:
 - i. is fit for purpose, progressive and sustainable;
 - ii. provides local councils with appropriate funding for the services supported and conducted by Councils;
 - iii. recognizes that the current funding model for councils is redundant and does not meet the needs or expectations of current or future ratepayers; and
 - iv. appreciates the different needs and expenditure of councils (urban, regional, rural, tourism, etc).
- b. consider implementation of the new funding model across all local councils.

NATIONAL OBJECTIVE

The current funding model for councils is redundant and does not support the growing demands being placed on local governments across Australia.

KEY ARGUMENTS

As density increases in urban areas, considerable and increasing strain is being placed on local services such as libraries, parks, footpaths, infrastructure, sporting fields, and the like however the current funding model based on land value does not reflect this. Rather than rates increasing with population, the same rates are just shared among more ratepayers who live on the same size land which does not increase rate revenue.

In regional and rural councils, there are not sufficient rateable properties to sustain the council services and infrastructure such as roads, waste, and public infrastructure. And in councils with tourist centres, again there are not sufficient rateable properties to support the cost of providing appropriate and necessary tourism infrastructure such as public amenities, roads, open space, footpaths, and cycleways.

Consideration also needs to be given to non-rateable properties such as schools, religious bodies etc who use council services such as parks, footpaths, community centres, and the like but pay no contribution. In urban areas, rateable properties are often purchased by institutions which are exempt from paying rates resulting in a previously rateable property converting to non-rateable due to its change of use.

Motion number 30 Glen Eira City Council VIC

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to:

- a. Revise the administrative arrangements for tied grants, to allow councils the financial autonomy to achieve the objectives of the grants;
- b. Establish ongoing partnership arrangements with councils to deliver local infrastructure and services which meet community needs and expectations and support positive, environmental, social and economic outcomes;
- c. Implement an ongoing funding stream and prioritisation framework for the delivery and maintenance of essential community infrastructure such as public libraries, cultural and community centres, aquatic and leisure/recreation centres, cycling and pedestrian infrastructure, and open space/recreation facilities; and
- d. Provide full and sustainable revenue streams to support any additional responsibilities that are put on local government.

NATIONAL OBJECTIVE

The motion advocates for changes to the Australian government's approach to local government funding and partnerships. It suggests revising administrative arrangements for tied grants, establishing ongoing partnerships, implementing funding for essential community infrastructure, and ensuring sustainable revenue streams for additional responsibilities. These proposals aim to ensure councils financial autonomy, meet community needs, and promote positive outcomes. The motion's importance at the national level lies in addressing critical issues related to local governance, infrastructure, and funding, with potential widespread impact on communities across the country.

KEY ARGUMENTS

The financial sustainability of Australian councils plays a crucial role in building community trust. Communities must trust that their councils can sustainably deliver services that are important to them. For example, adequate ongoing funding allows for the maintenance and improvement of community infrastructure, contributing to a higher quality of life for residents.

Council is committed to providing high-quality services but right now our costs are rising faster than we can cover. Our long-term sustainability is not guaranteed as inflation, interest rates, costs and cost shifting is increasing, whilst council is locked into rigid rate caps.

In 2023—2024, Financial Assistance Grants to local governments have dropped to 0.5 percent of tax revenue. This is a significant drop from 1996 when these grants constituted 1 percent of tax revenue. This underscores the need for adequate financial support.

Current grant opportunities are often complicated and come with restrictive conditions like 50:50 funding, short deadlines, limited resources, and grants that don't align with councils' local priorities. To continue delivering services and infrastructure in the future, local councils need support from other levels of government with flexible funding mechanisms.

At the same time, federal, state and territory governments continue to withdraw funding programs and transfer responsibility for some functions to local government. As a large proportion of Council's income must be allocated to the maintenance and replacement of its

public assets, substantial funding is needed for new projects, particularly to address population growth and environmental considerations.

This motion seeks to urge the Australian Government to review the grants system, to allow councils for some autonomy to achieve the objectives of the grants. It also seeks to allocate additional funds to local councils, ensuring they can undertake essential infrastructure projects that contribute to the well-being and prosperity of our residents. Additional funding streams and partnerships are needed to support maintenance and replacement of existing infrastructure, particularly to adapt to population growth and environmental considerations.

Councils also need the Australian Government to commit to providing sustainable revenue streams when additional responsibilities are placed on them. Councils are hindered by various financial pressures, like rate capping, cost shifting, and increasing interest rates, making it tough for councils to accurately budget for rising costs in providing essential services and maintaining vital infrastructure.

Motion number 31 Hepburn Shire Council VIC

The National General Assembly urgently calls on the Australian Government to provide funding for the establishment and ongoing update of an annual Local Government Cost Index, given that the Consumer Price Index (CPI) issued by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) measures household inflation, which is not a true indication of the cost factors impacting on local governments. The Local Government Cost Index could be used to assess annual adjustments to recurrent grant funding.

NATIONAL OBJECTIVE

Victoria does not currently have a LGCI, and there is no national index. The proposed motion seeks to require the establishment of a National Local Government Cost Index, which could be considered for annual movement to recurrent funding and would assist Councils in budget planning and State Governments in the consideration of applications rate caps.

KEY ARGUMENTS

Many States across Australia currently have a Local Government Cost Index (LGCI). A LGCI is designed to better reflect the cost increases associated with the delivery of local government services, recognising that the CPI alone does not reflect cost increases across the range of council services.

Motion number 32 Shire of Campaspe VIC

The National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to:

- a. Acknowledge that Council decisions are made in the best interest of their communities.
- b. Increase direct interaction between local and Commonwealth Governments without the need for State Government oversight in relation to grant funding opportunities as evident in the successful blackspot and Local Roads and Community Infrastructure programs.
- c. Work towards achieving maximum community value through flexible policies and programs, acknowledging that local government is best positioned to deliver on community priorities and needs.

NATIONAL OBJECTIVE

1. From a local government view, the current intergovernmental structure is set up based on financial dependency rather than by policy and proper cooperative interaction by the levels of government.
2. Local governments in Australia are some of the largest in the world by population size, but only account for 6% of government expenditure and 3-4% of total taxes collected (Source: Mr Pery Allen AM, A Federation for the 21st Century, Page 116).
3. Removing the State Government from the management process of grant funding will allow for direct coordination of grant funding between the Commonwealth and local government.
4. The autonomy of councils must be respected by both State and Commonwealth Governments. Councils are elected by the people who live in the local area.
5. Ask all three levels of government to stop the persistent “blame game” between the levels of government and focus efforts into achieving best outcomes for all communities in Australia.

KEY ARGUMENTS

Social Contract Responsibility - Remember that governments have a social contract with the people to not only protect their natural rights but to also provide essential services that allow the community to function. At times, governments lose sight of this social contract obligation – Local government has a social obligation to deliver services that do not, and cannot, generate a profit. It should be noted that Councils can be the last provider of some services as the private sector is unwilling to provide (no profit) or the State Government has delegated to Council to provide regardless of the cost or population size.

Remove Party Politics from Decisions - In the past, local governments have been handed funds for projects that the community neither wants nor needs. Both State and Commonwealth Governments need to trust local government to provide expert advice in relation to asset infrastructure works and ensure funding allocation is geared towards this.

Natural Disaster Funding and Management – Recent flood and storm events across Eastern Australia have highlighted the need for a more clear and concise approach to recovery. Local government has been criticised about not being ready for natural disaster management, yet in Victoria councils are not the lead agency and the State government showed signs it was ill prepared itself. There were also instances of duplication of effort and conflicting information

provided to local councils on which government departments would fund recovery efforts, or parts thereof.

Democratically Elected Council - Local government is a distinct tier of government with democratically elected councillors to make decisions on behalf of the local community. The autonomy of councils must be respected, and councils must retain the flexibility to seek funding from the Commonwealth Government that meet local community priorities and needs without interference from and/ or management by the State Government. Noting that Commonwealth tied funding is provided with detailed requirements, how can this system be improved to provide flexibility and maximise the benefit to local government?

A One Size Approach Does Not Always Work – Local communities need to have their voices heard and the one size approach does not fit when dealing with urban vs rural for example. Delivering services needs to be tailored and funding provided to local government needs to be flexible to allow this.

Acknowledge local government differences – Funding arrangements need to consider differences between local governments. For example, oncost rates can be different due to different workers' compensation requirements or the need to pay for extra annual leave entitlements. Another example is that access to resourcing (labour, expertise, materials, etc) is also going to be different across local governments. Funding opportunities need to allow local governments to apply on their individual merits and not under a one size fits all approach.

Central information portals – Local government staff tend to interact with different portals/websites to manage reporting and payment requests at a State and Commonwealth Government level. A central information portal aligning all levels of government would be beneficial. This could be focused on grants, allowing for all levels of government to apply and report on grant funding within the same space.

Motion number 33 Cessnock City Council NSW, Singleton Council NSW, Mid Coast Council NSW, Lake Macquarie City Council NSW, Dungog Shire Council NSW, Muswellbrook Shire Council NSW, Newcastle City Council NSW, and upper Hunter Shire Council

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to:

Lead collaboration with state and local government to review, simplify and streamline the delivery and governance of grant funding to local government, focusing on:

- a. Consolidating currently disparate funding programs delivered across various Commonwealth and State Government agencies toward a “block funding” approach to providing grant funding to local government, delivered over timeframes that align with local government planning cycles.
- b. Identifying broader options than requiring direct co-contributions from councils to access grant funding. This aims to remove the inherent disadvantage currently experienced in accessing grant funds by local councils who do not have the financial or resource capacity to offer co-contributions, yet to whom the dependence on grant funds to deliver delivery of community services and infrastructure remains vital.
- c. Reducing the administrative burden on local government through more consistency in the governance frameworks, systems and documentation required across various funding programs and governing agencies.

NATIONAL OBJECTIVE

The delivery of essential community, infrastructure, facilities and services provided by local councils in communities right across Australia is underpinned by a diversity of government grant programs administered by a wide spectrum of Federal and State Government agencies.

In a national environment where the availability of government resources to support local councils deliver local projects and services is increasingly scarce, a national review of the design, delivery and governance arrangements across both state and federal governments for the delivery of grant funds to local government is necessary. The purpose of this review would be to:

- Consolidate the currently disparate funding programs delivered across various Commonwealth and State Government agencies to improve the efficiency with which available grant funds are allocated.
- Investigate delivery of alternative options for delivering grant funding to local councils to better align with the strategic planning priorities and timelines of councils.
- Reduce the administrative burden on local government through more consistency in the governance frameworks, systems and documentation required across various funding programs and governing agencies. This would support more time being allocated to project delivery instead of grants administration.

KEY ARGUMENTS

The delivery of essential community, infrastructure, facilities and services provided by local councils in communities right across Australia is underpinned by a diversity of government grant programs administered by a wide spectrum of Federal and State Government agencies.

There is a significant and urgent need to simplify and streamline the delivery of grant funds provided to local government from both state and federal governments. This review is needed to:

- Improve the efficiency with which increasingly scarce grant funding available from federal and state governments is administered and distributed to the local government sector. This includes exploring opportunities to consolidate the currently disparate funding programs delivered by various Commonwealth and State Government agencies to local government.
- Investigate opportunities for better aligning the availability, timing and duration of grant funding with the strategic and operational planning cycles of councils. Many of the competitive based grant programs currently available to local councils are characterised by short lead in times, regular changes to program focus and eligibility requirements, short delivery timeframes, and considerable variations in the level of funding available from year to year. This creates significant challenges for councils to plan and fund strategic, longer term community strategic priorities with the assistance of grant programs. Exploring a “block funding” approach to delivering funding to local governments in place of competitive grants would provide a higher level of predictability and capacity to plan.
- Reduce the administrative burden on local government through more consistency in the governance frameworks, systems and documentation required across various funding programs and agencies. There has been a discernible and increasing trend in administration and compliance reporting obligations over recent years that is directly resulting in a greater proportion of staff time allocated to project administration and reporting at the expense of project delivery.

Motion number 34 Tamworth Regional Council NSW

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to provide regionally significant large events and regional/rural tourist attracting facilities with insurance subsidies to facilitate the ongoing viability of the events and facilities.

NATIONAL OBJECTIVE

It is important that as a region we retain these “social assets” to continue to attract tourists, contributing to the ongoing economies of rural and remote regions.

KEY ARGUMENTS

The current regular and quite substantial increasing cost of insurances is putting them under doubt for the future.

Motion number 35 Bega Valley Shire Council NSW

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to provide greater flexibility in grant funding related to financial estimates, increased visibility of program announcements and application timeframes and improved consistency and trust in grant reporting and acquittals.

NATIONAL OBJECTIVE

Councils spend considerable resources seeking, applying for and acquitting grant funding. The Federal Government also spends considerable time administering grant programs. With greater levels of trust established between councils and funders it would provide improved efficiency in project delivery and reporting.

KEY ARGUMENTS

There are four key issues for councils related to grant funding programs that continue to impact resourcing and capacity for councils to deliver projects on time and budget.

Financial flexibility:

It is requested that improved financial flexibility be considered as part of grant applications. This includes an understanding from the funding bodies that from the time that a project is scoped and costed to when notification of a grant outcome is successful, the deed execution process to procurement of services there is often a cost escalation beyond the value of the grant and/or co-contribution. This issue could be alleviated by increasing thresholds for contingency in projects budgets as part of the grant submission noting that many grant programs have previously set limits on this. It may also be of value for the funding body to hold in reserve a portion of the grant funding program for when this occurs and Council need to seek additional funds to deliver the project.

Increased visibility:

Providing councils with visibility on when programs are expected to be announced will help councils to resource the preparation of their applications, resulting in improved submissions. Once funding programs are confirmed in Federal budgets it would be beneficial to local government to have a schedule of grant program openings.

Application timeframe:

The timeframe from when the funding guidelines become available to when the application close are increasing becoming shorter. This relates to the above point and impacts the quality of submissions from councils. Increasing visibility and allowing for adequate time for grant submissions to be prepared will improve grant submissions and ultimately project delivery.

Reporting consistency:

It is noted that improvements have been made in the consistency across both levels of government in the development of guidelines and deeds however there are still significant inconsistencies in reporting and acquittals of grants across programs. Some programs require an onerous level of detail on progress reporting that is resource intensive for both the council and funding body.

ROADS AND INFRASTRUCTURE

Motion number 36 Cootamundra-Gundagai Regional Council NSW

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to work with all State jurisdictions to ensure that aged passenger service trains servicing regional Australia are replaced/upgraded with modern reliable train services between the Nation's Capital Cities, linking vital regional towns and cities within Australia.

NATIONAL OBJECTIVE

To provide greater connectivity with the regions and major cities by providing passenger rail services that are reliable and on a travel time equivalent at least that of road but hopefully much faster.

KEY ARGUMENTS

Residents living in regional areas of Australia should be able to access transport options that enable them to travel to other parts of regional Australia or Australian Capital Cities in an efficient, effective and comfortable manner. Access to airports within regional Australia is not always an effective option for residents of regional Australia. Access to a contemporary rail service, including access to facilities that enable connectivity and business services, for all residents of regional Australia should be an option.

Motion number 37 Penrith City Council NSW

The National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to reconsider the infrastructure funding cuts made in response to the independent strategic review of the Infrastructure Investment Program (November 2023). There is an urban policy disconnect between the Australian Government's Housing Accord and the infrastructure funding cuts, which cut major road upgrades. It is critical that the necessary supporting infrastructure is provided ahead of and commensurate with the housing set out in the Accord.

NATIONAL OBJECTIVE

Given the scale of further growth projected for growth areas, this is a national policy issue with long lasting impact. Australia's fast-growing outer suburbs experience population growth rates at double the national average and have long encountered under-investment in vital infrastructure. One in every five Australians are living in fast-growing outer metropolitan areas. These outer suburbs produce 13% of Australia's jobs and 11% of the Gross Domestic Product, but only receive 13% of infrastructure investment.

Looking at the funding and delivery of infrastructure through the lens of 'equitable access' will ensure infrastructure can be delivered effectively to serve the most rapidly-growing areas and the most vulnerable people. This approach supports a vision for cities where residents have equitable access to infrastructure that supports these outcomes – no matter where they live.

Investment in infrastructure in growth areas under successive governments has not kept pace with community needs and wants. The right investment in Australia's outer metropolitan growth areas will not only directly impact local communities, but the nation. There is a policy disconnect between the Australian Government's Housing Accord and the 2023 infrastructure

funding cuts announced as part of the independent strategic review of the Infrastructure Investment Program, which cut major road upgrades.

KEY ARGUMENTS

Planning for housing needs to be inextricably linked with infrastructure funding and provision, particularly in outer growth areas. It is often accepted that growth areas will be car dependent, lacking in infrastructure such as open space and community facilities, exacerbated by disconnected transport links – at least until long after those areas establish. A paradigm shift is needed in the way that this infrastructure is approached, funded and delivered in growth areas.

The provision of infrastructure and services that is enabled through Federal and State Government funding means that community benefits can be achieved earlier.

The independent strategic review of the Infrastructure Investment Program (November 2023) cut funding for 50 projects worth \$11.6bn. This was after the National Housing Accord was announced with this target of 1.2 million new well located homes over 5 years from mid 2024.

Supporting infrastructure is critical to meet population growth in outer metropolitan growth areas to an extent that residents of these precincts need to have the equivalent supporting infrastructure as their inner metropolitan counterparts. This approach supports a vision for Australian cities where residents have equitable access to jobs, education, health services, cultural activities and the physical and community infrastructure that support these outcomes – no matter where they live.

The lack of public transport within the outer metropolitan growth areas creates barriers for the communities in accessing jobs, education and services, which is particularly detrimental to socially and economically disadvantaged communities. Investment in public transport infrastructure is a key to improving social equity and addressing other barriers.

The provision of infrastructure and services that is enabled through Federal and State Government funding means that community benefits can be achieved earlier. A national funding model for infrastructure provision is needed to ensure infrastructure is delivered alongside housing.

It is no longer fair that growth area residents have substandard or lagging infrastructure, often an afterthought after the housing is constructed. The right investment in Australia's outer metropolitan growth areas will not only directly impact local communities, but the nation.

To achieve equitable access to infrastructure for growth area (1) communities, levels of accessibility and service must be benchmarked against inner metropolitan areas to quantify the shortfall and plan to redress it.

It is often accepted that growth areas will be car dependent, lacking in infrastructure such as schools, hospitals and open space, exacerbated by disconnected transport links – at least until long after those areas establish.

Access to public transport in Australia's growth areas is universally limited resulting in high car usage. Car dependency is further entrenched due to limited local employment opportunities which results in almost half of the working residents in the growth areas (48.3%)² travelling outside the area to work. On Census day 2021, over half of the working population (57%)² in the growth areas travelled to work in a private car compared with 4.5% on public transport, and even less walked to work (0.9% compared to 2.5% in Australia) (2).

The lack of public transport within the outer metropolitan growth areas creates barriers for the communities in accessing jobs, education and services, which is particularly detrimental to socially and economically disadvantaged communities. Investment in public transport infrastructure is a key to improving social equity and addressing other barriers. An interconnected network of public transport to get around the area and to link to major transport hubs is required along with an increased focus on bike paths and walkability (including first and last mile connections with public transport options) to encourage the health and wellbeing of our communities.

Compounding the impacts of limited transport options for growth area residents is the significant financial cost. The cost of the daily average commute by private car for growth area workers is \$36.28 (running costs, tolls and parking) per return trip, and this increases to \$58.35 when standing costs (insurance, registration etc) are included. This equates to \$8380 annually for full-time workers, which represents 17 percent of the average income for growth areas (\$49,250). While public transport is an affordable alternative, for people in outer growth areas public transport options are limited, overly complex, incompatible with routine, or non-existent compelling more people to drive to work (3).

Looking at the funding and delivery of infrastructure through the lens of 'equitable access' will ensure state and local infrastructure can be delivered effectively to serve the most rapidly-growing areas and the most vulnerable people. This approach supports a vision for Australian cities where residents have equitable access to the infrastructure that supports these outcomes.

Motion number 38 City of Stirling WA

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to develop a model to shift towards community-driven infrastructure planning, ensuring that local residents actively participate in the decision-making process for major road and infrastructure projects.

NATIONAL OBJECTIVE

This motion addresses a fundamental aspect of governance and public policy that is applicable in both metro and regional areas of Australia: community engagement in infrastructure planning. As Australia's population increases, so too does the number of people impacted by major infrastructure projects.

By advocating for a shift towards more community involvement in the planning of major infrastructure projects, this motion seeks to address a national concern of ensuring democratic representation in and fostering trust between communities and the Federal government. Additionally, infrastructure projects often have far-reaching impacts beyond local jurisdictions, making it imperative to have a standardised approach that includes community input to ensure projects align with broader needs and values. Thus, debating this motion at the National General Assembly is crucial for promoting inclusive and transparent decision-making processes that build community trust nationwide.

KEY ARGUMENTS

With the fast pace our population is growing it is hard for the community to keep up and be actively involved in understanding infrastructure needs and delivery for the community. Often

decisions are made in silos at various levels of government with little to no community involvement (e.g. tree removal for major Stirling City Centre infrastructure).

This motion aims to establish community advisory boards or forums that provide a platform for residents to contribute insights, preferences, and concerns. By involving the community from the planning stage, we seek to enhance transparency, build trust, and create infrastructure projects that truly reflect the needs and values of our diverse communities.

Consultation and community involvement in major infrastructure projects varies across Australia. Local Governments regularly undertake a high level of community consultation / engagement with their communities on a range of issues. It is therefore considered reasonable to have a consistent approach with regards to major infrastructure projects. This approach would lead to:

1. Enhanced transparency: Involving local residents in infrastructure planning increases transparency by providing insight into the decision-making process, leading to greater accountability and trust in government actions.
2. The potential for tailored solutions: Community input allows for the identification of unique needs and preferences within different neighbourhoods or regions, enabling the development of infrastructure projects that are more tailored to local contexts and priorities.
3. Improved project outcomes: By incorporating diverse perspectives and local knowledge, community-driven planning can result in infrastructure projects that better address the actual needs of the community, leading to more effective and sustainable outcomes.
4. Reduced community angst / conflict: Early involvement of the community helps identify potential conflicts or concerns before they escalate, allowing for more proactive resolution and smoother project implementation.

Motion number 39 Brimbank City Council VIC

This National General Assembly calls on the Federal Government to significantly increase the level of funding to upgrade major highways across Australia and to work closer with councils across the nation to better understand the deficiencies in their road networks.

NATIONAL OBJECTIVE

Transport and infrastructure are significant areas of expenditure for all councils, while some funding is provided by the Australian and State Governments, Councils cannot cover the extensive costs of maintaining and upgrading major highways and need further government investment.

KEY ARGUMENTS

Arterial road networks form the major connections that move people and goods between major regions, activity centres, freight terminals, tourist areas and population centres.

Australia has the 9th highest road network size in the world. However, major highways are becoming more congested with deteriorating conditions affecting the safety of commuters and not meeting the demands of communities. The existing interstate and intrastate road corridors pass through rapidly growing communities with busy intersections and lower speed limits.

These highways and roads will become increasingly congested as the population grows, requiring further investment.

As result of the Federal Government's Infrastructure review in 2023, a total of 50 infrastructure projects worth \$11.6bn were cancelled. These included funds allocated to a number of major highways such as the Great Western Highway in NSW, the Calder Highway in Victoria and the Truro Bypass Project along South Australia's Sturt Highway.

Motion number 40 Wakefield Regional Council SA

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to focus on the long term financial sustainability of local government infrastructure, particularly sealed and unsealed road networks that are being degraded due to insufficient funding, increased traffic numbers and gross vehicle mass increases that result in safety and risk management issues and potential litigation resulting from local governments' financial inability to provide local road networks that are fit for purpose in a first world country such as Australia.

NATIONAL OBJECTIVE

The motion is relevant to several of the twelve points that motions should focus on, namely,

- 1 Intergovernmental Relations
- 2 Financial Sustainability
- 3 Roads and Infrastructure

KEY ARGUMENTS

Support from the Australian Government in the form of targeted funding to enable Local Government to provide modern fit for purpose infrastructure to their ratepayers, businesses and primary producers, would be a practical demonstration of how intergovernmental relations could contribute to an economic, social and safety improvement over a significant area of the country.

Local Governments remaining financially viable is critical to maintaining or improving intergovernmental relations and providing valuable services and facilities to local communities. Noting that many local governments, particularly in rural and regional areas, rely heavily on Federal grants to fund their share of local services to their communities without placing an undue burden on landowners and ratepayers.

With some State Governments already or considering legislating rate capping for Councils, reducing financial viability in the face of increased demand for services and ever-increasing risk management and compliance requirements.

As the evolution of freight and passenger vehicles transport continues and, in particular heavier freight transport vehicle classes, larger farm machinery, bigger passenger vehicles, become more prevalent corresponding increases to the cost of providing local road networks that are fit for purpose are falling onto local government and local communities. Uncertainty of long-term ongoing grant allocations threaten some Councils long-term financial viability, noting that 1996 Financial Assistance Grants were 1.0% of Commonwealth tax revenue, 2021 Financial Assistance Grants were 0.6% falling to 0.5% in 2023. For many regional local government's

expenditures on local roads and freight routes is the largest capital expense. Local road networks, especially unsealed roads provide the commercial, agricultural and social links to the sealed network that ultimately links town, cities and ports. Unsealed roads are often the first link in the supply chain of food (including grains and livestock) to processors, distributors and food retailers. The introduction of heavier classes of freight transport vehicle leaving the farm gate, increases the financial burden to provide a local road network that is fit for purpose. Safety and risk management issues around intersections, bridges and width of roads suitable for vehicles with longer turning and merging will increase on the unsealed network. An unsealed network that is not fit for purpose will inevitably increase the number of smaller rural and regional councils that will become financially unsustainable unless additional targeted funding is provided.

In distributing funds from the Commonwealth to local government, each State has its own Grant Commission to distribute those Commonwealth funds using formulas that can vary widely between States. Because the Commonwealth legislates how federal grants should be allocated, a more consistent approach between States based on the intent of Commonwealth legislation would ensure councils with similar circumstances, but in different states, would be treated in a consistent manner.

A commitment to targeted long term funding to rural and regional local government to address upgrades to unsealed local road networks by the Commonwealth Government would be an essential first step towards ensuring local government can provide roads and infrastructure that meets the needs of local communities, businesses and primary producers.

Motion number 41 Federation Council NSW

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to support the replacement of ageing basic infrastructure (water and sewer) in areas that support national security and national defence capabilities.

NATIONAL OBJECTIVE

Achieving a greater strength of sovereign capability in the defence and security protection of Australia, by investing into core infrastructure in the towns that support the operations including production, of defence requirements.

KEY ARGUMENTS

The water treatment plant in Mulwala, NSW, was previously owned by the Commonwealth and was “gifted” to the then Corowa Shire Council. The water treatment plant supplies water to the Thales munitions plant at Mulwala. The plant is in dire need of replacement to keep up with demands of not only the local community but of the local munitions plant as well. Federation Council does not have the financial resources to support the replacement of the water treatment plant and calls on the Federal Government to fund the replacement of the plant to continue to support the defence capabilities of Australia. This same principle should then apply across the country where military installations or industry that directly supports military, exists. This is particularly as Australia strengthens its sovereign capabilities and its defence forces and therefore its defence spending. It is not enough to simply fund the submarines and bushmasters, fund the basic water and sewer infrastructure that the towns that these things occur in, require.

For more than 25 years, Thales has supported the Australian Defence Force (ADF) and strategic partners with core industrial capabilities for munitions and ordnance manufacture, and guided weapons production including the manufacture of high-performance propellants and explosives for warheads, solid fuel rocket motor manufacturing and associated R&D and support services.

Recently the Australian government has announced an investment of \$220 million in support of local jobs and munitions production at the Government Owned Company Operated (GOCO) at Mulwala in regional New South Wales, and Benalla in Regional Victoria.

Motion number 42 South Burnett Regional Council QLD

That this National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government for assistance with urban water supply.

NATIONAL OBJECTIVE

Essential Infrastructure

KEY ARGUMENTS

Our council is aiming to increase access to water allocations and establish infrastructure that provides for improved water security across urban and rural water supplies. Council proposes a programme to conduct assist with urban water security will accelerate and materially progress water projects identified by the individual council area.

Water is essential for regional economics and economic growth. Assistance for urban water infrastructure is vital. As are the assessment of the incremental urban water needs from now until 2037 and development of a tangible, actionable strategies to move forward for urban water supplies.

Motion number 43 Moree Plains Shire Council NSW

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to:

- a. Complete the Inland Rail Narrabri to North Star 22km “missing link” of rail track that will support connection of the Moree Special Activation Precinct and agribusiness to ports across southeastern Australia, and
- b. Complete the Inland Rail program in its entirety, to support growth and development across regional Australia.

NATIONAL OBJECTIVE

This year the recommended motion aims to highlight the continuation and completion of Inland Rail construction within the Moree Plains and from Melbourne to Brisbane more broadly to support positive economic outcomes for the nation.

KEY ARGUMENTS

The ‘missing link’ 22km rail link is still to be completed for the Narrabri to North Star (N2NS) section of track within the Moree Plains Shire, which is of critical importance to local

agricultural businesses, the Moree Special Activation Precinct (SAP), and the national economy.

The N2NS project has been partially completed, falling short of Moree from Tapscott Road to Camurra, classified as Section 2C and N2NS Phase 2 projects. With the rail line incomplete, existing road-based supply chains will remain, which is more expensive, less efficient, and less safe.

Motion number 44 Cessnock City Council NSW, Singleton Council NSW, Mid Coast Council NSW, Lake Macquarie City Council NSW, Dungog Shire Council NSW, Muswellbrook Shire Council NSW, Newcastle City Council NSW, and Upper Hunter Shire Council NSW

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to lead systems reform across all three levels of government to improve the planning, administration and delivery of road funding, with a focus on ensuring greater equity, certainty and sustainability in funding across regional and metropolitan communities.

NATIONAL OBJECTIVE

Local roads underpin regional economies around Australia. They are the foundational infrastructure upon which local jobs, visitor economies, movement of people and freight, and community safety, amenity and resilience depend. The cumulative impact of the functions provided by local roads at a national scale thereby underpin the productivity of the national tax base. Nationally led systems reform which focuses on improving the planning, administration, and delivery of road funding to create greater equity, certainty and sustainability in funding across regional and metropolitan communities will therefore deliver both significant local and also nationwide outcomes.

KEY ARGUMENTS

Managing and maintaining the quality and safety of local and regional road networks falls directly on local governments around Australia. To resource delivery of this essential community infrastructure and the local and national benefits it provides, local government must be appropriately and equitably funded to maintain roads and their ancillary infrastructure. Nationwide, councils are facing substantial pressures on their ability and capacity to sustainably resource the ongoing maintenance of safe and efficient local and regional road networks. Primary challenges include:

- Regular variations in both the focus of road funding grants and the formulas for calculating the level of funding for which councils are eligible. This ongoing variability presents significant challenges for local councils around workforce planning and retention, and the costs of materials, labour and contractors. It would be preferable to consolidate currently disparate road funding programs toward a “block funding” approach to providing funding to local government, delivered over timeframes that align with local government planning cycles and priorities.
- Maintaining the condition and resilience of the road network and ancillary infrastructure in the face of increasing extreme weather events. The design of road funding programs needs to accommodate not just the increasing costs of repairing roads after natural disasters, but the

capacity to strategically invest in the road network to enhance its inherent resilience to climate change and unprecedented weather events.

- An increasing administrative burden on local government involved in the application and management of multiple road funding programs.
- Structural inequities in the allocation of road funding, where regional communities bear an undue road funding burden compared with metropolitan counterparts. A more equitable model for allocating roads funding across metropolitan and regional areas, that equalises the per kilometre funding for all areas is required.

Motion number 45 Macedon Ranges Shire Council VIC

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to include wildlife trauma and fatalities metrics in federal road safety funding models.

NATIONAL OBJECTIVE

Refer to summary of key arguments.

KEY ARGUMENTS

The recent Road Safety Forum held by Macedon Ranges Shire Council in conjunction with Wildlife Rescue Victoria outlined the importance of how components of road safety come from all three tiers of government in Australia, the community, and driver behaviour.

It is important, as per our Mobility and Road Safety Strategy, that all elements of the system to improve road safety are addressed.

Currently, the assessment of roads for federal funding through the Black Spot road funding applications does not include incidents of collision with or fatality of wildlife, only reported incidents of human collisions or fatalities. Data is available through vehicle insurance companies and wildlife rescue organisations that can capture the number of incidents of wildlife trauma and fatality on our roads. With the inclusion of this data, local communities should be able to get funding from the federal government, and other non-local government sources, to improve road safety. A road that is safer for wildlife is also safer for humans.

Roads and Infrastructure, intergovernmental relations, financial sustainability, and environment are 4 of the 12 priority areas covered in this motion to the NGA.

Councils are working hard on conservation initiatives, which are paying dividends, with wildlife returning and flourishing in many areas. However, this leads to high numbers of interactions between wildlife and vehicle traffic. According to Wildlife Victoria data, 5% of wildlife fatalities in Victoria occur within the Macedon Ranges Shire.

Higher levels of wildlife trauma and fatalities particularly impact peri-urban and interface councils. This is partly due to city drivers not changing their driving habits and being cognisant of the differing risks of driving on rural roads.

Wildlife trauma and fatalities are terrible for the wildlife; they also impact humans in the vehicles and the vehicles as well.

Incorporating wildlife trauma and fatalities metrics into road safety funding models will make roads safer for our communities, visitors, and wildlife.

Motion number 46 Warrnambool City Council VIC

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to reintroduce the Regional Airports Program with at least \$200 million dollars of funding.

NATIONAL OBJECTIVE

As the NGA 2024 Discussion paper states, ‘Local government assets make up a significant proportion of the physical structure of local communities and often provide critical access to and support for citizens to engage in state and national assets and opportunities.’

This extends to airports in rural and regional communities, which are often the only effective way for access to education, healthcare, and disaster management support. Infrastructure improvements to regional and rural airports across the nation will not only improve the quality of life for people in those communities by bridging the gap between the regions and metro areas but will boost connectivity for all Australians offering benefit for everyone.

KEY ARGUMENTS

Regional airports are valued community assets that are often managed and maintained by local government. They support export-oriented agribusiness, assist in medical evacuation and access to healthcare, support bushfire fighting operations, and are gateways to world-renowned tourist destinations.

However, currently regional communities are under serviced by commercial airlines despite there being an interest in establishing more services. The largest barrier to entry for these airlines is that the infrastructure at regional airports is not at the standard required to operate their services. This exacerbates regional disadvantage by further reducing connectivity and access to essential services such as specialist medical care and education. Local government does not have the financial capacity to fund expensive infrastructure upgrades and need the support of the Federal Government to deliver for our community.

The Federal Government has in the past had a number of funding programs dedicated to regional airport upgrades such as the Regional Airports Program and the Remote Airstrip Upgrade Program. However, these programs have now been expended and there is no funding program specifically dedicated to regional airport upgrades available to Local Government.

Minister the Hon Catherine King MP has indicated a White Paper will be released later in 2024 outlining the future of regional airport funding. This is a positive step but is important that this crucial infrastructure is adequately funded, and a \$200 million commitment to regional airports would represent a doubling of the amount offered in the first iteration of the program.

Motion number 46.1 Paroo Shire Council QLD

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to:

- a. increase funding for the Regional Airports Program;
- b. reconsider the funding framework in terms of the matching component; and
- c. secure the continuation of this Program in future Federal Budgets

NATIONAL OBJECTIVE

In the 2019–20 Budget, the Australian Government committed \$100 million over four years to 2022–23 to the Regional Airports Program, a competitive grants program intended to:

- improve the safety of aircraft, operators and passengers using regional airports or aerodromes;
- facilitate improved delivery of essential goods and services such as food supplies, health care and passenger air services;
- improve the connectivity of Australia's regions to domestic and global market opportunities;
- meet the operational requirements of aeromedical and other emergency services in the region.

Across Australia, local governments own and operate more than 300 small airports and aerodromes. These airports are essential for sustaining and linking regional, rural and remote communities especially for health services, education, economic development and social connectivity.

Further, recent natural disaster events across Australia have also emphasised the importance of local airports and aerodromes in hosting defence and civilian aircraft engaged in search and rescue, food and supply drops, aerial firefighting, aeromedical evacuation, and patient transport flights.

These critical assets are also often damaged in natural disaster events with significant damage to airport pavements, lighting and other critical systems.

KEY ARGUMENTS

In 2023, the Minister for Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Local Government, the Hon Catherine King MP announced \$27.9 million in funding for 44 projects under round three of the Regional Airports Program.

Whilst this funding is appreciated, clearly it is not adequate to address the necessary upgrades to the 300 small airports and aerodromes that serve communities across Australia.

Noting that successive ALGA National State of the Asset Reports highlight that most local government airport assets are in poor condition, increased and ongoing funding for the Regional Airports Program is important beyond its current funding horizon of 2022–23.

Additionally, a review of the funding framework for the Program is sought given the limited revenue base of most regional, rural and remote councils make it difficult for them to find the matching financial contribution required under the Program.

Motion number 47 City of Kingston VIC

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to:

a. Commit to legislative changes of the Airports Act 1996 and Airports Regulation 1996, following the White Paper process, to improve and protect General Aviation giving specific consideration to:

- i. Legislative mechanisms needed to ensure that Airport Strategic Planning actively prioritises the protection of Commonwealth Land for aviation related purposes.
- ii. Legislated obligations on the Airport Lessee Company to ensure aviation related businesses are prioritised to ensure commercial transactions on Commonwealth Land cannot undermine existing businesses or the needs of aviation for the life of the established Airport lease period.
- iii. The views held by State or Local Government with respect to the land use planning implications on Airport Land are given a much more elevated level of consideration in determinations on Draft Major Development Plans or Draft Airport Masterplans.
- iv. The establishment of independent expert review processes to aid the Commonwealth minister in considering Draft Major Development Plans or Draft Airport Masterplans.

b. Undertake a thorough review of all functions under the Airports Act 1996 and Airports Regulations 1996 requiring the Airport Lessee Company to provide advice, assess or determine any matters relating to considerations regarding the safety of Airfields and/or Development which is proposed to occur on them.

NATIONAL OBJECTIVE

Airports across Australia are critical to our national infrastructure. They are central to the operation and development of not only metropolitan areas but crucial ports for our regions and rural areas. Since deregulation occurred many airports across Australia could be confused with business parks, rather than aviation hubs. For many they have a significant non-aviation commercial centre and as a consequence, compromise potential for future expansion in terms of aviation. There are significant inconsistencies between the lands legislative requirements for airports to function as an Airport as required by the Airports Act 1996, whilst expansive non-aviation development continues to occur. We are in a unique situation where we can pre-empt and therefore protect the critical component of our aviation industry, particularly at a regional and rural level. The Federal Department of Infrastructure are undertaking a review of the Airports Act and Regulations through the White Process but have not committed to legislative changes. Views held by State and Local Government with respect to land use planning need to be given a much more elevated level of consideration in order for consistent and appropriate uses to be provided on Federal land.

KEY ARGUMENTS

Since 1996 when privatisation occurred, airports across Australia have embarked upon an unprecedented wave of commercially orientated development that have no relevance to the aviation community.

From the readings of the Act and the justification for selling off the leaseholds, it was not the intent of the Federal Government to legitimise business plans geared to maximising shareholder returns at the expense of the aviation industry.

The privatisation of federal airports was meant to do the exact opposite by assisting in bolstering of the aviation industry. It is now a unique situation where privatised airport leaseholders are able to hold unique and often unregulated monopoly powers which negatively impact the aviation industry and sidestep State and Local planning powers.

The structure of government tiers where Commonwealth 'trumps' State and local legislation, regardless of any inconsistencies, can and has created serious consequences with respect to land use planning. It is the ability of airport corporations, to bypass state and local legislation to develop non-aviation development by virtue of the approval process allowable under the Airports Act that we are seeking to debate and change. The City of Kingston believe Australia is currently at a tipping point where land set aside for aviation are increasingly becoming examples of commercial parks with aviation problems. There should be certainty to not only the users of an airport but also assurances to the community as to what will be built on site, its location and use. Airport planning and regulations need to be integrated with local, state and territory planning and regulatory processes. A clearer framework for protecting airport operations from inappropriate non-aviation development is critical to protecting our national infrastructure.

Examples of weaknesses from the Airports Act and Regulations include:

- No developer contributions for infrastructure upgrades
- Poor community consultation
- Lack of independent reviews or third party appeals
- The lack of regulatory approach taken by the federal government, alongside the lack of urban planning expertise has consequently led to more inappropriate development allowed with no checks or balances (see point above). Examples are non-aviation factories built within the airport threshold creating a safety risk, or non-aviation developments built within metres of a residential boundary creating enormous amenity impacts (both examples can be found at Moorabbin Airport). No minimum standards are provided for on airport sites with regards to any impacts on adjoining residential properties.

State and local government in Victoria are actively trying to protect and safeguard the aviation industry by way of what uses and developments can occur around airports (through the Melbourne Airport Environs Safeguarding Standing Advisory Committee

(MAESSAC), yet significant development (non-aviation) can occur seemingly unabated on Federally leased land meant to be utilised as an airport. The safeguarding of our aviation assets are critical. A much more focused assessment into the management of federally leased airports is required to review the depletion of aviation activity on airport land to expedite non-aviation development. Hand in hand is a stringent review on the Airports Act and Regulations.

Motion number 48 Moonee Valley City Council VIC

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to:

- a. Ensure that there is greater consistency between different airports across Australia in terms of noise mitigation requirements upon airports.
- b. Require that when significant major development applications are proposed on an airport operating on Commonwealth land, they should be subject to a rigorous public evaluation against relevant state and local government land use planning strategies and engage appropriately with stakeholders. This should involve the establishment of a publicly accessible Independent Panel or similar that can provide unbiased advice to the relevant Federal Minister and include a full assessment of the environmental, economic, and social impacts of any proposal.

NATIONAL OBJECTIVE

The recent Aviation Green Paper highlighted the different approaches to the amelioration of noise impacts on airports in different locations. Some airports have curfews applied. Noise amelioration programs to acquire or insulate certain properties affected by noise were undertaken under previous Government policy at Sydney and Adelaide Airports from the mid-1990s. It is indicated that the Commonwealth Department will release a noise insulation and property acquisition policy as part of the draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the preliminary flight paths for Western Sydney International. There is no commitment for this to occur at other airports, and or to establish Federal requirements at this time.

Whenever a Major Development Plan is proposed at an airport, it is generally considered against the relevant approved master plan for the Airport. However, on many occasions, proposals can include elements that have an impact on the surroundings. There could be the opportunity to establish an Independent Panel to provide advice and allow affected communities to have a forum to allow their concerns to be heard.

KEY ARGUMENTS

Noise

The recent Aviation Green Paper highlighted the different approaches to the amelioration of noise impacts on airports in different locations. Some airports have curfews applied. Noise amelioration programs to acquire or insulate certain properties affected by noise were undertaken under previous Government policy at Sydney and Adelaide Airports from the mid-1990s. It is indicated that the Commonwealth Department will release a noise insulation and property acquisition policy as part of the draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the preliminary flight paths for Western Sydney International. There is no commitment for this to occur at other airports, and or to establish Federal requirements at this time.

Given the impacts of aviation noise on neighbourhood amenity, the Australian Government should consider the provision of assistance to those residents most affected and should establish better solutions to manage those properties impacted by aircraft and acknowledge those existing communities that are to be impacted by additional aviation activity.

The Australian Government and the Airports could provide assistance towards the costs of formalising notification for purchasers of property to advise them or that the premises may be within areas that could be affected by aircraft noise.

Land Use

Whenever a Major Development Plan is proposed, it is generally considered against the relevant approved master plan for the Airport. However, on many occasions, proposals can include elements that have an impact on the surroundings. For example, developments that include a significant expansion of retail components at airports may impact the viability of retail and commercial precincts in the surrounding areas. Any such development should

be given wider consideration and assessment in terms of the context of the local planning schemes.

