



AUSTRALIAN
LOCAL GOVERNMENT
ASSOCIATION



**DON'T LEAVE LOCAL
COMMUNITIES BEHIND!**

Federal Election Priorities

Successfully delivering for Greater Sydney communities



Rouse Road footbridge (\$22 million), Blacktown City Council, NSW

Blacktown City Council Mayor Tony Bleasdale said the opening of the Rouse Road Bridge in 2019 - partially funded through the Commonwealth's Bridges Renewal Programme - solved a number of significant problems and that the bridge was a major access point for the Tallawong Metro station and Rouse Hill Anglican College.

"This area is experiencing rapid growth and the old causeway was an enormous traffic bottleneck and a serious safety concern for pedestrians and motorists alike during times of heavy rain," Cr Bleasdale said.

"Blacktown City Council had the bridge planned for some time, but needed to wait for available funding. The Australian Government grant enabled the work to be fast-tracked."

Authorised by Matt Pinnegar Chief Executive Officer of ALGA.

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Introduction: Linda Scott, ALGA President

As our nation faces social and economic challenges unseen in peace-time Australia, Australians need their decision-makers working together.

They want, expect, and need pragmatic policy making that delivers a locally led recovery from COVID-19, and a focus on opportunity rather than austerity from this economic crisis.

In total (including direct and flow-on impacts), the funding priorities we've proposed in this document are estimated to contribute at least \$6.46 billion per annum on average to Australia's Gross Domestic Product (GDP), as well as support an average of 43,444 full time equivalent (FTE) jobs per annum across Australia over a four-year period.

By working with Australian councils – the level of government closest to its community – a future Federal Government can put steps in place to guarantee no local community is left behind as we recover from COVID-19.

DON'T LEAVE LOCAL COMMUNITIES BEHIND!

The COVID-19 pandemic that shook Australia in March 2020 has imposed new physical, social, and economic realities in Australia.

Occurring almost simultaneously with the Black Summer fires, floods, and drought, the pandemic helped trigger Australia's first recession in nearly 30 years.

It has led to unprecedented Commonwealth, state and local government economic support for those most affected by the economic and social impacts, but the cumulative shocks to our system – exacerbated by the Delta variant and a mammoth vaccination task – have presented all governments with significant financial challenges, which local governments are unable to face without the support of the Commonwealth.

Businesses closed their doors and laid off staff, families lost income, and individuals were left isolated from friends and loved ones.

Unwelcome as the pandemic was, it has also revealed the adaptability, innovation, and resilience of our nation and its citizens.

Through stay-at-home orders in place, our homes became our offices, schools, and lecture halls, and many have faced unemployment or uncertainty about how to pay the rent or support our families.

Within days of the announcement of lockdowns and health restrictions, we took difficult but necessary steps to protect our communities from the risks of infection – educating people about the need for social distancing and providing masks and food for communities.

We used our own limited funding to provide financial support to local small businesses directed to close because of COVID-19 restrictions, and organised vouchers for aged and other vulnerable locals to redeem at participating local cafes and restaurants struggling to stay in business.

We supported our communities to innovate, quickly adapting in a way only local governments can.



Councillor Linda Scott
President of the Australian Local
Government Association

As communities and businesses “pivoted”, we saw the adaptability that characterises local government.

Recognising that broad economic stimulus and job-creation programs were the keys to community recovery, local governments accelerated local employment-generating programs.

We partnered with other governments to roll out targeted capital works to improve road safety, rejuvenate or upgrade local community assets, and enhance our local parks, footpaths and community open spaces.

Forced to contemplate what the future might look like post-COVID, many Australians believe our communities should be restored not to what they were, but to what they could be.

A successful national recovery is a recovery that will be made up of thousands of smaller locally driven recoveries led by local governments in partnership with funding partners: private, philanthropic, state, territory and federal.

To sustain such a recovery and ensure it is felt across all communities regardless of size or location, we need a stronger, more equal partnership between governments. Our local communities need more investment, and they need to have a greater say in decision-making about their futures.

All spheres of government, elected and administrative, must work together to ensure that economic recovery post-COVID does not falter.

We have a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to build a better future: one that bolsters community connection, wellbeing and resilience.

This document lays out a series of offers to the next incoming government, alongside a set of asks.

They build upon local government’s strengths and its proven track record of working in partnership to deliver for Australian communities and national productivity.

The policies contained in these election priorities have been assessed by independent economists, who were engaged to model the contribution to the Australian economy from each priority investment as well as articulate the socio-economic benefits these programs can be expected to deliver.

They are exactly what is needed to ensure local communities of all sizes are in a strong position to drive the inclusive recovery all Australians want and that leaves no community behind.

Local government can lead and deliver the strong community-focused recovery from COVID-19 by:

- leading local economic growth;
- delivering stimulus projects that generate local jobs, support local businesses and boost productivity;
- enabling economic growth through the development of a circular economy;
- building community resilience to disasters and climate change; and
- facilitating community wellbeing.

	Local Government Offer to the Australian Government	Local Government Ask of the Australian Government
Economic Recovery	To partner with the Federal Government to create more jobs, while addressing the nation's skills shortage through training and upskilling Australian workers.	To commit to a progressive increase in Financial Assistance Grants to at least one percent of Commonwealth taxation revenue (at least \$4.5 billion per year), and an initial injection of additional Financial Assistance Grants funding.
Transport and Community Infrastructure	To partner with the Federal Government to create infrastructure that will improve the safety, liveability and productivity of our communities, while contributing to Australia's economic recovery.	To invest \$500 million per year for four years extending the Local Roads and Community Infrastructure Program, while increasing roads funding and improving digital connectivity in our regions. To invest in an innovative housing partnerships of \$200m over four years to support affordable housing in communities.
Building Resilience	To partner with the Federal Government to grow the resilience in our communities, mitigate against the impacts of future disaster events, while focussing on local opportunities to reduce our carbon emissions and to Close the Gap between Indigenous Australians and the nation.	To provide \$200 million per year for four years for a targeted disaster mitigation program, while establishing a \$200 million Local Government Climate Partnership Program and supporting all councils to implement Closing the Gap targets with \$100 million per annum over four years.
Circular Economy	To identify and implement opportunities to reduce waste sent to landfill and support the development of a circular economy that will deliver environmental and economic benefits for all our communities.	To provide \$100 million per year for four years to fund local government circular innovation projects, and support our communities to reuse wherever possible.
Inter-governmental Relations	To provide a local, place based community perspective to intergovernmental deliberations to ensure that decisions are responsive to local needs and have regard to the great diversity between communities.	To reinstate local government representation to the primary intergovernmental forum in Australia, the National Cabinet, and ensure local government's ongoing voting membership of other Ministerial forums.

Economic Recovery

Government responses to COVID-19 over the past two years have been overwhelmingly concentrated on averting a health and economic crisis. 2022 and the years beyond are set to be dominated by discussions and decisions around economic recovery.

New policies and strategies will be required to ensure all Australians can be employed in secure, meaningful, and sustainable jobs.

With our footprint across the nation and a workforce that encompasses 394 occupations, local governments provide an ideal catalyst for growing jobs.

We are also the ideal vehicle for co-investment in new job-creation initiatives.

Increased federal funding and investment will help councils roll out new local economic stimulus projects and give us the ability to cut the red tape that might potentially be slowing or blocking other investments planned for communities across Australia.

We