At present, there is no real obligation to consider this. There could be the opportunity to establish an Independent Panel similar to that would be required under Victorian legislation to consider a rezoning or major planning proposal. This would allow relevant experts to be engaged to provide advice and allow affected communities to have a forum to allow their concerns to be heard.

Motion number 49 Albury City Council NSW

That the National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to provide local government with access to a funding pool which is exclusively dedicated to both infrastructure development and/or maintenance as well as operational costs of council-owned regional airports.

NATIONAL OBJECTIVE

While regional airports are critical to the nation's economy and security, it is estimated that 60 per cent of regional airports currently operate at a loss due to ageing infrastructure, rising security and regulatory burdens and staffing costs. Australia's regional airports provide a critical role in border protection, medivac, defence and disaster response, and it's only reasonable that the Federal Government contribute to their ongoing operations and capital infrastructure. Regional airports play an important role in facilitating connectivity for both social and economic purposes.

KEY ARGUMENTS

An estimated 200 regional airports are owned and operated by local councils across Australia but rising costs means that many airports are operating at a loss and a burden on regional ratepayers. There is significant concern that unless the Federal Government steps in, Australia's regional airports will be deemed unviable, putting the handbrake on regional growth and increasing the nation's health and security risk.

Motion number 50 City of Darwin NT

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to support flood proofing on major Australian highways and rail corridors, including upgrading culverts, causeways and bridges to ensure transport corridors for food, freight and essential supplies at all times.

NATIONAL OBJECTIVE

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to support flood proofing on major Australian highways and rail corridors, including upgrading culverts, causeways and bridges to ensure transport corridors for food, freight and essential supplies at all times.

KEY ARGUMENTS

City of Darwin recognises the potential threats of climate change and if current climate change predictions are correct, the broader Australian community will face more significant challenges to our built and natural environments, including vital infrastructure. These may include:

- Extreme rainfall events
- Increased level and severity of bushfires
- Rising sea levels
- A greater proportion of cyclones
- An increase in average daily temperature maximums
- Continued loss and risk to biodiversity
- Risks of contamination to the water supply through saltwater intrusion into freshwater aquifers.

Supporting this view, Australian are seeing significant weather events such as extreme rainfall and cyclones, cut major transport corridors including road and rail with increasing frequency. This restricts the ability of communities to maintain a supply of groceries and essentials, as well as receive equipment and personnel to assist during times of disaster. As well as the direct impacts, the longer term impact is that this disadvantage reduces the ability of regions to be competitive and attractive in terms of liveability and labour force. To ensure continued supply of essential goods and services, expensive alternative arrangements, such as Australian Defence Force aerial transportation of goods is required. When assessing whether it is feasible or cost effective to upgrade road and rail corridors, the costs and risks of undertaking these aerial transfers with continued frequency also needs to be factored into assessing the costs/benefits.

The National Land Transport Network accepts that major corridors will have flood impacts from time to time, however it is the experience of the communities affected that this is no longer acceptable. In addition, many of these communities support the strategic national interest, including military installations, mining and agriculture and it is not in the national interest for their primary means of connectivity to be removed, often on an annual basis.

Whilst many of these roads are the responsibility of either the Australian or relevant State/Territory Government, local governments are responsible for portions of these roads, in addition to their own local road network. It is noted that the Disaster Funding Recovery

arrangements do not currently compensate State/Territory and local governments for reduced lifespan of damaged infrastructure, e.g. roads. They also do not allow for funding support to undertake "betterment" projects, i.e. rebuild more resilient/floodproof infrastructure with funding assistance as they are restricted to building "like for like" to simply replace what was there.

Therefore, this motion calls on the Australian Government to provide funding and support to floodproof major national highways and rail corridors across Australia, such as the Stuart, Victoria, Great Northern, Bruce Highways and other major highways across the States and Territories.

Motion number 50.1 Berrigan Shire Council NSW

This National General Assembly calls upon the Australian Government to address the challenges faced by local government sustainability by implementing programs to enhance infrastructure management and integrate plans into long-term financial strategies. Specifically, the importance of local governments providing linked freight routes that meet increasing heavy vehicle requirements are required to strengthen the communities' trust in all levels of government as infrastructure providers.

NATIONAL OBJECTIVE

This motion aligns with the Australian Local Government Association's national objective by advocating for programs and initiatives that enhance the long-term sustainability of local government infrastructure. The proposed measures aim to strengthen the capacity of local government to manage infrastructure effectively, integrate infrastructure planning into long-term financial strategies, and uphold the reputation of Australia's infrastructure providers. By addressing these key aspects, this initiative supports the National Objective of promoting the interests and capacity of local government to serve their communities efficiently and sustainably.

KEY ARGUMENTS

Local governments manage a third of the nation's general infrastructure and more than 75 percent of the nation's road networks, and yet we have access to funding that is far less than that responsibility. We are tasked with ensuring freight networks link through our local government areas to provide for the increasing needs of Australia's freight task.

Local governments require programs to enhance the long-term sustainability of infrastructure and build for the future. Aging assets, population growth, increased service levels and changing climate patterns pose challenges to the resilience of critical infrastructure. The Australian Government should invest in programs that support the maintenance, renewal, and modernisation of local government infrastructure. Funding should include provision for asset management, technology upgrades, and sustainable development practices to ensure infrastructure can meet the evolving needs of communities.

The Australian Government should promote the integration of infrastructure plans into long-term financial strategies at the local government level. Funding mechanisms and financial support programs should align with the strategic goals of local councils. Berrigan Shire Council proposes initiatives that encourage collaboration between federal and local governments to

develop sustainable funding models, allowing councils to undertake infrastructure projects without compromising their long-term financial stability.

Maintaining, strengthening, and enhancing the reputation of Australia's infrastructure providers, including local government, is crucial for attracting investment and fostering public trust. The Australian Government can support this through programs that highlight successful infrastructure projects, celebrate innovation in construction and maintenance, and acknowledge the contributions of local governments. Recognising and promoting the positive impact of infrastructure providers can contribute to the overall reputation of Australia's infrastructure sector.

The Australian Government can play a role in improving the capacity of local governments by promoting innovation and technology adoption in infrastructure management. This includes incentivising the upgrade of critical infrastructure such as electricity and telecommunications in rural and remote areas to allow for the use of smart technologies, data analytics, and sustainable practices in the planning, construction, and maintenance of infrastructure. These initiatives would not only enhance efficiency but also contribute to the long-term sustainability of local government assets.

Promoting collaboration and knowledge sharing among local governments is essential for capacity building. Berrigan Shire Council suggests programs that facilitate the exchange of best practices, lessons learned, and successful strategies among local government officials. Collaborative platforms can enable councils to learn from each other's experiences and adopt proven methods for infrastructure management and sustainability.

The Berrigan Shire Council urges the National General Assembly to support this motion, emphasising the need for Australian Government programs and initiatives to enhance the long-term sustainability of local government infrastructure. By investing in capacity-building, integrating infrastructure planning into financial strategies, and promoting the reputation of infrastructure providers, the Australian Government can contribute to the resilience and effectiveness of local government in delivering essential services to communities.

Motion number 50.2 Bega Valley Shire Council NSW

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to review in partnership with councils the freight connectivity routes into various major and regional airports to improve access to growing international export markets for regional communities.

NATIONAL OBJECTIVE

Improving freight routes into airports will positively impact transportation costs and transit times which will help regional producers to be competitive on a global scale.

KEY ARGUMENTS

Improved freight routes connecting regional producers to international markets offer a range of significant benefits that can positively impact regional economies including access to international markets more quickly and cost-effectively. This can lead to increased exports, higher sales volumes, a diversified customer-base, increased foreign investment and revenue growth for local businesses. An increase in economic activity often translates into more local

job opportunities which can lead to reduced unemployment rates and an improved standard of living our regions.

Motion number 50.3 Tenterfield Shire Council NSW

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to develop a road funding ratio to increase regional and rural feeder roads funding for rural and remote councils to ensure that produce can easily flow to the National highway system and meet market demand.

NATIONAL OBJECTIVE

Refer to summary of key arguments.

KEY ARGUMENTS

Feeder rural roads are essential in order for freight transport to provide the regional farmer with opportunities of markets. If the feeder roads in rural regional shire areas could be supported, it would enable the small grower to access the larger markets and compete on a national scale.

Motion number 51 Nillumbik Shire Council VIC

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to establish a funding stream that supports local councils in managing asset renewal responsibilities.

NATIONAL OBJECTIVE

- Local Government has benefited from Federal Government funding programs to build new assets that support the evolving needs and priorities of our communities.
- These assets have helped increase participation in sport, enhanced community wellbeing and strengthened connections between regions.
- Managing all of the different assets, both natural and built, within a municipality is a significant challenge, and an important one at that. Council assets provide the foundation through which Councils deliver more than 120 services to the community.
- External funding sources aimed at renewal responsibilities would provide a significant benefit to local councils, particularly in the current financial environment where priorities have become less about building new facilities and more about looking after the ones they've got.

KEY ARGUMENTS

In the current financial environment, it makes sense for Federal and local governments to collaborate and prioritise efficient asset management over the construction of new assets, unless their necessity has been clearly identified.

Motion number 52 Redland City Council QLD

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to provide greater access to funding by local government for essential infrastructure projects and establish a framework linking infrastructure investment with forecasted population growth.

NATIONAL OBJECTIVE

With infrastructure deficits posing significant challenges to communities nationwide, increasing federal funding for local infrastructure delivery is imperative. The key benefits of linking federal funding to projected future population growth include:

- **Equitable Distribution:** Ensuring that infrastructure is delivered in locations that will be most impacted by population growth.
- **Economic Stimulus:** Investing in local infrastructure creates jobs, stimulates economic activity, and spurs growth in industries such as construction, engineering, and manufacturing. This multiplier effect boosts local economies, generates tax revenue, and contributes to overall economic prosperity.
- **Improved Quality of Life:** Adequate infrastructure enhances the quality of life for residents by providing access to reliable transportation, clean water, sanitation, healthcare facilities, education, and recreational spaces.
- **Resilience and Sustainability:** Investing in resilient and sustainable infrastructure strengthens communities' ability to withstand and recover from natural disasters, climate change impacts, and other shocks.
- **Proactive Delivery:** Linking infrastructure funding to future forecasted population data allows governments to: provide adequate infrastructure ahead of growth, not constantly be 'playing catch up' with infrastructure deficits, avoid disadvantages to liveability such as road congestion.

KEY ARGUMENTS

A new approach to infrastructure funding is required to ensure that decision making at the federal and state levels appropriately account for housing policy and infrastructure delivery at the local scale. This is necessary for several key reasons including:

- **Impact on Housing Demand:** Immigration significantly affects population growth, which in turn increases the demand for housing in local communities¹. Failure to align future immigration levels with housing policy can lead to housing shortages, increased housing costs, and affordability challenges for residents, especially in areas with already limited housing supply.
- **Strain on Infrastructure:** Population growth resulting from immigration also puts pressure on local infrastructure such as transportation networks, schools, healthcare facilities, and utilities. Without adequate infrastructure planning and investment, quality of life is impacted.
- **Social Cohesion:** Rapid population growth can disrupt social cohesion and community dynamics, particularly where significant and rapid changes occur at the neighbourhood level.
- **Economic Implications:** Housing affordability and infrastructure adequacy are critical factors that influence a region's economic competitiveness and attractiveness to businesses and investors. Failure to address these issues could hinder economic growth and development opportunities.
- **Financial sustainability:** Capped infrastructure charge regimes, infrastructure price inflation and low federal tax revenue allocations place the long-term financial sustainability of local government at risk.

As populations grow, there is increased demand for essential infrastructure such as transportation networks, housing, utilities, healthcare facilities, and educational institutions. By establishing a national framework to align infrastructure funding with future population growth (potentially linked with a national settlement strategy), governments can prioritise and proactively invest in projects that address current, and plan for, anticipated needs.

A new funding framework should be based on the following:

- **Allocation Criteria** Clearly defined criteria for allocating funds to local governments based on factors such as population growth, economic development needs, infrastructure deficiencies, and regional priorities.
- **Funding Mechanisms:** Diverse funding mechanisms such as grants, loans, public-private partnerships, and revenue sharing arrangements to support infrastructure projects.
- **Financial Sustainability:** Measures to ensure the financial sustainability of infrastructure investments, including cost benefit analysis, user pays systems and revenue generation/recovery strategies.
- **Accountability and Transparency:** Mechanisms to enhance accountability and transparency in the allocation and use of funds, such as performance metrics, reporting requirements, and public consultation processes.
- **Flexibility and Adaptability:** Flexibility to accommodate changing circumstances and emerging priorities, allowing for adjustments to funding allocations and priorities over time in response to evolving community needs and policy.

Motion number 53 City of Greater Geelong VIC

The National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to implement a program to standardise the system for condition rating of assets.

NATIONAL OBJECTIVE

Local Governments hold considerable assets and currently there is no standard system across the sector for condition rating of these assets.

KEY ARGUMENTS

Would simply and make consistent how local government rate its assets – ensuring efficiency and consistency in the sector.

Motion number 54 District Council of Tumby Bay SA

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to assist State and Local Governments to work on a sustainable long-term solution to secure the future of our jetties and ensure these valuable assets are not lost for good.

NATIONAL OBJECTIVE

Many regionally based jetties in South Australia are leased by the State Government to the local councils, with the State expecting small regional councils to cover the full cost of repair and

maintenance. This is proving increasingly difficult with a small rate base and escalating costs relating to marine infrastructure materials and labour. Jetties are key public infrastructure enjoyed by local communities and visitors from around Australia. Whether you are from South Australia or interstate, we all enjoy these jetties and support is required to retain them for the wellbeing of communities.

KEY ARGUMENTS

A recent report released by the Local Government Association (SA), the Value of Jetties report places a dollar figure on just how much jetties are worth to SA communities and the economy.

Engaging more than 2,400 South Australians in a survey, the research underpinning the report asked questions to help understand how jetties are used – including for fishing, walking and sightseeing – the wellbeing they generate for users, and their economic impact. No doubt, the result of this research applies equally throughout Australia.

A striking 80% of respondents voiced support for the State Government to take financial responsibility for jetty maintenance, with over half also agreeing councils should play a role in upkeep.

Unfortunately, many of our jetties across South Australia need serious repair – some are so bad they've been forced to close due to safety concerns, with the cost of repair far more than what the council and its community can reasonably afford to remain sustainable.

In South Australia, the issue of jetties has become increasingly divisive, with Councils bearing the brunt of community dissatisfaction about the closure of aging State-owned infrastructure. Trust in both levels of government has been damaged due to a multitude of circumstances and this needs to be addressed.

In the spirit of building trust with our community we are asking ALGA to call on the Federal Government to assist State and Local Governments to work on a sustainable long-term solution to secure the future of our jetties and ensure these valuable assets are not lost for good.

Motion number 55 Lake Macquarie City Council NSW

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to work with state and territory governments to align timing of state and federal grant programs for major infrastructure projects.

NATIONAL OBJECTIVE

Support local government in delivering major infrastructure projects to benefit their communities.

KEY ARGUMENTS

Multiple funding sources are often required for large, transformative infrastructure projects. However, securing matched state and federal grant opportunities can be difficult for councils when application opening and closing dates are not aligned. This is compounded when published dates for grant decision outcomes are not met.

Grant programs offering larger funding opportunities (for instance, more than \$5 million) often require a significant co-contribution, and councils may need to secure funding from more than one source to satisfy this criteria.

Aligning timelines for the application and award processes of major state and federal infrastructure grants would help councils when seeking funding opportunities from multiple programs and levels of government.

Motion number 56 Mornington Peninsula Shire Council VIC

The National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to:

- a. Provide adequate funding for roads and infrastructure, keeping up with the increasing cost of construction and climate change data. Funding must adequately allow for roads and drainage to meet current construction standards and codes, manage increased rainfall and sea level rise due to climate change, support gender equality and accessibility requirements.
- b. Introduce a nation-wide program to focus specifically on drainage, which considers the impacts of sea levels and increased runoff, with the understanding that coastal Council's, such as the Mornington Peninsula, will have greater road and infrastructure costs due to sea level rise. Funding must futureproof assets from climate change and in some cases, move infrastructure due to expected inundation.
- c. Use local data to help with federal planning and prioritisation of roads funding. For example, the Mornington Peninsula has a high volume of both sealed and unsealed roads, due to the regional, rural and urban characteristics of our local government area. The topology on the Mornington Peninsula is varied. We have steep hinterland areas prone to coastal run off resulting in blocked drains and deterioration of road layers.
- d. Manage roads as an interconnected transport network including local government data and with all levels of government working together. The community does not differentiate between local, state and federal roads, and is not concerned who is responsible for their management. The community expectation is that roads are accessible and fit for purpose.
- e. Provide better clarity on road programs allowing 1-5 years of funded projects with clear funding parameters, recurrent funding instead of once off funding, and allowing Council at least 12-18 months for planning. Many challenges local government face is to do with uncertainty that comes from existing grant programs (i.e. Blackspot) with limited time to prepare applications and approvals being issued very close to construction start dates, making it very challenging to deliver.
- f. Increase focus on supporting risk-based applications and increasing the 2 million dollar per project cap would result in safer roads and prevent road trauma, that has a significant financial and social cost on our communities. The current Black Spot program criteria isn't allowing local government to proactively address road safety risks.
- g. Provide allowances for councils to use surplus funds from approved grant scopes on further related improvements that fit the funding criteria, rather than handing funds back.

NATIONAL OBJECTIVE

Current road funding programs exist but have not kept pace with the increasing cost of construction, construction standards and codes and climate change data and therefore do not allow councils to keep roads and drainage up to the expected community standard. We need federal funding to invest in upgrades to ageing and rapidly deteriorating infrastructure and make it safe and fit for purpose, meeting current construction standards and codes, resilient to climate change and built with necessary mitigation measures, supporting gender equality and accessibility requirements.

Federal funding is provided with detailed and sometimes restrictive requirements. System improvements that provide flexibility and better reflect local issues would maximise benefits to local communities and build trust in governments.

Better federal support for councils to manage and maintain roads and drainage, would be more cost effective by improving related infrastructure, such as footpaths, reserves and state and federally managed roads. E.g. drainage that can handle extreme weather events and higher rainfall will also alleviate the damage caused to roads and footpaths.

A national road management plan which uses local government data, would ensure roads and drainage are funded as part of a national network. There has been difficulty mapping the open drain network and this could be resolved with a national road plan including drainage, informed by local knowledge and expertise.

KEY ARGUMENTS

The Mornington Peninsula, although classified as metropolitan by the state government, is predominantly rural and regional in character. The Peninsula has a high volume of both sealed and unsealed roads and is not able to access regional funding programs, which better suit the road and transport issues we are dealing with.

The Mornington Peninsula Shire has a low population which equates to a low-rate base, however experiences increased tourism year-round (up to 50 per cent increase over summer), putting further pressures on our ageing infrastructure. Council is also responsible for a large geographical area of 724 square kilometres, which poses limits on our ability to fund roads, drainage, footpaths and shared paths.

Assets are fundamental to enabling councils to plan and deliver services to the community. The Shire is responsible for managing more than \$3.2 billion worth of assets on behalf of the community, and must plan for their acquisition, operation, maintenance, renewal, upgrade, expansion and disposal.

These assets include transportation and stormwater assets which are major contributors to Victoria's infrastructure base, open space assets which contribute to the community's social and recreational needs, and community buildings which provide community services to enhance quality of life of the community.

The Shire must prioritise projects such as urgent short-term fixes rather than longer term solutions which manage the impacts of climate change due to inadequate funding. For example, continuous pothole patching in the same road locality is better resolved through road base and seal re-construction. Often the patching of potholes is to the level road surface with

the pothole recurring and quickly breaking down again. This creates an endless cycle of repair and cost.

The future road and drainage maintenance activities for the Mornington Peninsula Shire as of 2024 has seen a shortfall of \$705,000, as the lump sum maintenance activity annual spend has been exhausted for the financial year-to-date. This funding shortfall is due to a combination of factors, including:

- an aging network,
- ever increasing road usage,
- proximity to Melbourne makes the Peninsula an extremely popular tourist destination.
- extreme weather, harsh rain events in combination with long dry spells.

Due to historical developments, and varying design standards over the last decades, significant proportions of the local drainage network fail to meet community expectations of managing flood waters in a 20 per cent Annual Exceedance Probability (AEC) event. Climate change will put even more pressure on drainage networks and meeting community expectations a significant challenge without major investment.

The federal government can help councils manage critical infrastructure with increased funding, which considers increased building costs and climate change impacts. Our local community provides ongoing feedback about the inadequate condition of roads and drainage. Roads are seen as a basic community service, that councils are responsible for maintaining, even when they are state-managed roads. We are familiar with community defining Council's main 3 responsibilities as being "roads, rates and rubbish". Local councils have developed comprehensive road management plans, but don't have adequate funds to implement them.

Motion number 57 Forbes Shire Council NSW

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to extend financial support for telecommunications to be upgraded on major highway access routes.

NATIONAL OBJECTIVE

With the advent of the Age of Technology, communications and data collection has significantly improved freight logistics and safety. To further improve telematics and communications there needs to be continuous service of telecommunications, on the major highway access routes.

KEY ARGUMENTS

Freight logistics and safety has measurable economic benefits to the State economy, particularly where it is provided on major highway access routes. The safety of these routes can be further enhanced with telematics on heavy vehicles through the monitoring of driver behaviour, tracking of freight and journey management. This technology is currently limited by the extent of the service availability of telecommunications.

Continuous telecommunications on major highway routes would also provide emergency services with such improved communications and response ability. Further, if serious

accidents occur, emergency services can be notified much quicker as the person calling the accident in would not have to travel to a location where mobile service is available.

On very high trafficked highways and motorways, congestion can be monitored and semi-autonomous vehicles can be provided with data that would assist the driver with journey management.

The continuous telecommunications on major highway routes would also provide continuous mobile phone service, which would allow people conducting a business from their vehicle to pull over and take or make calls, thus further improving the economics of the State.

Motion number 58 Snowy Valleys Council NSW

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to develop a forward-thinking 'whole of life cost' approach to the undergrounding of energy transmission infrastructure rather than relying on outdated overhead construction methods.

NATIONAL OBJECTIVE

Australia continues to be investing in outdated electrical distribution technology whereby the whole of life costs of the infrastructure is greater than undergrounding. This has a significant impact on local communities but also affects every energy consumer.

KEY ARGUMENTS

Based on expert advice on undergrounding major electrical transmission infrastructure, Council contends that the best solution is to avoid the overhead transmission externalities by undergrounding lines. Undergrounding transmission lines is the most appropriate option considering the affects that above ground would have to visual amenity, farming, residents, forestry, biodiversity, tourism and reduced fire risk and ultimately cost. We can be reassured that we would be following best practice of others worldwide. Undergrounding is a proven technology commonly adopted elsewhere in the world where communities will not tolerate overhead infrastructure and policy-makers see the wisdom of planning infrastructure for long-run resilience to future climate events that threaten the security of supply of electricity through overhead lines, as they do here as well. Current proposals to construct transmission lines overhead are short-sighted and do not reflect the long-term cost taking into consideration the risks mentioned above.

Motion 59 Tenterfield Shire Council NSW

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to develop a national code for renewable energy component transportation, to ensure that councils are not burdened by additional cost of road improvements and maintenance to allow the construction and servicing of wind turbines.

NATIONAL OBJECTIVE

This type of solar infrastructure for wind farms are very large and very heavy. The local road networks of regional and rural councils were not built to withstand the weight or size of the individual components that are being transported. Local roads are the lifeline to the local communities, and are being worn down by larger investments within the region.

KEY ARGUMENTS

This type of solar infrastructure for wind farms are very large and very heavy. The local road networks of regional and rural councils were not built to withstand the weight or size of the individual components that are being transported. Local roads are the lifeline to the local communities, and are being worn down by larger investments within the region.

Motion number 60 Snowy Valleys Council NSW

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to empower the Australian Energy Regulator to provide funding for the establishment of a Community Enhancement Fund in LGAs that are negatively impacted (socially and economically) by nation building energy transmission infrastructure.

NATIONAL OBJECTIVE

Electrical distribution assets continue to be built overhead across Australia despite significant environmental impacts on the landscape and local communities.

KEY ARGUMENTS

Snowy Valleys Council supports the expansion of the electrical distribution network as it is in the national interest, but this should not be at the expense of the social, environmental and economic fabric of local communities. Snowy Valleys Council for example has for some time been building a strong reputation in nature-based tourism however the continued construction of overhead electricity distribution assets is having a significant impact on tourism, the economy, through the de-valuation of farming land and the natural environment.

The establishment of community enhancement funds in council areas where these distribution assets are constructed would assist in off-setting the negative impacts of projects that are in the national interest.

Motion number 61 Western Downs Regional Council QLD

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to re-orientate infrastructure development assessment frameworks and to include consideration for infrastructure projects of national significance (such as large dams that have a longer return on investment than that realistically considered in the current framework) to unlock new economic opportunities for the nation.

NATIONAL OBJECTIVE

Regional Australia is home to more than nine million people and accounts for roughly one-third of the national workforce. The regions generate about 34 percent of the nation's economic

output (RAI). The Western Downs region is a strong example of the significant economic contribution regions make. With a GRP of \$3.68 Billion, the GRP per capita in the Western Downs LGA is \$106,392 and on par with that of Brisbane, and nearly 65 percent higher than that of Toowoomba.

Delivery of new long-term bulk water supply for regional communities will support forecast population and industry growth, and further unlock significant economic opportunities, such as hydrogen production. This can position Australia as a leading nation exporting hydrogen and supporting decarbonisation efforts of other nations.

Current assessment frameworks, such as the Infrastructure Australia Assessment Framework, are not fit-for-purpose to assess significant new infrastructure developments. Existing frameworks are biased towards short-term infrastructure projects with an immediate to short-term payback benefit. Efforts to consider significant long-term infrastructure projects are fruitless due to the short-term economic analysis of existing frameworks.

This approach limits the nations' ability to pursue significant projects and enable long-term sustainability of regional communities.

KEY ARGUMENTS

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to re-orientate infrastructure development assessment frameworks and include consideration for infrastructure projects of national significance to unlock new economic opportunities for the nation.

Several regional areas across Australia, including the Surat Basin, have seen strong investment in the resources industry over the past 15 years. Legacy infrastructure, as well as the available pool of highly skilled workforce, positions these regions favourably for renewable energy generation, recognised by the proposed development of renewable energy zones across Australia.

Regional Australia is at the heart of the renewable energy transition, however significant limitations to water supply are considered the single limiting factor to capitalize on new and emerging economic opportunities.

Significant renewable energy developments, such as hydrogen, can be unlocked by investing in a long-term bulk water supply, to leverage of current power infrastructure and enable green hydrogen production from water electrolysis (electrolytic hydrogen) and renewable energy sources such as solar and wind.

It is apparent that the ability to gain support and funding for large scale infrastructure projects are ultimately fruitless due to the assessment framework currently in place. Developments in regional Australia are further hampered due perceived economies of scale and complexities in modelling benefits over a long-term horizon.

In Queensland, Nathan Dam and Pipelines project was intended to provide long-term reliable water supplies to mining, power, urban and existing agricultural customers in the Surat Coal Basin and the Dawson sub-region of Central Queensland. The project was originally linked to key customers in the mining sector that allowed a significant portion of the water allocation to be linked to high value investment return.

Existing energy companies are diversifying their energy portfolios and include renewable and green sources of energy generation. There is great interest in green hydrogen production, and this opportunity has the ability to transform regional economies by creating export opportunities. In addition to the energy sector, a new bulk water supply will greatly benefit the strong agricultural sector.

The Surat Basin region has established itself as an energy hub on the back of some of Queensland's most productive agricultural land and beef production. The region's resilience during prolonged drought events has driven the need to become highly efficient in water management. These gains in consumer efficiency place the diverse industry portfolios in a prime position to take advantage of new water sources.

It is expected that investment in long-term bulk water supplies for regional areas will transform regional economies to enable new economic development opportunities, such as hydrogen. Construction of water infrastructure will create a significant number of local jobs and will greatly benefit the agricultural and renewable energy sectors, further driving economic strength.

Water security will also assist with de-urbanising metropolitan areas. The Regional Australian Institute estimates that 1 out of 5 households living in metropolitan areas is considering moving regionally. Investment in long-term bulk water sources will make the regions more attractive to live and work.

Motion number 62 Forbes Shire Council NSW

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to establish a sustainable funding system to support the establishment of Electric Vehicle Infrastructure in Australia.

NATIONAL OBJECTIVE

The Australian Government, Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water (DCCEEW) has an Electric Vehicle Strategy with a vision increase the uptake of electric vehicles (EVs) to reduce our emissions and improve the wellbeing of Australians.

KEY ARGUMENTS

The town of Forbes is yet to have any public EV charging infrastructure in place, despite being a significant tourism destination, economic centre, major road network, including a national highway. Therefore, the onus in this area has, yet again, fallen to Local Government to support the Federal Strategy to reduce carbon emissions by moving away from traditional internal combustion engines, towards renewable energy sources, mainly Electric Vehicles.

To be able to support EV transition in Regional Australia these projects must be sustainable i.e. not be a drain on already stretched Local Government resources (both people and finances). This means more than complete or partial funding of infrastructure, but include support for the planning, site selection, project management and ongoing operational costs.

The private sector has been either unable or unwilling to install EV charging infrastructure in Forbes NSW, this is despite:

- Grant awarded successful grant funding of a fast-charging Station in the Round 1 NSW Fast Charging Grant awarded in 2022 to a private site that is yet to be installed in April 2024.

- Council engagement with a number of national private EV infrastructure suppliers expressing ability to support applications in way of site selection and planning.

Forbes Council has been successful in the award of a grant to install a charging station in Forbes in the Local Road Community Infrastructure Round 3 Funding, installation of infrastructure is planning to be installed in May 2024 (pending approval from Essential Energy). Whilst the support is greatly appreciated to assist in the EV transition, the grant is singular, does not form part of an overall strategy in EV transition (Federal, State or Regional) nor support the ongoing operation and maintenance of the infrastructure.

The operation of EV infrastructure does not form a traditional part of council operations and is most often heaped on council officers. Councils need resources in the form of both staff and finances to support EV Transition where private industry does not.

We call for further support in the form of:

- Funding for council officers for education, time and funding to permit EV transition in Regional Australia;
- Sustainable funding to ensure that the operation and maintenance of infrastructure does not become a burden on local government.

Without this support, local government cannot be expected to fill the gap in place of private industry, state or federal governments.

EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT

Motion number 63 East Gippsland Shire Council VIC

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to support the urgent need:

- a. to manage and regulate voice and data telecommunications as an essential service, with emergency roaming mandated for all carriers;
- b. to develop mandatory service reliability standards that support emergency services, government and community;
- c. for partnerships between all levels of government and telecommunication carriers and electricity suppliers to support investment to enhance the resilience of infrastructure in the context of climate change;
- d. to develop a community partnership model in remote areas that maintains back-up infrastructure (i.e., generators) prior to and during events, improving reliability; and
- e. to ensure universal service obligations provide for baseline access to voice and data services at an affordable cost for all Australians to support community safety, access government services and support community and economic participation.

NATIONAL OBJECTIVE

In recognition of the impact of extreme weather events over the past three years across the nation, the Federal Government is requested to establish policy settings and invest that increase the resilience of telecommunications infrastructure during disasters, improves the quality and extent of coverage to support regional living, and provides equitable access to services and digital technologies.

KEY ARGUMENTS

The key arguments behind this motion are:

1. Digital communications in the modern world are essential services.
2. Digital inclusion is tracked by the Australian Digital Inclusion Index (ADII) measuring access, affordability and digital ability, the results of which show it should be significantly higher across Australia.
3. Disaster management - Digital connectivity is a key component of disaster management, where mobile and internet services are critical to community safety. Disasters are experienced as a loss of control and trauma from such events can be reduced where reliable and timely information is available.
4. Governments now place significant reliance on digital communications to provide warnings, updates on service restoration and to access support services. Ironically for those impacted by the February 2024 Victoria storms which resulted in significant power and telecommunication outages, a primary source of information was power company outage websites which were not accessible to those impacted.
5. Foreseeable events - Large, widespread events that impact infrastructure are not “black swan” events - they are entirely foreseeable. Examples in Victoria include the Black Summer

Fires, recent major flooding in the north of Victoria, and the February 2024 storms are consistent with forecast impacts of climate change. There are many other national examples.

6. While there has been significant investment in infrastructure hardening following the 2019/20 Black Summer fires, recent events have shown this does not go far enough. Current strategies can be expensive which progressed facility by facility. There is the opportunity for partnerships to drive investment at a national scale, bringing the unit cost of resilient telecommunication systems down.

7. The COVID 19 pandemic accelerated the transition of governments and other services online. This can have advantages in areas remote from government service centres, but it does rely on effective digital participation by all members of the community, and so it is critical that baseline services are available to all at an affordable cost.

Motion number 63.1 South Gippsland Shire Council VIC

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to seek the immediate reclassification of telecommunications to an essential service and request that urgent regulatory changes be introduced to ensure providers responsible for the maintenance and delivery of infrastructure and services, increase back up power systems to all existing and future phone towers from 18 to 72 hours in line with the state-wide emergency preparedness program, “The First 72 Hours”.

NATIONAL OBJECTIVE

Natural disasters are continuing to impact Australian communities regularly and with increasing severity. When these events occur, communities rely on telecommunications for help (000 services), to keep connected with loved ones, and to source vital and potentially life-saving, information.

KEY ARGUMENTS

Telecommunications are essential during an emergency and should be reflected as such. They play a critical role in improving emergency response, enhancing public safety, and mitigating the impact of disasters by facilitating communication, coordination, and information sharing. Regulations must also be changed to increase back up power on mobile towers as 18 hours does not provide sufficient support for people in need of assistance in an emergency setting.

Effective telecommunications are crucial in emergencies for several reasons:

1. **Coordination and Response:** During emergencies, quick and efficient communication is essential for coordinating response efforts. Emergency agencies and responders, such as police, fire authorities and medical personnel, need to communicate rapidly to assess the situation, deploy resources, and provide assistance where needed.
2. **Information Dissemination:** Timely and accurate information is vital during emergencies to inform the public about the situation, provide safety instructions, and advise on evacuation routes or shelter locations. Effective telecommunications allow authorities to disseminate this information through various channels, such as broadcast alerts, social media, and mobile notifications. During the recent February 2024 storm event in South Gippsland, many residents

were faced with a contaminated water supply, the provision of timely information was essential – but unavailable for many people in our local community.

3. **Resource Allocation:** Telecommunications help in monitoring and managing resources effectively during emergencies. This includes coordinating emergency response personnel and the distribution of medical supplies, food, water, and other essential resources to affected areas based on real-time information and needs assessment.
4. **Maintaining Contact:** People may need to contact emergency services, family members, or friends during an emergency event to seek help, provide updates on their status, or locate missing persons. Reliable telecommunications ensures that individuals can reach out for assistance or support when needed.
5. **Situational Awareness:** Telecommunications enable authorities to maintain situational awareness by gathering information from various sources. This helps in understanding the extent of the emergency, emerging trends and risks, identifying areas of high impact, and making informed decisions to mitigate risks and protect lives.
6. **Continuity of Operations:** Effective telecommunications systems are essential for ensuring the continuity of essential services and critical infrastructure during emergencies. This includes communication networks for emergency services, utilities, healthcare facilities, and transportation systems, which must remain operational to support response and recovery efforts.

In summary, effective telecommunications play a critical role in improving emergency response, enhancing public safety, and mitigating the impact of disasters by facilitating communication, coordination, and information sharing.

Motion number 63.2 Maranoa Regional Council QLD

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to invest in the resilience of telecommunications infrastructure, specifically by mandating backup generation and battery power solutions for mobile telecommunications across all local government areas.

NATIONAL OBJECTIVE

The national objective of this motion is to enhance the resilience and reliability of Australia's telecommunications infrastructure, ensuring that all communities, especially those in rural and remote areas, have uninterrupted access to communication services. By mandating backup power solutions, the government can significantly reduce the risk of communication blackouts during emergencies, thereby supporting community safety, business operations, and essential services continuity.

KEY ARGUMENTS

1. **Equity and Access:** Ensuring that all Australian communities have equitable access to reliable telecommunications services, particularly in emergencies.
2. **Safety and Security:** Enhancing the resilience of telecommunications infrastructure contributes to public safety and security by maintaining critical lines of communication during natural disasters and other emergencies.

3. **Business Continuity:** Reliable telecommunications are vital for the continuity of businesses and services, especially in remote areas where alternatives are limited.
4. **Emergency Response and Management:** Effective emergency response and management rely heavily on robust telecommunications networks to coordinate efforts and disseminate information.
5. **Investment in Infrastructure:** Encouraging investment in resilient telecommunications infrastructure as a means to future-proof Australia's communication networks against the increasing frequency and severity of natural disasters.

This initiative aims to ensure equitable access to reliable telecommunications, especially in rural and remote communities, enhancing safety, business continuity, and community connectivity during emergencies. The resilience of telecommunications networks, particularly in rural and remote areas, is critical for ensuring community safety and connectivity. Recent events have highlighted the vulnerabilities in our telecommunications infrastructure, underscoring the need for enhanced resilience measures such as backup generation and battery power solutions to maintain communications during critical times, thereby ensuring that all communities, regardless of their geographical location, have access to reliable telecommunications services.

Motion number 63.3 Corangamite Shire Council VIC

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to support the motion and advocate for the enhancement of telecommunications services across regional Australia, in particular through times of emergency to:

- a. Acknowledge reliable telecommunications services are critical to ensuring emergency management partners have strong intelligence gathering capabilities, which impact decision making and the flow of public information to at risk communities.
- b. Create a model that formally engages telecommunications carriers, energy providers, and other stakeholders to develop a framework of responsibility in maintaining back up infrastructure prior to, and during emergencies.
- c. Provide a greater emphasis on backup power generation solutions to infrastructure sites in the event of primary power interruptions, including the use of pre-installed renewable energy options.
- d. Coordinate stakeholders to work collaboratively to increase telecommunications service capability in the lead up to high-risk periods and emergency events to ensure telecommunications systems can meet increased demand.

NATIONAL OBJECTIVE

The availability and reliability of telecommunications and data services is a national issue that particularly impacts regional and rural Australia, with Councils at the forefront of emergency efforts with emergency management partners in the lead up to, during emergencies and during recovery efforts.

The need for telecommunications suppliers to invest in infrastructure to meet everyday demand in regional and rural Australia cannot be questioned. Ensuring that infrastructure can

meet increased demand in an emergency, disaster or recovery settings add additional complexity and accountability. Ensuring telecommunications infrastructure is reliable both in its primary supply and with back up measures in the event of power outages is a key point in ensuring operational readiness and resilience.

The need for our communities to be informed during these times is critical to ensure safety, and resilience of impacted people. Commitments both in principle and through policy and law change that mandate best practice standards to ensure telecommunications are reliable and robust would build trust between communities, governments and stakeholders.

Corangamite Shire Council has identified issues associated with the availability and reliability of telecommunications in the lead up to, during and following emergency incidents across local communities. A submission of this matter to the Australian Local Government Association National General Assembly of Local Government is an opportunity to advance advocacy on this issue with other councils and the Federal Government.

KEY ARGUMENTS

This motion reflects Corangamite Shires lived experience across several emergency management events, including significant campaign fires in March 2018, repeated flooding within rural townships, as well as navigating the COVID-19 pandemic. These events are classic examples where reliable telecommunication services were either lost or non-existent and how those impacts can be detrimental to protection and safety of life.

Australia faces a unique set of challenges when it comes to telecommunications during emergencies and natural disasters. As our reliance on digital communication grows, so does the need for robust systems that can withstand and promptly recover from disruptions.

Across many communities' data and telecommunications systems require investment and improvement to meet the needs of everyday use. These systems are fragile and can become unreliable and overloaded during periods of high demand. This is particularly evident in the lead up to anticipated emergencies, during times of emergency and disaster and during recovery efforts. During emergencies and disasters, it becomes clearer than ever that communication is a basic human need and should be available for all. It is acknowledged that ensuring a robust communications system across regional and rural communities is complex in nature.

Corangamite Shire has been no stranger to significant emergency incidents and disasters over the last ten years. This includes significant campaign fires in March 2018 repeated flooding within rural townships, as well as navigating the COVID-19 pandemic. Following the fire events in March 2018, Emergency Management Victoria (EMV) conducted a community and multi-agency review of the fire management. Through this process it was determined that;

'Breakdowns in communication impacted effective information and intelligence sharing and dissemination and receipt of public information to community members was impacted by telecommunications and power disruptions.'

(Lessons 27 & 31 EMV 2018 Southwest Fires Operational Debrief Program Report)

Providing legislated minimum service standards for data and telecommunications carriers with support from stakeholders during times of emergency and disaster is critical in keeping communities prepared, informed and resilient.

Motion number 64 Forbes Shire Council NSW

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to ensure that 80% of Disaster Relief Funding be received by councils upfront.

NATIONAL OBJECTIVE

Following Natural Disasters, councils are being forced to fund the repairs of critical infrastructure from their own operating capital, including repairs to Regional and Local Roads, due to significant timing delays in remittance of Disaster Recovery Funding.

KEY ARGUMENTS

Forbes Shire Council along with many other councils was severely affected by the 2022/2023 floods. Forbes Council incurred more than \$28m of damage to its asset network as a result of this natural disaster and has had to significantly increase its road maintenance crews and engage contractors to address the extensive road damage across the shire's 1,800+ km of roads.

Forbes Shire Council commenced repair works not long after the November flood, and as at 29 April 2024 had funded more than \$11.57m worth of flood damage works on the Regional and Local road network from its own operating capital. The State Government did forward two prepayments for works completed due to lobbying by Council (total \$6m received to date), however, Council is still awaiting reimbursement for over \$5.5m worth of works already paid for by Council. These extreme delays in payment have put significant strain on Council's finances. This issue is common across nearly all flood affected councils.

The excessive timing delays between claim submission lodgement and claim payment receipt from Transport for NSW, as well as the overly onerous reimbursement reporting requirements placed on councils, means that councils like Forbes Shire are being forced to carry the financial burden of both climate events and bureaucratic excess outside of their control.

Although disaster recovery funding is delivered through state and territory agencies, the majority of Disaster Recovery Financial Assistance is Federal in nature, and the National General Assembly therefore calls on the Australian Government to ensure that 80% of Disaster Relief Funding be received by councils upfront in order to avoid the cashflow challenges that all councils affected by natural disasters are currently facing.

Motion number 64.1 East Gippsland Shire Council VIC

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to support the urgent need to:

- a. accelerate investment in disaster risk reduction including mitigation and resilience and preparedness to reduce the cost of disaster recovery;
- b. move investment to a funding allocation model based on need informed by disaster risk and consequence and community capacity rather than competitive funding models;
- c. support proactive co-investment to increase infrastructure resilience and incorporate an expectation for betterment (for resilience) as part of the Disaster Recovery Funding Arrangements (DRFA);
- d. support partnerships to increase resilience through social infrastructure; and
- e. develop a plan to support individuals and communities through change where their current homes are in high-risk locations.

NATIONAL OBJECTIVE

The severe impacts of disasters have been felt across Australia in the last 5 years. All levels of government are impacted by the escalating costs of recovery from disasters. Similarly, individuals, businesses and insurers are similarly impacted by escalating costs associated with the impact of disasters. While some good initial steps have been taken to invest in disaster risk reduction through the Disaster Ready Fund, there is a need to accelerate action and ensure that vulnerable communities are not left behind. Failure to do so will incur significant social and economic costs.

KEY ARGUMENTS

1. The last five years have demonstrated that our current approach to responding to disasters is not sustainable, with increasing costs of recovery associated with more frequent and severe disaster events.
2. The establishment of the Disaster Ready Fund is an important first step, however much more is required to deliver the change needed to support the Australian community.
3. There is a need to accelerate action and current models where funding for initiatives is delivered primarily based on competitive grant funding will not deliver the outcomes required. Competitive funding model support action by those who already have high levels of capability but not necessarily aligned to need.
4. A needs-based allocation method is required to deliver equitable and effective investment in disaster risk reduction – informed by disaster risk (and consequence), community capacity and local plans for risk reduction.
5. The Australian Government has used needs-based funding models to effectively partner with local government on other issues and this is another opportunity.

Motion number 64.2 Shire of Campaspe VIC

The National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to include provisions for betterment as part of the Disaster Recovery Funding Arrangements (DRFA) to enable councils impacted by natural disasters to build back better and improve infrastructure to be more resilient to impacts in the future.

NATIONAL OBJECTIVE

Councils around Australia are responsible for significant critical infrastructure used by all Australians. As the impacts of climate change become more apparent, Councils are experiencing more natural disaster events which are crippling critical infrastructure. Building betterment into the DRFA program would allow Councils already undertaking significant repairs of infrastructure would allow Councils to build back better and make infrastructure more resilient to natural disasters.

KEY ARGUMENTS

Councils have seen increasing instances of natural disasters occurring, including bushfires, floods, droughts and storms. Council infrastructure is often severely impacted, and while Council's appreciate the current DRFA program, the fact that betterment is not included in the program means that money to repair roads and critical infrastructure is spent without thought to improving that infrastructure to be more resilient to future events. For example, a road, severely impacted by floods, could be better serviced by a larger culvert to protect that road in future, would not be funded by DRFA, which would only cover the costs of restoring the road to its previous condition. This work could then prevent a claim being made from the DRFA program in future events.

Most local government areas will have examples of the same infrastructure assets being repaired due to natural disasters. Instead of returning the damaged asset back to its former state prior to the natural disaster, listen to local government and enable it to implement asset betterment so that the asset requires less, or no future works due to natural disasters. Local government usually cannot undertake such improvement works on its own financially.

Motion number 64.3 Forbes Shire Council NSW

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to extend financial support for Essential Public Asset Restorations (EPAR) to include an identified 'Betterment' component to provide disaster tolerance of the asset and prevent the repeated damage at identical locations.

NATIONAL OBJECTIVE

Climate Change has resulted in Australia undergoing more frequent and more extreme weather events. The November 2021 and November 2022 flooding on the east coast of Australia not only saw unprecedented flooding but repeated washouts in the same locations where recent repairs had been undertaken. This motion is directed at allowing road authorities across Australia to use existing Disaster Funding Recovery Arrangements (DRFA) to rebuild flood damaged infrastructure that will tolerate flood events without being damaged, so the road network accessibility can be restored when the flood water recedes.

KEY ARGUMENTS

Climate change is well established and the repeated flooding in 2021 and 2022 saw the same road infrastructure being flood damaged, repaired and then flood damaged in subsequent flood events, sometimes more than once. The Australian community is frustrated that repeated damage at identical locations continues when most of these locations could become 'flood tolerant'. Flood tolerance is the principle where a flood will deluge road infrastructure, but the flood waters will not damage the infrastructure. The road infrastructure will not be 'flood proofed', so the road will be closed during the flood, but when the flood has receded the road can be reopened and will not require a lengthy wait to provide accessibility.

Some families can be isolated for weeks after a flood has receded because the road infrastructure has not been repaired due to the widespread damage and unavailability of enough resources to undertake timely repairs. Further, the local economics of an area can be severely impacted, firstly by the flood and then by the unrepaired damage to freight routes. There is also the social impact of children not being able to access schools and families not being able to access medical facilities and basic family needs.

The provision of 'flood tolerant' road infrastructure is achievable with a relatively small increase in available flood restoration funding. Road authorities understand that flood proofing road infrastructure is financially excessive but flood proofing that prevents damage and the requirement to undertake repairs is achievable and will vastly improve accessibility of road infrastructure after flooding.

A further enhancement to flood tolerance is the identification and rectification of flood 'pinch points'. These are small distinct locations that are often the first to close and the last to open during floods, that if improved would provide a vast improvement to the accessibility of the road. An example is a causeway that regularly floods, where a box culvert or bridge would significantly improve the accessibility and safety of a route, particularly in times of flood evacuation.

Motion number 64.4 City of Greater Geelong VIC

The National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to improve the Disaster Recovery Funding Assistance framework and available resources to assist local government in managing early recovery, with a focus on comparative evidence collection requirements needed.

NATIONAL OBJECTIVE

Climate change and natural disasters impact all local governments and significantly impact resourcing and their financial position.

KEY ARGUMENTS

There is a considerable resource requirement needed to compile the necessary evidentiary collection needed to access funding.

There needs to be balance struck to enable councils to focus on supporting the community and not be burdened by collecting evidence to claim funding.

Motion number 64.5 Cabonne Council NSW

This National General Assembly call on the Australian Government, in coordination with State and Territory Governments, to review the Disaster Recovery Funding Arrangements to:

- a) Provide up-front funding by way of an evidenced based grant program, to fast track and facilitate on-the-ground support following a disaster and;
- b) Acknowledge sewer and water infrastructure as an essential public asset.

NATIONAL OBJECTIVE

Disaster Recovery & Resilience

KEY ARGUMENTS

The Disaster Recovery Funding Arrangements 2018 (DRFA) is the means through which the Australian Government provides funding to states and territories to respond to a natural disaster. The DRFA is activated when the event meets the definition of an eligible disaster and is a cost-sharing arrangement between the Commonwealth and states and territories.

One of the relief measures under the DRFA is Reconstruction of Essential Public Assets (REPA), which automatically activates Emergency Works and Immediate Reconstruction Works for the relevant event. Within the context of the funding guidelines a public infrastructure asset is defined as “an asset that is an integral part of a state’s infrastructure and is associated with health, education, justice of welfare” and “an integral part of the normal functioning of a community”.

Sewerage and water infrastructure is not classed as an essential public asset and repair to these assets after being impacted by a natural disaster are claimed through council’s insurers which then ultimately impacts on claims for other public assets. Stormwater infrastructure however is considered an essential public asset under the definition.

Activation of the remaining funding relief measures can only be requested by a state government department and requires an onerous process of outlining the impact of the disaster, detailing relevant relief measure that are being sought and providing support documents such as photos, meeting minutes and reports to demonstrate the disaster impact to the community.

There is a need for a funding model to enable councils to react in real-time to their community needs in the aftermath of a natural disaster, particularly given the risk of health implications in communities post natural disaster.

Motion number 64.6 Mitchell Shire Council VIC

That the National General Assembly call on the Federal Government to commence an urgent review of betterment funding arrangements to identify how increased betterment funding can be provided to support improved resilience to ever increasing natural disasters and other emergencies.

NATIONAL OBJECTIVE

For the Federal Government to increase the betterment funding provided to Councils and communities in the wake of a disaster. Without increased funding to support betterment communities will continue to be vulnerable to natural and other disasters.

KEY ARGUMENTS

Whilst funding is available through the Disaster Recovery Funding Agreements (“DRFA”) to support certain relief and recovery activities, this funding only allows for damaged or compromised infrastructure to be returned to its existing condition. Essentially, this limits or discourages any attempt to better the infrastructure to make it more resilient.

Recent disasters have highlighted the futility of recovery funding when betterment is not included. In Victoria, flooding less than two years apart has resulted in a situation where repair work following floods in 2022 was washed away when flooding occurred again in January 2024. This is not only costly for all levels of government, but also incredibly frustrating for community who can see the clear logic is to take the opportunity to improve any damaged infrastructure to prevent future issues.

The DRFA and other existing relief funding models are clearly inadequate when supporting betterment of infrastructure in disaster impacted areas. An urgent review is required to consider and establish new funding mechanisms which can avoid waste, build infrastructure resilience, and ultimately support better outcomes for communities as they recover.

Motion number 65 Shire of Ashburton WA

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to fund the establishment of a network of Regional Emergency Management Support Officers to assist local governments in effectively delivering their extensive emergency management roles and responsibilities for local communities.

NATIONAL OBJECTIVE

The motion raised advocates for a consistent funding model from the Federal Government for Australian local governments to build capability and capacity to adequately deliver their extensive emergency management roles and responsibilities. This is essential to building community trust, disaster resilience and reducing risk.

Local government is the first point of contact with the community in an emergency event and requires the knowledge and skills to engage the community so that they have trust in local government to support them and advocate on their behalf.

KEY ARGUMENTS

1. Often local governments are under resourced to fulfill the responsibilities delegated to them in emergency management, such as the development of effective Local Emergency Management Arrangements, mitigating disaster risk, supporting community led recovery and meeting the requirements of the Disaster Recovery Funding Arrangements to ensure effective and timely recovery after a natural disaster.

2. An additional resource dedicated to the local government role both internally and externally would improve the quality of communication with stakeholders along with risk management and planning.
3. Climate change is increasing the frequency and extremity of natural hazards such as bushfire and extreme weather events. Additional investment in local emergency management capacity is urgently required to strengthen Australia's community resilience.
4. The proposed Regional Emergency Management Support Officers would significantly increase the support available to local governments to build community trust, reduce disaster risk and build preparedness and resilience in the future, and builds on previous Commonwealth level proposals:
5. ALGA's submission to the Senate Select Committee on Australia's Disaster Resilience, which proposed a network of funded officers across State and Territory Local Government Associations, and at the Australian Local Government Association (ALGA).

This network of officers will engage with councils in their respective state or territory to provide a range of assistance depending on councils' level of risk maturity. The outcomes would include:

6. For councils with no current risk reduction strategy, to encourage and assist these councils to undertake an assessment of their current and future disaster risk and to identify achievable ways to address and reduce that risk in collaboration with their communities with the resources available.
7. For councils which have a higher level of maturity and existing risk reduction strategies, access to resources and knowledge to update their existing disaster risk reduction strategies. An important component of the project for these councils would be a greater focus on working with their communities and emergency management committees to raise awareness, and to build capability and partnerships with their communities.
8. Facilitating information sharing, collaboration, resource sharing and engagement with local communities to raise awareness for the need to address risks and build local resilience.
9. Co-ordinated resources to bolster the capacity of local government but not duplicate or conflict with existing state or territory government programs.

Motion number 65.1 Maribyrnong City Council VIC

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to support community-led planning and initiatives for emergency management.

NATIONAL OBJECTIVE

A program to support community-led planning and initiatives for emergency management will help build trust between Local Government and emergency impacted residents, providing an actionable lever to support community proposals.

KEY ARGUMENTS

Education initiatives are required to ensure people understand the risk of disasters such as extreme heat, severe thunderstorms and flooding.

Agencies, not communities, undertake emergency management planning. This means that the current focus and funding for community plans in an urban area has the same approach as a small regional or rural town. Victorian Government and Local Government support for community-led campaigns will build a resilient community that understands risk, community support and the role of Government. This relationship and mutual understanding will build trust.

Motion number 66 Gladstone Regional Council QLD

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to ensure that emergency management and resilience initiatives are fit for purpose and meeting community needs by:

- a. Mandating input on all funding applications from emergency and disaster management committees or groups relevant to each state, with a reasonable review timeframe allowed, to ensure genuine community benefit and avoid duplication and;
- b. Providing long-term funding for resilience roles and projects.

NATIONAL OBJECTIVE

Currently, local emergency and disaster management committees, or groups are not required to review all applications for emergency and resilience funding, leading to duplication of effort and lack of benefit to the intended communities.

Where review is required prior to a submission being made, evidence of such consultation is not always requested from the applicant and as such, this step is not being enforced or monitored.

As a result, resilience funding is not always being directed to projects and initiatives that will result in long-term community benefit.

To ensure that initiatives and projects are fit for purpose and meeting community need, it should be a requirement of funding applications, that relevant local emergency and disaster management stakeholders are consulted, with a reasonable review timeframe allowed for feedback, prior to applications being submitted.

In addition, long-term funding to local governments for resilience roles and projects would support in building community resilience and preparedness, reducing the burden on Government services and recovery funding.

KEY ARGUMENTS

Local Governments are well placed to manage disaster response locally. By leading emergency management and response, local governments can enhance the resilience of their communities and guide future initiatives, reducing reliance on other Government agencies, and building community trust.

Individuals or agencies based outside of regions for which they are applying for funding are receiving support for projects and initiatives that are already established creating duplication, or that do not meet the needs of the region.

As a pre-requisite for funding, all applications should require input and/or approval from local emergency and disaster management committees, or groups who can ensure that funding is directed to the initiatives that will have the greatest community benefit.

In instances where stakeholder input has been sought prior to submission, it can be demonstrated that these committees and groups provide invaluable support and guidance that ensures projects' success in meeting local needs and avoiding conflict with other projects or arrangements.

Enhancing community resilience through fit for purpose programs and funded resilience roles will alleviate burden on other Government agencies and available funding.

Motion number 67 Forbes Shire Council NSW

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to undertake a comprehensive review of the auditing system and documentation requirements as they pertain to disaster recovery claims, with the aim of streamlining procedures, eliminating redundancies, and expediting the processing of claims.

NATIONAL OBJECTIVE

The efficient and timely processing of disaster recovery claims is vital for providing relief to disaster-affected communities. The existing dual-level auditing framework and documentation requirements for flood damage requests, operated separately by state and federal agencies, introduces unnecessary bureaucratic hurdles that delay the payment of crucial claims.

KEY ARGUMENTS

Forbes Shire Council is eligible for Disaster Recovery funding under the under the Disaster Recovery Funding Arrangements 2018 for the 2022 and 2023 Spring Flooding. As at 29 April 2024, Council has undertaken recovery work to the value of \$11.57m and to date has not been reimbursed for any of this expenditure (two separate prepayments independent of Council's claim totalling \$6m were fortunately forwarded to Council to assist meeting the cashflow burden of flood repair works).

The State Government has imposed an excessive administrative burden upon councils both directly, and indirectly through the State Government's hesitance in approving claims due to the State previously being refused funding when claims were forwarded to the federal government who had their own administrative and audit requirements that had to be met.

The administration of government monies needs to be robust and include adequate checks and balances, however, council does not understand why DRFA claims are subject to two levels of administrative red tape and audit. The current system has resulted in extreme hesitancy at the state level to approve claims from councils, and as a result, negative cashflow impacts for disaster affected local communities.

By conducting a comprehensive review of the existing system, policymakers can identify and rectify disparities between state and federal practices. Such reforms aim to enhance the

efficiency and responsiveness of the claims adjudication process while ensuring fair treatment for all claimants.

Furthermore, by aligning state and federal auditing and administration practices, governments can better allocate resources and personnel toward proactive disaster mitigation strategies rather than navigating bureaucratic complexities. This proactive approach not only improves overall disaster resilience but also reduces the long-term financial burden on governments and taxpayers.

Motion number 68 City of Darwin NT

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to reaffirm that the Australian Defence Force provide disaster assistance to local communities when required or requested.

NATIONAL OBJECTIVE

Local government has a vital role to play in disaster response and resilience. As the level of government closest to the community, local councils have a unique understanding of the specific needs and challenges faced by their residents, and they can respond quickly and effectively to the needs of their communities. To maximize the effectiveness of local government in disaster response, it is essential that councils have the necessary resources and support from higher levels of government, including Australian Defence Force (ADF) personnel and equipment, particularly where local capacity is limited. The importance of this has been demonstrated through bushfires, floods, cyclone and several storms across Australia and the Australian community expect that in times of need the ADF will assist with resources, and specialised equipment.

KEY ARGUMENTS

In the Defence Strategic Review, the Australian Government has taken the position that climate change will result in a greater number of disaster events requiring significant response and that if the ADF continues to provide support to respond, it is at risk of being “overwhelmed” and unable to perform its primary objective of defending Australia. A proposed response is for the ADF to no longer provide preparatory and response activities for disasters except in cases of extreme need, though “extreme need” is undefined. This will potentially have a significant impact the ability of many communities to respond and recover for disaster events.

Many parts of Australia are subject to the impacts of climate change, which may include extreme rainfall events, rising sea levels, a greater proportion of cyclones, an increase in average daily temperature maximums, frequent and more severe bushfires and continued loss and risk to biodiversity. However, despite the Review acknowledging the threats from changing climates to the extent that it has categorised it as a national security issue, the Review proposes reducing the support provided by the ADF in disaster response.

The ADF are well regarded and respected in the Australian community. This support is of vital importance to the ADF in performing its functions, some of which may cause disruption and inconvenience to residents, e.g. night time operations, operations on public land, live firing exercises etc. Part of that social acceptance is the reasonable expectation that when the community needs the support of the ADF in disaster recovery that it is provided, particularly

where there are limited civilian resources. Many communities have a relatively small base of operational local government and State/Territory Government emergency services personnel. Similarly, there is often only a small private contractor base who already service multiple local governments, the State/Territory Government and public utilities. Furthermore, for many regional and remote communities, readily deployable resources are not located in nearby or connected communities. Larger cities are a long distance away and potentially inaccessible during a significant weather event due to loss of road and rail access, and potentially airports. It would also be cost prohibitive to transfer personnel and equipment, whereas ADF has personnel and equipment already in place.

Concerns have also been raised about the cost impacts on the ADF of undertaking disaster preparation and recovery activities. If the ADF was not to provide support, it is likely local governments would attempt to supplement the capacity gap with contractor labour which would be recoverable under disaster funding arrangements, increasing the cost to the Australian Government.

City of Darwin also understands there is potentially consideration being given to the use of a federally funded “rapid deployment” workforce and/or funding for locally based volunteer organisations. City of Darwin is concerned that any federal workforce or volunteer organisation would likely be based in larger population centres, would have a number of potential barriers restricting its ability to deploy rapidly and little local knowledge and presence due to relatively small population bases. Size of population also means that volunteer organisations may not be feasible and may be competing for the same personnel as emergency services and the ADF Reserve.

Motion number 69 Knox City Council VIC

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to investigate and set measures to assist the affordability and availability of insurance for properties in areas, including council owned land and assets, that are likely impacted by natural disasters.

NATIONAL OBJECTIVE

This motion links to theme #4 Emergency Management. Importantly, this motion aligns with the following NGA considerations:

- New program ideas that that would help the local government sector to deliver the Australian Government’s objectives.

With the increasing prevalence of natural disasters impacting properties, community members are being priced out of insurance. Additionally, insurance coverage and availability for properties built prior to the changes in insurance assessment mean an increasing number of households and businesses are forced to go uninsured.

KEY ARGUMENTS

In 2022 alone, 46 disasters were declared across Australia, covering more than 300 different council areas. In recent years, almost every Australian council has been impacted in some way by fires, floods, or cyclones, and other extreme weather events.

Last year's flooding caused a damage bill of approximately \$3.8 billion to local roads across Queensland, New South Wales, Victoria, and South Australia. This was just a fraction of the total disaster costs incurred by governments across the country.

From an insurance perspective and trend over time:

- Home insurance claims rose 25% between the financial years 2020–21 and 2021–22 (source: ASIC Report 768 August 2023).
- The total cost of finalised claims increased by around 35% from an average of \$310m per annum over 2009 to 2013, to an average of \$420m per annum over 2014 to 2021 (source: APRA NCPD Analysis May 2023).

Motion number 69.1 Snowy Monaro Regional Council NSW

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to urgently address the access and price of insurance in Australia, particularly in the context of extreme weather events and pricing in regional areas.

NATIONAL OBJECTIVE

Australia needs to have a resilient community, and this must be supported by a strong and viable insurance framework. The impacts of climate change are having far reaching impacts, the full extent of we have not yet fully seen. To ensure that we are resilience into the future we need to be addressing the factors that are impacting on our communities, and the impact of extreme weather events is a major factor in making insurance become more costly, which will drive greater increases in cost of living and increasing unaffordability of insurance among the least resilient sectors of our communities.

The impacts of increasing insurance costs will be felt by all sectors of the economy, from agricultural businesses, to manufacturing and into every household. If action is not taken now, the burden on all levels of government to cope with events into the future will only escalate further. The scale of the problem requires a national, considered and coordinated approach.

While we have seen the start of the issues of insurance premium increases, much worse can be expected if action is not taken.

KEY ARGUMENTS

The CPI increase in insurance pricing over the last five years has been 32%, compared to an overall CPI increase of 19.3%. Increased insurance premium costs are clearly one driver of increased cost of living and, as premiums continue to rise well ahead of earnings, it is likely that there will be an increase in the level of people under-insuring or not taking out insurance. This means that when a disaster event occurs there will be lower levels of resilience and a higher reliance on government support to individuals within the affected community. The Australian Competition and Consumer Commission noted that house and contents insurance increased 15% just in the 2022-23 year alone.

The Insurance Council of Australia's report "The Cost of Extreme Weather" released in 2022 anticipates that by 2050 households will be paying \$35.24billion in direct costs relating to extreme weather events. (<https://insurancecouncil.com.au/resource/new-research-shows-every-australian-pays-for-extreme-weather/>) The Climate Council undertook an assessment in

2022 on the likely impacts of this and found that approximately 520,940 properties, will be effectively uninsurable by 2030.

As weather events become more extreme this will also impact our important agricultural sector, with the ABC recently reporting on the impact of increasing insurance, which is leading to underinsurance and increased risk being taken by farmer

While over time the level of amounts paid out by insurers has been increasing, APRA data shows that the premiums written have increased at a higher rate than the gross payouts made. (<https://www.apra.gov.au/quarterly-general-insurance-statistics>)

It is clear that the insurers are factoring in much higher risks into the premiums being passed onto businesses and the community. Eventually this will create a significant social issue as more and more people, most likely those least able to recover for a disaster, are forced to either underinsure or not insure at all. As set out in the Insurance Council of Australia's Insurance Catastrophe Resilience Report 2022-23, "insurance affordability is only going to get worse if governments don't act now before the impact of climate change on premiums is fully felt. If these solutions are implemented those currently facing the highest risks – and so facing the greatest increases to their insurance costs – would see the biggest benefit."

Motion number 70 Maranoa Regional Council QLD

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to collaborate with insurance providers, local governments, and technical experts to enhance the transparency, accuracy, and credibility of flood mapping and its impact upon actuarial assessment of risk.

NATIONAL OBJECTIVE

The national objective is to establish a unified and transparent approach to flood risk assessment and insurance premium calculation across Australia. By enhancing flood mapping accuracy and making this information widely accessible, the government, in collaboration with insurance providers and local authorities, aims to achieve equitable insurance practices that reflect actual risk levels. This initiative will not only protect homeowners from unfairly high premiums but also encourage more informed community and government investment in flood mitigation and resilience strategies.

KEY ARGUMENTS

1. **Equity and fairness:** Homeowners deserve to pay insurance premiums that accurately reflect their property's flood risk, ensuring that insurance costs are fair and justified.
2. **Transparency:** Increasing the transparency of flood risk assessments and the criteria insurance companies use to calculate premiums will build homeowner trust in the insurance process.
3. **Accuracy and credibility:** By collaborating with technical experts and utilising the latest technology and data, flood mapping can be significantly improved, resulting in more accurate assessments.
4. **Reflecting local investments:** Recognising and incorporating the effects of local governments' investments in flood mitigation strategies over the last decade into insurance calculations can incentivise further community and government action on flood resilience.

5. Community trust and engagement: Engaging communities in the flood mapping process and making data publicly accessible will enhance community trust and encourage proactive measures to mitigate flood risk.

This concerted effort aims to ensure fair insurance premium calculations for homeowners, predicated on reliable and publicly accessible flood risk data. Discrepancies in flood risk data assessment have led to significant variations in insurance premiums, affecting homeowners' trust and financial well-being. The lack of transparency from insurance providers about the data used to calculate premiums has exacerbated these issues. With local governments across Australia having invested tens of millions of dollars in flood mitigation infrastructure and strategies over the last decade, there's a pressing need for this investment to be reflected in the insurance premium calculation process, ensuring fair treatment and enhanced community trust in insurance practices.

Motion number 71 Narrabri Shire Council NSW

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to urgently progress the Inquiry into insurers' responses to recent major flood claims, and to:

- a. Expedite its current suite of reforms to help reduce insurance costs for homeowners and businesses, and in addition;
- b. Expand the disaster event re-insurance framework for all small, medium, rural and remote area communities impacted by natural disasters;
- c. Increase targeted investment in community resilience building initiatives at the regional level; and
- d. Invest in increased and sustained infrastructure betterment funding to local governments.

NATIONAL OBJECTIVE

Stronger community resilience.

KEY ARGUMENTS

Disasters such as bushfires, floods and cyclones are naturally occurring events, however their frequency and intensity is increasing. As detailed in the LGNSW 2023/2024 Advocacy Priorities discussion paper the sheer scale of these disasters demands a far greater emphasis on resilience and adaptation, to ensure communities are better prepared for future events. The escalation of these events due to climate change, coupled with population growth means that community vulnerabilities are rapidly increasing along with overall disaster risk.

Insurers need to reflect on lessons learned through recent major flooding events and embed this knowledge into both current and future business practices to better support community recovery. Meaningful market change and associated innovation needs to occur to ensure that the national insurance sector remains fit for purpose in the face of climate change.

Concurrently, government must continue to work with households and the business community to prepare for, respond to and recover from disasters. Over the longer term, reducing disaster risk and improving community readiness is imperative in efforts to support

households and communities to be more resilient to future disasters, in addition to placing downward pressure on insurance premiums.

Motion number 72 Murweh Shire Council QLD

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to establish a Senate Committee Inquiry to specifically examine the issue of escalating household insurance premiums in regional areas where extensive mitigation works have been carried out.

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 acknowledged by the insurance industry that these actions have, in many situations, prevented significant claims being lodged.

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".

In South West Queensland there are examples of insurance premiums increasing by over 400 percent despite these policy holders living in areas that are now protected by levee infrastructure.

Recent flood events demonstrate that these infrastructure measures successfully protect communities with no flood inundation experienced. Yet, despite this, insurance premiums have continued to increase at unsustainable levels, further adding to cost of living pressures. Given national efforts by all levels of government to invest in mitigation infrastructure and by councils to improve community resilience through land use planning and other local based programs, this issue deserves scrutiny through a dedicated Senate Inquiry including public hearings across the country.

KEY ARGUMENTS

Communities across Australia and those in regional and remote areas in particular continue to suffer from lack of affordable household insurance options despite significant levels of investment by all levels of government in mitigation works to protect communities.

This is adversely impacting community liveability, workforce attraction and mental health outcomes in individuals in an overall context of increasing cost of living pressures.

The lack of responsiveness from the insurance industry is unacceptable and despite previous efforts by Governments, councils, regional groups of councils and community organisations to engage in a solution, thus far there is no evidence of insurance premiums reducing.

Noting the current Parliamentary Inquiry into insurers' responses to 2022 major floods claims, it is suggested that these findings can be further built on by examining the specific issue of mitigation works and insurance premium levels through a dedicated and focussed Senate Committee Inquiry.

Motion number 73 Tenterfield Shire Council NSW

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to work with State and Local Government Authorities to roll out emergency preparedness containers within each rural council area to allow rapid service access in times of emergency to reduce delays being experienced due to a need to transport required provisions from city areas.

NATIONAL OBJECTIVE

We have seen that Australia is a country of extremes – this includes fire, flood, drought and pandemics. In the event of natural emergencies the roll out of “emergency preparedness containers” would allow rapid service access reducing the delay in the provision of supplies from longer distances.

KEY ARGUMENTS

We have seen that Australia is a country of extremes – this includes fire, flood, drought and pandemics. In the event of natural emergencies the roll out of “emergency preparedness containers” would allow rapid service access reducing the delay in the provision of supplies from longer distances.

Motion number 74 Cabonne Council NSW

This National General Assembly calls on the Government to provide an annual non-competitive funding program that matches (50/50 split) recovery funding, that enables local government to fund climate change adaptation, resilience and betterment projects, which help mitigate the impacts of natural disasters in local communities.

NATIONAL OBJECTIVE

Local councils are at the front line of climate-related impacts and are usually given the task of practical support and recovery of impacted communities.

KEY ARGUMENTS

For every dollar spent on natural disasters, 97 cents is spent on recovery, whereas only 3 cents is spent to support preparedness.

Broad reform of local government funding is needed that recognises the rapid trajectory of climate change that is occurring. Local councils are at the front line of climate-related impacts and are usually given the task of practical support and recovery of impacted communities.

Managing record fire, flood, heat and drought conditions has initiated a funding cycle of ‘disaster-recovery-disaster-recovery’ that is unsustainable, both financially and socially. Emergent and cascading risks will increasingly impinge on Council’s ability to maintain basic services. Solutions can no longer use such a reactive funding model and assumptions but must recognise that climate change is inevitable and rapid, needing equivalent pro-active and protective policies to keep pace.

At present there is little ability for councils to prepare for or mitigate inevitable changes. Funding sources are reactively tied to ‘disaster recovery’, and any attempt to improve or

prepare is classed as 'betterment' and given few avenues for funding. This needs to change, not just in amount but also in priority.

A structure similar to the Local Roads and Community Infrastructure Program funding, which was an annual non-competitive program, would enable Council's to prepare and deliver meaningful preparedness projects within our communities.

Preventative measures yield significant returns. Studies estimate that every dollar spent on disaster prevention can save as much as A\$15 in recovery efforts. Prioritising adaptation strategies can help mitigate the impact of climate-related disasters and protect communities.

Motion number 75 Tenterfield Shire Council NSW

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to provide additional funding support to rural and remote councils to control roadside vegetation, reducing fire and bio hazard increase.

NATIONAL OBJECTIVE

Financial support for weed eradication would reduce the issues of fire escapes and bio hazard increases. Weed eradication funds are only on the weeds of national significance, although all weeds pose a fire threat to livestock, homes and other assets.

KEY ARGUMENTS

Financial support for weed eradication would reduce the issues of fire escapes and bio hazard increases. Weed eradication funds are only on the weeds of national significance, although all weeds pose a fire threat to livestock, homes and other assets.

HOUSING AND HOMELESSNESS

Motion number 76 Narrabri Shire Council NSW

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to advocate for:

- a. Increase sustained funding and maintain investment in public, social and affordable housing;
- b. Work with all levels of government to undertake a review of all government-owned property to identify suitable sites for redevelopment as affordable housing;
- c. Continue to work with local councils, developers and community housing organisations to facilitate the construction of affordable social housing; and
- d. Ensure that any commensurate housing programs do not result in cost shifting to local government.

NATIONAL OBJECTIVE

Stronger community resilience.

Roads and infrastructure funding.

It is currently well-documented that Australia is currently experiencing an unprecedented housing affordability crisis. Over a million lower income households are presently paying housings costs which frequently exceed the commonly utilised affordability benchmark of 30% of household income. Whilst many Australians are continuing to struggle with housing costs coupled with increasing costs of living, 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 state of homelessness.

KEY ARGUMENTS

As detailed in the LGNSW 2023/2024 Advocacy Priorities document, access to secure, affordable housing is a basic human need and key to a prosperous and equitable society. A lack of affordable housing compounds intergenerational inequality and harms social cohesion.

The Australian Government must do its part to ensure everyone, and especially the most vulnerable members of the community, has access to a safe and secure home. Additional investment is urgently needed for public and social housing each year for the next 10 years to contribute to addressing the homelessness and housing affordability crisis right across the nation. On this basis, the National Housing and Homelessness Plan must be urgently delivered to provide a better understanding of the current state of housing and homelessness in Australia and the drivers of homelessness and housing insecurity throughout urban, regional, rural and remote Australia.

This Plan must also set out strategies that are both achievable and well-resourced to facilitate all levels of government working together and with the private and community sector to better support people experiencing homelessness and housing insecurity.

Motion number 76.1 Berrigan Shire Council NSW

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to actively re-engage with the provision and supply of social and affordable housing through collaboration and effective implementation that includes the strategies that tackle the root causes of homelessness at the local level.

NATIONAL OBJECTIVE

This motion aligns with the Australian Local Government Association's National Objective by emphasising collaboration between the Australian Government and local government to address the affordable housing crisis and homelessness. The proposed program to re-engage with the provision of social and affordable housing aims to support local councils in their efforts to provide affordable housing and mitigate homelessness. By advocating for joint initiatives, this motion aligns with the National Objective of promoting the interests and capacity of local government to address pressing social issues and improve the well-being of communities. Blaming councils' planning departments for the current housing crisis is subterfuge of the worst kind, diverting attention from systemic issues and the need for comprehensive government-led solutions.

KEY ARGUMENTS

The housing crisis has become increasingly evident, and local councils, have been sounding the alarm for more than a decade. The Australian Government must actively re-engage with the provision and delivery of social and affordable housing to support local governments in providing this critical community infrastructure. Berrigan Shire Council urges the National General Assembly to advocate for initiatives that make affordable housing a priority in national housing policies.

Throughout the preceding decade, housing ministers have done little more than remove the provision of social and affordable housing from their portfolio responsibilities. This motion calls for a re-evaluation of ministerial responsibilities to ensure addressing the affordable housing crisis and homelessness is a central focus. The Australian Government should consider reinstating social and affordable housing within the portfolio responsibilities of relevant ministers, signalling a commitment to actively tackle housing challenges at a national level.

Local governments play a crucial role in urban planning and zoning regulations. The Australian Government should work collaboratively with councils to develop planning frameworks that prioritise the inclusion of affordable housing. It is crucial to acknowledge that blaming councils for the housing crisis is a misdirection, diverting attention from broader systemic issues.

Addressing homelessness requires a multifaceted approach. The Australian Government should develop funding programs specifically aimed at homelessness prevention. This could involve partnerships with local service providers, outreach programs, and initiatives to address the root causes of homelessness, such as mental health issues, unemployment, and family breakdowns. Berrigan Shire Council urges the allocation of resources to programs that provide support and assistance to individuals and families at risk of homelessness. The housing crisis needs more than a simplistic narrative that obscures the need for comprehensive government-led initiatives.

The Australian Government can incentivise innovative housing solutions through funding and policy support. This includes promoting sustainable and cost-effective building methods,

modular housing options, and adaptive reuse of existing structures. Berrigan Shire Council encourages the development of programs that foster creativity and innovation in the housing sector, ensuring solutions are tailored to the unique needs and challenges faced by local communities.

A comprehensive understanding of the causes and impacts of homelessness is crucial for effective policymaking. The Australian Government can collaborate with local councils to invest in research and data collection on homelessness and affordable housing issues. Berrigan Shire Council recommends initiatives that support data-driven decision-making, enabling governments at all levels to implement targeted and evidence-based solutions.

The Berrigan Shire Council urges the National General Assembly to support this motion, emphasising the need to address the affordable housing crisis and homelessness. By working collaboratively with local governments, the Australian Government can develop holistic solutions that not only provide affordable housing but also tackle the root causes of homelessness, contributing to the well-being and stability of communities across the nation. Acknowledging that blaming councils for the housing crisis is a misdirection, is crucial for fostering genuine collaboration and addressing the systemic issues at the he

Motion number 76.2 Waverley Council NSW

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to address the need for more affordable housing and to tackle homelessness by developing a range of programs and policies in collaboration with local governments.

NATIONAL OBJECTIVE

See summary of key arguments.

KEY ARGUMENTS

Collaboration between the Australian Government and local councils, along with active engagement with community organisations and the private sector, is crucial to the success of these initiatives. This multi-faceted approach can contribute to both the immediate alleviation of homelessness and the sustained availability of affordable housing options. Potential affordable housing programs and homelessness prevention initiatives include:

1. Increase funding for affordable housing:
 - (a) Allocate additional funding to support the construction and maintenance of affordable housing projects.
 - (b) Provide grants or low-interest loans to developers focusing on affordable housing.
2. Land use planning and zoning policies:
 - (a) Work with local governments to review and amend zoning regulations to facilitate the development of affordable housing.
 - (b) Streamline approval processes for affordable housing projects.
3. Incentives for private sector involvement:

- (a) Introduce tax incentives for developers who invest in affordable housing projects.
 - (b) Explore public-private partnerships to encourage private sector involvement in affordable housing initiatives.
4. Community land trusts: Support the establishment of community land trusts that can acquire and manage land for affordable housing purposes.
 5. Rent assistance programs: expand rental assistance programs to help low-income households afford private rental accommodation.
 6. Wrap-around support services: invest in support services such as mental health counselling, addiction treatment, and job training to address the root causes of homelessness.
 7. Emergency shelter expansion: increase funding for emergency shelters and temporary housing options to provide immediate relief for those experiencing homelessness.
 8. Housing first approach: adopt a 'housing first' approach, prioritising providing stable housing as the first step in addressing homelessness, and then offering support services as needed.
 9. Collaborative data collection: work with local councils to establish comprehensive data collection systems to understand the causes and demographics of homelessness better. This can inform targeted interventions.
 10. Community engagement and education: develop public awareness campaigns to reduce stigma associated with homelessness and encourage community support for homeless individuals.
 11. Employment programs: implement programs that focus on skill development and job placement for individuals experiencing homelessness.
 12. Integration of housing and health services: foster collaboration between housing and health services to address the unique needs of homeless individuals, especially those with mental health or substance abuse issues.
 13. Rental assistance for vulnerable populations: provide targeted rental assistance for vulnerable populations, such as youth aging out of foster care or individuals leaving correctional facilities.
 14. Long-term housing solutions: develop long-term housing solutions, including transitional housing and permanent supportive housing for those with complex needs.
 15. Policy coordination: establish a coordinated approach between federal, state, and local governments to ensure policies and programs are aligned and effective in addressing homelessness.

Motion number 76.3 Randwick City Council NSW

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to amend the Housing Australia Future Fund Facility (HAFFF) funding program to:

- a. provide significant funds directly to Local Government for the purposes of building public housing, with priority given to projects that utilise existing Local Government landholdings; and
- b. remove the limitations on loans to 30% of the project cost for less than 75 dwellings and for larger proposals a limit to 10% and instead provide interest free loans up to 50% of the project cost.

NATIONAL OBJECTIVE

1.This motion focusses on housing and homelessness which is one of the twelve priority areas in the NGA 2024 discussion paper; and

2.This motion is consistent with ALGA’s objective to support and strengthen the role of local government in population management, land use planning and building.

KEY ARGUMENTS

The Housing Australia Future Fund Facility (HAFFF) and National Housing Accord Facility (NHAF) are Federal Government initiatives to increase the provision of social and affordable housing.

Specifically, the HAFFF, aims to deliver 20,000 new social and 10,000 new affordable homes over five years while the NHAF supports the Federal Government’s commitment to deliver 10,000 new affordable homes over five years from 2024. Both programs are administered by Housing Australia and are funded by deploying returns from future fund investments.

Under the National Housing Accord, the NSW Government has committed to providing 377,000 new homes by 2029. The recent planning changes that the NSW Government has sought to introduce will do nothing to improve housing affordability and there has not been any serious commitment to increase the amount of public housing to address long waiting lists. Local councils are well placed to deliver public housing given their strategic approach to housing and knowledge of community needs. The current restrictions on the funding available through the HAFFF unreasonably limit the capacity for local government for deliver public housing.

Motion number 77 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 and provide the potential for an immediate accommodation supply in already existing housing stock.

NATIONAL OBJECTIVE

Housing homelessness is one of the National General Assembly's 12 priority areas. All levels of government, including councils, have a fundamental role to play in addressing this crisis, which is being compounded by high interest rates, rising construction costs and skills shortages.

KEY ARGUMENTS

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. Removing this disincentive would enable more people to open their home to renting rooms or parts of their home to those most disadvantaged. For example, consideration be given to allowing owners 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. This would provide the potential for an immediate accommodation supply in already existing housing stock; allowing other lengthy methods of increasing dwellings such as building new developments to occur in the meantime.

Motion number 78 Tamworth Regional Council NSW

That the National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to consider that proceeds from the sale of a family home when downsizing (into a smaller property) be exempt from inclusion in the pension asset test for the remainder of the life of the individual or couple.

NATIONAL OBJECTIVE

The aim behind this is to free up larger sized homes for families, making it another contributor to the housing shortage, without impacting on the pension status of the individual/couple. It also has the added advantage in that the elderly person/people will have less physical and financial demands on maintaining a larger property.

KEY ARGUMENTS

There will be no impact on the pension received by an individual/couple if they purchase a smaller home and have funds left over. The balance of those funds may be invested, and any related income paid to the individual/couple is not part of an income asset test for their pension for the rest of their life/lives.

Motion number 79 Murray River Council NSW

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to review the land rezoning processes with a view to reduce duplication with state government agencies and give decision making power back to local government to reduce red tape and housing delays.

NATIONAL OBJECTIVE

Australia is currently facing a housing affordability and availability crisis, noting that the migration of city residents to regional NSW is adding additional pressure on Councils for the provision of adequate supply of residential land to ensure a consistent supply of land available to the market.

As NSW's population continues to grow and migrate to regional areas, it is imperative that we have robust but streamlined planning systems in place to accommodate this growth. Yet, the

current standardisation of processes in the NSW planning system (and other State systems) is resulting in a city-centric approach that is leaving regional councils feeling frustrated, unsupported and is resulting in stagnated housing outcomes.

Processes and systems in the NSW planning system for land rezoning, have become significantly challenging for regional areas, where concurrent approval from the State government agencies (in our case Department of Planning and Environment) (“DPE”) has created time delays in residential rezonings for logical expansion of regional townships that have been identified for pipeline development within adopted Local Housing Strategies, and indeed strategic planning documents for decades.

Currently in the NSW planning system, any land rezonings are required to be referred to DPE for concurrence approval. A gateway determination for land rezoning can take up to 12 months to get through the process with DPE applying a ‘detailed Lense’ to their assessment, which would usually be done by Council at the Subdivision DA stage of the process.

KEY ARGUMENTS

Currently in the NSW planning system, any land rezonings are required to be referred to DPE for concurrence approval, even though past reviews by DPE where a number of Councils requested this change in the Concurrence and Referral SEPP in November 2021 did not eventuate in any change. It is also a requirement for DPE to assess and approve the Council’s local housing strategy under their own guidelines where Councils are also required to identify pipeline development and sequencing releases of residential land.

Reverting planning powers back to Local Government for individual rezonings of land already identified for logical and sequential rezoning in Housing Strategies would remove approximately 6 months of processing time for any land being rezoned. The majority of these land rezonings are occurring on:

- Low hazard areas from flooding/bushfire;
- Previously been agricultural and holdings where the land has already been identified for residential development (fringe residential development) linking to existing residential estates and trunk infrastructure;
- Infill development sites that have been identified for residential development strategically for 20+ years, even where “leapfrog” development has occurred in the past;
- Greenfield areas in flat and largely unencumbered regional areas.

While efficiencies and cost saving measures at a top-level are important, they should not come at the expense of progressive and sustainable development locally. We need a more bespoke approach that considers the unique needs and characteristics of each region, rather than relying on generic check-list exercises applied uniformly at the state level. These considerations by State Government officials assessing such rezonings continually in a detailed sense and moving away from conceptual level considerations.

With planning powers given to Local government for all land rezonings identified within a local housing strategy, this would unlock housing development potential to meet Australia’s (and each States) aggressive housing agenda, without necessarily adding any risk if the land has been through a community process, an Council led Local Housing Strategy that is already has

State government approval, without land rezonings having to be individually re-adopted by State agencies for second and third time before dwelling are actually constructed.

Murray River Council and most of the other NSW regional councils have a number of suitably unzoned residential land awaiting to be activated. Many councils would experience the pressure applied by developers to have their fringe residential land (marginal farmland) rezoned for residential use where the land is not profitable to remain as farmland and is adjoining existing residential land estates.

Council believes that State government processes particularly in NSW, are adding very little value to the process for straightforward and unencumbered expansions of residential areas already identified growth corridors for decades. Noting that councils are responsible for most of the risks associated with land development especially trunk infrastructure, and the developers' contributions to connect into trunk infrastructure.

Motion number 80 Inner West Council NSW

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to :

- a. Note the multiple reports by energy analysts demonstrating that all-electric homes are cheaper to run than those connected to gas;
- b. Provide cost-living-relief to households by requiring newly built homes to be fully electric by updating the National Construction Code; and
- c. Coordinate and assist states and territories to implement these changes via their respective planning and building regulations.

NATIONAL OBJECTIVE

That the Australian Government demonstrates its commitment to tackle the cost-of-living crisis for families, renters, single parents and vulnerable groups in financial stress by helping them to cut their energy bills by creating all-electric new homes.

KEY ARGUMENTS

Rising gas price rises are impacting on families and households across the country who are already struggling with spiralling housing and food costs. A recent Energy Consumers Australia survey of 2,500 people found that more than one quarter of households are struggling to pay their energy bills.

Study after study demonstrates that homes powered by 100% electricity are cheaper to run than those connected to gas. For example, recent, separate studies by Monash University, Energy Consumers Australia, Renew, Australian Council for Social Services, and Rewiring Australia all demonstrate that homes that swap gas appliances for modern, efficient ones, combined with energy efficiency upgrades and solar and battery installations, can cut energy bills by a range of \$500 to \$5,000 per year, depending on the combination of upgrades.

The Australian Government could provide direct and immediate cost-of-living relief to people moving into new housing by ensuring newly built homes are fully electric without gas.

Recent modelling shows that this move alone would cut household energy bills by 90.6% by 2040.

Motion number 80.1 City of Sydney NSW

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to:

- a. note that, while the National Construction Code (NCC) was updated in 2022 to improve the thermal and energy performance of new residential buildings, the revised NCC still allows new homes to be powered by toxic and polluting gas appliances;
- b. notes that recent modelling by Climate Works demonstrates that the current energy performance standards in the revised NCC will not allow Australia to meet its Paris Agreement commitment to limit global warming to 1.5 degrees; and
- c. accelerate the transition to all-electric homes by ensuring new homes are powered by 100 per cent electricity and no gas, which will require an update to the NCC to explicitly require homes to be powered by 100 per cent electricity.

NATIONAL OBJECTIVE

That the Australian Government listens to medical professionals by ensuring that the homes we live in are clean, healthy and safe, free from the harmful toxins caused by gas appliances, particularly space heaters, stoves and cooktops.

KEY ARGUMENTS

Decades of scientific medical research demonstrates the alarming health impacts of gas appliances when used indoors. For example, a recent Australian study found that gas cooktops are associated with around 12 percent of childhood asthma cases in Australia.

Medical professionals note that the real rate is probably much higher, as mild asthma cases are often undiagnosed, never see a respiratory specialist, and don't appear in health statistics. Indoor gas combustion is likely to be a significant cause of Australia's relatively high rates of asthma. US researchers from Stanford University have linked gas stoves and ovens to home air levels of carcinogenic chemicals like benzene.

We know that long-term exposure to benzene is linked to acute lymphocytic leukemia, chronic lymphocytic leukemia, multiple myeloma, childhood leukemia, and non-Hodgkin lymphoma. Methane leakage in buildings has other very serious health effects.

Given the known, scientifically proven links between indoor gas use and harmful human health outcomes, requiring new homes to be fitted with electric appliances, it is incumbent on the Australian Government to act swiftly to address this public health emergency.

Rising gas price rises are impacting on families and households across the country who are already struggling with spiralling housing and food costs. A recent Energy Consumers Australia survey of 2,500 people found that more than one quarter of households are struggling to pay their energy bills.

Study after study demonstrates that homes powered by 100% electricity are cheaper to run than those connected to gas. For example, recent, separate studies by Monash University, Energy Consumers Australia, Renew, Australian Council for Social Services, and Rewiring Australia all demonstrate that homes that swap gas appliances for modern, efficient ones,

combined with energy efficiency upgrades and solar and battery installations, can cut energy bills by a range of \$500 to \$5,000 per year, depending on the combination of upgrades.

The Australian Government could provide direct and immediate cost-of-living relief to people moving into new housing by ensuring newly built homes are fully electric without gas.

Recent modelling shows that this move alone would cut household energy bills by 90.6% by 2040.

Motion number 81 City of Onkaparinga SA

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to develop a national, equitable approach to improving access to rooftop solar for renters and landlords.

NATIONAL OBJECTIVE

The 2023 national Annual Climate Change Statement states: “The Government recognises there will be a further major role for distributed and consumer energy resources, including rooftop PV, orchestrated distributed storage and electric vehicle supply equipment (EVSE), in achieving 2030 renewables and emissions targets”, and “The Government aims to empower Australians with choices to make energy performance upgrades that reduce their costs, including measures that support energy efficiency, rooftop solar, and switching to electric appliances where they want to”.

Australia must take a proactive approach to making photovoltaic energy systems available to more occupiers of homes, including rental tenants, to help achieve Australia’s 2050 net zero emissions target.

Many Australian councils are at the forefront of innovation but lack the resources for partnership and a national framework needed to address them effectively. Pilot programs have been undertaken in several states, but the scale of the challenge requires a collaborative, coordinated national approach.

Australia needs national leadership, funding, and a long-term commitment from the Australian Government to tackle this problem now and into the future.

KEY ARGUMENTS

Australia has legislated greenhouse gas emission reduction targets of 43% below 2005 emission levels by 2030, and Net Zero by 2050. Emissions for the year 2022 were 25% below 2005 levels; to reach the 2030 target, we need to reduce annual emissions over the next seven years by more than we have in the last 10. Electricity production is our largest source of emissions. Our target for energy generated by renewable (non-fossil fuelled) sources is 82% by 2030, and 100% by 2050; so, to reach 30.9% in 2021-22, we need to more than double renewable electricity in the next eight years.

Australia has the highest rooftop solar per capita in the world, 16.3GW installed capacity as at 2022, generating approximately 8% of national grid energy annually. The National Energy Market technical plan recommends Australia installs five-times more rooftop solar to reach our goals. This is possible, given that Australia’s estimated total potential for rooftop solar is 179 GW. Around half of the unused potential for rooftop solar (96 GW) is residential.

A barrier to increasing residential solar is that there is little incentive for renters or landlords to install solar. With 33% of current households renting, this represents both an untapped renewable electricity source and an equity divide between those that live in their own home and those renting.

Renters are typically younger, move more often, have lower incomes and lower wealth, and are almost twice as likely to have poorer general health. In 2019-20, the proportion of lower-income households spending more than 30% of their gross weekly income on housing costs was more than half (58%) of those renting from a private landlord.

Home solar leads to, on average, savings of \$1086 per annum (48% lower electricity bills). Those who can often least afford it and are more likely to have health challenges are paying, on average, 48% more on electricity. There are barriers to renters and landlords installing solar, principally the split incentive issue:

- tenants pay energy bills, and therefore are incentivised to pursue opportunities to lower energy costs but cannot add solar without a landlord's agreement
- tenants rarely have tenure to justify even short-term investments
- landlords may not be inclined to take out a loan for solar where the benefits largely accrue to the tenant, especially mid tenancy, with limited opportunity to recoup costs through rent
- current lack of rental accommodation means there is no motivation to add extra features to attract tenants or higher rents.

Local and state government agencies have supported and trialled methods to address the issue, however this is best addressed with a nationwide equitable approach. The Australian Government should conduct a review of Australian and international trials and implement a national approach by 2027/28 in order to work towards our net zero goal.

The City of Onkaparinga has been responding to climate change for over two decades. Our Climate Change Response Plan 2022-27 addresses a range of responses from corporate emissions reduction to adaptation and community resilience. The Plan acknowledges the shared responsibility between all levels of government, business and the community and shows leadership as a council in the frontline of climate change consequences.

Council's 2021 community survey found that, for residents without rooftop solar, 19% reported "living in a rental property" as a key reason why they did not have solar, and we know there are affordability issues for renters in our City:

- 33.6% of rental households are low-income (earning less than \$800 per week)
- the incidence of residents experiencing rental stress (paying more than 30% of their usual gross weekly income on rent) is 35.5% city-wide, which is higher than state (30.5%) and national (32.2%) levels. The figure is higher still in certain suburbs, such as Hackham, where 49.9% of rental households are experiencing rental stress.
- the rental affordability situation is compounded by the relative disadvantage experienced by certain sections of our community. The City's index of relative socio-economic disadvantage (SEIFA index) is 987.5, below the Greater Adelaide (992.0) index. Some suburbs

experience notably greater disadvantage than the city-wide average, such as Christie Downs (803.2) and Hackham West (805.7).

The split incentive issue is exacerbated by the current housing situation, which has led to reduced supply of rental accommodation – Adelaide’s vacancy rate is currently 0.4% - and the average lease is less than 12 months with less than a third of formal rental agreements extending beyond 12 months. In theory, a well-functioning rental market would incentivise landlords to retrofit their properties because those properties would then command higher income.

Options include:

- incentivise landlords to install solar and improve energy efficiency by providing a financial incentive to landlords to install solar and undertake energy efficiency upgrades
- upgrades/ solar installation could be tax deductible or eligible for accelerated depreciation, e.g. changing what is considered eligible repairs and reasonable upgrades to rental properties under the Income Tax Assessment Act 1997
- alternatively, this financial incentive for landlords could become part of negative gearing reform
- advocate for bodies such as the Clean Energy Council to work collaboratively with the states and territories to develop guidelines to inform the establishment of effective, fair and sustainable rebate and grant schemes
- prioritise no interest loans to renters under the \$1.7 billion Energy Savings Package, announced through the 2023-24 Budget, to help households, local councils and businesses to access energy upgrades, including electrification. The package includes \$1 billion to the Clean Energy Finance Corporation to provide low-cost finance for home upgrades that save energy.
- along with a no interest loan for renters could be a provision for landlords to pay a renter the residual value of the solar if a tenant leaves before the 20-year asset lifecycle is reached.
- consider initiatives such as Building Upgrade Finance (BUF) which attempted to address the split-incentive issue in the commercial sector.

Motion number 82 Singleton Council NSW, Mid Coast Council NSW, Lake Macquarie City Council NSW, Dungog Shire Council NSW, Muswellbrook Shire Council NSW, Upper Hunter Shire Council NSW, and Newcastle City Council NSW.

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to:

Support the urgent delivery of new housing and improve housing affordability and access by:

- a. Investing in the transport and community infrastructure required to unlock development-ready land.
- b. Leading collaboration across Australian, state and local government to develop a collaborative framework for biodiversity planning that will enhance conservation outcomes and provide greater planning and investment certainty for local and regional communities around the availability of land for housing.
- c. Investing in additional public housing and incentivising affordable housing schemes.
- d. Repurposing existing government facilities such as underutilised health facilities, or other government buildings that could be repurposed for short term housing.

NATIONAL OBJECTIVE

Across Australia housing is becoming increasingly expensive, creating a crisis in housing affordability and accessibility across both metropolitan and regional areas. Addressing this challenge is an important national issue that will be most effectively addressed via a collaborative whole of government (Federal, State and Local) approach.

The social and economic impacts for the nation as a whole arising from reduced access to safe, secure and affordable housing include:

- Reduced participation in education and employment opportunities
- Impacts on personal health and wellbeing
- Disconnection from local communities.
- Financial stress
- Increased homelessness

Of relevance to all levels of government, these impacts manifest themselves in additional health expenditure, additional justice system costs, reduced household consumption, mental health impacts, overcrowding, reduced educational outcomes, and reduced wellbeing for low-income households.

For regional areas in particular, a lack of available or affordable housing represents a significant brake on the ability to attract and retain the skilled workers needed to deliver core community infrastructure and services, and to support economic growth and evolution across regional Australia.

KEY ARGUMENTS

Housing is a critical need providing both shelter and stability. Access to safe, secure housing has a profound impact on the health, wellbeing, and overall quality of life. Beyond meeting individual needs, the provision of housing is critical to the economic and social wellbeing of the

whole community. Housing is the foundation of success across a wide range of social and economic indicators.

Australian housing has become increasingly expensive in recent decades, with public concerns about housing affordability continuing to increase as house prices grow much faster than incomes. In parallel, the availability of housing has also been declining, as evidenced by record low vacancy rates across Australia.

A substantial focus of recent government efforts to improve the housing affordability and availability has been to focus on increasing the level of planning approvals for new housing. While this represents an important part of the solution, strategies need to look beyond just reducing barriers to planning approvals and consider more effective approaches that can be achieved only via a more collaborative and coordinated approach across all levels of government.

Focus areas for collaboration include:

Coordination of planning, infrastructure and investment

Significant areas of development ready land exist (i.e. planning approvals are already in place), but construction cannot proceed due to delays in the provision of core enabling infrastructure (e.g. transport and utilities) by government agencies. For example in the Hunter Region alone, more than \$20 billion in development is being held up by transport infrastructure delays. Those developments could deliver more than 60,000 jobs, 40,000 homes, and \$37 billion in economic benefits to the region.

This issue is not unique to the Hunter region. To proceed with housing construction on “development ready” sites across both regional and metropolitan areas requires:

- More sophisticated and collaborative place-based approaches to urban planning and investment across all levels of government
- Collaborative investment across all levels of government to deliver the enabling transport and community infrastructure needed to progress the rapid delivery of housing on existing development ready land.

Biodiversity planning

Biodiversity legislation and planning requirements across different government jurisdictions are complex, inconsistent, and in many cases are delivering neither good urban planning or biodiversity conservation outcomes. A more collaborative framework for biodiversity planning is needed across Commonwealth, State and Local Governments to drive a regional, place-based approach to biodiversity planning and conservation, that aligns priorities, delivery mechanisms and collaborative approaches across governments, agencies and land tenures, to enhance biodiversity outcomes and provide greater planning and investment certainty for local and regional communities.

Motion number 83 Ku-ring-gai Council NSW

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to require all State and Territory governments to work with local governments to deliver planning and land-use reforms and to build community trust in accordance with the National Housing Accord.

NATIONAL OBJECTIVE

Under the National Housing Accord, State and Territory Governments had committed to “working with local governments to deliver planning and land-use reforms that will make housing supply more responsive to demand over time”.

KEY ARGUMENTS

We understand the urgency to create more housing supply, and that the quickest way to do this is for States and Territories to unilaterally establish housing policies without genuinely considering input from the local government sector. However, this is problematic as local governments are closest to the issues on the ground, are aware of existing infrastructure and amenity constraints, and are in a better position to optimise the distribution of housing across their LGAs.

Unilateral overrides of housing policy will lead to inferior outcomes for the future residents of Australia and undermines community trust in all levels of government. It is better for all levels of government to work together in ensuring that housing supply is backed by appropriate infrastructure and amenity.

Motion number 83.1 City of Greater Geelong VIC

The National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to develop a National Housing Plan in coordination with a National Urban Policy that respond to following key areas:

- a. Promote land use efficiency, increase density within urban development in appropriate locations that respond to population dynamics and increase in housing supply.
- b. Framework to guide states and local government for housing affordability monitoring, housing supply and target forecast
- c. Increase housing supply and diversity, including increase of social and affordable housing.
- d. Transport planning for efficiency and alignment with increased housing opportunities
- e. Environmental sustainability and climate change resilience with national strategic framework for state/local planning.
- f. Land release and infrastructure for urban developments that increase housing delivery opportunities
- g. Urban governance that promotes more collaboration between federal, state and local governments in these key areas.
- h. Funding program and pathway that bring these key areas into alignment.

NATIONAL OBJECTIVE

Housing and homelessness are a nation-wide problems that impact all levels of government and for change to be impactful - all areas of government need to work together to enable change.

KEY ARGUMENTS

The above motions highlights the areas where local government can make the biggest impact to housing supply and therefore should be the focus of the National Housing Plan

Motion number 83.2 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 providing support to councils to enable investment in essential enabling infrastructure to support construction beyond just support for social and affordable housing programs.

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

While acknowledging and supporting the Government's Housing Australia Future Fund as a way forward to tackling the broader and concerning issue of homelessness and lack of affordable housing, there are development opportunities in regional Australia that will provide housing and ensure regional growth and sustainability.

Local Government entities in regional areas are generally dealing with aging water and sewer infrastructure that are unable to cope with growth without significant investment. In addition, due to economies of scale, private development in regional areas is less attractive and has a lower return on investment.

Yet both regional and urban Australia have similar housing challenges, that extend beyond delivery of social and affordable housing.

The Government has announced an investment of an additional \$1 billion in the National Housing Infrastructure Facility to support more essential housing project infrastructure such as utilities and roads. To address the housing shortages across Australia and meet national housing targets, it is essential that State and Federal funding programs delivered through the National Housing Infrastructure Facility provide support to Councils for enabling development that supports housing outside of just funding social and affordable housing programs.

Motion number 84 Lake Macquarie City Council NSW

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to:

- a. accelerate already committed and funded infrastructure projects
- b. prepare a funded implementation plan to deliver infrastructure upgrades that support housing growth
- c. investigate and implement an alternative mechanism for raising funds to support the delivery of infrastructure that supports housing growth.

NATIONAL OBJECTIVE

Prioritisation of infrastructure to support the delivery of 1.2 million new, well-located homes between 2024 and 2029 to meet the national target.

KEY ARGUMENTS

Australia is currently experiencing a housing crisis and federal, state and local governments all have a significant role to play in addressing this issue. In August 2023, the National Cabinet set an ambitious revised target for the National Housing Accord of 1.2 million new, well-located homes over five years from 2024. The NSW Government has committed to deliver 75,000 new homes each year over the next five years to meet its share of the target.

Adequate investment in enabling infrastructure is essential to facilitate the delivery of this housing and unlock new residential development. This includes investing in quality public spaces, active and public transport networks, roads and intersection upgrades to ensure urban areas can accommodate increased population and housing density without compromising lifestyle and neighbourhood amenity.

The Australian Government must seek to accelerate projects for which funding has already been committed, such as essential road upgrades. The funding, planning and delivery of infrastructure should go beyond existing development contribution mechanisms managed by local councils and be closely aligned with planning for housing growth, so that required infrastructure is identified as part of early planning stages. Dedicated funding streams should be developed to ensure infrastructure delivery is timed to coincide with new residential development.

Achieving the delivery of 1.2 million new homes is contingent on state and federal governments ensuring potential development areas are suitably serviced to attract investment and accommodate residential growth. Current and future residents have an expectation that infrastructure will be funded and delivered to support the growth in housing, and setting a clear delivery plan is essential to obtaining and retaining community trust.

Motion number 85 Gladstone Regional Council QLD

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to reinstate or replace the National Rental Affordability Scheme (NRAS) funding.

NATIONAL OBJECTIVE

No properties are to be left in the National Rental Affordability Scheme (NRAS) by mid-2026.

Coupled with a shortfall of available affordable housing, a significant number of people stand to be displaced by the cessation of the scheme.

More than 38,000 properties nationwide were on the scheme.

Higher costs of materials, land and finance are making it more difficult for developers to build dwellings profitably, making achieving targets for new builds challenging.

Australia's housing shortfall is expected to be at least 175,000 homes by 2027. Cessation of the NRAS will put further pressure on a housing market in crisis.

KEY ARGUMENTS

Introduced in 2008, the National Rental Affordability Scheme (NRAS) was a program set up by the federal government as a way to address the shortage of affordable rental housing.

They did this by incentivising investors to rent their properties at 20%+ below market rate.

The program had three intended outcomes:

- Make new homes available to low-income earners who may otherwise not be able to afford it.
- Boost the overall number of rental homes by tempting investors into the market
- Encourage landlords to find innovative ways to keep management costs down.

The scheme commenced being phased out in 2014, with no properties to be left in the scheme by mid-2026. Coupled with an immediate shortfall of available affordable housing, a significant number of people stand to be displaced by the cessation of the scheme.

Motion number 86 Snowy Monaro Regional Council NSW

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to prioritise working in partnership with other levels of government to ensure a suitable supply of affordable housing in the regions.

NATIONAL OBJECTIVE

Councils have a role to play in ensuring there is enough suitably located land available for housing and that a diversity of housing stock is supported. This includes ensuring that there is sufficient affordable housing for the community. Affordability has been a growing issue across the country and needs an integrated response for all levels of government to ensure that legislation and policy at the three levels combine harmoniously to achieve the desired outcome.

KEY ARGUMENTS

Like many regional areas, Snowy Monaro is experiencing a shortage of housing and accommodation. This includes affordable and social housing, as well as accommodation for a large seasonal workforce. Over the past two years, the area has seen unprecedented population growth, particularly in Jindabyne and Berridale, which according to the REIA have experienced the second and third highest population growth in Australia.

The shortage of available housing is impacting on all local business, including the local schools and hospital, as potential workforce cannot find a place to live. It is impacting on Council, as workers in essential services, such as water and sewer supply, are leaving the area due to the high housing costs.

In Jindabyne, similar to many locations with seasonal resort tourism, this is compounded by the number of workers and tourists seeking short term accommodation, resulting in the market prioritizing those rental options (i.e. air bnb type) over long term rentals.

Short term rental accommodation (STRA) has a significant impact on the cost of housing and the availability of long term rentals in high tourism areas, and this impact appears to be increasing. Information provided through the Go Jindabyne Masterplan project shows that approximately 30% of all dwellings in Jindabyne are used solely for STRA. There are legislative barriers to SMRC applying a 'bed tax'.

There is also a lack of requirements to complete construction, with land banking by developers/landowners occurring. This is further increasing the cost of available housing. Land tax reform is seen as needed as one of the tools to influence the supply of land. In Cooma, a large amount of land is appropriately zoned for residential development, and over the past 5 years, Council has granted consent for over 200 lots. However, the majority of this land has not reached the market. The general lack of regulation to require the completion of development and to prevent land banking has led to a tightly held market that has failed to provide housing supply.

There are constraints to developing Crown Land and support for Local Aboriginal Land Councils. Cooma and Adaminaby are experiencing an acute housing shortage caused in part by Snowy 2.0. Both Cooma and Adaminaby have a significant amount of Crown Land zoned for residential development. Realising this development potential has proven elusive without being caught in long bureaucratic processes. A straightforward and streamlined process to release this land from the Crown and settle native title claims is needed to allow Governments or relevant Local Aboriginal Land Councils an opportunity to realise these assets and the housing opportunities that come with them.

All levels of government are required to work collaboratively together in establishing policy and legislative support to incentivise owners to put housing into the long term housing market in a way that increase the level of affordable housing.

Motion number 86.1 Leeton Shire Council NSW

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to dedicate a proportion of their financial assistance for housing initiatives to rural Australia where the need is great but the scale of development is unable to compete with metropolitan areas and major regional centres.

NATIONAL OBJECTIVE

The objective is to seek dedicated financial assistance for housing initiatives in rural Australia to enable Local Government to strategically plan and develop enabling infrastructure to address housing affordability and supply. Councils welcome initiatives such as the Housing Australia Future Fund, the HAFF, but requires the government to ring fence a portion to deliver for rural and remote Australia.

KEY ARGUMENTS

- There continues to be an unprecedented level of housing demand in rural and regional Australia which is inhibiting business / industrial growth. There is often a lack of development ready land.
- The national rental vacancy rate was low at 0.8% in January 2024. This emphasises the highly competitive nature of Australia's rental market, with asking rent prices at historic highs.
- Local Government can play a major role in facilitating and developing affordable housing, however, due to scale in rural areas, along with increasing and unexpected costs, financial assistance is required to develop the enabling infrastructure required to deliver new housing.
- Rural Councils often need to purchase in skills and 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 where scale generally does not deliver a commercially viable lot yield.
- 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 86.2 Tenterfield Shire Council NSW

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to develop a national housing shortage review and to investigate the national delivery of housing through the State Governments to meet the demands of regional and rural communities.

NATIONAL OBJECTIVE

As prices rise for housing in the regions, first home buyers, renters and low socio economic communities are being thrown to the street. The number of homes that are rented via Air BNB also reduces the total of houses available. Local Government is not equipped to answer this issue, it needs to be a State and Federal issue.

KEY ARGUMENTS

As prices rise for housing in the regions, first home buyers, renters and low socio-economic communities are being thrown to the street. The number of homes that are rented via Air BNB also reduces the total of houses available. Local Government is not equipped to answer this issue, it needs to be a State and Federal issue.

Motion number 87 City of Holdfast Bay SA

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to strongly lead a swift realignment of housing policy to recalibrate the housing market in acknowledgement of shelter being a fundamental human need and right, urgently lead the development of alternative housing models to expand housing options, and boldly re-prioritise its infrastructure spending to address the housing crisis and arrest its continued escalation.

NATIONAL OBJECTIVE

The housing crisis is real, as indicated by statistics and the on-ground experiences of service agencies. While it has many causes and results in varying symptoms across the country, it is nevertheless a national phenomenon.

The Australian Government announced an important investment in late 2023 via the Housing Australia Future Fund and the National Housing Accord, but there are many other levers in the complex network of issues causing the housing crisis which can be activated.

As eloquently stated by the United Nations (UN) Special Rapporteur, "homelessness is a profound assault on dignity, social inclusion and the right to life. It is a prima facie violation of the right to housing and violates a number of other human rights in addition to the right to life, including non-discrimination, health, water and sanitation, security of the person and freedom from cruel, degrading and inhuman treatment." The Office of the High Commissioner, UN Human Rights further notes "Homelessness...indicates a State failure to guarantee access to safe, affordable and adequate housing for all..."(1)

Homelessness, housing stress, unstable housing and affordable housing shortages are not failures of individuals' characters, and directing markets to assure human rights is the fundamental job of government.

KEY ARGUMENTS

Governments have varied roles in economics and historically, Australia's social policy made clear distinctions about who was deserving of welfare. Resources were aimed at protecting wage earners, which stands in contrast to the origins of Scandinavian social policy which was focused on promoting equality. During the 1980s onwards, the rise of neoliberalism created a backlash against government interventions in markets. While the relative merits of economic approaches can be debated, the current on-ground reality is rising inequality and growing social instability.

Whatever a government's politics, a fundamental criteria to having citizens' trust is a collective belief that a government's actions will be fair and will benefit most. The housing crisis is a symptom of why trust has been steadily declining, because the results of successive government housing policies are far from fair, and an increasingly small cohort are benefiting from the growing divide.

During the past four decades home ownership among Australians aged 25-34 sunk from around 60% to 45%, and 71 to 65% across all age groups . (2) At the other end of the spectrum, the proportion of social housing is estimated to have fallen from over 7% of all housing in Australia in the early 1990s down to just 4% in 2019.(3) Contrast this with Singapore, where over the same period, home ownership rose from around 60% to 88%. In Vienna, Austria more than 60% of the city's 1.8 million inhabitants live in subsidised housing and nearly half of the housing

market is made up of city-owned or cooperative models. In Sweden, housing co-operatives amount to 22% of total housing, while in Norway this figure is 15% nation-wide, but 40% in the capital.

Simply attempting to increase supply via existing models of home building and ownership when there are already known labour shortages in the construction sector will not alleviate the crisis. Because housing is a complex adaptive system, improved results need system-wide analysis and transformation. This requires a multi-disciplinary approach that challenges underlying assumptions about the root causes of, and potential solutions to, homelessness and its precursors. It requires integrated housing policy that is supported, not thwarted, by other government investment decisions (e.g., taking skills out of housing construction for other non-urgent construction activities, investing primarily in roads rather than liveable neighbourhoods, etc). And it requires an acknowledgement that the status quo must change, underpinned by trust built on results that improve equity.

There is a strong case for bold government intervention in the housing market. Examples could include more directive land use planning based on wellbeing outcomes to ensure that housing is built where infrastructure already exists and that land uses are not counter-productive (e.g., premium land being taken up by car yards). Consideration could also be given to creative short-term solutions (e.g., how might public buildings be used for safe, temporary accommodation out of business hours? Would additional flexible working arrangements free up public buildings for conversion to accommodation?) Whatever is considered needs to be transformative as the status quo cannot continue.

Motion number 87.1 North Sydney Council NSW

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to:

- a. recognise that the housing affordability crisis across Australia requires a multifaceted and nuanced approach from all levels of government.
- b. to work directly with local government to provide funding directly to councils to support the local delivery of social and affordable housing.
- c. link funding provided to the States to the delivery of social and affordable housing in state owned projects and that the commitment to the provision of social and affordable housing be in in perpetuity, not on a short-term basis.

NATIONAL OBJECTIVE

Housing affordability is a critical issue for all Australian States. The housing affordability crisis in Australia is a complex issue that cannot be adequately addressed through a one-size-fits-all solution. It requires a multifaceted and nuanced approach that takes into account the unique circumstances and challenges faced by different communities across the country.

KEY ARGUMENTS

At the local level, governments are often in the best position to understand the specific housing needs of their communities and to implement targeted solutions that address those needs. By working directly with local government, the Federal Government can ensure that funding and

resources are allocated in a way that reflects the realities on the ground and maximizes their impact.

Direct funding to councils for the delivery of social and affordable housing is a practical and effective way to address the housing affordability crisis at the grassroots level. Local governments are well-positioned to identify suitable sites for development, engage with community stakeholders, and oversee the construction and management of housing projects.

Linking federal funding to the delivery of social and affordable housing in state-owned projects is a strategic way to leverage resources and incentivize action at the state level. By making funding contingent on the commitment to providing housing in perpetuity, governments can help to ensure that investments have a lasting impact and contribute to long-term solutions.

Moreover, tying funding to specific outcomes sends a clear message that addressing the housing affordability crisis is a priority for the Federal Government. This can help to catalyse action at the state level and encourage collaboration between different levels of government to tackle the problem collectively.

Motion number 87.2 Mornington Peninsula Shire Council VIC

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to:

- a. Identify and release crown land and buildings to be repurposed and developed into social and affordable housing, with allocated funds to support this.
- b. Establish targets by local government area for the supply of social housing to better match need, and appropriate mix of dwelling size to match local needs.
- c. Adopt a stronger, standardised approach and establish a clear pathway for providing social and affordable housing through mandatory inclusionary zoning
- d. Create a mechanism to allow local government participation to influence national policy and initiatives, ensuring local data helps to shape this policy.
- e. Provide direct access to federal government funding for social and affordable housing.
- f. Provide access to specific funding for key worker accommodation.

NATIONAL OBJECTIVE

There are areas of high need on the Mornington Peninsula with four towns experiencing more relative disadvantage than the Australian average.¹ Despite the growing need, the provision of social housing on the Mornington Peninsula has been stagnant. We must ensure federal funding models and programs respond to communities most in need. Other similar communities and council areas also miss out on support due to current funding models and criteria.

Communities such as ours which are made up of a mix of regional, rural and urban areas, need greater access to direct federal funding programs for social and affordable housing. We currently miss out on state regional initiatives because despite our predominantly regional character, we are classified by the Victorian government as a metropolitan council. For example, despite our clear needs, the Mornington Peninsula Shire Council do not qualify for

recent state initiatives including \$1 billion Victorian Regional Housing Fund and Key Worker Accommodation program.

KEY ARGUMENTS

Federal government support and incentives are required to attract community housing associations to areas outside metropolitan areas such as the Mornington Peninsula. Incentives could include the release of government owned land for the development of social and affordable housing, and access to funding streams for Councils with high, unmet need.

The high cost of land on the Mornington Peninsula, coupled with low-density planning controls, make it less attractive for housing agencies to undertake developments. Federal government funding is needed to ensure social and affordable housing is built in local communities, where it is most needed.

At the last Census, 6,430 local households were in housing stress (9.3 per cent of all households)². 35.3 per cent of households in private rentals are in rental stress, which is higher than the average for Greater Melbourne (26.8 per cent of households). Despite this, we are locked out of funding initiatives including the Victorian Regional Housing Fund.

Four Peninsula towns experience socio-economic disadvantage higher than the Australian average.³ Only 2 per cent of houses sold on the Peninsula are affordable to those on a low or very low income.⁴

Federal funding must target communities suffering the most. Despite the growing need, the provision of social housing on the Mornington Peninsula has been virtually stagnant since 1991. Only 1.4 per cent of households on the Mornington Peninsula are social housing, which is below Greater Melbourne (2.3 per cent of households).

The Mornington Peninsula community currently do not have access to a regional-based initiatives. The unique mix of our regional characteristics does not fit the existing state metropolitan classifications therefore we miss out on this funding regardless of our need, including Key Worker Accommodation funding.

Motion number 87.3 Mornington Peninsula Shire Council VIC

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to:

- a. Increase Emergency Relief Funding and ensure more equitable distribution that reflects need at a local level.
- b. A review of vacant social housing properties and additional funds to support maintenance and/or repurposing of ageing stock to minimise vacancy rates.
- c. A review of crown land to identify and release land and buildings that could be developed for social and affordable housing with allocated funds to support this development.
- d. Ensure social housing targets are met in the locations where there is greatest need by supporting local councils to minimise the barriers housing agencies face when presented with high land costs coupled with low density planning.
- e. Ensure that negotiation of the next National Housing and Homelessness Agreement considers the recommendations of previous inquiries, such as the 2021 Inquiry into Homelessness in Victoria. Funding models should deliver improved outcomes for people experiencing homelessness through better integration, coordination and outcome-based measures and services, that more effectively respond to community need.

NATIONAL OBJECTIVE

Current funding models and programs are not appropriate to equitably meet needs across diverse communities. Funding is currently allocated on a regional-basis and does not adequately consider communities such as the Mornington Peninsula, which is classified as metropolitan but has more in common with regional areas.

The Mornington Peninsula and other council areas of high socio-economic disadvantage are missing out on necessary funding. We must ensure federal funding models and programs are evidence-based and responding to the communities suffering most.

KEY ARGUMENTS

There are currently over 3,700 people on the waiting list for social housing on the Mornington Peninsula.⁶ The absence of crisis accommodation on the Peninsula further exacerbates the issue with many people sleeping rough on our foreshores every night. The Mornington Peninsula has the fourth highest number of people sleeping rough in Victoria, with 12 per cent of people who were experiencing homelessness sleeping rough at the last census.⁷

There is no funded crisis accommodation facility on the Mornington Peninsula, however such a resource is critical to addressing homelessness, before people can be placed into longer term housing. Local crisis accommodation is critical to providing people with safe and stable accommodation while they are waiting for longer term housing. Unfortunately, the only crisis housing and large majority of social housing options are in inner metropolitan areas, far from where the local community need is.

The housing and cost-of-living crisis has seen a significant increase in demand for emergency relief in our community, but there has not been the level of increased government funding to help meet this demand.

Emergency relief funding is distributed on a regional basis but the service access and needs across a region are diverse, and the allocation of limited resourcing results in some communities such as the Mornington Peninsula missing out.

Communities on the Mornington Peninsula do not have the range of necessary service models to support local needs. We would like to see an increased amount of emergency relief funding coming to our municipality, and a fair share that reflects our community's need – for things such as food relief, material aid, financial assistance, housing support and outreach services to try and prevent homelessness.

JOBS AND SKILLS

Motion number 88 City of Canterbury-Bankstown NSW

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to address skills shortages and build capacity in local government by:

- Expanding and funding opportunities for training through local government apprenticeships, traineeships and cadetships.
- Providing subsidised or free TAFE and university courses in the disciplines where there are known skills shortages to better connect job seekers and workers with local and regional employment opportunities in local government.

NATIONAL OBJECTIVE

The local government sector requires a diverse and sustained workforce of mixed occupations and skill sets to fulfill expanding responsibilities and meet the growing and diverse needs of the community.

Significant labour and skills shortages, along with financial constraints, impacts of natural disasters and other factors, are constraining the capacity of local governments to deliver services, projects and infrastructure to the community. Labour and skills shortages are also impacting the capacity for local governments to promote local and regional economic development and employment growth, and to effectively deploy the local workforce to create a more sustainable community.

The Australian Government must urgently play its part in the amelioration of labour and skills shortages in local government by delivering on the outcomes of the 2022 Jobs and Skills Summit and:

- increasing funding for apprentices, traineeships and cadetships in local government
- extending on the National Skills Agreement and Australian Skills Guarantee to provide increased funding for fee-free TAFE and university placements to better align local labour and skill supply with jobs and skills demand in local government.

KEY ARGUMENTS

ALGA's 2022 Local Government Workforce Skills and Capability Survey indicated that more than 90 percent of Australia's 537 councils were experiencing skills shortages, with about two-thirds of these councils experiencing related impacts on project delivery. The Survey also shows critical skills shortages across the occupations including, but not limited to, engineers, town planners, building surveyors, environmental health officers, accountants, accounts and pay roll clerks, IT and ICT technicians, supervisors and team leaders, labourers and mechanical tradespersons.

The predominant factors influencing skills shortages are a tight labour market for skilled workers, funding uncertainty and an inability for councils to compete with private sector remuneration and locational disadvantages, with these problems exacerbated for many councils that are also experiencing constrained financial resources and dealing with the impacts of natural disasters (ALGA submission – Australian Skills Guarantee Discussion Paper). Competition for skills with the private sector and other levels of government has

severely impacted on the local government sector creating challenges to attract and retain required staff.

These factors limit the capacity of local governments to develop, deliver and maintain services, projects and infrastructure to the community, to promote local and regional economic development and employment growth, and the capacity to build from the 'ground up' and effectively deploy the local workforce, people and resources to create a more sustainable community. These direct impacts of skills shortages are being felt across communities all over Australia.

Councils also play a key role in ensuring local businesses have access to skilled staff, and assisting the community with access to skills, education, and pathways to employment. Many local businesses are also experiencing skills shortages and are still trying to recruit or hire skilled workers following the COVID health restrictions.

The local government sector is also calling on the Federal Government to deliver on its Party National Platform 2023 that promises to respond to critical labour market shortages in the economy through the delivery of accessible and quality education in addressing skills shortages, rebuilding the sectors hardest hit by the pandemic and collaborating with all levels of government, industry, unions and education and training providers to develop and provide high quality and relevant industry qualifications.

Motion number 88.1 Tenterfield Shire Council NSW

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to identify jobs and skill development opportunities for rural council areas and utilise the delivery through the accredited regional service outlets such as TAFE.

NATIONAL OBJECTIVE

Rural and regional Council's struggle with finding skilled staff, as there are less training facilities. A skills shortage is a national, state and local issue.

KEY ARGUMENTS

Rural and regional Council's struggle with finding skilled staff, as there are less training facilities. A skills shortage is a national, state and local issue.

Motion number 88.2 Tamworth Regional Council NSW

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian government to fund the first 12 months of wages for apprenticeships and traineeships and 50% reimbursement thereafter until their training is complete in all local governments throughout Australia.

NATIONAL OBJECTIVE

Local government is a major employer in Australia employing more than 190,000 Australian across over 400 occupations. Currently councils are facing significant job and skills shortages that are constraining capacity and capability to deliver services and maintain and build local infrastructure.

KEY ARGUMENTS

By allowing councils to attract and retain apprentices and trainees the capability of councils would be greatly improved as well as providing increased vocational pathways for community members.

Motion number 88.3 Forbes Shire Council NSW

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to adequately fund the delivery of trades courses on site at rural and regional TAFE campuses.

NATIONAL OBJECTIVE

The shortage of skilled tradespeople nationwide remains acute. In the heart of our rural landscapes lies an untapped well of potential, eager individuals with dreams and aspirations. However, the journey towards these goals often faces a significant roadblock: limited access to Technical and Further Education (TAFE) courses. It's time we recognise the pressing need for increased funding to bring more TAFE courses onsite to rural campuses, bridging the gap in skills and opportunities.

KEY ARGUMENTS

Many TAFE courses are simply not readily available in rural areas. This lack of accessibility perpetuates a cycle of underdevelopment, hindering economic growth and social progress in rural communities.

The bush is in desperate need of skilled tradespeople across various sectors, from electricians and welders to mechanics and nurses. These professions form the backbone of rural economies, driving infrastructure development, maintaining essential services, and ensuring community well-being. However, without accessible TAFE education, the pipeline for skilled workers remains alarmingly dry, jeopardising the vitality of rural industries and livelihoods.

The current scenario forces individuals in rural areas to travel substantial distances to access education. This not only incurs significant financial burdens but also imposes immense logistical challenges, often deterring individuals from pursuing further education altogether. Education should be a gateway to opportunity, not a barrier dictated by one's geographical location.

While online and hybrid learning models have expanded access to education regardless of geographic location, it's essential to recognise that many TAFE courses, particularly in trades, require in-person elements. Trades education often involves hands-on training and practical experience that cannot be fully replicated in virtual environments. Therefore, while online and hybrid models offer valuable flexibility, they cannot fully substitute the need for onsite TAFE campuses in rural areas.

Although the current National Skills Agreement is a great step forward for increasing funding to the VET Sector, further funding directly tied to providing access to TAFE courses in rural areas would empower these communities to thrive independently. Accessible education breeds local talent, fostering economic resilience and reducing dependency on external resources.

Motion number 89 Bega Valley Shire Council NSW

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government (Department of Home Affairs) to utilise the Regional Development Australia (RDA) Skills Audits to better inform the skilled occupation list, with each region able to have a regionally specific skills list tailored to identified regional needs.

NATIONAL OBJECTIVE

Many Councils across the country are facing skills shortages. Working with RDA to undertake Skills Audits and using these to inform the skilled occupation list will help to ensure a more efficient matching of migrants and skills and will help to retain migrant skills within the regions.

KEY ARGUMENTS

It is imperative that regional communities are able to attract and retain suitable skilled workers. The Skilled Work Regional (Provisional) visa (subclass 491) allows skilled migrants to live, study and work in designated regional areas for a period of 5 years. It is a provisional residency visa available to skilled workers who are willing to live and work in a designated regional area (successful applicants can apply for a permanent visa after 3 years). It is available both to skilled workers who are already living and working in Australia as temporary residents, and to those living outside Australia. NSW participates in the 491 visa program to support its regional economies and communities through the settlement of highly skilled migrants who are committed to living and working in regional NSW long term.

The process for determining the list of skills needed in regional communities, which are then aligned with the 491 visa program, has evolved over time and does not adequately or accurately represent the real skills needed in regional Australia.

Motion number 90 City of Stirling WA

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to:

- a. Research, design, and develop a national graduate program to attract talent for critical capability areas in the government sector.
- b. Engage with the sector to gather graduate or skills demands and understand if there is interest in a national graduate program.
- c. Develop costings and a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to the sector for approval.
- d. Implement a Graduate Coordinator to manage the graduate recruitment, onboarding, training programs, rotations, mentoring, coaching and transition to ongoing employment.
- e. Establish opportunities to offer and provide graduates to the sector that can support the supply of future talent and skills needs for the industry.

NATIONAL OBJECTIVE

In 2023, the skills market remained incredibly tight, with 88% of employers experiencing a skills shortage* and 77% of employers report difficulty in finding the skilled talent they need**.

The latest Skills Priority List (SPL) released by Jobs and Skills Australia in October 2023 shows that 36% of occupations assessed are in shortage. Technicians and Trade Workers, and Professional occupations (health, engineering, information communication technology (ICT) and science roles) have the highest shortages.

With the competitive talent market, Local Government is competing for key talent against industry and each other. Should Local Government develop a national Graduate program, it will support the sector to secure the future supply of in demand capabilities and the development of careers for the Industry.

* Research from Hays – Skills in demand for 2024.

** 2023 Global Talent Shortage Survey, Manpower Group.

KEY ARGUMENTS

The City proposes a national graduate program to have several agencies and councils involved to provide rotational or secondment opportunities with structured training programs for university graduates. This will provide graduates with a diverse range of experience across the sector and provide regional or interstate rotations, a great way for graduates to kick start a career in their chosen profession with a pathway to permanent employment within the sector.

With a successful graduate program, it will provide a new value proposition for employment into the sector and a new competitive edge through new talent and career entry pathways in government.

It is important to ensure graduates are engaged within the last six months of the program to apply for employment opportunities with their preferred council or agency. Therefore, a coordinator mentoring the graduates and managing the rotations will ensure a successful program from recruitment to the transition to employment beyond the graduate program.

Motion number 91 Bega Valley Shire Council NSW

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to provide incentives to address critical sector skills shortages effecting private and public investment, primarily in the fields of planning, engineering and building certification with these incentives to be in the form of scholarships, co-funding cadetships and reduced university course costs.

NATIONAL OBJECTIVE

Councils across the country are facing a housing affordability and availability crisis with a number of factors contributing to the situation. There is also an enormous pipeline of public investment that has been targeted at unlocking future economic growth.

It is becoming more apparent that there is an imbalance between demand for a number of skilled professions and supply of practitioners in those fields that is creating a real barrier to housing and enabling infrastructure development.

KEY ARGUMENTS

Key shortage areas in both the private and public sector are most acute in the engineering (including development engineering), planning (including development assessment) and

building certification areas. Competition for the relatively limited supply of these professions compared to demand means that everyone is competing for the same number of limited people, rather than addressing the underlying issue of supply in the fields.

Through targeted incentives there is the opportunity to address the issue albeit it recognising the investment is for the longer term benefit.

Motion number 91.1 Tenterfield Shire Council NSW

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to develop professional training paths to allow councils to support the training of engineers, building surveyors and other professional staff.

NATIONAL OBJECTIVE

Professional skill shortages are a fact of life for regional councils. Many employees wont live in the regions and we therefore need to support and develop the skilled workforce that we are able to attract. Specific areas of shortage are the Engineering and Building Surveyors areas.

KEY ARGUMENTS

Professional skill shortages are a fact of life for regional councils. Many employees wont live in the regions and we therefore need to support and develop the skilled workforce that we are able to attract. Specific areas of shortage are the Engineering and Building Surveyors areas.

Motion number 92 Gladstone Regional Council QLD

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to address skills shortages and regional retention challenges by;

- a. Reviewing incentive allocations to make working and living regionally more attractive.
- b. Adequately incentivising critical workers to live in regional areas and;
- c. Supporting local Government efforts through funding, to improve regional liveability factors.

NATIONAL OBJECTIVE

Australia is experiencing impacts from a lack of workers in areas such as;

- Trades (construction, infrastructure)
- Professional occupations (health, engineering, science, manufacturing)
- Care (childcare, aged care)

This lack of workers is affecting critical service delivery in health, housing, and community safety as well as the daily operations of industry and local governments.

Local governments and other industry sectors are experiencing impact to daily operations as vital roles are difficult to fill and retain.

Regional areas are particularly suffering.

A holistic review of incentive allocation is required to make working and living regionally more attractive.

Incentives targeted at attracting critical workers to live and work regionally are required to ensure equitable access to fit for purpose, affordable services for all Australians.

Funding support to local governments is required to assist with improving liveability factors to further entice workers to regional areas.

KEY ARGUMENTS

Workers may not be attracted to regional areas if liveability factors are not sufficient and liveability of a region is impacted by availability of workers, particularly critical workers, creating a cycle. Therefore, A holistic approach to worker attraction, retention and liveability is crucial to addressing the challenges, for the long-term.

Liveability is measured by quality-of-life factors, such as social infrastructure, transport, housing, health care, education, and a safe and stable built and natural environment.

Liveability is a crucial component to attracting and retaining workers.

Without adequate incentives, workers may not be attracted to live and work regionally due to a lack of access to other services deemed important for their lifestyle.

The ability to attract and retain the required workforce is crucial to the nation's energy transition to renewable energy.

Local governments are well placed to focus on improving liveability of their communities however, adequate Government support by way of funding for social infrastructure projects, housing, health care and education is required.

Motion number 93 Forbes Shire Council NSW

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to abolish HECS and HELP debt for doctors, teachers and nurses in rural and remote areas.

NATIONAL OBJECTIVE

According to the National Skills Commission 2023 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

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 and HELP debt places a significant financial burden on recent graduates and early-career professionals. Abolishing HECS-HELP debt for doctors, teachers, and nurses in rural and remote areas could significantly address critical shortages in these vital professions. These regions often struggle to attract skilled professionals due to factors like isolation, limited

resources, and challenging conditions. By relieving these essential workers of their HECS debt burden, we can incentivize them to pursue careers where their expertise is most needed.

With reduced financial pressure, individuals would be more inclined to establish roots in these underserved areas, thus strengthening community ties and services.

This investment in education and training without the burden of debt would improve service quality and narrow the gap in access to healthcare and education, ultimately fostering healthier and more empowered communities. Abolishing HECS and HELP debt for these professionals is a prudent investment towards achieving equitable access to essential services for all Australians.

Motion number 93.1 Tenterfield Shire Council NSW

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to work with State Governments to identify health professionals required within rural areas and provide direct support by reducing HECs debts for people moving to rural or remote areas for a set period of time.

NATIONAL OBJECTIVE

Refer to summary of key arguments.

KEY ARGUMENTS

Fewer and fewer accredited health practitioners are heading to regional and rural areas to work and settle. If we aren't able to attract these professional to our communities we will lose more services and community members will need to move closer to larger cities with the health services they require, putting more stress on housing and the hospitals and health professionals in the larger areas.

Motion number 94 Snowy Valleys Council NSW

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government, together with State and Territory Education Ministers, to undertake an urgent review (as scheduled) on the impact of the National Teacher Workforce Action Plan to understand whether it is achieving its desired outcomes.

NATIONAL OBJECTIVE

In December 2022 Education Ministers agreed on a National Teacher Workforce Action Plan to address the national teacher workforce shortages.

KEY ARGUMENTS

It was identified in December 2022 by all Education Ministers for the need for an action plan to address the teacher workforce shortage. It would appear that over the past two years the teacher shortage has further deteriorated and that it is crucial that a review of the progress of the workforce plan is undertaken in 2024 as scheduled. Within Snowy Valleys Council, our small community of Khancoban has been unable to attract a pre-school teacher for over six months resulting in the service temporarily closing until a teacher can be recruited. A number of

public primary and secondary schools are also being impacted by teacher shortages. This is not unique to Snowy Valleys Council.

Motion number 95 Leeton Shire Council NSW

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to:

- a. provide local councils with both the mandate and direct financial resourcing to provide additional oversight to the Pacific Australia Labour Mobility (PALM) Scheme Program (both workers and employers), in partnership with Government and PALM contractors; and
- b. reinstate temporary work rights for workers disengaged from the PALM Scheme who are residing and working in regional and rural areas.

NATIONAL OBJECTIVE

To ensure regional and rural businesses are supported to legally meet their workforce needs while protecting “disengaged” PALM Scheme workers from exploitation.

KEY ARGUMENTS

- The Pacific Australia Labour Mobility (PALM) scheme is an essential temporary migration program designed to address unskilled, low-skilled, and semi-skilled labour shortages across rural and regional Australia, as well as the agriculture sector nationally. The PALM scheme allows eligible Australian businesses to hire workers from nine Pacific islands and Timor-Leste. Some rural and regional business have as many as 25 – 40% of their workforce from the PALM Scheme.
- The PALM Scheme has been a vital source of workers when there are insufficient local workers available. It is increasingly difficult for regional/rural employers to recruit low to medium skilled workers agricultural workers, forklift, factory floor workers, labourers which is why PALM workers are an attractive option.
- The Scheme does not always deliver on the workers’ expectations which results in a relatively large number leaving their designated place of employment. Some of the reasons for disengagement include unfair wage deductions, poor housing for workers, uncertain work hours, and lack of social connection.
- “Disengaged” workers lose their work rights and Medicare benefits. They can, as a result, be exposed to exploitation as they strive to survive outside the PALM Scheme. Many will move interstate and to new towns, seeking employment. They work for cash-wages.
- Many regional and rural Councils appreciate how their local farmers, businesses and industries need PALM scheme workers, with “disengaged” workers as much in demand as those who remain in the Scheme.
- The Federal Government needs to increase its support for local governments who find themselves having to support both local businesses (to find workers) and worker wellbeing, as well as the interface between both and other services.
- Many Councils are willing to oversight and provide services to the PALM Scheme provided they are financially resourced to do so.

- A more systematic approach is required to ensure that all local Councils have the information and financial resources they need to support the Scheme and foster inclusive and welcoming communities.
- If PALM workers become “disengaged” but are providing vital services in a community where there are no local workers available, they should be accorded work rights to allow them to get back to working legally as PALM Scheme workers on similar terms and conditions as their original visa. This supports farmers, businesses and industries (who are desperate for workers) to continue to operate legally when sourcing labour.

Motion number 96 Forbes Shire Council NSW

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to extend financial support for the delivery of health services and equipment in rural and remote communities and ensure local government is included as a stakeholder in project consultation.

NATIONAL OBJECTIVE

It should be included as a prerequisite, that agencies, for example primary care organisations, applying for Federal grants related to the delivery of health services in rural and remote communities provide evidence to the funding body of consultation with and support by the Local Government/s areas targeted, prior to applications being made and include Local Government as a stakeholder in projects.

KEY ARGUMENTS

Local Governments in rural and remote constituencies are acutely aware of the health-related issues that affect their communities and, though, not a remit of Local Government they continue to spend significant amounts of money to maintain health service across the age continuum within their communities. Community members also fundraise for the provision of delivery service and equipment within their communities.

Rural and remote councils are propping up health service delivery in their constituencies with no financial remuneration from State or Federal Governments and little recognition of the cost shifting burden to these Councils.

Local Government in rural and remote areas should be included in any dialogue related to delivering health services within their constituencies. For example, the Innovative Models of Care Program.

Models of Care introduced following authentic consultation foster and strengthen community confidence in contrast to imposed Models of Care.

Motion number 97 City of Mount Gambier SA

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to remove the parental income test as a qualifying criteria for Youth Allowance eligibility for regional students relocating to pursue post-secondary education, and other measures that encourage youth/regional participation in further education.

NATIONAL OBJECTIVE

Engage! A strategy to include young people in the decisions we make was published by the Australian Department of Education on 20 March 2024.

The opening message from the Minister for Youth, the Hon Dr Anne Aly MP states '[t]his strategy marks the beginning of a new chapter in how we work with young people to build a better future for everyone' and '{w}e can deliver a better Australia by listening to their valuable insights, perspectives and lived experience. We know that young people are best placed to help us understand the issues they face and help inform policies for the future.'

The strategy provides that young people in Australia should be empowered, valued and included in the development of policies and

programs that impact them, and identifies that 25.9% of the 4.7 million young people aged 12-25 live in regional and remote areas.

The most important issues for Young people are identified as cost of living (55.3%), housing affordability, rent and home ownership (30.3%) and education and training (29.1%).

Priority 1 in the strategy is that the Australian Government will recognise and listen to young people, with Action 1.2 being to recognise young people's contributions to their communities.

Priority 3 is supporting government to work with young people, with Action 3.1 including young people helping shape new and improved policies and programs that impact young people, and Action 3.2 relating to the Australian Government considering young people in the design of new policies and programs.

This motion relates directly to this Australian Government objective.

KEY ARGUMENTS

To be classified as "independent" and exempt from the ongoing parental income test under the current Youth Allowance qualification criteria, students must meet the following conditions:

- Be under the age of 22.
- Not be in a registered or de facto relationship.
- Not have a dependent child.

To fulfill these requirements, they need to pass a workforce participation test. This involves working full-time (30 hours per week) for a minimum of 18 months within a 2-year timeframe. By meeting these criteria, students can maintain their independence and continue receiving Youth Allowance payments without being subject to their parents' income assessment.

There is an alternative qualifying criteria for regional, rural and remote students which means they can be considered independent if they have earned at least 75% of the National Training Wage (approx. \$29,000) in a 14 month period since leaving school or they have worked part time (at least 15 hours per week) for at least 2 years since leaving school. To qualify as independent using this alternate criteria, students must be moving away from home to study and their parents must earn less than a combined income of \$160,000 pa plus \$10,000 for each eligible sibling.

Given the considerable economic pressures already being faced by regional families sending a child to a major city to study and the relatively meagre payments provided by Youth Allowance towards a student's cost of living, the parental income test and workforce participation requirements is considered unjust for regional students.

The City of Mount Gambier has sought and obtained support from the South Australian Local Government Association and seeks a show of support from fellow regional (and metropolitan) councils through the ALGA NGA to advocate to have the parental income test removed from qualifying criteria for young regional students that are relocating to them a fair go at success.

The President of the Local Government Association of South Australia, Mayor Dean Johnson, wrote to the Federal Minister for Education, the Hon Jason Clare MP, in December 2023 in relation to a motion passed at the LGA's Annual General Meeting held on 26 October 2023 following support from its Member Councils, that the LGA:

“Advocate for removal of the parental income test as a qualifying criterion for Youth Allowance eligibility for regional students relocating to pursue post-secondary education, and other measures that encourage youth/regional participation in further education.”

LGASA Members concerns and request are consistent with those of the Isolated Children's Parents' Association (ICPA):

Rural and remote students continue to be under-represented at tertiary level and have lower participation completion rates compared to metropolitan counterparts. The single greatest barrier to rural students' access to tertiary education is cost.[i]

The current income support mechanisms for eligible students (Youth Allowance, ABSTUDY and Austudy) and part-time work that many students undertake, contribute to assisting with the living costs of students once they can actually access their chosen tertiary institution but do not adequately recognise the additional costs incurred by all rural and remote students having to relocate each year to access higher education.

The logistics for students relocating to a tertiary institution of their choice include the up-front set up and on-going costs associated with relocation from the family home; travel to the place of study, securing accommodation and on-going living expenses in context of demand for affordable housing and rising living costs. While the costs associated with relocating have been recognised through the provision of Relocation Scholarships, only students receiving Youth Allowance as a dependent have benefited from this payment.

Members are concerned with the eligibility criteria for regional, rural and remote students and the impact on local and regional workforce skills development. The economic pressures faced by regional families in sending a child to a major city to study and the limitations of the Youth Allowance towards students cost of living, places significant disadvantages for regional students. It is requested by members that the federal government recognise the disadvantage that of the Youth Allowance (eligibility/means/income and workforce participation tests) impact on the level of participation of regional youth in post-secondary education and remove the parental income test as a qualifying criterion for rural and remote students.

Motion number 98 Brimbank City Council VIC

This National General Assembly calls on the Federal Government to:

- a. Increase the JobSeeker and Youth Allowance payments
- b. Create an Economic Inclusion fund to create local job opportunities for local people

NATIONAL OBJECTIVE

In recent years, Australia has faced high inflation coupled with a lengthy period of increases to interest rates, exacerbating the cost of living pressures and the increase in the cost of essential goods. This has had a significant effect on the most vulnerable citizens, particularly those who are receiving JobSeeker and Youth Allowance. Increasing these payments, in addition to creating an Economic Inclusion Fund, can reduce inequality, decrease the cost of living pressures and aid in the mental wellbeing of those affected.

KEY ARGUMENTS

Addressing unemployment will encourage residents to be more active in society, decrease their level of socio-economic disadvantage and provide them with the opportunity to earn and learn. An increase to JobSeeker and youth allowance would see many people assisted out of poverty and decrease the reliance on State government support. According to research undertaken by the Australia Institute think tank, Australia has one of the lowest unemployment benefits out of any OECD country. Despite recent increase to support payments, the rates still do not cover the cost of basic and essential items. For example, JobSeeker does not keep pace with the increased cost-of-living.

The establishment of an Economic Inclusion Fund aims to create local job opportunities for vulnerable groups across Australia. Funding for economic inclusion initiatives will help create an inclusive economy that enables local jobs for local people experiencing barriers to employment. Such initiatives can include expanding the program offerings of various local government facilities, and appointing employee pathways and program officers to connect people with training opportunities through TAFE Skills and Job Centres. These officers can work with specific cultural and language groups across libraries, Neighbourhood houses and local shopping centres to support job seekers.

COMMUNITY SERVICES

Motion number 99 Orange City Council NSW

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to fund the introduction and supply of anti-choking devices in all Australian Schools and Childcare Centres and encourage all Australian sporting clubs to include them as a must-have in addition to a defibrillator as part of their first aid toolkits.

NATIONAL OBJECTIVE

Life Vac is a medical device that has been specifically designed to address choking emergencies when standard first aid methods are unsuccessful. It is a single use portable suction device that is effective in clearing the upper airway 97% of time in the first compression and up to 100% by the 3rd compression. It is relatively inexpensive at approx. \$165. This is a very small investment to potentially prevent the death of a child in any community and to provide peace of mind to childcare workers and teachers nationally.

KEY ARGUMENTS

Further information can be found at <https://www.lifevac.net.au> but here are some key arguments:

- Choking can kill in less than 10 minutes.
- Time is of the essence when somebody begins to choke.
- In Australia the average Ambulance response time is 8-14 minutes (to treatment time is much more).
- 6 minutes of oxygen starvation means brain damage is possible.
- 6 - 10 minutes of oxygen starvation means brain damage is probable.
- Over 10 minutes of oxygen starvation means the victim is likely to die.
- Many people around the world cannot receive conventional treatment for choking due to pregnancy, disability, age, or obesity. Every second counts.
- If you use your LifeVac in an emergency, LiveVac will replace it free.

This is a Government issue and these devices need to be supplied free of charge to schools and childcare centres. Children are dying needlessly when lives could be saved.

Motion number 100 City of Onkaparinga SA

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to fund local governments for immunisations at \$19 per administered vaccine, for parity with the payments available to pharmacies under the National Immunisation Program.

NATIONAL OBJECTIVE

Refer to summary of key arguments

KEY ARGUMENTS

As announced in the 'Strengthening Medicare Policy', the commonwealth government has expanded the National Immunisation Program to pharmacies. This means eligible people will be able to get immunisations on the program at their local pharmacy at no cost. The Australian Government will fund pharmacies \$19 per administered vaccine. The government claims this reform will increase patient access and affordability, and reduce pressure on general practice.

Like many councils across Australia, City of Onkaparinga receives no state or federal funding for the provision of vaccines on the National Immunisation Program for our current childhood immunisation service.

We believe that, given local governments are making significant contributions to rates of immunisations across the country, they should be recompensed to the same degree as pharmacies.

Motion number 101 Break O'Day Council TAS

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to:

- a. Recognise that Local Government, as the closest level of government to the community, has an important role to play in ending violence against women and children.
- b. Support and resource Local Governments to advocate for and enact social change in their communities to end violence against women and children.
- c. Collaborate with Local Government when discussing, developing and implementing strategies to end violence against women and children.

NATIONAL OBJECTIVE

Regardless of a woman's status in society, their age, religion, political views or address, violence against women does not discriminate. It affects women from all walks of life and with the latest statistics stating that a woman is violently killed every four days in Australia, it is an issue that requires attention from all levels of government as well as the community.

Local Governments can play a crucial role in addressing violence against women and advocating for cultural and societal change due to our close proximity to our communities and our ability to implement tailored solutions for our communities. We are well placed to implement policies, allocate resources, raise awareness, provide support services, and collaborate with other levels of Government to create safer and more equitable communities for all.

KEY ARGUMENTS

The issue of violence against women and children has been on the Australian Government's agenda for several decades. Efforts to address this issue have intensified over the years, with significant attention and resources allocated to prevention, support, and legislative measures. However, despite these efforts, violence against women and children continues to dominate news headlines across the nation. Local Government believes that an ongoing commitment and long lasting action that involves support and collaboration between Local Government and the State and Federal Governments is required to create lasting change.

In October 2022, the Australian Government announced the National Plan to End Violence against Women and Children 2022 -2023. This plan provides a framework aimed at ending violence against women and children over the next 10 years. This plan aims to coordinate efforts across jurisdictions to prevent and respond to violence against women and is a joint initiative between Federal and State Governments. While the document states it is to provide... “a national policy framework to guide the work of government’s policy makers, business... etc” Local Governments believe a vital opportunity to work directly with Local Governments and their communities has been missed.

The most recent action in regards to this Plan from the Federal Government was Prime Minister Anthony Albanese announcing around \$1 billion to support those escaping domestic and family violence. Local Government commend this decisive action from the Federal Government and urge the State and Federal Governments to collaborate with Local Government to determine how this money could be best spent in their communities.

Local Government across the nation are already doing significant and important work in this space and we could do more with support from the State and Federal Governments. Local governments can collaborate with other stakeholders, including State and Federal governments and agencies, community organisations, advocacy groups, and businesses, to develop comprehensive strategies for preventing and addressing violence against women. A collaboration across the three tiers of government would help leverage resources and expertise on the ground, but most importantly, maximise the impacts of the National Strategy.

Overall, local governments have a critical role to play in ending violence against women by implementing policies, allocating resources , raising awareness, providing support services, and workingcollaborating with other levels of government andother stakeholders to create safer and more equitable communities for all.

Motion number 102 Adelaide Hills Council SA

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to:

- a. Recognise local government plays a pivotal role in achieving the Australian Government's vision of ending gender-based violence in a generation.
- b. Recognise councils can lead this generational change by adopting Our Watch’s Prevention Toolkit for Local Government.
- c. Fund a dedicated Domestic and Family Violence Prevention Officer in each State’s local government association, this role should be jointly funded by Commonwealth and state governments. That this position be funded for a minimum of five years in line with the first stage of the National Plan to End Violence against Women and Children 2022-2032. The focus of the role should be to support councils in the implementation of Our Watch’s Prevention Toolkit for Local Government.
- d. Fund the establishment of a local government grant funding program, similar to the Victorian Government’s Free from Violence Local Government program, to be administered by each LGA. That this program should be jointly funded by Commonwealth and state governments to support councils to embed gender equality and violence prevention practices into every part of their workplaces and services.

NATIONAL OBJECTIVE

This motion aligns with the 2024 NGA's priority area "Community Services" by calling for Commonwealth resourcing of local government to support the delivery of the National Plan to End Violence against Women and Children 2022-2032.

Domestic, family, and sexual violence (DFSV) is a complex and pervasive problem across the nation, with impacts across Australian families, communities and society as a whole. However, violence against women and children is preventable. To stop this violence from happening, a primary prevention approach is needed to address the underlying drivers of this violence, including gender inequality.

As the closest level of government to the community, local governments are uniquely placed to drive social change to prevent DFSV through existing partnerships, networks, and structures. To help local governments take up a prevention role, Our Watch, with Australian Government support, have produced an online Prevention Toolkit for Local Government. This Toolkit provides practical resources, tools, and templates to help local governments implement prevention activities in their workplaces and communities. However, Commonwealth and state funding is needed to establish a dedicated project officer and funding program in every State local government association focused on supporting councils to implement the Toolkit and contribute to preventing DFSV.

KEY ARGUMENTS

The number of women killed by violence each year in Australia is increasing. According to Counting Dead Women Australia (run by research group Destroy The Joint), 64 women were killed due to violence in 2023, 7 more than in 2022. As of 17 March 2024, 16 women have already been killed due to violence.

According to Our Watch, in Australia, on average one woman is killed every nine days by a current or former partner, while on average, 13 women are hospitalised every day due to family and domestic violence. In Australia, 1 in 5 women (22%) has experienced sexual violence since the age of 15, and 1 in 2 women (53%) has experienced sexual harassment in their lifetime.

Local government is at the coalface of community, with direct access to the women and children who are vulnerable and at risk. By adopting Our Watch's Toolkit for Local Government (the Toolkit), local councils can be empowered to shape attitudes, culture and norms through their employment, service provision, procurement, planning and local initiatives. The Toolkit provides councils with evidence-based and practical resources, tools and templates to help them plan and implement prevention activities in their workplaces and communities. It includes guidance for actions that need to be taken internally before local governments can engage in the external work, including gender equality audits, policies and developing a process for safety planning.

However, as councils who have already committed to implementing the Toolkit have discovered, there is significant resourcing and expertise required to implement the recommended Toolkit actions. The LGA of SA has recently reported hearing that councils are keen to act and work on prevention measures but are operating in an increasingly constrained fiscal environment.

This motion calls for funding a dedicated role in every local government association across Australia to assist councils in utilising and implementing the Toolkit, including measures to improve gender equality outcomes in local government workplaces across Australia.

The motion also calls for the Australian Government to co-fund, with State Governments, the establishment of a local government grant funding program, similar to the Victorian Government's Free from Violence Local Government program, to be administered by each State's local government association. This grant program would assist councils to cover the costs of delivering Toolkit and prevention initiatives, such as undertaking independent gender equity audits and staff training in partnership with approved expert consultancy services like the Our Watch Institute.

Should the Australian Government fund dedicated project officers in each State's local government association, the scope of the role could also include establishing a council network or community of practice with the aim of supporting council staff who are leading their organisation's Toolkit implementation.

Motion number 103 Tamworth Regional Council NSW

That the National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to recognise through the Medicare Rebate system well skilled and credentialed Mental Health Nurses and other associated and registered Mental Health practitioners, following triage and referral to an appropriate level of intervention by the GP.

NATIONAL OBJECTIVE

In rural Australia access to psychologists and psychiatrists is limited and costly with the process for referral can be quite protracted, by which time the individual's condition may have further deteriorated.

KEY ARGUMENTS

The availability of public health practitioners in rural and regional areas is very restricted, and due to the often lower socio-economic situations of people with mental health issues, they cannot afford to pay for assessments and treatments that leave them well out of pocket. That's if they can access the treatment in the first instance.

By having appropriate recognised option such as Mental Health nurses, counsellors etc, coming under a scaled Medicare Rebate scheme, we provide more equity and equality for service access for those living in rural and regional areas.

Motion number 104 City of Greater Dandenong VIC, Borough of Queenscliffe VIC, and City of Kingston VIC

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to:

1. Acknowledge Greater Dandenong City Council as secretariat of the Local Government Mayoral Taskforce Supporting People Seeking Asylum on behalf of the following member councils:
 - a) Executive Members – Blacktown City Council, Brimbank City Council, City of Darebin, City of Hume, City of Kingston, City of Monash, Merri-bek City Council, Wyndham City Council, Yarra City Council;
 - b) General Members – Ararat Rural City Council, City of Ballarat, Banyule City Council, Blue Mountains City Council, City of Canterbury Bankstown, City of Casey, Hawkesbury City Council, Hobsons Bay City Council, Inner West Council, Maribyrnong City Council, Melbourne City Council, Moonee Valley City Council, Newcastle City Council, Nillumbik Shire Council, Orange City Council, Randwick Council, Surf Coast Shire, City of West Torrens, City of Whittlesea; and
 - c) Supporter Councils – Albury City Council, Bass Coast Shire Council, City of Greater Bendigo, Cardinia Shire Council, City of Greater Geelong, City of Port Phillip, City of Hobart, Macedon Ranges Shire Council, Mornington Peninsula Shire, Borough of Queenscliffe, Wellington Shire Council, City of Wagga Wagga, City of Whitehorse;
2. Ensure people seeking asylum have a valid bridging visa with associated work and study rights while they await decisions on their protection application, including automating the bridging renewal process;
3. Expand the Status Resolution Support Services (SRSS) program eligibility and simplify the application process so that individuals and families seeking asylum who are in need and awaiting the outcome of their protection claims, or awaiting the outcome of the Administrative Appeal Tribunal AAT (or Administrative Review Tribunal once the AAT is abolished) can access healthcare, disability, housing support and other essential services; and
4. Provide improved access to tertiary education options for people seeking asylum (and their children) awaiting the outcome of their protection claims or awaiting the outcome of the Administrative Appeal Tribunal AAT (or Administrative Review Tribunal once the AAT is abolished).

NATIONAL OBJECTIVE

This submission recommends reforms or improvements to a national community services program that would help local governments support the Australia Government to deliver on its national objectives.

The Australian Federal Government has responsibility for immigration policy and providing people seeking protection with a clear and efficient Refugee Status Determination process, with adequate support mechanisms for those in need.

People seeking refugee protection face major hurdles in accessing federal government-funded support programs. Most are currently ineligible for the Status Resolution Support Services

(SRSS) Program, the Federal Program which supports people seeking asylum during their protection application process.

As a result, they rely on support from local governments, community groups for charity and/or find work in exploitative conditions. This cost shifting places huge burdens on local government and their communities, needlessly places individuals and families at risk of destitution and erodes trust in government process and institutions. The temporary status of this group creates added challenges, such as difficulty accessing women's refugees or homelessness services and further education opportunities.

'Arguably there is no greater obligation upon government than to maintain the trust that citizens have in meeting their community services obligations and promises, particularly to society's most vulnerable.' (2024 National General Assembly ALGA discussion paper page 16).

KEY ARGUMENTS

The Status Resolution Support Services (SRSS) Program has become so narrow and restricted that it fails to meet its intended purpose. Financial assistance delivered through the SRSS Program has been cut by 95% (from \$300 million in 2015-16 to \$15 million in 2022-23) and the number of people assisted has dropped from more than 13,000 in 2017 to 1,600 in 2023. Expenditure on SRSS financial assistance in 2022-23 (\$15 million) was underspent by \$22 million.

Charities cannot meet the need for emergency assistance. The demand for help far outstrips what charities and community groups have been able to provide. Homelessness services are reporting an increase in the number of people seeking asylum sleeping on the streets.

State governments are also winding back support. After providing some short-term assistance for fill the gap created by the Federal Government's cuts, state governments are now progressively withdrawing. Assistance for plane arrivals has ended in Queensland. The NSW Government ended its assistance in June 2023, on the clear expectation that the Federal Government will reverse past cuts to the SRSS program.

Lengthy delays in visa processing have made the situation much worse. This lack of access to assistance is coupled with large waiting times for decisions for people who apply for protection onshore, with people waiting more than eight years without access to a safety net for a final resolution of their asylum application.

Local Government Response

Since 2018, the Local Government Mayoral Taskforce Supporting People Seeking Asylum has been advocating for the rights of people seeking asylum to the Federal Government. Established and chaired by Greater Dandenong Council, the Mayoral Taskforce Supporting People Seeking Asylum is now made up of a growing membership of over 40 councils nationwide, who understand that the advocacy for a fairer and swifter Refugee Status Determination system with adequate support systems in place for individuals and families at risk of destitution is an issue of national importance.

Right now, in Australia there are more than 90,000 people waiting for their application for protection to be finalised. Applications for asylum are clearly stuck in a broken system. This overly slow approach prevents individuals and families gaining the stability that refugee status provides. The result is vulnerable people living in local government communities for years,

without access to critical support services such as Centrelink, Medicare, public housing, education, mental health and food.

Motion number 105 Newcastle City Council NSW

That this National Assembly calls on the Federal Government to extend its support for people seeking asylum to those granted permanent residency by:

- a. Providing everyone with a valid visa with work, travel and study rights.
- b. Expanding the Status Resolution Support Services eligibility criteria and simplify the application process so that people in need can access healthcare, disability, housing support and other essential services.
- c. Ensuring an independent, timely and fair application and merits review process for all humanitarian applications.
- d. Providing people who have received a negative refugee determination under the 'Fast Track' system with a fair review process.
- e. Continuing to invest resources to urgently clear the backlog of asylum applications and appeals.
- f. Abolishing temporary visas like Temporary Protection Visas and Safe Haven Enterprise Visas and replacing them with permanent protection visas and pathways to citizenship for all humanitarian arrivals.

NATIONAL OBJECTIVE

We all have an important role to ensure that everyone – our neighbours, friends and local community members can participate in society and enjoy self-determination in decisions; and we would welcome your interest in discussing this issue in greater detail.

KEY ARGUMENTS

Right now, fewer than 900 people can access Government financial assistance through the Status Resolution Support Services and many more in our communities are without access to basic healthcare, housing, education, employment and food. Charities and Local Government cannot meet the need for emergency relief and are reporting an increase in the number of people seeking asylum sleeping rough on the streets.

Furthermore, people who have had their visa applications rejected, have similar life circumstances to those who have recently been granted permanent visas. Many were cruelly and unfairly rejected under the biased 'Fast Track' Refugee Status Determination process instituted by the previous government.

Motion number 105.1 Maribyrnong City Council VIC

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to provide additional support and rights for asylum seekers and refugees who are living in the Australian community, particularly:

- a. providing both study and work rights to those currently excluded;
- b. providing additional general and mental health support where required; and
- c. providing additional pathways to permanent residency for those asylum seekers and refugees who currently have limited or no options to remain in the Australian community

NATIONAL OBJECTIVE

There are currently many refugees and people seeking asylum in Australia are unable to obtain employment or undertake study due to their status immigration.

Despite being ready to work and available to contribute to their respective communities, the lack of ability to engage in work or appropriate study can lead to a range of poverty and health impacts that could be mitigated.

KEY ARGUMENTS

By providing work rights while people wait for visa outcomes, more people would be financially independent and less reliant on government-funded support services.

The lack of clarity for some asylum seekers and refugees as well as the time required to process applications, has led to a number of health impacts that require significant community support.

Motion number 106 Blacktown City Council NSW

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to increase its services and funding in outer suburban high growth areas to match the levels of funding provided to established areas of capital cities.

NATIONAL OBJECTIVE

The high growth outer urban areas of our capital cities contribute significantly to the nation's prosperity, but face a large and growing inequity of government investment. This inequity is a barrier to national wellbeing.

KEY ARGUMENTS

From a report by Urbis in November 2021:

“Spatial inequality is a persistent urban problem that is etched into the economic geography of our cities. Gough Whitlam raised the issue some 50 years ago in his 1972 campaign speech delivered at Blacktown...

...increasingly a citizen's real standard of living, the health of himself and his family, his children's opportunities for education and self-improvement, his access to employment opportunities, his ability to enjoy the nation's resources for recreation or culture, his ability to

participate in the decision and actions of the community are determined not by his income, not by the hours he works, but by where he lives...

In the half century since Whitlam's speech, the problem has widened as our cities have grown outwards. It has also deepened as our lower income households have increasingly concentrated in areas with poor access. If left unchecked, spatial inequality can entrench disadvantage and harm economic growth. It can also suppress human capital formation, entrepreneurship and intergenerational mobility."

The issue is simply one of metropolitan equity: the proportion of the population in growing regions deserve a proportionate share of capital and operational expenditure and funding by the Commonwealth (as well as from the respective state governments).

Key examples of the existing inequity include:

- Arts and cultural facilities and funding
- Higher education places
- Medical research institutes.

Local government does not seek in any way to take away facilities from existing communities, but to ensure that the policy decisions of government begin to redress and stop adding to the inequity.

Motion number 107 Narrabri Shire Council NSW

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to give greater consideration to equity and accessibility of bus transport within remote rural and regional areas.

NATIONAL OBJECTIVE

Stronger community resilience.

Roads and infrastructure funding.

According to iMove Australia, equity in transportation is meeting the goal of providing everyone with the same access to reliable and affordable transport. It is a principle that goes beyond accessibility and equality and focuses on the bigger picture issues that affect the ability of people to move around freely in their day-to-day lives.

As also outlined by the Australian Institute of Family Studies, transport difficulties are consistently identified as a factor that restricts Australian families' capacity to access services and participate in activities (Carbone, Fraser, Ramburuth, & Nelms 2004; Cortis, Katz, & Patulny, 2009). These difficulties include limited or no access to public transport, non-family friendly transport options, and not being able to afford, or experiencing stress as a result of, the cost of transport. The phenomenon of transport difficulties is commonly referred to as transport disadvantage (or "transport poverty") (Wadiwal, 2005). Transport disadvantage is experienced by specific sub-groups in the population, for example, families with young children, people with a disability and Indigenous Australians. Transport disadvantage is also

common in specific geographical locations such as outer-urban (or "fringe") areas, rural and remote Australia.

KEY ARGUMENTS

Rural and remote areas of Australia have low levels of public transport access. Some remote areas have relatively low levels of vehicle ownership and transport options for Indigenous Australians in remote communities and communities located in fringe urban areas are limited. A significant proportion of Indigenous Australians living in remote areas have no access to public transport and one-third have no access to a car. Cars in remote Indigenous communities are heavily used and, due to the fact that they are often purchased second hand and used in rough terrain, maintenance is expensive and they often have a short lifespan. Even outside of non-remote areas a significant proportion of Indigenous Australians have no access to public transport. Young mothers and sole parents are particularly vulnerable to transport disadvantage. For these groups, transport difficulties can play a key role in social exclusion.

The recent report *Evaluating Transportation Equity: Guidance for Incorporating Distributional Impacts in Transport Planning* (Victoria Policy Institute, April 2024) identifies that to be equitable transport planning should aim to minimise disparities in inputs (funding, road space and priority) and outcomes (convenience, comfort, safety and accessibility) between different groups, particularly rural travellers, with particular consideration to disparities borne by physically, economically and socially disadvantaged groups. These findings are also reflected in the recent second report of the NSW Bus Industry Taskforce which clearly articulates that significantly more work needs to be done to better plan and manage essential transport infrastructure, including depots, facilities, bus stops and supporting technology. Further, that the deterioration of bus services that carry 40 per cent of all public transport passengers but receive only 2 per cent of capital expenditure in transport must be urgently rectified.

Achieving true equity in transport requires detailed analysis and consideration of the social, economic and regulatory factors that can render individuals isolated and immobile, and the Australian Government must do more to proactively solve such systematic and structural issues. The re-evaluation of current policies, strategies and plans to address current inequities, particularly in respect to bus transport, is urgently needed. A firm commitment must be made to establish platforms and mechanisms where often marginalised and isolated communities can participate in the meaningful co-design of infrastructure and transport decisions.

Motion number 107.1 Shoalhaven City Council NSW

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to provide adequate funding in collaboration with the State Government relating to Access and Equity to provide assurance and appropriate accessible transport particularly for people in regional and rural areas.

NATIONAL OBJECTIVE

Access to public transport enables Australians to work or study, visit family and friends, and access critical services such as healthcare. However, one in six people aged 15 years and over with disability have difficulty using public transport. Without equitable access to public transport, discrimination can arise.

Ongoing difficulties associated with access to transport are commonly referred to as "transport disadvantage". Transport disadvantage is experienced by specific sub-groups in the population, for example, families with young children, people with a disability and Indigenous Australians. Transport disadvantage is also common in specific geographical locations such as outer-urban areas, rural and remote Australia including the Shoalhaven LGA.

KEY ARGUMENTS

The Shoalhaven is an area which experiences considerable transport disadvantage, with transport from many outlying towns and villages limited. These low levels of public transport create ongoing challenges for these vulnerable groups. A proportion of the community feel they often cannot get to the places they need to visit because of the lack of accessible public transport such as wheelchair accessible taxis. Shoalhaven City Council supports Local Government NSW's call for provision and funding for improved access to transport in regional areas. A review of support to encourage investment in wheelchair accessible vehicles and to prioritise use of the vehicles for customers with disability would be welcomed.

Motion number 108 City of Kingston VIC

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to:

- a. Acknowledge the complexity involved for councils, and other providers, in adapting services to meet requirements under the new Aged Care Act.
- b. Work with aged care providers to develop a 24+ month transition plan that provides a staged and structured implementation of the new Aged Care Act.

NATIONAL OBJECTIVE

Vital aged care services are currently provided to communities across Australia by a range of providers including local councils, community providers and for-profit entities.

Thousands of providers across the country support almost a million older people national wide.

Despite the commonly used descriptors like "entry-level" or "basic supports", the reality is these services play a crucial role in supporting the most vulnerable and marginalised groups within our communities.

These include offering targeted assistance to culturally and linguistically diverse communities, refugees, as well as individuals living with dementia, homelessness, and squalor.

They also play a pivotal role in delivering urgent post-hospital support for older individuals with acute or urgent care needs.

Community nursing, allied health, personal care, transport, meals on wheels, assistive technologies, and home modification programs rapidly mobilise to provide care and services to at-risk clients who are discharged from the hospital, still waiting for the appropriate aged care assessments and support planning to occur.

These services – run by Councils, community and other providers – are facing significant change due to the new Aged Care Act.

The care of many older people will be at risk if proper time, direction and support to make this transition smoothly is not provided.

KEY ARGUMENTS

Reforms via the new Aged Care Act are welcomed, however delays have meant that providers have been left with woefully inadequate timelines to absorb and adapt to the new standards and regulation.

When making recommendations regarding the timing of the rollout of the new Aged Care Act, it is essential to consider the cumulative impact of every provision with the Act that applies to providers.

The proposed go-live date for the new act is July 2024, yet at the time of this submission (March 2024) providers have no visibility into the details held within the Rules and have been unable to adequately prepare for the changes.

At this point, it seems implausible for providers to be expected to mobilise resources to implement an incomplete exposure draft with minimal detail and no offer of financial support within such a short timeframe.

Many providers simply do not have the resources to achieve this type of change without a realistic timeline, support structure and an injection of funding.

Many providers are small organisations with annual grant funds of less than \$1 million per annum from the Department of Health and Aged Care.

Many heavily rely on volunteers in both their service delivery workforce and organisational governance through their boards.

Due to their size, the accumulative administration component funded through unit pricing provided under CHSP translates to limited administrative and business resources to support service delivery.

Conversely, there are some providers, such as local councils, Aboriginal community controlled, and community health organisations, where these services are a minor program within a broader health, primary care, or community services portfolio.

This adds complexity due to various regulatory and compliance frameworks the one organisation is to operate within.

Considering the implementation timelines and the diverse needs of these providers in adapting to the New Aged Care Act, we strongly encourage the government to pay particular attention to the targeted support required for these providers.

This is crucial given the diversity in their operations and services, size and capacity, and the fact that, for a majority of these providers, it will be their first time operating within an Aged Care Act.

To rush through these changes will result in inconsistent sector responses, put some operators at financial risk and most importantly may impact the standard of care received by those in need.

By committing to work with the sector on a 24-month transition plan, the Australian Government can ensure the sector is well equipped to deliver these changes in due time.

(Further details on this issue can be found in: A response from Victoria to the new Aged Care Act: exposure draft – consultation paper no.2 Submission by SSD Connect Alliance, Bayside City Council SSD & Eastern SSD Partnership 16 February 2024.)

Motion number 108.1 Camden Council NSW

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to:

- a. Recognise the essential role councils play in delivering seniors programs which both benefit local communities and save the Australian and State Governments significant health care costs; and
- b. Support the capacity of councils to develop and deliver seniors programs which enhance health and wellbeing outcomes for older Australians, by increasing the funding provided for such programs and ensuring that the funding opportunities enable the longevity and sustainability of program delivery.

NATIONAL OBJECTIVE

Australia's population is ageing due to increasing life expectancy and declining fertility rates. Data from the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) reveals that as of 30 June 2020, there were an estimated 4.2 million older Australians (aged 65 and over) who comprised 16 percent of the total Australian population. The number and percentage of older Australians is expected to continue to grow, with ABS data projecting that by 2066, older people in Australia will make up between 21-23 percent of the total population.

With a third of all senior Australians also living alone, social connection and lifelong learning are important components of healthy ageing. They contribute to physical, mental and emotional wellbeing, helping older adults live longer, happier and more fulfilling lives.

Across the sector, councils deliver seniors programs to improve health and wellbeing outcomes for older Australians, and are well placed to identify and respond to emerging needs and gaps within their local communities through established partnerships with relevant agencies and organisations. Councils also provide resources in a variety of accessible formats in relation to facilities, program delivery, information and access to services to connect seniors with services and wellbeing options within the community.

KEY ARGUMENTS

The delivery of seniors programs by councils results in improved health and wellbeing outcomes for older Australians by linking them with available services, supporting active and independent living and reducing loneliness, among other benefits. These benefits can save the Australian and State Governments significant health care costs on an ongoing basis.

Currently, the Australian Government's My Aged Care Program can be a complex and confusing system for seniors to navigate, exacerbated by a lack of service provision in some areas which results in lengthy waiting lists to receive services. Unfortunately, many seniors endeavour to access My Aged Care at crisis points when they require urgent health care, which increases the strain on the provision of health care. There is a growing pressure on local government to address these community needs by developing community-based programs to engage community and services in response. In practice, this requires councils to be appropriately

resourced to offer regular opportunities for services and community to connect and participate in social, wellbeing and learning activities.

A successful example of this within the Camden Local Government Area (LGA) is the Seniors Café Connect Project. This offers a one-stop-shop that provides information about health, social and service provision in a variety of formats. In addition to the cafe, a different activity is delivered to scope interest for further social and affordable activities. A significant majority of community members who participated in a survey about their experience agreed that the project had the following benefits for them:

- Provided a platform to engage and enjoy social connections – 92%
- Provided an opportunity to try new things – 90%
- Increased opportunities for seniors to participate in recreational activities – 84%
- Gained knowledge, learnt new skills and built confidence – 82%
- Improved wellbeing – 82%
- Provided opportunities to engage and participate – 77%
- Gained skills and capacity to source, receive and distribute information about My Aged Care to your broader community – 68%
- Connected with or used an Aged Care Service as a result of attending Café Connect – 63%
- Increased their social network – 63%.

Service providers and connectors also strongly agreed that this connection model is addressing a fundamental part of providing person-centred health and social care.

These positive outcomes for this early intervention model for reducing social isolation, increasing wellbeing and connecting seniors with services to support ageing in place are indicative of the value of seniors programs for building positive government-community relationships. However, it is a challenge to accommodate all interested seniors and there are waiting lists to attend.

To achieve maximum benefit for communities and reduce the pressure on health care funding, it is necessary for councils to be better funded for the delivery of seniors programs. This includes ensuring that funding opportunities are provided with timeframes that are realistic for the achievement of sustainable results and that ongoing funding is offered for successful projects.

Motion number 108.2 Mid Coast Council NSW

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to urgently review the current financial imposition upon residents in Aged Care Facilities posed by non-regulated additional service fees, and the overall complexity of other means tested fee assessments such as the difference between aged care and aged pension assessment methodology of a residence or RAD.

NATIONAL OBJECTIVE

Aged Care is a national issue and with an ageing population it is now affecting a greater percentage of the population and will continue to increase in the coming years.

When considering the financial sustainability for aged care, there is a very high level of complexity for those entering aged care to determine their fee assessment and method of funding.

There has been widespread and significant additional non-regulated fees being imposed by aged care facilities presumably to offset their increased cost of service delivery and as a consequence, for many aged care residents with limited financial resources, this has proved challenging and unsustainable.

As the needs for aged care increases in the future, a sustainable, less complex system is required to ensure future viability.

A consistent approach to aged care financial means assessment and aged pension asset assessment would also remove much of the complexity.

KEY ARGUMENTS

Many aged care facilities are imposing non-negotiable additional service fees which are over and above the regulated means tested fees that applies to permanent residents of age care facilities.

The additional service fees are described as coverage for the cost for a choice of menu, fox TV, additional fruit, a daily newspaper, a larger bed and even a superior pillow.

There is often a refusal to unpack those services.

Regulated services include the base fee paid by all residents in aged care which is the equivalent of 85% of the single rate age pension.

Additional regulated fees include the means tested fee which applies to any individual with assets exceeding \$59,500 or \$119,000 if a couple.

Since aged care facilities have been faced with additional wages and compliance costs and the level of Government subsidy has not kept pace with this, additional service fees of typically \$25 per day are being imposed.

In many cases, the cost of care then exceeds 100% of the single age pension after application of applicable means tested fee.

The complexity of aged care financial assessment includes the choice of paying a Residential Accommodation Deposit (RAD) or Daily Accommodation payment combination, for those whose assessed assets exceed \$201,231.20 (single) or \$402,461.40 (couple) and as such not being classed as low means resident.

There is further complexity such that the criteria in assessment of a residence differs between aged care assessment and aged pension assessment.

Motion number 109 Narrabri Shire Council NSW

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government, in partnership with the States to:

- a. Support regional and local government employees with parenting responsibilities to participate in the workforce, by providing targeted capital funding to identified at or nearing capacity areas to construct additional early education and childcare centres to meet community need, particularly for children in the 0-5 age range;
- b. Further 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; and
- c. Ensuring that the implementation of such programs shall not result in cost shifting to local government authorities.

NATIONAL OBJECTIVE

Stronger community resilience

As detailed in the LGNSW 2023/24 Advocacy Priorities discussion paper, equitable access to essential infrastructure and services is the cornerstone of democratic society. Local government must be supported in their critical efforts to ensure that no communities are left behind.

Current workforce shortages are being further exacerbated by a chronic lack of childcare across rural and regional Australia. This is also a significant barrier to women returning to the workforce.

KEY ARGUMENTS

As detailed in the Australian Government Productivity Commission's draft report A path to universal early childcare education and care (November 2023), there are currently limited incentives for childcare providers to operate in remote and disadvantaged areas. Urgent intervention is therefore needed to adequately secure care for rural and regional communities.

Motion number 110 Blacktown City Council NSW

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to harmonise state and territory regimes for the management of regulated cooling tower systems. The harmonised regimes should include the ability to penalise easily identifiable breaches of cooling water systems through on the spot fines.

NATIONAL OBJECTIVE

Cooling towers are recognised as a key health regulation target, but state regimes are inconsistent and not achieving full compliance.

KEY ARGUMENTS

Non-compliant cooling tower systems are common to all states and territories. Water treatment companies who manage these systems work across various jurisdictions. Having a

nationwide approach ensures the protection of public health by preventing the growth and transmission of Legionella bacteria.

There is an inability for councils to take immediate regulatory action when a breach of Public Health legislation for cooling towers has been identified. Current legislation only provides a council with the ability to issue a fine for 'failure to comply with a Prohibition order in relation to a regulated system'.

The relevant legislation does not allow for a council to issue a fine for administration non-compliance, for the following examples:

- Failure to notify the local council when legionella and heterotrophic plate count limits are exceeded
- An expired Risk Management Plan
- Failure to keep maintenance records up to date
- Failure to provide accurate details for on-site contact, including access to the towers.

Providing councils with the ability to issue on the spot fines for these easily identifiable breaches will allow for faster compliance and will ensure that the risk of non-compliance is mitigated appropriately.

Motion number 111 Hawkesbury City Council NSW

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to review the current delivery and operational framework of community transport with a goal to better integrate these services to ensure all people with support needs can readily access community transport at a time that they need, to live the life that they choose.

NATIONAL OBJECTIVE

Transport plays a crucial role in the everyday lives of Australians. The barriers to accessing transport are complex and have the greatest impact on communities experiencing disadvantage. This is particularly magnified for people with Disability, Aged and Rural or Regional communities relying on Community Transport services.

The recent National reforms to the provision of Aged and Disability care services have created a fractured transport service system. Despite the intentions of funded programs such as NDIS, Aged Care and DVA in aiming to reduce barriers for community. The administration of these funded programs on the ground presents significant gaps for both Community Transport providers and their users. The new regulations placed on transport providers, along with the different funding and eligibility arrangements make navigating services extremely difficult for users, and in many cases have left people who require transport assistance ineligible for subsidised transport services in their LGA.

This service gap has shifted responsibility onto local councils to meet community transport needs. This is yet another level of cost shifting onto local councils.

Community Transport is vital to achieving equitable inclusion and access to health, social and community care. This is a National responsibility and needs to be a National priority.

KEY ARGUMENTS

Aged and disability care reforms have resulted in a complex operating environment for community transport providers that brings challenges for both funding and service delivery. The new regulations generated by these reforms have created a fragmented transport service system that renders many people who need transport assistance ineligible for subsidised community transport services. Different funding and eligibility arrangements between NDIS, DVA and Aged Care funding make navigating services extremely difficult for users, and some users have found themselves ineligible for the services offered in their LGAs. This service gap then has to be met by local councils to ensure that people are able to access necessary services or complete routine tasks like shopping. This is yet another level of cost shifting onto Local Councils in an already challenging economic environment. The problem is more acute in rural and regional areas, further disadvantaging our communities. While transport is a commercially available public utility, it is a mistake to assume that it is accessible and inclusive for all.

Motion number 111.1 Merri-bek City Council VIC

The National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to:

Commit appropriate levels of funding to enable States and Territories to make public transport services accessible for people with disability; and

Commit to a clear timeline for States and Territories to meet the Disability Standards for Accessible Public Transport 2002 across all forms of public transport, including publishing and publicising the progress of States and Territories implementing accessible public transport infrastructure annually.

NATIONAL OBJECTIVE

In Australia, one in six people aged 15 years and over with disability have difficulty using public transport. Without equitable access to public transport, discrimination can arise.

Under the Disability Standards for Accessible Public Transport 2002 (Transport Standards), public transport operators and providers are required to make their services accessible for people with disability. However, despite the standards being in place for more than 20 years, no State or Territory met the end of 2022 deadline to have public transport networks and associated infrastructure fully accessible, and the current pace of upgrades indicates that some States and Territories won't make the 2032 deadline that includes accessible rolling stock for trains and trams.

The Federal Government must step in now to put funding and a framework in place that ensures States and Territories make progress to achieve accessible public transport outcomes. The lack of accessible public transport infrastructure means that people with disability, and others including our older population, people with prams, and people with any mobility issue, are locked out of fully participating in society.

KEY ARGUMENTS

Access to public transport enables Australians to work or study, visit family and friends, and access critical services such as healthcare.

However, one in six people aged 15 years and over with disability have difficulty using public transport. Without equitable access to public transport, discrimination can arise.

In Australia, public transport operators and providers are required to make their services accessible for people with disability, mandated by the Disability Standards for Accessible Public Transport 2002 (Transport Standards). The Transport Standards are developed under the Disability Discrimination Act 1992 and took effect on 23 October 2002.

The Transport Standards apply to train, tram, bus and coach, ferry, taxi and aviation services and are designed to provide certainty to providers and operators of public transport services and infrastructure about their responsibilities under the Disability Discrimination Act 1992.

The Transport Standards require all of Australia's public transport networks and associated infrastructure to be fully accessible by the end of 2022 (with the exception of trains and trams, which have until the end of 2032 to roll over their stock to be fully accessible).

Despite the Transport Standards coming into effect 20 years ago, no Australian State or Territory achieved the end of 2022 deadline to have public transport networks and associated infrastructure fully accessible. At the current pace of upgrades, some States and Territories will not make the 2032 deadline either.

The Federal Government must provide the funding and frameworks to ensure that States and Territories prioritise, plan for and fund public transport accessibility to meet the legislated 2032 accessibility targets.

Motion number 112 Penrith City Council NSW

The National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to invest in public transport and active transport infrastructure in outer metropolitan growth areas to an extent that residents of these precincts have an equivalent level of access and the same standard of service as their inner metropolitan counterparts.

NATIONAL OBJECTIVE

Australia's fast-growing outer suburbs experience population growth rates at double the national average and have long encountered under-investment in vital infrastructure. One in every five Australians are living in fast-growing outer metropolitan areas. These outer suburbs produce 13% of Australia's jobs and 11% of the Gross Domestic Product, but only receive 13% of infrastructure investment.

Investment in public transport and active transport under successive governments has not kept pace with community needs and wants. Our communities deserve safe, reliable, convenient and frequent public transport and connectivity so as not to present a barrier to job and educational opportunities, nor negatively impact the health and well-being of communities. The right investment in Australia's outer metropolitan growth areas will not only directly impact local communities, but the nation.

The level of service, frequency, quality and connectedness of public transport and active transport in outer metropolitan growth areas should be benchmarked against inner metropolitan areas with a view to achieving equitable access for residents of growth areas.

KEY ARGUMENTS

To achieve equitable access to public and active transport options for growth area¹ communities, levels of accessibility and service must be benchmarked against inner metropolitan areas to quantify the shortfall and plan to redress it.

Access to public transport in Australia's growth areas is universally limited resulting in high car usage. Car dependency is further entrenched due to limited local employment opportunities which results in almost half of the working residents in the growth areas (48.3%)² travelling outside the area to work. On Census day 2021, over half of the working population (57%)³ in the growth areas travelled to work in a private car compared with 4.5% on public transport, and even less walked to work (0.9% compared to 2.5% in Australia)³. During the pandemic, 18.2% worked at home, meaning that the number of people travelling by car was already lower than usual.

The lack of public transport within the outer metropolitan growth areas creates barriers for the communities in accessing jobs, education and services, which is particularly detrimental to socially and economically disadvantaged communities. Investment in public transport infrastructure is a key to improving social equity and addressing other barriers. An interconnected network of public transport to get around the area and to link to major transport hubs is required along with an increased focus on bike paths and walkability (including first and last mile connections with public transport options) to encourage the health and wellbeing of our communities.

Compounding the inequity and adverse impacts of limited access to public and active transport options for growth area residents is the significant financial cost. The cost of the daily average commute by private car for growth area workers is \$36.28 (running costs, tolls and parking) per return trip, and this increases to \$58.35 when standing costs (insurance, registration etc) are included. This equates to \$8380 annually for full-time workers, which represents 17 percent of the average income for growth areas (\$49,250). While public transport is an affordable alternative, for people in outer growth areas public transport options are limited, overly complex, incompatible with routine, or non-existent compelling more people to drive to work⁴.

Looking at the funding and delivery of public transport and active transport through the lens of 'equitable access' will ensure state and local infrastructure can be delivered effectively to serve the most rapidly-growing areas and the most vulnerable people. This approach supports a vision for Australian cities where residents have equitable access to jobs, education, health services, cultural activities and the physical and community infrastructure that support these outcomes – no matter where they live.

Motion number 113 Shire of Dundas WA

This National General Assembly calls upon the Australian Government and the Federal Minister for Health and Aged Care, Hon. Mark Butler MP, to plan and fund the provision of medical services, (in consultation with relevant local governments), to regional, rural, and remote communities.

NATIONAL OBJECTIVE

Over the last couple of years, the cost to councils and their ratepayers has been increasing and the Rural Doctor shortages was highlighted across the nation.

Demands from our small Community Medical Practice cost is increasing to almost 15% of our revenue and this will impact council's ability to keep delivering other services to community, it could be that positions within council may have to be removed to provide these increased demands from our local practice.

KEY ARGUMENTS

RACGP - DPA change making rural GP recruitment harder

"There has been 'an immediate impact' on the GP workforce in rural and remote areas following a decision to expand Distribution Priority Area (DPA) status, newsGP has been told. Last month's Federal Government announcement means that GP catchments in Modified Monash 2 (MM 2) areas, which include most large regional towns, now automatically have DPA status.

Some outer-urban areas within large cities, classified as MM 1, have also gained DPA or partial DPA status".

The continuation of Bulkbilling is also a concern across Australia. Councils now has to take on providing Medical Practice business and recruit Doctors as a staff members, as remote practices and Communities are impacted negatively if these services are not available. A range of issues are making it more difficult to attract GPs to remote areas, including staff availability to fill admin positions for their practice and housing in remote areas being severely impacted by the lack of Federal and State Government investment.

Motion number 113.1 Narrabri Shire Council NSW

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 rural and regional areas and urgently establish a Rural Health Taskforce.

NATIONAL OBJECTIVE

Stronger community resilience.

Roads and infrastructure funding.

Around seven (7) million people, representing 28% of the Australian population, live in rural and remote areas, encompassing many diverse locations and communities. These Australians face unique challenges and frequently have poorer health outcomes than those living in metropolitan areas. Current data demonstrates that people living in rural and remote areas have higher rates of hospitalisations, deaths, injury and also have poorer access to, and use of, primary health care services, than persons living in major cities.

KEY ARGUMENTS

Australians living in rural areas also face increasing rates of health facility closures/service reduction, health care worker shortages and geographic challenges to obtaining timely care compared to those in urban areas. While there have been renewed efforts to revive rural Australia and address current equity issues, its residents continue to face disparities to quality health care as current efforts have taken a siloed approach to improving access and delivery which will ultimately not solve the problem.

Finding sustainable solutions to the growing list of issues that are affecting the health of rural and regional communities has been identified at the recent NSW Country Mayors Association (CMA) as a key focus. This is also reflected in the LGNSW 2023/2024 advocacy priorities and highlights that access to health services in rural, regional and remote areas is a critical issue for communities. The implementation in full the recommendations of the parliamentary inquiry into rural and regional health services is also urgently called for.

Motion number 114 Snowy Valleys Council NSW

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to alter Australia Post's Statement of Corporate Intent to provide options where Post Offices no longer exist for postal services unable to be delivered to street/roadside addresses, e.g. delivery of parcels.

NATIONAL OBJECTIVE

There would be many rural/remote communities across Australia affected by the lack of postal parcel services.

KEY ARGUMENTS

Excerpt from the 2023/24 – 2026/27 Australia Post 'Statement of Corporate Intent' – FY24 Australia Post strategic priority – 'trial new Post Office formats, improve the customer experience through the POST + point of sale technology and expand the Parcel Locker network'. This priority is crucial, as, by way of example, a small community within Snowy Valleys Council (Talbingo) has recently lost its Post Office service, which included other services such as banking, access to Medicare and payments for utilities. Whilst a street delivery has been introduced for this town, there are difficulties with parcel deliveries, requiring residents to travel 40 minutes to an adjacent town to collect parcels. This creates significant issues for residents that are unable to travel and Australia Post needs to urgently act on their strategic priority to provide this basic service to remote locations.

Motion number 115 Knox City Council VIC

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to investigate, and where possible, implement reforms aimed at assisting the vulnerable when required to provide personal identification requirements that require access to critical digital community services and obtaining a phone number and/or data SIM card. Specifically, the reforms could investigate the requirements for personal identification documents as per The Identity Verification Services Act 2023 and in consultation with the Australian Communications and Media Authority.

NATIONAL OBJECTIVE

This motion links to theme #7 Community Services, with a strong dependency with theme #9 Data, Digital Technology and Cyber Security.

Importantly, this motion aligns with the following NGA considerations:

- focus on practical programs that can strengthen the system of local government nationally to provide the services and infrastructure required to support and strengthen our communities; and

- new program ideas that that would help the local government sector to deliver the Australian Government’s objectives.

Access to the internet is essential in today’s world. Many services and programs are being digitized, including booking social housing, and applying for jobs. As the process of digitizing increases, those without access to the internet will be further left behind.

Although there are many issues in accessing services, including obtaining hardware and SIM card, the practically issue comes down to having access & providing personal identification documentation – which many vulnerable and homeless community members do not have access to.

This issue must be debated as the identification policy requirements are doing harm to those seeking to get out of poverty, at the expense of the relatively small risks that this cohort presents.

KEY ARGUMENTS

Telecommunication service providers require ID for data and a phone number based on the Australian Communications and Media Authority (<https://www.acma.gov.au/acmas-rules-id-checks-prepaid-mobiles>) and The Identification Verification Services Act 2023 (<https://www.legislation.gov.au/C2023A00115/latest/text>).

Telstra has indicated there are some early discussions happening in providing relief for this cohort, and/or to obtain an exception for this group. However, there needs to be change at a policy level to allow the telecommunication companies to change internal business processes to service this group in the community.

Importantly, this change will allow the telecommunication companies to work with community support groups to enable them to service vulnerable community members to gain access to the internet with minimal or no identification requirements.

Motion number 116 Lake Macquarie City Council NSW

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to provide national standards and guidelines for local government to measure community wellbeing.

NATIONAL OBJECTIVE

To recognise the importance of resourcing and reporting on programs to enhance community wellbeing.

KEY ARGUMENTS

Australia’s first Wellbeing Framework was released in 2023. This creates a timely opportunity to advocate for it to be implemented in a local government context. Ensuring societies are healthy, secure, sustainable, cohesive and prosperous are priorities for local councils, providing parallels with the five themes reflected in Australia’s first Wellbeing Framework.

Well-resourced, place-based community wellbeing initiatives contribute to building trust between governments and communities. Universal reporting should be developed at a national level to measure success. There has been a shift in focus at local government level, placing a

higher value on the social wellbeing of communities. However, councils struggle to allocate sufficient funding to programs addressing social inequities and the wellbeing of residents when faced with competing priorities such as assets and infrastructure delivery.

Many local government community wellbeing initiatives are either grant-funded or run on small budgets. Ongoing connections and trust built within communities can be compromised by lack of program scope or continuity.

A national reporting framework that is aligned to Australia's Wellbeing Framework would provide a platform for local government to appropriately resource, report on and measure their community wellbeing projects, and for the Federal Government to ensure appropriate funding avenues are provided to support councils deliver wellbeing initiatives.

Motion number 117 Tenterfield Shire Council NSW

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to develop, with State Governments, programs to support essential not for profit organisations to fund and provide services in the community to meet increasing service demand for meals, housing and mental health support.

NATIONAL OBJECTIVE

Regional and rural communities are at the end of the chain when it comes to housing, meals and mental health support. These areas can be supported at a local level by the Community groups themselves if there is a sufficient system to fund them.

KEY ARGUMENTS

Regional and rural communities are at the end of the chain when it comes to housing, meals and mental health support. These areas can be supported at a local level by the Community groups themselves if there is a sufficient system to fund them.

Motion number 118 Shire of Ashburton WA

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to investigate the feasibility of establishing a Local Government Bank of Australia or alternative model for regional Australia, which includes how the local government sector can facilitate or deliver face-to-face banking services; and requests that the feasibility report findings are presented at the Australian Local Government Association 2025 National General Assembly.

NATIONAL OBJECTIVE

As the Australian Government's Senate Standing Committee on Bank Closures in Regional Australia Inquiry continues, current banking data states that more than 2100 Australian bank branches have closed across the country since 2017, with regional areas suffering a 34% loss in branches.

With nearly 7 million people (approximately 28% of the population) living in regional and remote Australia, there is an urgent need to develop a practical and pragmatic solution that provides essential financial services, carries a more relevant risk profile, leverages not only the social

license and tangible community trust experienced by the LG sector, but leverages the sector's mandate as a not-for profit, governing local community.

No access to face-to-face banking services results in limited to no access to cash / cash deposits and security; erosion of regional liveability; community vulnerability and inequality; limited to no financial/banking relationships or financial education; impaired financial literacy; and reduced access to financial information relevant for credit assessment and decisions for business and personal needs.

Regional and remote communities must not be marginalised and discriminated against due to their postcode and locality. There are innovative banking models used throughout the world that demonstrate that a structured solution is achievable and importantly, viable.

KEY ARGUMENTS

The Shire of Ashburton located in the Pilbara Region in West Australia, delivered 12% (\$39 billion) of WAs Gross Regional Product in 2022. Despite this immense economic contribution, the Shire's towns have been losing banking services. Since 2022, there is no physical banking presence across the entire Shire!

For the Shire, closures result in residents forced to travel to Karratha to physically access banking services - some residents travelling up to 9 hours. This is the equivalent of asking a Sydneysider who has a motor vehicle and is able-bodied to drive further than Canberra to do their banking. If they have a disability, or no access to a vehicle or public transport, their journey is unattainable!

The social, financial and economic impact of this accelerating inequality effects:

- Vulnerable community members
- Aboriginal peoples and their communities
- Sustainability and productivity of businesses
- Community safety, participation and wellbeing
- Survival of community groups and clubs
- Access to credit and other core financial services including insurance
- Reliance on technology already compromised due to the regional digital inclusion gap

The participation of the LG sector in a regional financial services solution needs to be researched and modelled. Potentially manifesting as a Local Government Bank of Australia (the Bank), the primary purpose of the Bank could be to provide essential community banking services in regional Australia. The Bank, guided by a social licence benefit could facilitate surplus funds reinvested back into local communities, and could be geared at higher risk levels to promote investment in regional communities, businesses, tourism etc.

There are numerous options to explore including sharing of LGAs regional assets, existing distribution channels, infrastructure, back-office functions and shop fronts including co-location of service providers and partnership agreements to deliver banking services and processing responsibilities.

Key benefits to having local government as part of the solution to accessible, relevant banking and financial services include:

- Funding reinvestment: profits invested back into local community/regions
- Liveability: retain and expand upon regional Australian's quality of life
- Regional equality and accessibility: closing the financial inclusion gap, changing the risk profile of banking services, increasing financial literacy and access to information and services
- Business and economic growth: access to credit, planning and relationship banking
- Insurance: addressing the unattainable goal of asset protection and wealth creation both financially and practically – a scalable, more equitable platform; providing alternative insurance options for communities and businesses
- Workforce stability: attracting skilled migrants and people from metro and peri-urban areas. Leveraging the trend to move to regional Australia, addressing the crisis of regional workforce shortages
- Utilising and leveraging existing local government assets and infrastructure
- Providing a competitive advantage to the banking sector

Community leadership and innovation is at the core of local government with Council's strategically positioned to support and strengthen not only community, but the 3-tier system of government nationally. With "digital uptake, changing customer attitudes" and "a new branch is not be feasible" used as reasons for no local bank presence, the obligation of social license needs to be at the forefront of our thinking.

Motion number 119 City of Melville WA

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to invest in the sustainability of the arts and cultural sector through:

- a. Establishment of Community Arts and Cultural Facilities Fund for the development, renewal and maintenance of arts and cultural infrastructure;
- b. Capacity building for community arts organisations; and
- c. Creation of an innovation fund for re-orienting core services.

NATIONAL OBJECTIVE

Community Arts and Cultural Facilities Fund

LGAs frequently contribute disproportionately to the development of arts and cultural infrastructure. Establishment of a fund will embed a uniform, national approach to the capital costs of local arts and cultural infrastructure, reducing the cost for LGAs to own and operate these assets, creating a more equitable model and improving outcomes for community. The Fund would also offset the heavy investment from LGAs in the cost of ongoing facility management, maintenance, and renewal.

Capacity building for community arts organisations

Community arts organisations (CAOs) require support throughout their lifecycle, especially as they grow. This transition is frequently complex without financial resources. Government can support the sustainable growth of CAOs through capacity building that embeds the capabilities for sustainable operational expansion.

Innovation fund

Demand for libraries and museums continues to grow, but government funding is insufficient to cover basic core services. This funding deficit undermines local government's capacity to innovate to meet community need and maintain relevance. An innovation and development fund will enable local governments to better meet the needs of their community by encouraging new and innovative practice, while also ensuring core services are delivered.

KEY ARGUMENTS

Local government is an important provider of arts and cultural infrastructure, including libraries, museums, galleries and arts and cultural centres. However, current funding at a state and federal level is insufficient and employs a predominantly grant- and project-based model, making long-term sustainability extremely challenging.

There is significant pressure on local governments to fully fund the arts and cultural sectors in their communities, especially in the regions, where a low rate-base diminishes resources. There are currently no funding programs targeted at reducing costs for local governments that own and operate cultural and / or arts centres. At the same time, over 78% of the WA population participated in an arts and cultural activity from April 2022 to April 2023*.

NSW and Victoria have already established funding cooperation between state and local government to better support arts and cultural infrastructure: the New South Wales Government's State Regional Cultural Fund launched in 2018, and the Victoria Government's Community Infrastructure Fund, funded over \$4.5 million worth of projects in 2021-22 alone.

Employing a tri-government funding model would provide a capital funding commitment to the provision of arts and cultural infrastructure, enabling local, state and federal government to work together to better meet the needs of communities.

Motion number 120 Shoalhaven City Council NSW

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to provide adequate financial assistance, via Services Australia, to eligible ratepayers (Pension and Low-Income earner's) to assist with payments of council and water rates.

Financial assistance should be provided at an amount, or percentage, that reflects current level of rates, and should be delivered via a more efficient and cost-effective mechanism, than is currently used.

NATIONAL OBJECTIVE

Currently, a rebate for council and water rates is available to eligible pensioners. Pensioners who hold a pensioner concession card, DVA Gold Card (TPI and EDA), and widow/ widowers who are entitled to income support, may apply for this rebate. The rebate does not extend to low-income earners.

This rebate has not increased in the last 13 years. The current cost of living crisis and an increase in rates over this period has seen the benefit of this rebate erode.

KEY ARGUMENTS

There is a need to provide additional financial support to seniors, pensioners, and low-income earners across our communities, particularly during the cost-of-living challenge currently facing our country.

CLOSING THE GAP AND ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER RECONCILIATION

Motion number 121 City of Kalgoorlie-Boulder WA

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to establish a specific funding stream to enable local government to implement localised strategies and projects directly related to addressing the Closing the Gap priority areas as outlined in the National Agreement.

NATIONAL OBJECTIVE

Whilst there has been progress in addressing the key priority areas of Closing the Gap, there is still a long way to go to ensure appropriate support is provided to First Nations people. Councils across Australia have been implementing a variety of programs and projects that go well beyond their Reconciliation Action Plan outcomes to provide on-the-ground support to First Nations people; funding directly to Councils is required to support these initiatives.

KEY ARGUMENTS

No access to face-to-face banking services results in limited to no access to cash / cash deposits and security; erosion of regional liveability; community vulnerability and inequality; limited to no financial/banking relationships or financial education; impaired financial literacy; and reduced access to financial information relevant for credit assessment and decisions for business and personal needs.

Motion number 121.1 Waverley Council NSW

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to advance reconciliation and close the gap between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and the rest of the Australian population through a comprehensive and collaborative approach from both the Australian Government and local governments.

NATIONAL OBJECTIVE

A comprehensive and sustained commitment from both levels of government, as well as active engagement with Indigenous communities, is essential to building trust and achieving meaningful reconciliation. Regularly reviewing and adapting these initiatives based on feedback and outcomes is crucial to their success.

KEY ARGUMENTS

With nearly 7 million people (approximately 28% of the population) living in regional and remote Australia, there is an urgent need to develop a practical and pragmatic solution that provides essential financial services, carries a more relevant risk profile, leverages not only the social license and tangible community trust experienced by the local government sector, but leverages the sector's mandate as a not-for profit, governing local community. Potential trust-building initiatives include:

1. Truth and Reconciliation Commission: consider the establishment of a Truth and Reconciliation Commission to address historical injustices and promote healing.

2. Cultural exchange programs: facilitate cultural exchange programs between Indigenous communities and local governments, fostering mutual understanding and respect.
3. Government accountability measures: implement transparent mechanisms to ensure government accountability in delivering on commitments to Indigenous communities.
4. Cultural competency evaluation: regularly assess and enhance cultural competency within government agencies, seeking feedback from Indigenous communities on their experiences.
5. Ongoing dialogue: foster ongoing dialogue between government representatives and Indigenous communities, creating spaces for open communication and collaboration.
6. Traditional decision-making processes: recognise and respect traditional decision-making processes within Indigenous communities, incorporating them into governance structures where appropriate.

Motion number 122 Bega Valley Shire Council NSW

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to review the impact on councils and communities of prolonged Aboriginal Land Claims lodged with the Registrar of the Aboriginal Land Rights Act 1983 (ALRA) and Native Title Claims in the Federal Court and seek to implement measures to improve prioritisation timeframes.

NATIONAL OBJECTIVE

Lengthy and protracted legal processes relating to Aboriginal Land and Native Title Claims significantly impacts Councils across the country as they prevent partnering opportunities, development/enhancement and investment on Crown land.

KEY ARGUMENTS

Regional and remote communities must not be marginalised and discriminated against due to their postcode and locality. There are innovative banking models used throughout the world that demonstrate that a structured solution is achievable and importantly, viable.

Motion number 123 Redland City Council QLD

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to review and amend The Native Title Act 1993 and the Native Title Respondent Funding Scheme to provide a contemporary set of regulations built on the experience and learnings of implementing The Native Title Act 1993 over the last three decades, by:

- i. Removing uncertainty around provisions in The Native Title Act 1993 that suggest native title rights or interests are not subject to Commonwealth, state or local government laws.
- ii. Restore respondent funding to achieve a fair and just outcome for both claimants and respondents.
- iii. Establish a national fund for state and local governments to acquire Native Title interests to preserve and maintain public works, infrastructure and services.

NATIONAL OBJECTIVE

Application of mainstream law

The Native Title Act 1993 (the Act) should be reviewed and amended to make certain that mainstream Australian law applies over native title land, as it does over non-native title land. It is important that all laws apply over native title land to ensure consistency, clarity and cohesion. Any amendments should seek to clarify the operation of s211 of the Act, which sets out certain classes of activities where native title holders are exempt from obtaining a licence, permit or other instrument in accordance with a law of the Commonwealth, State or Territory where the activity is for the purpose of satisfying personal, domestic or non-commercial communal needs.

Just outcomes for all

The Commonwealth Government has historically provided financial support to Native Title claimants and responders. Recently, the federal government has committed to abolishing the Native Title Respondent Funding Scheme (through the introduction of the Attorney-General's Portfolio Miscellaneous Measures Bill 2023 which seeks to, inter alia, repeal s213A of the Act), resulting in no financial assistance for responding to native title claims, while claimants are fully funded. This change is inequitable and passes the financial burden to rate payers for local governments to respond.

KEY ARGUMENTS

The Act was developed over 30 years ago, in response to the *Mabo v Queensland (No. 2)* 1992 High Court case, to establish governance and process for claiming and recognising native title rights and interests over Australian land and waters, balancing Indigenous and non-Indigenous people's rights to land.

Redland City Council values reconciliation and the vital role First Nations peoples and their culture play in our great country. We believe these reforms will add robust governance to The Act, improving outcomes for the quadruple bottom line: culture, economy, environmental and social.

Removing uncertainty over the application of mainstream laws

Amending The Act to make certain the upholding of mainstream Australian laws reduces the need for claims to progress to court, as recently was the case with *Redland City Council v Burns* 2024, where a native title holder was found guilty of an offence under s162 of the Planning Act 2016 as a result of carrying out prohibited works by clearing native vegetation. The native title holder raised a defence under s211 of the Act i.e. that by undertaking the clearing he was satisfying his personal, domestic or non-communal needs in the exercise or enjoyment of his native title rights and interests. The need for Council to seek clarity in this regard through the courts was a costly exercise on taxpayers' dollars. Further clarity around s211 and how it removes the prohibition on certain classes of activities for native title holders provides an opportunity for efficient use of resources. More information on the above mentioned Magistrates Court case can be found here:

<https://www.redlandscoasttoday.com.au/2024/02/court-ruling-confirms-native-vegetation-clearing-was-illegal/>.

Overall, confirmation of how mainstream laws apply over native title land is critical for promoting legal certainty, protecting rights, fostering social cohesion and upholding environmental conservation and sustainability.

Just outcomes for claimants and respondents

The Commonwealth Government's commitment to abolish native title respondent funding by seeking to repeal s213A of the Act is inequitable. The federal government's funding of only one party in a native title claim does not support equitable and impartial consideration of native title claims and responses.

Removing funding to respondents passes the financial burden onto rate payers and adds to the challenges for local government, as responders, to remain financially sustainable.

As stewards for community assets including parks and open spaces, reserves, community precincts etc., local governments owe it to their communities to consider and respond to native title claims to seek the best outcome for all.

National fund for state and local governments

Native Title is a national issue to be addressed nationally for past land tenure decisions and not cost shifted to local governments and indigenous communities to address in a fragmented piece meal approach. A national acquisition funding scheme creates consistency and certainty for local communities whilst providing a just terms national funding source for native title holders.

Motion number 124 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 legislating for an Indigenous Voice to Parliament to provide advice on issues relating specifically to indigenous peoples.

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 was a generous invitation from 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.

After the recent Referendum failed to pass, there was no doubt a great deal of disappointment in the community, however this should not be the end of conversations as to how public policy can better reflect the needs of indigenous people.

DATA, DIGITAL TECHNOLOGY AND CYBER SECURITY

Motion number 125 Shire of Campaspe VIC

The National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to fund a nationally coordinated program of collaboration between Federal Government and local governments, through the Australian Cyber Security Centre or other suitable body, focused on shared cyber security improvements.

NATIONAL OBJECTIVE

The ongoing protection against, and awareness of, cyber security threats is key for all government organisations. The impact of this is being experienced at the local government level in the delivery of cyber security testing, planning and implementation of prevention and response systems. The development of a national lead cyber security response service for local government organisations will provide increased security and trust for communities in government services through proven protection of IT systems and community sensitive data while ensuring a consistent approach and reduced duplication of effort and costs.

This will offer an alternate approach to the current practice where each local government engages external resources to advise on and implement what are often similar cyber security protection services. By not providing these services at a national level local government will continue to duplicate similar developments and implementations to respond to the increasing risks of a cyber security attack with limited national coordination and duplication of costs.

KEY ARGUMENTS

The risk of a cyber-attack is both current and increasing within all government agencies. The pace of change and sophistication of these attacks is rising daily with the corresponding risk of a data breach increasing with each new development.

Local government nationally is required to respond and spend more of their resources, time and funding to prepare appropriate responses to these risks. It is reasonable to assume that each local government is responding in their own manner and engaging external consultants or services to assist them in planning and implementing appropriate services. This represents a potential duplication of effort and expense with similar responses at each local government organisation resulting in a waste of resources, time and duplication of costs nationally.

While some national government services are assisting to protect from cyber-attacks and have proven effective in a limited sense, these need to be expanded and strengthened at the local government level to ensure consistent ongoing and appropriate protection, detection and response is available to local government organisations.

Currently a few offerings are available through the Australian Cyber Security Service (ACSC) and communicated through state government organisations. These are proving successful; however, each local government must implement additional systems and processes to ensure ongoing protection of data and threat protection. The degree of this protection is at the discretion of each local government as to how and to what extent additional services are implemented.

This proposal is to expand the scope of the current Cyber Security offering to each local government to include (at a minimum):

- Recommended penetration testing and measures relevant in a local government context (like the Essential 8 definitions).
- Centralised services to provide recommended protection, detection, and management of any cyber-attack in conjunction with the local government organisation subscribing to these services.

The benefits of offering these services from a national perspective will enable a more consistent and cost-effective cyber security response for each local government.

Motion number 125.1 Blacktown City Council NSW

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to provide increased support to local government to address cyber security deficiencies, as part of our national response to this critical issue.

NATIONAL OBJECTIVE

Cyber security is formally identified by all levels of government as a critical national issue.

KEY ARGUMENTS

Cyber security threats are increasing exponentially year on year and the costs of controlling and mitigating these risks is increasing. Councils hold large amounts of customer and sensitive information and present a potential attractive target to cyber criminals.

It is important that councils undertake steps to reduce their cyber security risk, including security awareness training for staff, security hardening of systems and network security activities.

It has been found in various studies (such as a recent report by the NSW Auditor General) that State-based regulation and support is not adequately improving government cyber resilience, including at the local level.

Councils would benefit from a coordinated national approach to cyber security and assistance from the Australian Government in encouraging cyber security compliance from key local government software vendors.

Motion number 125.2 City of Greater Geelong VIC

The National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to develop a strategic cyber security framework for local government.

NATIONAL OBJECTIVE

Cyber security and Cyber-attack is an increasing issue for local government nation wide

KEY ARGUMENTS

The development of a strategic cyber security framework to guide local government would assist local governments nationwide – especially smaller councils who do not have resources to deal with this threat.

Motion number 126 Maribyrnong City Council VIC

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to provide meaningful financial support to assist all local government areas to become better 'Smarter Cities', utilising technology, data and innovation to improve service delivery and making communities better places to live.

NATIONAL OBJECTIVE

This motion proposes financial support or grant programs for local governments, to enable more Smart City initiatives to be implemented. This will foster a community of practice to share skills and knowledge across all levels of Government.

KEY ARGUMENTS

Effective and open-source data can help build public trust, as they are able to easily find and identify data, while understanding that sensitive information is not being taken or shared.

Motion number 126.1 City of Greater Geelong VIC

The National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to establish a framework promoting transparency of digital technologies and data collection in public spaces to foster greater trust, inclusivity, and accountability.

NATIONAL OBJECTIVE

Smart Cities and the conspiracy theories surrounding 15-minute cities is impacting local governments around the country.

KEY ARGUMENTS

A national framework that promotes transparency and consistency would lessen many myths and theories being touted by anti-smart city activists and would engender trust by a common understanding of what was being collected in public spaces.

Motion number 127 Western Downs Regional Council QLD

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to increase targeted funding for place-based solutions which will increase availability and bandwidth of the cellular network across Regional Australia.

NATIONAL OBJECTIVE

Regional Australia is home to more than nine million people and accounts for roughly one-third of the national workforce. The regions generate about 34 percent of the nation's economic output (RAI). The Western Downs region is a strong example of the significant economic contribution regions make with a GRP per capita of \$106,392.

The 2021 Regional Telecommunications Review reported that data and connectivity has assumed a more vital role in the lives of all Australians, including Regional Australia (Australian Government, Regional telecommunications Review 2021).

A resilient and stable mobile and data connection is an essential tool to support Regional Australia's growth and transition into the digital economy. Despite some improvements, most of regional Australia still experiences the shortfalls of telecommunication and digital connectivity. The availability of suitable and resilient solutions being implemented across communities with a low-density population remains a significant issue.

One of the main reasons for this is that telecommunication providers will only increase coverage when demand reaches a level to be financially attractive. This is an issue faced by all regional and remote areas across Australia that have a low-density population.

KEY ARGUMENTS

There are clearly identified gaps in access, reliability, and speed levels of mobile and digital connectivity in many regional areas across Australia. A major issue of concern with these areas of low to no coverage is that the mobile phone network is relied upon for communication in emergency situations - particularly in the event of disaster management and during emergency situations.

Reliable connectivity is a prerequisite to enabling economic development and population in regional Australia. Digital and mobile connectivity is a requirement to attract investment, running day-to-day operations and to improve productivity to reach markets anywhere in the world. Connectivity also enhances the liveability of a region and enhances the attraction and retention of population.

Equitable access to connectivity is fast becoming a Human Right expectation as it enables communities in remote areas to have access to educational, social and health services that might otherwise not be possible. Connectivity can enable people living in regional and rural Australia to have access to many critical services not available in their areas such as Telehealth.

Regional areas in Australia contribute significantly to the economy. Regional Australia sees mining, agriculture and manufacturing being at the forefront of productivity and healthcare and construction more recently contributing the success of regions. Each of these industries are highly reliant on reliable and strong connectivity not only for day-to-day operations, but importantly, to support the implementation of workplace safety programs.

The Western Downs alone has a thriving agricultural industry that contributes more than \$1 billion to the national economy. Challenges with digital connectivity and mobile telecommunications are further exacerbated for agricultural properties which often span significant areas of this land.

Tourism, across regional Australia relies heavily on the digital economy and an efficient connection creates the backbone for promotion and participation in regional events. Without sufficient connection, many regional communities have difficulty supporting the influx of users on the network during large scale events.

Whilst the investment by the Australian Government in the \$1.1 billion-dollar Better Connectivity Plan for Regional and Rural Australia is welcomed, there is still a significant part of regional Australia that faces connectivity issues. Review of co-contribution requirements across funding applications is requested to assist the roll out of the programs. Co-contribution requirements for projects often results in Telecommunication providers not prioritising joint applications with areas that cannot contribute significantly.

Co-contribution is particularly difficult for Local Governments that cover a large geographic area with a (low density) small population base as these regions are more likely to experience connectivity challenges across multiple locations.

Whilst existing programs and policy are welcomed, there is a call for all levels of government to work collaboratively to achieve place-based solutions to the gaps that are specifically identified in regional areas across Australia to allow for increased availability and bandwidth of the cellular network.

Motion number 127.1 Cabonne Council NSW

That this National General Assembly call on Australian and State and Territory Governments to deliver on their commitments to roll out a reliable telecommunications network to regional areas and ensure that the shutdown of the 3G network does not reduce regional connectivity nor impede access to emergency services.

NATIONAL OBJECTIVE

Digital connectivity is an important issue nationally and the unreliability, or more concerningly, lack of mobile networks disadvantages Australians who rely on these networks for social inclusion, access to government services, financial services, health and education. It is also critical in emergency situations. These networks play a vital role in supporting public safety, day-to-day business operations and social connectivity.

KEY ARGUMENTS

Infrastructure Australia's 2022 "Regional Strengths & Infrastructure Gaps" report highlighted broadband and mobile connectivity as one of 5 top infrastructure gaps in regional areas, alongside housing, water security, education and public transport.

We acknowledge the Government's investment in improving regional mobile telecommunications through initiatives such as the Better Connectivity Plan for Regional and Rural Australia and the Mobile Black Spot Program and urge the Government to make-good on its commitment by rolling out to these initiatives at a faster rate.

The need for better and reliable connectivity will again be highlighted with the 2024 Regional Telecommunications Review into the adequacy of regional Australia's telecommunications which has commenced and it is imperative that broad consultation with regional stakeholders including local government is carried out.

An immediate issue however is the shutting down the 3G networks with the Telstra network on June 30, 2024, followed by the Optus network in September 2024.

Although mobile phones are the most common devices which will be impacted, the change will affect devices such as medical-alert technology, baby monitors, EFTPOS machines and farming equipment all dependent on the 3G network. This is concerning for users who will need to upgrade their devices at a time when the households and businesses are experiencing financial hardship.

Additionally, Telstra has warned that devices that cannot access the 4G network will not be able to call triple-0, but more concerning is that devices in Australia might show as being 4G connected to the user but may not be capable of VoLTE compatible to enable making

emergency calls making it the responsibility of the user to ensure their device is compatible before a life-threatening situation occurs.

We call on the government to ensure and seek assurances from the major telcos that regional users will not be disadvantaged, or their safety be comprised, by this shutdown.

Motion number 127.2 Tenterfield Shire Council NSW

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to continue to support the rollout of mobile phone towers in regional and rural Australia to ensure that all residents have a similar level of service and access to communications as those in city centres.

NATIONAL OBJECTIVE

Refer to summary of key arguments.

KEY ARGUMENTS

Why are there still so many “black spots” throughout Australia. In this day and age everyone has a mobile phone, no longer using landlines. In the event of an emergency – fire, flood, car crash etc we all rely on the mobile phone and connectivity to services and our loved ones. Why should the lives of the regional communities be valued less, we all need effective access to telecommunications. Since the pandemic more and more people are wanting to move away from the cities to regional areas. This not only helps rural communities with a skilled workforce but puts pressure on the available communications available remotely.

Motion number 127.3 Balonne Shire Council QLD

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to develop and implement a National Strategy to facilitate a more strategic and coordinated approach to telecommunications and digital connectivity investment in regional, rural and remote Australia.

NATIONAL OBJECTIVE

Telecommunications infrastructure is fundamental to communities' economic development, social connectivity, and safety, especially in a vast and diverse country like Australia. The issue of adequate and equitable telecommunications services in South West Queensland epitomises the broader challenges that rural, regional, and remote areas face nationwide.

The Australian Digital Inclusion Index 2023 underscores a persistent gap in digital inclusion across states and territories, revealing disparities between capital cities and their regional counterparts. With major cities scoring 74.6, outer regional areas lag at 66.3, and very remote areas at 62.6. Moreover, the report highlights that individuals in regional, rural, and remote regions often incur higher telecommunications services costs than those in metropolitan areas.

Such significant disparities in access to telecommunications impact vital aspects of life in regional, rural and remote Australia, including education, business, health services, and emergency responses.

Debating this as a national issue is crucial, as it emphasises the need for a unified approach to infrastructure development that addresses the unique needs of all Australians, regardless of

their geographic location. It also stresses the importance of involving local communities in decision-making processes to ensure that telecommunications solutions are effectively tailored to the specific challenges of different regions.

KEY ARGUMENTS

The 2021 Regional Telecommunications Independent Review Committee Report emphasised a critical national issue: the inconsistency and inadequacy of telecommunications across regional, rural, and remote Australia.

The report revealed a "Patchwork Quilt" of connectivity, where services vary drastically across regions, often depending on local capacity and resources to implement effective telecommunications solutions. This situation underscores the need for a more strategic and coordinated approach to ensure equitable access to telecommunications nationwide.

Despite substantial investments like the National Broadband Network and the Mobile Black Spot Program, many areas remain significantly underserved compared to urban centres. This disparity hampers local economies and public safety and contributes to a widening digital divide that impacts national cohesion and economic stability.

The Australian Digital Inclusion Index 2023 reinforces this concern, showing a persistent gap between capital cities and other parts of states and territories.

As a national issue, the quality of telecommunications in regional, rural and remote communities affects Australia's overall progress and the ability to function as a cohesive digital economy. Poor connectivity in these areas can stifle economic development, limit access to essential services, and exacerbate social inequalities. Moreover, as the country continues to embrace digital transformation, ensuring robust telecommunications infrastructure across all regions is imperative for maintaining Australia's competitiveness.

Thus, the debate and decisions on this motion and the broader issue of regional telecommunications are about improving service delivery and reinforcing Australia's economic structure and social fabric, making it a quintessential national issue.

CLIMATE CHANGE AND RENEWABLE ENERGY

Motion number 128 Inner West Council NSW

This National General Assembly calls on the federal government to improve the ethically and environmentally responsible investment options for councils by developing legislation that requires all banks to offer fossil fuel free investment options.

NATIONAL OBJECTIVE

Local governments across Australia often hold significant funds that have been allocated for future use, but many 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.

Some progress has been made but the largest banks Australian banks do not offer these investments.

KEY ARGUMENTS

LGNSW and ALGA have been having discussions with banks and their associations about offering investment products that don't further contribute to climate change. Councils that wish to invest this way still find that some of the biggest banks don't offer these products.

Many councils are particularly interested in identifying investment opportunities that will not contribute to climate change.

Motion number 129 Maribyrnong City Council VIC

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to provide programs and initiatives addressing air pollution including:

- a. Transition to zero emission methods of operation for industry and freight, this includes supporting heavy vehicle buy-back schemes.
- b. Policy reform to require the transition of diesel trains to electro-diesel.
- c. Mandatory heavy vehicle emission standards, to be applied to existing and new heavy vehicles.
- d. Implementation of federally significant ultralow emission zones, to be applied to residential areas subject to high rates air pollution.
- e. Implementation of policy and funding programs that support local and state governments to reduce vehicle pollution, traffic and car dependency.
- f. Establishing programs and partnerships to increase active and public transport uptake

NATIONAL OBJECTIVE

The Grattan Institutes Truck Plan Report highlights that at least 400 deaths in Australia can be attributed to air pollution from trucks.

KEY ARGUMENTS

A recent study of 12 Australian cities found that even a small increase in nitrogen dioxide can result in an increase of asthma rates by 54 per cent.

This is supported by a study in the European Respiratory Journal that found Australians aged 45-50 who lived less than 200m from a main road had a 50% higher risk of asthma and lowered lung function over a five-year period.

Motion number 130 Moyne Shire Council VIC

That the National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to ensure engagement with local communities in relation to Offshore Wind Energy Zones during the feasibility phase of the project so that a range of issues are considered in relation to:

- a. Establishing mechanisms for consultation and feedback that ensures meaningful engagement of local communities, indigenous groups, fishing industry representatives, and other stakeholders
- b. Implementation of measures that minimise impact on the landscape and viewsheds by engaging with community on innovative design and placement strategies, environmental impact assessments in relation to marine flora and fauna, and protection of sensitive habitats and species
- c. Development of strategies to minimise disruption to local industry, economy, and infrastructure through a range of funded programs that support coastal environmental sustainability, economic diversification, consideration for existing and additional transmission infrastructure, and flow on community benefits through training and apprenticeship programs that supports local residents, attracts investment into local communities, and prioritises grant funding for communities abutting the wind energy zones.

NATIONAL OBJECTIVE

The announcement of the South Coast Offshore Wind Energy Zone is an opportunity for Australian Government to carefully consider how local industry, economies, and communities are engaged in feasibility phases to ensure that the communities impacted by the declaration of Offshore Wind Energy Zones are appropriately supported and engaged through all layers of the process to ensure that the opportunities for these communities and their supporting industries and stakeholders to provide input ensures that community trust is an integral component of planning and delivering on projects of such national significance.

KEY ARGUMENTS

Engagement and participation

With the announcement of Offshore Wind Energy Zones, an imperative exists for the Australian Government to actively engage with and manage the trust and buy-in of communities impacted by the zones.

Through meaningful engagement and consideration for the range of community groups impacted, including local communities, indigenous groups, marine industry stakeholders, the

establishment of methods of regular consultation and feedback models would support a collaborative approach to a project of national significance.

Environment and viewsheds

Implementing measures to minimise visual impacts on landscapes and viewsheds through innovative design and placement strategies would demonstrate the Australian Government's commitment to its climate change initiatives whilst considering the impacts of the local surrounds, both from a visibility perspective and from the raft of environmental impacts that need to be managed. Through comprehensive environmental impact assessments, government can understand and mitigate the potential risks to marine flora and fauna, implementing measures to protect sensitive habitats and species, and ensure transparency and accountability in the selection and implementation of offset measures related to climate change and to sensitive habitats and species.

Local industry, economy, and infrastructure

Developing strategies to minimise disruption to fishing operations, building confidence and trust of stakeholders through a shared approach to identifying opportunities for coexistence ensures local industry stakeholders remain engaged and collaborative.

Through funding programs that support local coastal environmental sustainability initiatives, prioritizing injection of funding into communities through weighted criteria that ensures allocation of grant funding for regions impacted by offshore wind zones, and for creating job training and apprenticeship programs that provide local residents with skills and employment opportunities in the renewable energy sector, the Australian Government can support greater regional collaboration.

Careful consideration for existing transmission infrastructure, investment in the development of appropriate additional infrastructure, and a prioritization of infrastructure that minimises, where possible, environmental and economic impacts to abutted communities demonstrates consideration for the impact on local communities in managing the impacts associated with the management of delivery of offshore wind energy to onshore grid networks.

Motion number 130.1 South Gippsland Shire Council VIC

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to support rural councils that are impacted by Australia's Renewable Energy transition targets, by calling on the Federal Government to provide funding, and resourcing, to support land use and infrastructure planning.

NATIONAL OBJECTIVE

Energy transition and the reduction in emissions is a critical concern for all Local Governments. A key component to address this will be the development of the renewable energy sector and particularly the offshore wind industry. The Federal Government is establishing offshore wind zones in a number of areas around Australia. These zones, when implemented, will supply power to the National Grid and be a major component of the nation's energy supply.

This will also build a new industry for Australia, with export opportunities and a diverse supply chain that will create prospects for businesses in municipalities across Australia.

Many of the areas where this energy generation will be established are in small rural Councils. In the case of offshore wind, unlike onshore energy projects, these developments will not pay rates or payments in lieu of rates. The costs of services, infrastructure and workforce required to support these projects is significant. This will require land use and infrastructure planning significantly beyond the capabilities within small rural Shires.

Supporting these Councils will reduce a major risk for these projects, which is critical to support this new industry and energy security for the Nation.

KEY ARGUMENTS

In 2022, the Australian Government legislated Australia's greenhouse gas emission reduction targets, aiming to reach emission levels of 43% below 2005 levels by 2030 and Net Zero by 2050.

With these targets in mind, in 2022 the Minister for Climate Change and Energy declared the first offshore wind area in Australia off the Gippsland coast. A 15,000km² area that has the potential to generate 10GW of power, making this a key component to reaching emission targets, with potential from other areas declared/proposed around the country. The Victorian Government (VicGrid) has also announced the Gippsland offshore wind transmission study area. The transmission infrastructure planned for this area will support the State's first offshore wind target of 2GW by 2032, and again assists with Federal targets.

Renewable energy as an industry is still early in its development in Australia and the offshore wind component doesn't currently exist. It is being rapidly developed around the country with many other countries seeking to also implement offshore wind. Alongside this, there are a range of other projects proposed to support the transition, including onshore wind, solar, battery and hydrogen.

If we're able to implement the development of this new sector, we can simultaneously develop local industry that will last generations. This can create opportunities for businesses all over the country and in some cases, this will assist with the transition of fossil fuelled based businesses and the creation of export industries.

With over \$100 billion slated in potential for renewable energy investments, the scale and scope of these investments are unprecedented and will require significant land use and infrastructure planning from Local Councils. This will range from housing and utilities to health care and recreation, the development required to successfully support these investments within small rural Shires is well beyond current resources.

The expected closure of fossil fuelled energy generation over the next decades magnifies the need for renewable energy development. Given the national significance of the energy transition, timely preparation is paramount for facilitating new energy investment.

Motion number 130.2 Dubbo Regional Council NSW

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to coordinate with the Energy and Climate Change Ministerial Council to implement a nationwide compulsory community benefit sharing framework. This framework would eliminate the need for individual councils to negotiate separate voluntary planning agreements for each project proposal within their respective Local Government Areas.

NATIONAL OBJECTIVE

Renewable energy projects are occurring across the entire nation and there is no consistency with the planning agreements for local councils.

KEY ARGUMENTS

Currently each council must negotiate with each individual renewable energy proponent for a planning agreement.

The delivery of any funds to a local council is not compulsory for the proponent of a renewable energy project.

The transition to Net Zero is already having impacts on local councils across the nation and it would be fair if those impacted councils received funds to benefit their residents.

A consistent national approach would mean that the same benefits were delivered across each State and each Council area rather than leaving it up to the negotiation skills of each Council and each proponent.

Motion number 131 Yarra City Council VIC

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to act on its pledge under the Coalition for High Ambition Multilevel Partnerships (CHAMP) for Climate Action (cop28.com) and consult and collaborate, create processes and provide the investment for local governments to maximise climate action, in order to limit the temperature increase to 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels, and increase adaptation and resilience.

NATIONAL OBJECTIVE

Recent Conferences of the Parties to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change have highlighted the important local government role in addressing the climate crisis and the need for all levels of government to work together to achieve the ambitious Paris Agreement goals.

At COP28, the host nation sponsored CHAMP for Climate Action, a pledge “to enhance cooperation...with our subnational governments...in the planning, financing, implementation, and monitoring of climate strategies,...to maximise climate action...with a view towards collectively pursuing efforts to limit the temperature increase to 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels, and increase adaptation and resilience.”

Australia signed this pledge.

KEY ARGUMENTS

This motion seeks the federal Government to enact its commitment as outlined in the CHAMP pledge through the actions listed here and described in detail at <https://www.cop28.com/en/cop28-uae-coalition-for-high-ambition-multilevel-partnerships-for-climate-action>:

- Consult
- Collaborate
- NDC 2025

- NDC investment
- Voluntary review
- High level dialogue

The CHAMP pledge, signed by 72 nations, recognises the enormity of task in keeping temperature rise to 1.5 degrees, the significant role local governments will play in the task and the need for national governments to work with a support them to do so.

Motion number 131.1 Newcastle City Council NSW

That this National Assembly calls on the Australian Government to acknowledge the Federal Government's action on climate change and its commitment to the Coalition for High Ambition Multilevel Partnerships (CHAMP) for Climate Action (cop28.com). Further, that the National Assembly assist local governments to maximise climate action, in order to limit the temperature increase to 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels, and increase adaptation and resilience by implementing the CHAMP via collaboration and consultation, creating processes and providing investment pipelines for shared outcomes.

NATIONAL OBJECTIVE

Recent Conferences of the Parties to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change have highlighted the important local government role in addressing the climate crisis and the need for all levels of government to work together to achieve the ambitious Paris Agreement goals.

At COP28, the host nation sponsored CHAMP for Climate Action, a pledge "to enhance cooperation...with our subnational governments...in the planning, financing, implementation, and monitoring of climate strategies,...to maximise climate action...with a view towards collectively pursuing efforts to limit the temperature increase to 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels, and increase adaptation and resilience".

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KEY ARGUMENTS

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- Consult
- Collaborate
- NDC 2025
- NDC investment
- Voluntary review
- High level dialogue

The CHAMP pledge, signed by 72 nations, recognises the enormity of task in keeping temperature rise to 1.5 degrees, the significant role local governments will play in the task and the need for national governments to work with and support them to do so.

Motion number 132 South Burnett Regional Council QLD

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to call for a moratorium on renewable energy and regulate by:

- a. holding a bond from the start of a project with guaranteed finance in place to cover decommissioning and full project removal, disposal and rehabilitation of costs at end of life.
- b. ensuring appropriate regulations are in place to protect threatened and endangered species;
- c. ensuring large scale renewable projects are subject to full state government approval processes and be made impact-assessable not code-assessable;
- d. ensuring an appropriate land access framework to protect the environment, cultural heritage and existing land users is established;
- e. ensuring minimal impact upon existing rate payers is negotiated;
- f. ensuring Australia's food security is protected by prohibiting large scale renewable projects on prime agricultural land; (See Paris Agreement Article 2 (1) (b))
- g. ensuring all large-scale renewable projects comply with the same regulations that apply to agriculture, mining and gas;
- h. ensuring large scale renewable projects are added as a trigger to the EPBC Act;
- i. ensuring a mandatory code of conduct is established to govern the renewable energy sector and renewable energy proponents' conduct with affected communities; and
- j. ensuring that local council be notified prior to negotiations along with all interested parties of any renewable projects within their region

NATIONAL OBJECTIVE

In 2022, 32% of Australia's total electricity generation was from renewable energy sources, including solar (14%), wind (11%) and hydro (6%). The share of renewables in total electricity generation in 2022 was the highest on record, a share 1 percentage point higher than the earlier 2021-22 financial year.

KEY ARGUMENTS

As a consequence of the current assessment government policy and approval frameworks, new renewable energy projects are having a substantial and unsustainable impact on lower order roads in regional local government areas along with other resources including water resources.

For example, due to the size and weight of the wind turbine components as well as the significant quantity of raw materials carted to site, the construction phase for wind farm developments impact on local roads in a way is more akin to a mine than other development generally assessed under the Planning Act. Historical methods of pavement design on these

lower order roads would not have accounted for intensive projects such and the proponents need to be able to contribute to the road profile to not diminish its level of service to other users.

There is significant community disruption from these projects and a fragmentation of prime agricultural land.

Motion number 132.1 Tenterfield Shire Council NSW

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to develop a national code on wind farms and wind turbines to require a lifetime bond to ensure removal and site rehabilitation following the closure of the wind farm.

NATIONAL OBJECTIVE

Refer to summary of key arguments.

KEY ARGUMENTS

If this isn't a national issue, then all around Australia there will be dilapidated wind farms and infrastructure left with no removal or thought to remove or recycle. The eyesore and the end-of-life infrastructure will remain on the land.

Motion number 133 City of Cockburn WA

This National Assembly calls on the Australian Government to amend the National Construction Code and implement a blanket ban on the use of dark coloured roofing materials to alleviate the urban heat island effect (UHI), particularly in newer suburbs.

NATIONAL OBJECTIVE

This is a national issue because Australia is being impacted by longer hotter summers. Already this year many temperature records have been broken across the country. Longer hotter summers mean an increased need for cooling. Houses with black roofs require more energy to cool. This increases costs for residents as well as increasing carbon emissions. If Australia and the States are to meet our emission reduction targets placing a ban of dark building materials will go along way to help us reach these targets.

It's also the matter of human health. According to the World Health Organisation global temperatures and the frequency and intensity of heatwaves will continue rise in the 21st century as a result of climate change.

Extended periods of high day and night-time temperatures create cumulative physiological stress on the human body which exacerbates the top causes of death globally, including respiratory and cardiovascular diseases, diabetes mellitus and renal disease. Heatwaves can acutely impact large populations for short periods of time, often trigger public health emergencies, and result in excess mortality, and cascading socioeconomic impacts such as lost work capacity and labour productivity.

KEY ARGUMENTS

The UHI effect increases energy consumption and adversely impacts human comfort and health.

Reducing the use of dark building materials, such as dark roofs can reduce the UHI effect, reduce energy costs and improve human comfort and health.

Reducing the use of dark building materials can help Australia meet its greenhouse gas emission targets while we transition to renewable energy.

The World Health Organisation states that population exposure to heat is increasing due to climate change, and this trend will continue. Globally, extreme temperature events are observed to be increasing in their frequency, duration, and magnitude.

The UHI effect is a phenomenon that occurs when built-up areas, like cities and towns, are significantly warmer than their rural surroundings. This is due to the increased heat absorption by materials commonly used in construction, such as asphalt, steel, and concrete.

The UHI effect can cause significant problems, including increased demand for energy resources for cooling, air pollution, and decreased water quality and heat stress in humans. Exposure to excessive heat has wide ranging physiological impacts for all humans, often amplifying existing conditions and resulting in premature death and disability.

Dark roofs, which are often chosen for their aesthetic appeal, tend to absorb and retain heat, increasing the (UHI) effect, while high-density housing that is being developed in Greenfields sites reduces green spaces reducing the natural cooling provided by vegetation.

In most cases, darker roofs will absorb more heat than a lighter roof. This means that having a black roof on a home can require much more energy consumption to cool the house, particularly in the hot Australian summer. This can not only increase energy bills but also increase carbon emissions if the energy being used is being produced from fossil fuels. Exceptions to the rule might be in places like southern states such as Tasmania.

In summary, the UHI can be reduced by using lighter surfaces to reflect heat rather than absorb it. Lighter roofs can help reduce a temperatures in built-up areas and make them more comfortable for residents.

Reducing the UHI can also help Australia to reach its emissions targets by reducing the energy consumption when energy is produced by fossil fuels.

Motion number 134 Nillumbik Shire Council VIC

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to establish legislation to support targeted investment in the development of Australia's electrical grid network infrastructure to equitably distribute large-scale renewable energy generation.

NATIONAL OBJECTIVE

- Local governments require funding support to develop necessary infrastructure for climate mitigation and adaptation, enabling the sector to transition to low emissions operations and services

- National scale public education and availability of information will be essential to support local communities in transitioning to low emissions lifestyles, such as by going efficient, all-electric
- Raising the standards of Building Codes in Australia to international best practice will help improve quality and thermal performance of new and existing housing stock to reduce long-term energy demands
- Developing greater incentives that support local councils in bulk-procurement of electric vehicles for council fleets and will help develop a second-hand market for EVs for those less able to afford new vehicles
- The development of, and legislation for, fuel quality and vehicle emissions standards for the importation of fuels and vehicles into Australia will play a critical role in lowering transport emissions and the transition to EVs.
- The Federal Government can help motivate and lead the nation's efforts toward achieving net zero emissions by providing annual emissions reporting, outlining the national emissions profile trends and listing the top polluters per sector

KEY ARGUMENTS

More than 100 councils across the country have declared a climate emergency while investing in renewables and are setting ambitious targets for cutting emissions.

There are limitations on homeowners being able to connect their on-site renewable energy generation to the grid. There are significant costs associated with connecting small to medium scale renewable energy generation to the grid. Weaknesses are already inhibiting the expansion of electric vehicle charging networks.

There is evidence of limitations in the national electricity grid's capacity to balance peak renewable generation with peak consumer demand along with limitations to distributing renewable energy from large and small generation sources to consumers.

Motion number 135 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:

- a. Be mandatory and deliver at least equivalent settings to those in other major markets – to ensure Australia doesn't stay at the back of the queue for cleaner vehicles.
- b. Give Australian drivers more choice and affordability than they have today, by bringing a wider range of vehicle types to our shores.
- c. 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.
- d. Be reviewed and updated approximately every five years. Technology changes fast and it's imperative we have a continued supply of quality vehicles equivalent to our global peers.

NATIONAL OBJECTIVE

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.

KEY ARGUMENTS

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

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 136 North Sydney Council NSW

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to provide funding for neighbourhood power-sharing schemes that otherwise would not be available to the community.

NATIONAL OBJECTIVE

Neighbourhood power-sharing schemes offer a multitude of benefits that can significantly enhance community cohesion, participation, and overall quality of life across Australia.

KEY ARGUMENTS

Firstly, these schemes empower residents by giving them a voice and a platform to actively engage in decision-making processes that directly affect their lives. By involving community

members in discussions and initiatives related to neighbourhood development, safety, and resource allocation, power-sharing schemes foster a sense of ownership and responsibility, leading to increased civic pride and social connectedness.

Moreover, neighbourhood power-sharing schemes promote inclusivity and diversity, ensuring that the needs and perspectives of all residents are taken into account. This inclusivity helps to bridge divides within communities, fostering mutual respect and understanding among different demographic groups. Additionally, by decentralizing authority and distributing decision-making power among residents, these schemes can lead to more responsive and effective governance, as local issues are addressed with greater sensitivity and relevance.

Furthermore, neighbourhood power-sharing schemes encourage innovation and creativity in problem-solving, as residents bring diverse perspectives and ideas to the table. This collaborative approach can result in more holistic and sustainable solutions to community challenges, ultimately improving the quality of life for all residents. Overall, by promoting participation, inclusivity, and innovation, neighbourhood power-sharing schemes play a vital role in building stronger, more resilient communities.

Motion number 137 Newcastle City Council NSW

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to

- a. Note the extensive scientific medical literature that demonstrates the alarming health impacts caused by indoor gas use, particularly cooking, on vulnerable groups like children, the elderly, people with respiratory conditions, and people on low incomes.
- b. Commit to phasing out gas appliances in homes by requiring all new homes to be powered by 100% electricity instead of gas.
- c. Revise the National Construction Code to ensure that all new residential developments are fully powered by electric appliances instead of gas ones.

NATIONAL OBJECTIVE

That the Australian Government listens to medical professionals by ensuring that the homes we live in are clean, healthy and safe, free from the harmful toxins caused by gas appliances, particularly space heaters, stoves and cooktops.

KEY ARGUMENTS

Decades of scientific medical research demonstrates the alarming health impacts of gas appliances when used indoors. For example, a recent Australian study found that gas cooktops are associated with around 12 percent of childhood asthma cases in Australia.

Medical professionals note that the real rate is probably much higher, as mild asthma cases are often undiagnosed, never see a respiratory specialist, and don't appear in health statistics. Indoor gas combustion is likely to be a significant cause of Australia's relatively high rates of asthma. US researchers from Stanford University have linked gas stoves and ovens to home air levels of carcinogenic chemicals like benzene.

We know that long-term exposure to benzene is linked to acute lymphocytic leukaemia, chronic lymphocytic leukaemia, multiple myeloma, childhood leukaemia, and non-Hodgkin lymphoma. Methane leakage in buildings has other very serious health effects.

Given the known, scientifically proven links between indoor gas use and harmful human health outcomes, requiring new homes to be fitted with electric appliances, it is incumbent on the Australian Government to act swiftly to address this public health emergency.

Rising gas price rises are impacting on families and households across the country who are already struggling with spiralling housing and food costs. A recent Energy Consumers Australia survey of 2,500 people found that more than one quarter of households are struggling to pay their energy bills.

Study after study demonstrates that homes powered by 100% electricity are cheaper to run than those connected to gas. For example, recent, separate studies by Monash University, Energy Consumers Australia, Renew, Australian Council for Social Services, and Rewiring Australia all demonstrate that homes that swap gas appliances for modern, efficient ones, combined with energy efficiency upgrades and solar and battery installations, can cut energy bills by a range of \$500 to \$5,000 per year, depending on the combination of upgrades.

The Australian Government could provide direct and immediate cost-of-living relief to people moving into new housing by ensuring newly built homes are fully electric without gas.

Recent modelling shows that this move alone would cut household energy bills by 90.6% by 2040.

Motion number 138 Mornington Peninsula Shire Council VIC

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to:

- a. Provide a policy framework and ongoing funding to assist the most vulnerable communities to reduce emissions, improve comfort and build resilience to the acute and long-term impacts of climate change.
- b. Fund energy efficiency and renewable energy programs for households, in particular low-income housing and rental housing, to reduce the long-term health impacts of climate change.
- c. Support training programs that build capacity among local government and other stakeholders to understand climate change risks and plan for the future.
- d. Increase the Solar Banks partnership program and expand the criteria to ensure low-income tenants in all housing types can access discounted solar.
- e. Provide financial incentives and tailored support for businesses to fund energy upgrades and renewables and delivery capacity building programs to help businesses understand their climate change risks and build resilience.
- f. Strengthen the National Construction Code to ensure all new building works are built for future resilience and comply with high energy efficiency standards.
- g. Improve the National Energy Market (NEM) connections process to ensure that the system can safely, securely and efficiently take on large-scale renewable energy projects.

NATIONAL OBJECTIVE

There are areas on the Mornington Peninsula experiencing more relative disadvantage than the Australian average. We must ensure federal funding models and programs respond to communities most in need and allow these communities to be able adapt to climate change, to live in comfortable, low emissions homes with the same protections from climate change as middle- and high-income homes.

Disadvantaged communities nation-wide who are most vulnerable should be able to access energy upgrades such as improvements to building thermal shell, hot water heat pumps, solar upgrades and efficient heating and cooling to reduce emissions, improve comfort and build resilience to the acute and long-term impacts of climate change.

This motion supports the federal government's target to reach net zero emissions by 2050, with an interim target of 43 per cent below 2005 levels by 2030.

KEY ARGUMENTS

Segments of our community are highly vulnerable to the impacts of climate change. The Peninsula experiences higher than average level of disadvantage, and with some localities experiencing a very high level of disadvantage and health related issues. 22 per cent of households fall within the bottom 20 per cent of Australian incomes. As the impacts of climate change continue to worsen, the gap between those capable of adapting and those who cannot, is growing wider.

Local governments are ideally placed to work collaboratively with communities, government organisations and NGOs to deliver on-ground programs that will assist the community to reduce emissions, improve comfort and build resilience to both the acute and long-term climate change impacts.

Disadvantaged communities require increased funding to adapt to climate change and be able to live comfortably in our changing environment. Federal funding models and programs must be evidence-based and respond to the communities suffering most.

In addition to the increased impacts of climate change, Australians are facing increased financial pressures, reducing their ability to upgrade their homes and build resilience to climate change. Many homes have poor thermal capacity, reducing residents' ability to cope in weather extremes. For instance, homes on the Mornington Peninsula were built before the 1990's (prior to the star rating system) and have poor thermal qualities. Without the financial capacity to upgrade homes for increased comfort, many disadvantaged residents are increasingly exposed to the weather extremes associated with climate change.

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change's (IPCC) Sixth Assessment report shows that climate change is rapidly accelerating, and impacts are projected to continue and become more severe. The report shows that climate change has already driven many extreme events in Australia with devastating impacts for communities and ecosystems. The severity and frequency of these extreme weather events will continue to increase unless strong action is taken by government to reduce emissions and policy frameworks established to enable business, industry and the community to play their part in reducing emissions.

Motion number 139 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 government funding support both in terms of investment levels and the breadth of projects that will be considered eligible.

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 to access financial assistance via grants that ensure energy savings projects in adopted Council energy strategies are achievable for Local Government

KEY ARGUMENTS

- Currently, Federal Government provides significant funding to State and Territory Governments for energy projects, however, the funding grants released often require substantial (unrealistic) co-contributions from Councils and/or restrict or limit the scope of the work the Councils can undertake.
- 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 investment to support the completion of the projects.
- The energy market has seen unprecedented cost increases 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.
- Enabling Councils to reduce their energy related financial liabilities will put Local Government in a better position for supporting, growing and maintaining their respective communities.

Motion number 140 Maranoa Regional Council QLD

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to increase support and funding for regional councils to develop and implement renewable energy solutions.

NATIONAL OBJECTIVE

The national objective of this motion is to accelerate Australia's transition to a low-carbon economy by empowering regional councils with the resources and autonomy needed to innovate in renewable energy. By fostering local renewable projects, the government can achieve broader environmental goals, enhance national energy security, and stimulate economic development in regional areas, aligning with Australia's commitments to climate change mitigation.

KEY ARGUMENTS

1. **Economic Benefits:** Investing in renewable energy creates jobs and stimulates local economies. For regional areas, this can mean diversification from traditional industries and the development of a sustainable economic base.
2. **Energy Security:** Renewable energy projects can reduce reliance on imported fuels and make energy systems more resilient to global market fluctuations and climate impacts.
3. **Environmental Impact:** Transitioning to renewable energy sources significantly reduces greenhouse gas emissions and environmental degradation, contributing to Australia's climate change commitments.
4. **Community Support:** There is strong community support for renewable energy initiatives, which can enhance social license and foster community engagement and ownership.
5. **Technological Innovation:** Supporting renewable energy in regional councils encourages innovation and the development of new technologies, positioning Australia as a leader in clean energy solutions.

Our council, representing a medium-sized community, faces unique challenges and opportunities in transitioning to a more sustainable and resilient energy system. We seek to explore solar, wind, and hydropower projects that align with our geographical and environmental characteristics, providing long-term benefits such as reduced energy costs, job creation, and improved energy security. However, the success of these initiatives requires significant upfront investment, technical expertise, and regulatory support from the federal level to ensure feasibility and effectiveness.

Motion number 141 City of Adelaide SA

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to:

Work with ALGA in leading a process to identify minimum climate disclosure reporting standards that could apply to local government entities for consideration by respective State Governments, delivering these standards by 30 November 2024, noting the drafting of recent legislation by the Federal Government and the drafting of a new Australian Sustainability Reporting Standard by the Australian Accounting Standards Board, both of which are due for implementation as of 30 June 2024 and which are already informing climate disclosure reporting approaches within Federal and some State agencies.

NATIONAL OBJECTIVE

Develop consistent guidance on standards for climate disclosure assessment and reporting at a local government level to ensure greater consistency in:

- (a) Assessing the impacts of climate change, covering physical and transition risks.
- (b) Determining the financial impacts which will be linked to national objectives for financing adaptation measures at a national level.

KEY ARGUMENTS

The local government sector has been at the forefront of action on climate change for much of the past two decades, leading on work to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and develop and implement climate change adaptation plans.

Over the past 5 years though, the business sector has become increasingly active internationally, initially through voluntary climate disclosure reporting through the Taskforce on Climate Related Financial Disclosures (TCFD) and more recently emerging mandatory reporting.

In Australia this will manifest in mandatory climate disclosure reporting via legislation soon to be introduced by the Federal Government backed by a new set up of complementary Australian Accounting Standards (Australian Sustainability Reporting Standards). This will make climate disclosure reporting mandatory for many Australian businesses. Furthermore, large non-profit entities will also be impacted and some states already require agency reporting aligned to the TCFD.

It has been argued that these are the most significant changes to corporate reporting in Australia for at least a decade and will affect all parts of the Australian economy either directly or indirectly via supply chain impacts. But to date, local government has not been considered even though the consolidated revenue, value of assets and staff numbers for many councils around Australia would meet many of the triggers for this reporting.

Without coordinated and clearer direction on reporting requirements and standards, Local Government will be the largest sector in Australia not to have national guidance on reporting requirements, which will impact governance, risk assessment and financing in the sector. Furthermore, greater consistency in reporting standards will assist with comparing governance and preparedness measures being implemented around Australia and create cost savings for when this work is delivered.

Motion number 142 Murweh Shire Council QLD

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to classify all carbon capture and storage (CCS) projects as a “controlled action” under the Commonwealth’s Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 (EPBC Act) where there are no existing and applicable legislative protections for the Great Artesian Basin in relevant jurisdictions. This would require CCS projects to be assessed under the EPBC Act before assessment under State and Territory government environment legislation.

NATIONAL OBJECTIVE

Carbon Capture and Storage (CCS) is the process of directly capturing and then storing the CO₂ emissions that are a by-product of industrial facilities and power plants. The aim is to stop the CO₂ from reaching the atmosphere. The captured CO₂ is typically compressed, transported and injected deep underground into such as sandstone where it is captured and stored indefinitely.

Currently there are numerous trials and feasibility studies into [carbon capture and storage \(CCS\) projects](#) across Australia’s mainland states and the Northern Territory. In 2023 there was one operational in Western Australia, one has taken a final investment decision and sixteen are

at feasibility stage. On May 31, 2024, the Queensland Government announced it would be introducing a moratorium on CCS in the Queensland component of the Great Artesian Basin after the State’s Environmental Regulator rejected an application from a Glencore subsidiary – Carbon Transport and Storage Corporation (CTSCo) – for a CCS proposal at a location near Moonie in the southern Darling Downs, and one other in Queensland.

In February 2022, the Commonwealth Government determined that the CTSCo project did not constitute a “controlled action” under the EPBC Act and did not require assessment. This decision is alarming given the potential long term environmental and economic damage that may arise – especially in this case to the Great Artesian Basin (GAB). While the Queensland Government ultimately rejected the proposal and will introduce a moratorium, this only provides protections for the Queensland component of the GAB. Such projects should be considered a “controlled action” under the EPBC Act as the national law providing for environmental assessment and approval of actions impacting matters of national environmental significance.

KEY ARGUMENTS

Councils are acutely aware of the international, Australian and State based initiatives to achieve net zero targets by 2050; and many are actively engaged in activities aimed at reducing carbon emissions.

Glencore documents indicated the now rejected [CTSCo Project](#) was seeking approval to injection test up to 330,000 tonnes of carbon dioxide into a high-fluoride, brackish water sandstone aquifer at a depth of 2.3 kilometres and claims the water in that aquifer is non-potable and that it is geologically isolated from shallower aquifers used by the agricultural community. Glencore claimed the project would have no impact on current or potential groundwater users of the [Great Australian Basin \(GAB\)](#) and that this view was shared by the Australian Government Independent Expert Scientific Committee (IESC) in a report commissioned by the Queensland Government.

Conversely, the now rejected CTSCo Project has drawn strong criticism from concerned property owners as well as peak bodies such as the [Queensland Farmers Federation \(QFF\)](#), [Agforce](#), Australian Lot Feeder's Association, Cotton Australia and the Local Government Association of Queensland (LGAQ). These organisations disputed Glencore’s claims that these projects will not adversely affect water in other aquifers noting information in Chapter 9 of CTSCo’s Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) concerning the risk assessment for groundwater indicates that at a number of the studied locations, there is a notable increase in both the lead and arsenic concentrations near the location of the greenhouse gas plume over both the short and long-term.

In the circumstances of the contested science and the extreme risks and potential consequences to the GAB (in this example), it stands to reason that, at the very least, the CTSCo proposal, and others like it across Australia, should be deemed a “controlled action” and subjected to the rigour of assessment under the EPBC Act.

The Queensland Government has moved to prevent further CCS applications in the GAB through legislative protections. However, as this moratorium is not in place in other states, there is nothing to stop another proposal from being successful outside Queensland’s jurisdiction. Classifying all CCS projects as a controlled action would ensure proposals for of

CCS in parts of the GAB in other states could be subject to a higher level of assessment, adding additional safeguards.

Motion number 142.1 Maranoa Regional Council QLD

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to implement protective measures for the Great Artesian Basin by establishing stringent environmental safeguards and regulatory frameworks for carbon capture and storage (CCS) projects. These measures should ensure the long-term sustainability of groundwater resources, supporting agriculture, communities, and ecosystems dependent on the Basin.

NATIONAL OBJECTIVE

The motion aims to protect the Great Artesian Basin, a vital resource for Australia's agricultural sector, ecosystems, and rural communities, from the potential risks associated with carbon capture and storage projects. By advocating for rigorous environmental safeguards and regulations, this initiative seeks to preserve water quality and availability, ensuring the Basin's long-term sustainability and supporting Australia's environmental and economic well-being.

KEY ARGUMENTS

1. **Environmental Sustainability:** The Great Artesian Basin's health is crucial for Australia's ecosystems, agriculture, and rural communities. Protecting it against potential CCS project risks is essential for maintaining biodiversity and natural resources.
2. **Economic Importance:** Agriculture and other industries reliant on the Basin contribute significantly to Australia's economy. Ensuring the Basin's sustainability supports these industries' future.
3. **Community Impact:** Rural communities depend on the Basin for their water supply. Protecting the Basin ensures these communities remain viable and continue to thrive.
4. **Climate Mitigation Balance:** While CCS projects are explored as part of climate change mitigation strategies, it's vital to balance these efforts with the need to protect critical natural resources like the Great Artesian Basin.
5. **Regulatory Frameworks:** Updating and enforcing strict regulatory frameworks for CCS projects can prevent potential negative impacts on the Basin, ensuring its protection for future generations.

The Great Artesian Basin is an essential water source that spans much of Australia, underpinning agricultural productivity, supporting ecosystems, and providing water to rural communities. With the growing exploration of CCS as a strategy for climate mitigation, there is an urgent need for a balanced approach that safeguards this critical natural resource from potential adverse impacts. This also includes ensuring assessment agencies are using up to date information in relation to aquifer capacity and usage.

Motion number 143 Glenelg Shire Council VIC

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to

Provide funding for a Carbon Reduction Future Infrastructure and Funding Planning Body (CRFIFPB) and that:

- a. Local Government Authorities that can reasonably demonstrate that projects in the national interests will have significant impact on their local government area, shall be eligible to apply for funding from this body.
- b. CRFIFPB shall provide funding for a position(s) to sit with in a successful applicant local government authority to assess and plan for future community needs resulting from potential projects.
- c. CRFIFPB shall liaise with operators and relevant departments of State and Federal government to provide oversight and coordination.
- d. CRFIFPB shall provide all funding necessary for the officer to perform their objectives.
- e. A regular report is to be tabled at Council Meetings on the progress of the CRFIFPB officer's work for transparency and any community feedback.

NATIONAL OBJECTIVE

As it would assist with financial sustainability for Council's councils across Australia.

KEY ARGUMENTS

The proposed motion aims to provide a working and open dialog with bodies like Local Government Shires (including neighbouring shires), Regional Development Victoria, Regional Development Australia and DEECA just to name a few. To bring all the information together as a useable snapshot to give oversight and ability to plan at the local government level.

Financial sustainability is at the heart of the motion. Local government is charged with bringing services to its citizens. To be able to map out and have an oversight of future needs is critical for funding applications, to have evidenced based data. The community needs to be able to trust that at the local government level, council is able to meet those obligations ahead of time, not be reactive. If smaller councils are hit with large multiple social challenges, this is not something that can be resourced and met.

Mapping out the future needed infrastructure and delivery requirements is the aim of the motion and epitomises the roads and infrastructure focus point. Part of that infrastructure is the future housing needs of the area and having projects mapped out that entail workforce needs will go a long way in solving this issue.

Part of the above-mentioned strengthening of relations also encompasses Registered Training Organisations and tooling the future workforce. As a relatively young industry, job upskilling will be crucial and communicating with RTO's is a necessity for green energy projects.

With any sudden dramatic increases in population, community services will need to be planned for. Everything from childcare to refuse collection and disposal. A massive undertaking shire wide. At the local government level these can take years to plan and undertake.

The projects themselves deal directly with Climate Change and also provide an opportunity to change the way in which LG's local governments deal with aspects of the environment and the circular economy. Some projects look at converting biomass to energy in the form of hydrogen. This then presents an opportunity to run light and commercial fleet on a hydrogen fuel source. An opportunity for using rubbish to power local government vehicles. Turning a cost of housing and transporting rubbish into a power source to be used. The implications of turning a cost into a revenue stream are huge for local government and need to be mapped out and explored.

While this motion has been brought about by conditions in the Glenelg Shire, we are not alone. Various national interest projects throughout Australia are in their planning stage and these seem to fall on regional, less financially equipped shires that can't easily deal with significant infrastructure and social issues. Help is needed to plan at the local government level to deliver targets set by State and Federal Government authorities.

ENVIRONMENT

Motion number 144 Wakefield Regional Council SA

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to work with state/territory and local governments across Australia, to develop Australia's capacity to substitute/supplement potable water with 'fit-for-purpose' alternative water sources such as recycled water, desalination and storm-water capture, particularly in rural and regional areas, so that overall water use is sustainable as the impact of climate change creates havoc with water source management through a mixture of drought and flooding.

NATIONAL OBJECTIVE

This motion is relevant to:

Housing & Homelessness

Climate Change

Financial Sustainability.

KEY ARGUMENTS

The National Water Commission (NWC) was an independent statutory authority in Australia established by the National Water Commission Act 2004 to implement the National Water Initiative and reform the broader national water agenda. The agency was abolished by the Abbott government in 2014. The reason for disbanding the Commission was the substantial progress already made in water reform and the current fiscal environment, there is no longer adequate justification for a stand-alone agency to monitor Australia's progress on water reform. What this information suggests is that water reform needed to be shifted elsewhere; and as a general rule, where water is to be used for agricultural and domestic use, "elsewhere" means local government.

LGA's across the country are being charged with the role of increasing the development of housing to address the housing shortage. Where there are water source shortages, there can be no housing development.

Australia is the driest inhabited continent on Earth, and among the world's highest consumers of water. Amongst OECD nations Australia is ranked fourth-highest in water use per capita. Australia faces increasingly acute long-term water shortages with lower rainfall, rivers drying up and dam water levels falling. The benefits of reforms achieved by 2014 have been diminished by climate change and increased demands for water from residential, commercial and primary production land uses.

Non-conventional water sources, such as seawater desalination, reclaimed water, groundwater resources and natural basin dams are playing an increasing role in Australia's water supply. The non-potable reuse of treated wastewater for irrigation of green spaces, golf courses, agricultural crops or industrial uses is common and increasing in Australia. This is supposed to take the pressure off treated water supplies for use in residential developments. Despite this in regional areas the difficulties and costs of transporting potable water from urban catchments into the regions is becoming cost prohibitive and lack of secure and suitable water support its stifling growth within the regions.

In summary, the Australian Government needs to work with state/territory and local governments across Australia, to develop Australia's capacity to substitute 'fit-for-purpose' alternative water sources such as recycled water, desalination and storm-water capture if we are to address sustainable water supplies, adapt to the effects of climate change and realise that the management of our water resources is an intrinsic factor in addressing (but not limited to) our population growth, economic development, housing shortage, natural environments and so on.

Motion number 144.1 Noosa Council QLD

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to strengthen environmental initiatives through investment in wastewater recycling and the adoption of a collaborative approach, both as a commitment to environmental sustainability and to foster trust within communities.

NATIONAL OBJECTIVE

Australia's environmental challenges necessitate a national dialogue on wastewater recycling. This is a matter of paramount national importance as it directly impacts the well-being of our citizens, water security, the preservation of our environment, and the overall sustainability of our nation. The need for a comprehensive and collaborative strategy underscores the urgency of this debate, emphasizing the importance of forging a united front to address this critical issue.

KEY ARGUMENTS

1. **Reforms for Safe Implementation:** Implementing comprehensive water regulation reforms ensures the safe deployment of wastewater recycling projects. Transparent reforms and more transparent and informed, evidence-based participation build trust by assuring the public of the safety and reliability of recycled water.
2. **Technological Innovation:** Investing in research for wastewater treatment technologies, especially for 'forever chemicals' like PFAS and other emerging contaminants, demonstrates a commitment to environmental safety and builds trust in the government's ability to address emerging challenges.
3. **PFAS Source Mapping:** Collaborating with environmental agencies to map PFAS contamination sources is essential. Transparent reporting and active management build trust by demonstrating a commitment to protecting wildlife and ecosystems.
4. **Water Recycling Targets:** Advocating for wastewater recycling targets for all outfalls. Clear targets build trust by ensuring a consistent commitment to sustainable water management practices.

Conclusion: Investing in wastewater recycling will strengthen the Australian Government's commitment to environmental sustainability and build trust within communities. Trust is the bedrock upon which sustainable policies stand, and by actively involving citizens and local governments, the government can foster a united front towards a more sustainable and resilient future.

Motion number 144.2 Tamworth Regional Council NSW

That the National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to commence an education campaign to educate the people of Australia about water recycling, including direct potable reuse of water, and provide a national framework for the approval of water recycling projects.

NATIONAL OBJECTIVE

Water Recycling has to be one of the suite of measures investigated to address reduced water security for communities in the future, particularly from the effects of climate change. Water Recycling, including direct potable reuse, is technically possible now and has been for years, but the community remains reluctant to embrace the technology.

KEY ARGUMENTS

Rather than Local Government undertake community education on a council-by-council basis the problem requires a national focus which can only be provided by the Australian Government. Further, water recycling projects that are approved at present have to run the gauntlet of each state's approval processes and requirements, some of which may vary widely, assuming they have a process in place at all. A more national approach to water recycling including approval processes is necessary.

Motion number 145 Logan City Council QLD

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to allocate adequate and accessible funding for local governments to undertake Red Imported Fire Ants eradication and management programs to address this national imminent threat while building community trust in all levels of Government.

NATIONAL OBJECTIVE

Red Imported Fire Ants (RIFA) pose an imminent threat to Australia. With a climate that is optimal for RIFA, if left unchecked they will have significant negative consequences to the nation in terms of human health, social amenity, agriculture, the environment, and infrastructure. It is estimated that the future costs to the Australian economy could be approximately \$1.25 billion per year or possibly greater, based on the estimated economic impacts in the United States.

Government at all levels must play a shared role in safeguarding our community and environment from this major biosecurity threat. Significant federal and state funding has been made available to tackle this problem. However, following reviews of the effectiveness of existing management programs, a recent governmental strategy shift, which emphasises local government responsibility, poses a potential unplanned financial burden for ratepayers across all council areas.

With this change in strategy, local government must be provided suitable funding to ensure they can adequately assist in safeguarding the nation's economy, environment, and biodiversity from the RIFA threat.

KEY ARGUMENTS

The Red Imported Fire Ant (RIFA) is one of the worst invasive species to reach Australia and is considered a nationally significant pest under the National Environmental Biosecurity

Response Agreement (NEBRA). In July 2023, national agricultural ministers endorsed a new National Fire Ant Eradication Response Plan 2023-2027. This new strategy responds to a 2021 strategic review of the program which highlighted eradication of fire ants may still be possible with a coordinated approach between the National Fire Ant Eradication Program (NFAEP), all levels of government (local, state, and federal), large landholders, businesses, and local communities.

In December 2023, the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries (DAF) wrote to Council stating that, under Section 23 of the Biosecurity Act 2014, all councils in Southeast Queensland are expected to take all reasonable and practical measures to prevent or minimise the risks posed by fire ants and will be expected to scale up investment in RIFA suppression activities to restrict their spread. This includes undertaking targeted fire ant management on all land Council owns, leases, or manages, as well as respond to public reports of fire ants which occur on this land. Council was informed that there will be a transition period of 6 months for this to occur, with full handover of this activity to local government by 30 June 2024. Each local government area will be required to individually bear the burden of funding their RIFA surveillance and suppression activities.

A significant amount of council expenditure and resources will be required to manage this new arrangement effectively. Early projections indicate that an increase of surveillance and treatment activities of the nature required for the City of Logan could cost up to \$1 million per annum for a period of up to 10 years if bait is provided at no cost.

Councils currently do not receive any funding from the federal or state government to undertake fire ant suppression activities. Without additional funding flowing to local governments, the amplified cost of RIFA suppression in local areas from 30 June 2024 will unreasonably burden ratepayers and could potentially jeopardise the effectiveness of the overall eradication program, creating a risk to the nation. A collaborative cost sharing approach, that includes adequate funding from the federal government towards local government, is essential to safeguard our communities from the risks posed by RIFA into the future and build trust in government that the RIFA threat can be defeated.

Motion number 146 Waverley Council NSW

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to strengthen Australia's environmental services and infrastructure by engaging in strategic partnerships with local governments.

NATIONAL OBJECTIVE

By implementing these programs and fostering strong partnerships between the Australian Government and local governments, Australia can make significant strides in achieving environmental sustainability at the local, regional, and national levels. Collaboration is key to addressing the complex and interconnected challenges posed by environmental issues.

KEY ARGUMENTS

Potential areas of collaboration and new programs that can be implemented include:

- a. Environmental services and infrastructure:

- i. Biodiversity conservation programs: collaborate on initiatives to protect and enhance biodiversity, including the restoration of natural habitats, conservation of endangered species, and reforestation projects.
 - ii. Waste management and recycling infrastructure: partner with local governments to improve waste management systems, invest in recycling infrastructure, and promote community awareness campaigns to reduce waste generation.
 - iii. Green energy projects: support local governments in implementing green energy projects, such as solar and wind farms, and explore funding mechanisms to incentivise the transition to renewable energy sources.
 - iv. Urban water management and conservation: develop programs to improve urban water management and conservation, including investments in water infrastructure and initiatives to reduce water consumption.
- b. Programs to progress local, regional and national objectives:
- i. Climate resilience initiatives: work with local governments to assess and enhance climate resilience in communities through infrastructure improvements, early warning systems, and climate adaptation planning.
 - ii. Smart city initiatives: support local governments in adopting smart city technologies to improve efficiency, reduce environmental impact, and enhance the quality of urban living.
 - iii. Community-based conservation projects: establish programs that empower local communities to participate in conservation efforts, including tree planting, wildlife monitoring and sustainable land management projects.
 - iv. National clean energy transition strategy: develop a comprehensive strategy in partnership with local governments to transition Australia to a clean energy economy, incorporating regional and local perspectives.
 - v. Circular economy programs: collaborate on initiatives to promote a circular economy, focusing on reducing waste, promoting reuse and recycling, and supporting sustainable production practices.
 - vi. Transportation infrastructure for sustainability: Invest in sustainable transportation infrastructure, including public transit systems, cycling infrastructure, and electric vehicle charging stations, to reduce carbon emissions.
 - vii. Indigenous land management partnerships: foster partnerships with Indigenous communities for sustainable land management practices, incorporating traditional knowledge and practices into environmental conservation efforts.
 - viii. Incentives for sustainable development: provide financial incentives or grants to local governments for sustainable development projects, such as eco-friendly housing, energy-efficient buildings, and environmentally conscious urban planning.

- ix. Innovation hubs for environmental solutions: establish innovation hubs that bring together local governments, businesses, and research institutions to collaborate on developing and implementing innovative environmental solutions.

Motion number 147 Tamworth Regional Council NSW

That the National General Assembly calls on the Australian government to provide funding to all local government pounds throughout Australia to enable the desexing of all adoptable cats that are handed into a pound facility, to reduce the significant impact that cats have on Australia's biodiversity.

NATIONAL OBJECTIVE

Councils across Australia are aware of significant statistics based on research across Australia detailing the negative impacts of cats, including domestic (pet) cats on native wildlife.

KEY ARGUMENTS

Council hold significant concerns regarding the impact on biodiversity of the huge numbers of native birds, small mammals and reptiles that are killed by domestic cats each year and the effect on vulnerable and threatened species. The Australian government partnering with councils to assist in desexing of cats will strengthen Australia biodiversity and greatly increase councils ability to regulate, educate and inform on the community and improve the outcomes for Australia's fauna.

Motion number 148 Maranoa Regional Council QLD

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to enhance the Murray-Darling Basin Plan's implementation with a focus on the economic and social welfare of local communities. This entails revising water allocation policies to ensure equitable access and support for the agricultural sector, alongside community engagement initiatives to foster local input and trust in water management decisions.

NATIONAL OBJECTIVE

The objective of this motion is to ensure that the implementation of the Murray-Darling Basin Plan prioritizes the economic and social welfare of communities within the basin. By revising water allocation policies for equitable access and enhancing community engagement, the plan can better meet its goals of sustainable water management while also supporting local economies and building trust among stakeholders. Addressing climate change impacts and ensuring rigorous compliance are also key to ensuring the plan's resilience and effectiveness in the long term.

KEY ARGUMENTS

1. Community Welfare: Prioritising the welfare of communities in the basin ensures that economic and social impacts are considered in water management decisions.

2. **Equitable Water Allocation:** Revising water allocation policies is necessary to support agricultural sectors and ensure equitable access to water resources.
3. **Community Engagement:** Enhancing community engagement helps build trust and ensures that local perspectives are included in water management strategies.
4. **Climate Change Considerations:** Incorporating climate change into the plan's implementation is crucial for its adaptability and long-term sustainability.
5. **Compliance and Enforcement:** Strengthening compliance mechanisms against water theft and over-extraction is essential for the plan's integrity and the protection of water resources.
6. **Balanced Interests:** Engagement processes must ensure that diverse interests are balanced, supporting a fair and effective implementation of the plan.

The Murray-Darling Basin Plan, essential for sustainable water management across several states, faces challenges in execution, particularly regarding water allocation targets, compliance, and the impacts on local communities and industries. Enhancing community welfare and participation is crucial for the plan's success and fostering community trust. Furthermore, the plan must consider climate change uncertainties and potential impacts on water availability, ensuring its long-term effectiveness. Improving compliance against water theft and over-extraction, with engagement ensuring a balance of diverse interests, is essential.

Motion number 149 Redland City Council QLD

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to amend the Environment Protection Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 (EPBC) referral process to:

- a. Provide local government with greater clarity around the application of the EPBC Act.
- b. Provide acknowledgement for previous environmental protection efforts appropriate for the threatened species, including conservation acquisitions and revegetation as part of advanced offset recognition.

NATIONAL OBJECTIVE

This motion seeks greater transparency and communication with Council's where changes to protected matters occur, and advanced offset credit to local governments who have made significant historical investment into revegetation and rehabilitation and have demonstrated responsible environmental planning and protection for impacted matters.

A more holistic approach to the application of the EPBC Act, and consideration of the quadruple bottom line, would ensure that local governments can plan and deliver important community infrastructure for their communities.

Improved clarity around the application, interpretation, and time frames of the EPBC Act supports local governments to satisfy legislation to protect and manage environment, whilst efficiently delivering important infrastructure for their communities to support liveability, social outcomes and deliver critical transport, housing and other service infrastructure.

KEY ARGUMENTS

The EPBC Act provides that an action which may impact a Matter of National Environmental Significance (MNES) must not proceed without approval from the Federal Minister for Environment. The EPBC protection of MNES (protected matters) undergoes regular changes, with limited local government awareness leading to disruptions to project planning. Changes made without better visibility of potential listing changes impact environmental and community planning outcomes for Council's, who invest significant resources in planning community infrastructure with correct controls in place at a point in time, only to discover changes have been made to species listing which make work redundant at a cost to ratepayers, resulting in redundant work, inefficient resource allocation and delayed delivery of community infrastructure (sport and recreation facilities, parks, cultural and educational facilities, road upgrades and wastewater network expansions). The lack of visibility also impacts investment in general environmental protection such as revegetation, given the need to "save" limited resources to potential EPBC assessments, reports and offsets. Achieving a balanced quadruple bottom line (cultural, economic, social and environmental outcomes) is crucial for sustainable prosperity, supporting Councils to deliver projects that enhance liveability. Councils play a key role in delivering critical infrastructure, such as roads and water and wastewater connections, to support delivery of national and state housing strategies. The complicated EPBC process poses additional hurdles and pressures, risking deliverability and affordability.

Government offset decisions can drive up costs for Councils in the delivery of infrastructure required to support housing growth. To deliver projects, and meet offsets, Council's need to reduce overall costs associated with delivering infrastructure, often by scaling down or simply not delivering the important infrastructure. In addition, the ambiguity surrounding whether to refer projects for assessment or not, leads to delays and confusion. Unlike the Queensland Government legislative scheme, the EPBC Act is not clear when referrals are required. There is limited recognition of Council's investment in the environment (e.g. creating conservation corridors, or innovative wildlife management initiatives), making continued investment in community infrastructure and conservation efforts unviable. We ask the Australian Government, when evaluating environmental impacts under the EPBC Act, to recognise the inherent differences between council projects aimed at community betterment and profit-driven endeavours of multinational mining corporations. Councils undertake projects that prioritise community amenity and social wellbeing, often without direct revenue generation. Failing to differentiate between these could unfairly disadvantage responsible community infrastructure projects. We urge the Australian Government to review the approach to recognising best practice environmental planning, particularly where proponents have exhausted offset opportunities within its boundary due to pro-active conservation efforts. A widening of the 'advanced credits' approach could support ongoing delivery of community infrastructure, recognising long track-records in revegetation and rehabilitation activities and contribute towards a bank of credits that could be used to offset future impacts. In addition, the allowing of simultaneous offset planting and clearing will also help streamline timeframes for delivery of community infrastructure.

Motion number 150 City of Greater Bendigo VIC

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to:

- a. Allocate sufficient, secure and ongoing resources to implementation of Threatened Species Recovery Plans, including ensuring ongoing funding for monitoring as well as sufficient funding for local governments to engage their communities and implement their land manager responsibilities under the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 (EPBC Act 1999).
- b. Develop, implement and publish annual progress reports that provide transparent and accessible updates on the Australian Government's progress with implementing the actions in the Threatened Species Recovery Plans. These reports should be published in between the more comprehensive review of Recovery Plans every 5 years or more.

NATIONAL OBJECTIVE

Protection of threatened species is a national issue.

Local governments across the country are responsible for ensuring they meet their obligations under the EPBC Act 1999, where council managed land supports a threatened species or ecosystem. They also are responsible for representing the views of their communities, many of whom are concerned about the biodiversity crisis currently unfolding.

The City of Greater Bendigo is concerned about the future of the Grey-headed Flying fox, which is listed as "vulnerable" under the EPBC Act 1999. It is listed as 'threatened' under the Victorian Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act 1988. The species are found across South Australia, Victoria, New South Wales and Queensland, including in many local government parks and reserves such as Rosalind Park in Bendigo. As a result, ensuring appropriate protection of the species is a national issue that crosses state boundaries.

Overall, the lack of regular and secure funding or support to local governments and the lack of transparent reporting compromises the ability for local governments to ensure they are equipped to fulfil their duties under the EPBC Act 1999. It also limits the ability for local, state and federal governments to work together on coordinated management, monitoring and community engagement that will ensure the ongoing survival of the species in the region.

KEY ARGUMENTS

Australia is home to between 600,000 and 700,000 unique species, with 84 per cent of plants, 83 per cent of mammals, and 45 per cent of birds only being found in Australia, all at risk due to human activity causing changes to the landscape and native habitat.

The Threatened Species Index registers data from long-term threatened species monitoring. Updated annually, the most recent 2023 index included data up to 2020. It showed a 61% decline from 2000 to 2020 in Australia's threatened bird, mammal and plant species. 130 species were added to the list in 2023, greater than the previous annual average of 29 species.

As a significant public land manager, local government is often responsible for managing threats to federally listed threatened species in parks and conservation reserves, protecting and enhancing habitat and managing conflicting uses of public space.

A key example of this is the Grey-headed Flying fox which is listed as "vulnerable" under the EPBC Act 1999. This species is under threat from loss and degradation of habitat as well as

impacts from human activity, such as fruit tree netting. They are also vulnerable to the impacts of climate change including heat waves and more frequent and intense fires.

The stresses and threats to the Grey-headed Flying fox are evident in Bendigo where large populations roost in gardens due to lack of suitable habitat in other locations. This can result in negative impacts to heritage features, heritage trees and community facilities as well as conflicts with other protected species such as Ibis.

The Grey-headed Flying fox has an impact on the amenity of public spaces and crops, especially fruit. As a result, the community places pressure on land managers to remove or relocate the species from public parks, while fruit growers install netting that is a key threat to the species.

Managing these conflicts and competing objectives is often beyond the resources and expertise of local government. Raising awareness amongst the community about the species and how to protect it is a much-needed additional local government task requiring resources to implement.

Local governments have difficulty understanding what action is being taken at state or national level that would support their efforts. The national Grey-headed Flying fox Monitoring Program's most recent comprehensive report is from 2015, the most recent report on survey data from 2019, and the latest Recovery Plan from 2021. Since then it is unclear what actions have been taken, how they might coordinate with local effort or whether we, as a nation, are on track to achieve the Recovery Plan's goals. Insecure continued funding for monitoring means that future declines in population numbers, or the impacts of threats may go unnoticed.

In conclusion:

* Direct financial support from the Australian Government is required to assist local government to implement our obligations under the EPBC Act 1999 and to support community engagement about threatened species.

* Transparent and regular reporting is required on progress with implementing National Threatened Species Recovery Plans.

Motion number 150.1 Redland City Council QLD

The 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

In 2022, the Federal Government announced an additional \$50 million investment over four years in koala including:

- \$20 million in grants and funding for larger projects led by Natural Resource Management groups, NGOs, and Indigenous groups, coupled with supporting state and territory governments 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 to fill critical knowledge gaps and increase the use of citizen science-based projects.
- \$10 million in grants for small-scale community projects and local activities including habitat protection and restoration, managing threats, health and care facilities, and citizen science projects.
- \$2 million in grants 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.

It is noted that money has not been specifically directed toward local government entities to help enhance current or planned koala conservation initiatives and actions.

KEY ARGUMENTS

Aligned with this year's NGA theme – Building Community Trust, we seek enhanced oversight and transparency in fund distribution, urging a more equitable allocation of funding.

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 National Recovery Plan's goals, objectives and strategies. Recognising that East Coast Councils are custodians of the largest Koala populations in Australia - we advocate for increased collaboration and investment from other levels of government to enable local governments to identify suitable projects to be delivered, and through funding, empower local governments to deliver them.

Local governments play a key role in supporting the implementation of State and Federal strategies, for example, the Redlands Coast Koala Conservation Plan and Action Plan aligns with the South-East Queensland Koala Conservation Strategy, achieving shared objectives for medium- and long-term outcomes. Redland City Council's (Council) koala conservation program is fully self-funded.

Council develops partnerships with universities who are awarded grants, such as the ARC grant that encourage collaborative approaches to research and improve conservation outcomes.

The Federal Government has committed substantial funding into koala conservation activities of which there is very little allocation specifically for local governments, who are a key delivery partner in the National Recovery Plan.

We seek enhanced oversight and transparency in fund distribution, urging a more equitable allocation of funding.

Motion number 151 City of Melbourne VIC

That the National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to build on the success of the Urban Rivers and Catchments Program (URCP) by:

- a. Expanding and continuing grants funding;
- b. Expanding the range of projects eligible to be funded; and
- c. Working with State and Territory Governments to remove barriers to funding support to councils where land ownership and management along urban waterways is complex and projects would require consent from multiple parties.

NATIONAL OBJECTIVE

This is a national issue because:

- Urban waterways are interconnected natural assets that provide significant environmental, social and economic benefits to communities across Australia. The health and management of urban waterways in one region can have flow-on effects of national significance.
- Many councils need more financial resources and capacity to undertake the comprehensive revitalisation projects required to unlock the full potential of urban waterways, especially given the challenges around project finance, land ownership and assembly.
- A national funding program would enable a more coordinated and strategic approach to urban waterway management, leading to better outcomes for the environment and local communities.

It therefore should be negotiated at the ALGA National General Assembly because:

- Urban waterways are a critical natural resource in our cities and their improvement can have multiple environmental, social and economic benefits.
- Protecting and enhancing our urban waterways is a complex challenge. A dedicated funding program will provide the catalyst and certainty to plan, design and implement holistic solutions.

KEY ARGUMENTS

The motion seeks to further build and expand on funding currently available through the URCP and remove barriers that hinder local councils in being able to revitalise urban waterways. This revised approach and broadened program should provide a consistent and reliable source of financial assistance to realise holistic environmental, social and economic outcomes. A collaborative approach between federal, state/territories and local government is required to develop eligibility criteria that address different regions' unique challenges and opportunities facing our urban waterways. Comprehensive revitalisation projects require coordinated support to unlock the full potential of urban waterways, particularly in solving challenges around project finance, land ownership and assembly.

The current complexities and challenges for local councils in achieving strategic outcomes and benefits for the community is something the City of Melbourne has experienced in its attempts to deliver a vision for the Moonee Ponds Creek (MPC) corridor. The MPC corridor is a north–

south spine linking several central city urban renewal precincts. Various state government agencies and some private landowners own and manage parcels of the Creek, which creates challenges around accountability, prioritisation and alignment of funding. A broader federal funding stream can offer an opportunity for stakeholders to come together and take shared ownership of outcomes.

Motion number 152 Blacktown City Council NSW

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to fund tree planting initiatives in all local government areas across the Commonwealth, in line with Australia's Paris Agreement commitment and greenhouse gas emission reduction targets of 43% below 2005 levels by 2030 and net zero by 2050.

NATIONAL OBJECTIVE

Tree canopy is a critical element of climate change adaptation.

KEY ARGUMENTS

We advocate to the Australian Government to provide more direct funding for tree planting initiatives through State and Territory Governments and Landcare groups.

Urban areas in Australia are anticipated to see an increase in hot days due to climate change. The frequency of extremely warm days has surged, as exemplified by the year 2019, which had 33 days where the national daily average maximum temperature across Australia exceeded 39°C (State of the Climate 2022). This number surpassed the total number observed from 1960 to 2018. The incidence of very high monthly maximum temperatures has risen dramatically from nearly 2% of the time in 1960-1989 to over 12% of the time in 2005-2019.

Planting street trees is one way we can effectively mitigate the urban heat island effect. Tree canopy cover has been shown to be the single most effective mechanism to reduce local temperatures and cool neighbourhoods. Trees have the added benefit of storing atmospheric CO₂, improving air quality and providing habitat.

Grant programs provide crucial support to councils to plant trees. We need more government support and funding for tree planting programs including:

- nursery management
- plant giveaways
- National Tree Day events
- Bushcare and biodiversity planting
- tree planting
- maintenance.

Motion number 152.1 North Sydney Council NSW

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to lobby the Federal Government to financially support local government programs and initiatives which seeks to address the ongoing loss of tree canopy across Australia.

NATIONAL OBJECTIVE

Many Councils across Australia are already designing and implementing innovative ways to increase tree canopy much of which is as a result of state government projects or private development. These projects come at a cost to councils and would be able to be more widely delivered and more accessible if federal funding for this purpose was made available to local government.

KEY ARGUMENTS

North Sydney Council has received positive and appreciative feedback from residents and members of the community for the “trees for newborns” and Streets Alive programs which contribute to council aim to increase total canopy cover to 34.4%. Since 2008, canopy cover has declined by 11.7% in the North Sydney local government area. These initiatives seek to involve the community in ongoing efforts to increase tree canopy, as well as celebrating the arrival of a new resident and encouraging members of the community to be actively involved in their local environment.

Motion number 153 Eurobodalla Shire Council NSW

The National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to provide grants to local councils and state governments to undertake virtual fence trials on their road networks. At the same time, funding is required for further research to determine the effectiveness of the technology on various native fauna species.

NATIONAL OBJECTIVE

A virtual fence is an active electronic protection system that alerts animals before crossing the road when a vehicle is approaching between dusk to dawn. It is deemed effective in reducing wildlife -vehicle collisions.

There is more than 900,000kms of roads covering the Australian landscape and many crashes involving wildlife and vehicles, resulting in injuries and loss of life to people and wildlife, together with damage to vehicles and property. The ecological consequences of road networks are immense and complex, with millions of native animals injured and killed each year.

According to the AAMI animal collision report, there were over 19,000 animal-related collisions reported across Australia in 2022. The data reveals that kangaroos, wallabies, and wombats are among the most affected species. These numbers likely represent only a fraction of the actual incidents, as many go unreported.

KEY ARGUMENTS

A virtual fence is an active electronic protection system that alerts animals when a vehicle approaches before they cross a road. The system is most effective between dusk and dawn.

The purpose of the program is to reduce wildlife being struck by travelling vehicles. As Council manages 1,100kms of roads in the Eurobodalla, the consequences of wildlife strikes are significant. Before installation of the virtual fence at Long Beach, Council and WIRES volunteers attended up to five wildlife strikes a week. Since the virtual fence, there were just five wildlife strikes in eight months.

A series of posts are spaced every 25m on alternating sides of the road. At the top of each post is a small device that emits an audible alarm and blue and yellow flashing strobe-type LED lights when struck by vehicle headlights at night.

As the vehicle passes, the devices are triggered in sequence by the vehicle headlights which forms a virtual fence. This deters animals like kangaroos, wallabies and wombats from crossing the road in search of food and shelter. The virtual fence is most effective when the speed limit is 80kms or less.

The success of the trial in the Eurobodalla attracted interest around the country, and Shoalhaven Council has recently installed their first trial fence.

Transport advocacy organisation SEATS supports the project and has asked the NSW Minister for Environment to sponsor continuation of the virtual fencing trial and offer a suitable contribution as seed capital to proceed. SEATS will also call on other research/implementation agencies like NSW Centre for Road Safety or the Insurance Council to partner with agencies to improve and develop a strategy for a widespread rollout of the project.

CIRCULAR ECONOMY

Motion number 154 Yarra City Council VIC

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to support the development of material product standards across the supply chain so products last longer, are repairable, reusable and recyclable.

NATIONAL OBJECTIVE

We are in the midst of a climate emergency. Federal leadership is critical. Standardising material products across the supply chain will reduce waste, emissions and improve recycling, thereby building Australia's circular economy and improving climate outcomes.

While state governments are driving the transition to local circular economies, the variety of materials introduces a myriad of challenges to keeping these materials in circulation and out of landfill.

Australia's economy relies on the movement of vast amounts of material products between states. State-based approaches are not sufficient. Federal action is required.

KEY ARGUMENTS

Currently only 3.7% of Australia's economy is 'circular' (according to the CSIRO).

Material products must be standardised to do better. The diversity of materials used to create products makes it challenging for community to reuse and repair products and for material processors to separate and recover these materials. These materials end up in landfill causing harm to the environment.

Standardisation can:

- enable individuals to choose products with greater potential to repair and reuse.
- provide clarity to residents re materials placed in each waste and recycling stream.
- provide material processors greater understanding and consistency of materials they receive.

Potential financial savings:

- Councils (reduced waste volume),
- Residents (longer-lasting products),
- manufacturers (reduced variety/amount of materials required).

CSIRO estimates "new circular products from waste resources could provide potential market opportunities worth \$210 billion by 2050."

Motion number 155 Town of Bassendean WA

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to:

- a. 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; and
- b. Investigate not only grants as a funding mechanism, but also interest free and/or low interest investment partnerships with the local government sector and their regional associations, to fast-track the establishment of infrastructure that improves circular waste processing within Australia.

NATIONAL OBJECTIVE

This motion aligns with the NGA's 12th priority area 'Circular Economy' outlining how the Australian Government can partner with local governments to advance circular economy; and likewise aligns with the NGA 10th priority area 'Climate Change and Renewable Energy' to reduce emissions via partnerships between the Australian Government and local governments to achieve Australia's 2050 net zero emissions target.

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 156 City of Holdfast Bay SA

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to lead improvements in safe battery disposal including encouraging regulatory harmonisation and enforcement, ensuring safer collection, supporting education campaigns, and considering reforms such as deposit schemes or similar.

NATIONAL OBJECTIVE

Escalating hazards posed by batteries being disposed of via conventional waste and recycling streams requires urgent attention. An increasing number of incidents is resulting in property damage, injuries, and financial burdens.

It is important for all governments, producers and recyclers to work together and take comprehensive action. Governments have a pivotal role to play in ensuring safe battery disposal, including providing appropriate regulatory environments. At present, regulatory inconsistencies currently undermine safe disposal rates, the effectiveness of stewardship schemes, and pose risks throughout the disposal logistics chain, leading to economic impacts on recyclers and the broader resource sector.

KEY ARGUMENTS

Safe battery disposal is a critical aspect of environmental sustainability and human health. As reliance on batteries grows with the proliferation of electronic devices, electric vehicles, and renewable energy storage systems, the need for responsible disposal practices becomes increasingly urgent. By way of one example, vapes are one of the many new products that are being introduced into the market with no producer regard or responsibility for the safe disposal of their component parts when their useful life comes to an end. Due to the battery being embedded, vapes are not included in the nationwide Battery Stewardship Scheme, meaning they cannot be dropped off at battery collection points, like supermarkets and retailers. Clean Up Australia's Pip Kiernan points out that "at the moment, there is no standardised or consistent way to collect and safely dispose and recover vapes in Australia"(1) and notes that the onus of figuring out how to safely dispose of them is placed on the consumer, when really it should be the responsibility of the producers.

Improper disposal of batteries leads to significant environmental harms through the leaching of toxic chemicals such as lead, cadmium, mercury, and lithium. By improving safe battery disposal, we can mitigate these harmful effects and protect our environment, as well as enabling the waste management sector to comply with environmental standards more easily.

Batteries are made from valuable and finite resources such as metals, minerals, and rare earth elements. Recycling batteries allows the recovery of these materials and reduces the need for new mining, which is often destructive to the environment and communities where it occurs. Efficient battery recycling not only conserves resources but also promotes a circular economy where materials are reused and recycled rather than discarded.

Improperly disposed batteries can create contaminations that pose health risks to humans and animals. There are also increasing incidents of battery-related fires causing property damage, injuries, and financial burdens on the recycling sector.

Investing in safe battery disposal methods not only encourages technological innovations in recycling processes but also facilitates the more efficient and cost-effective extraction of

valuable materials from batteries. Supporting these advancements not only enhances environmental outcomes but also drives economic growth and generates new employment opportunities within the recycling and green technology sectors.

Promoting safe battery disposal raises public awareness about the importance of responsible waste management and provides a first line of defence against poor environmental, safety and health outcomes resulting from improperly discarded batteries. Educating individuals and communities empowers them to make informed choices and embrace sustainable practices. Implementing public campaigns, educational programs, and accessible recycling infrastructure can substantially boost participation in safe disposal efforts, serving as the first line of defence against the adverse environmental, safety, and health consequences associated with improperly discarded batteries.

Motion number 156.1 Bayside Council NSW

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to support local government to enact the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission's recommendations on Lithium-ion batteries and consumer product safety, including:

- a. Recommendation 2 (Consumer safety): Consumers should have clear and accessible educational resources on Li-ion battery safety.
- b. Recommendation 3 (Disposal and end-of-life): The Australian Government and industry should continue to develop infrastructure, regulation and supporting policies to enable the safe and efficient collection and recycling of Li-ion batteries.

NATIONAL OBJECTIVE

Rechargeable lithium-ion (Li-ion) batteries are the most widespread portable energy storage solution globally.¹ They are used in a wide range of consumer products including:

- personal devices such as mobile phones, tablets, laptops
- household appliances and tools
- personal transportation devices such as e-bikes and e-scooters
- renewable energy storage systems
- e-vehicles.

The use of Li-ion batteries in consumer products is attractive as they are small with high energy density, and have better power efficiency than other battery types.

Recycling:

Batteries power many parts of our everyday life but not everyone knows what to do with them once they're used.

There are several recycling options available to consumers. Batteries can be taken to Community Recycling Centres or dropped off at a dedicated recycling point available at many large retailers like Coles, Woolworths, Bunnings and Officeworks.

Products with batteries embedded in them, like mobile phones, laptops and power tools should be disposed of at an e-waste recycling facility or e-waste drop-off event.

KEY ARGUMENTS

Motion Background

Risks:

Fires arising from Li-ion batteries are difficult to extinguish and may spontaneously reignite. Li-ion batteries are significantly more hazardous than standard batteries if they are disposed of incorrectly. They don't belong in household or commercial kerbside bins.

Local councils and waste contractors have seen a significant rise in the number of truck and rubbish fires caused by batteries, which if damaged can explode and spark fires which are difficult to put out.

Some Li-ion incidents have caused house fires resulting in serious injuries and property damage. Other incidents arising from Li-ion battery failure include burns, chemical exposure and smoke inhalation.

ACCC Recommendations:

The ACCC says consistent state and territory legislation regulating products containing Li-ion batteries is needed.

Motion number 156 Narrabri Shire Council NSW

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to:

- a. Prioritise research and investment in recycling products from renewable industry in recognition of its status as a key national environmental priority; and
- b. Develop a national legal framework to address end of life of solar panels and lithium batteries.

NATIONAL OBJECTIVE

Waste and recycling.

Circular economy.

Australia is currently world-leading in its uptake of residential rooftop solar, with current installation rates being understood to be in the order of ten times the global average rate. Consequently, on a per capita basis, the problem of solar waste in Australia is far more significant than faced in any other county. Australia is facing a solar waste crisis.

KEY ARGUMENTS

Due to Australia's limited regulations and commensurate domestic recycling capabilities, at end-of-life or following the damage of solar panels, they are ultimately sent to landfill. Renewable energy laws, including the Renewable Energy (Electricity) Act 2000 (Cth) have successfully accelerated transition to clean energy, however, due to their primary focus being on deployment of new renewable energy, the current statutory framework does not adopt a lifecycle approach with a circular clean energy regulatory focus. The current market failure and dearth of research demands urgent regulatory intervention.

OTHER ISSUES

Motion 158 Noosa Council QLD

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government in establishing pro-active steps to identify the core elements required to create a strategic, collaborative and consistent national approach and potentially policy changes in providing equal rights for elected representatives in relation to psychosocial safety legislation and workplace health and safety.

NATIONAL OBJECTIVE

With the introduction of psychosocial legislation in the workplace, it has been highlighted through the delivery of compulsory training for all staff in local government that councillors are not recognized as employees, therefore, are not privy to the same protection through mandatory training and/or legislation.

This motion is looking to explore opportunities and options to provide support and protection for all councillors.

To investigate where councillors fit and have the protection of the same legislation and rights in the workplace in the context of workplace health and safety.

KEY ARGUMENTS

Increased weather events, COVID, disasters and emergencies during the past several years has led to a heightened state of community and decision making, including higher level of responsibilities, workplace expectations and governance.

To keep abreast of growing demands in the workplace elected representatives across Australia should be afforded the same equal rights in the place of work as that of employees; ensuring they can fulfil the roles and responsibilities of their positions without fear or favour; establishing a national approach to developing legislation that protects Elected Representatives.

Providing the same rights to elected representatives as that of employees is essential in promoting respectful and inclusive workplace culture, sound fiscal management and return on investment across all levels of government nationally.

To enhance continuous improvement and evidence based guidance to government on how to strategically and effectively lead; promote and build trust within our communities as local representatives; with access to WH&S frameworks and protections, reflecting those of employees through psycho-social legislation and codes to contribute effectively to attract and retain a diverse range of people wanting to be elected to government, to mitigate risk of litigation and workers compensation claims, to protect the individual through safe work frameworks, training and education.

Reduce reliance on compliance and potential OIA complaints to address Code of Conduct violations; rather invest in education & training through HR towards building inclusive and respectful workplace culture.

Motion number 159 Broken Hill City Council NSW

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

NATIONAL OBJECTIVE

Introducing a requirement on metropolitan broadcasters to produce relevant regional news content covering all regional areas of Australia will ensure that viewers remain 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 metropolitan broadcasters.

The introduction of licence conditions to produce regional news would ensure regional areas do not suffer job losses and loss of access to relevant information, such as what has occurred across regional South Australia and the Far West region of New South Wales.

KEY ARGUMENTS

Southern Cross Austereo cancelled its Spencer Gulf Nightly News service in 2023 which covered issues affecting the Mid-North and Eyre Peninsula regions of South Australia (Port Augusta, Port Lincoln, Port Pirie and Whyalla), as well as the Far West region of New South Wales (Broken Hill, Menindee, Wilcannia, Tibooburra). This axing was done without warning and without consultation with the affected communities and has left these cities and towns with no regional TV news coverage of important local issues, and has also resulted in local job losses.

The loss of regional news has also resulted in a greater sense of isolation as residents feel 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 broadcasting stations across Australia axing their regional news services to cut costs. Metropolitan 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.

It is understood that the broadcast licencing requirements for the eastern part of the country include a compulsory regional news service for viewers, which is not compulsory in other parts of Australia.

The Spencer Gulf licence area is a regional non-aggregated licence area with no licence obligations for Southern Cross Austereo to deliver local news content to its viewers.

Although the Federal Government has introduced commercial broadcasting tax rebates to support regional broadcasting across Australia along with other funding support, without the introduction of licence conditions to compel broadcasting stations to provide their

communities with a news service, we could see similar job losses and restricted access to news and information impact almost all regional and isolated areas of the country.

Motion number 160 City of Onkaparinga SA

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to make a strong commitment to preserving a democratic local government in Australia, including national awareness of minority groups who aim to covertly influence and control elections and disrupt local government Council meetings across Australia.

NATIONAL OBJECTIVE

Australia must take a proactive approach to rebuild trust in and between all levels of government, and the community, to maintain faith in the integrity and importance of local government elections and decision-making forums.

Experiences from the COVID 19 pandemic, multiple bushfire and flood events, international geo-political tensions and increasing cost of living challenges have escalated a mistrust of government institutions and their democratic processes. Where voting is not compulsory this has resulted in a low turnout to council elections, low nominations for elected member positions in some councils and the spread of misinformation.

In addition to mistrust, it has also resulted in sometimes disruptive and aggressive behaviour by a small group of protesters at elections and council meetings. These incidents have not been isolated and we believe they will continue to be an ongoing issue for government, necessitating a consolidated and consistent response.

Whilst the primary concern is the safety of elected members, staff and the community who attend these meetings, the financial impost of dealing with these incidents (for example hiring additional security, adjournment of meetings) cannot be ignored. Steps must be taken to ensure that our democratic processes are preserved and protected.

KEY ARGUMENTS

The ability to move a legislatively required Council meeting from physical public access to livestreaming, when it is detected that the safety of elected members, staff and the community could be compromised, should be nationally consistent.

Whilst there are penalties in place currently, these should be increased to provide a much greater deterrent to disrupting meetings and to reflect the cost to the community more accurately when a Council meeting is disrupted, adjourned and re-commenced, or rescheduled. Not only is this a cost to councils, the allocation and diversion of police resources to be on standby and attend these disruptions comes at a great cost to the whole community.

The nominations for local government elections are unique in that there are few checks and balances carried out on candidates, with the onus being on the individual to ensure they are eligible for nomination.

Currently in South Australia the eligibility criteria state only that the candidate must not be:

- a member of an Australian parliament (including any state or territory parliament)

- an undischarged bankrupt or person benefiting from a law for the relief of insolvent debtors
- an employee of the council
- disqualified from election by court order under the Local Government Act
- have been sentenced to imprisonment and are, or could become, liable to serve the sentence or the remainder of the sentence.

We strongly recommend that provisions be enshrined in legislation to strengthen the criteria for individuals seeking candidacy by requiring them to hold a Working with Children clearance and be considered fit and proper as a minimum standard.

Representation from diverse communities should be further encouraged, with consultation to determine any barriers to nominating for council.

How council operates is not clear to most intending candidates and the role of councillors prior to being elected to council is similarly unclear. An elected Council's functions are very similar to that of a board of directors and few people would think they have the skills to be on a board of directors. Mandatory training for intending nominees should include an attempt to indicate the skills that are required to be a councillor, such as finance, policy, communication, engagement, commitment, being community minded etc.

The Australian Local Government Association and Offices of Local Government could develop the training. State-based electoral commissions should be responsible for administering or ensuring that the training is completed and nominees should be given a clear understanding of time commitments.

Real time publishing of nominations should occur and align with the state and federal members of parliament nomination process. This may assist to ensure a wide spread of nominations in wards and may prevent the need for a supplementary election if nominations are not received for a ward.

There are a range of initiatives and programs that could be adopted to improve this situation, and enhance the level of cooperation and collaboration between the Australian Government and local government, including:

- promote compulsory voting for local government elections across all states and territories
- promote voting methods for local government that are consistent with state and federal elections (polling booths on election day, postal voting and the availability of pre-polling locations)
- review the timing of local government elections to avoid them being held in the same year as state and federal elections OR
- consider holding the local government polling day at the same time as the state election polling day, providing an opportunity to share the expense and resources required on polling day
- promote nationally consistent effective suspension provisions for Elected Members (short or longer term) for disruptive and inappropriate behaviour and actions.

In addition, compulsory livestreaming of Council meetings could be considered, to:

- encourage a greater degree of scrutiny and disciplined behaviour
- provide greater access to Council meetings
- increase transparency
- allow flexibility for those wishing to provide a deputation.

Finally, real time publishing of nominations could assist with ensuring a wide spread of nominations and where Council areas contain wards it may prevent the need for a supplementary election if nominations are not received for a ward.

Motion number 161 Bega Valley Shire Council NSW

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to work with State Governments and the Australian Electoral commission, to undertake a broad education campaign on an ongoing basis to increase the community awareness and understanding of:

- a. The role and responsibilities of each level of government
- b. The election processes for each level of government including details on what a ballot paper looks like, how above and below the line voting works, and how preferential voting works
- c. The role of councils and councillors

NATIONAL OBJECTIVE

The role of local councils and elected councillors, particularly in the lead up to an election can be unclear to the community. Informed residents are essential for a functioning democracy. When people understand the functions and responsibilities of different levels of government, they are better equipped to make informed decisions about their representatives and policies. Informed residents are also better able to hold their representatives accountable and are more likely to be engaged in decision making leading to a stronger sense of community.

KEY ARGUMENTS

An erosion in trust of governments can stem from a lack of awareness and understanding of the role and responsibilities of each level of government and the role they play in serving communities. It is hoped that a broad education campaign will help to clarify any confusion and



AUSTRALIAN
LOCAL GOVERNMENT
ASSOCIATION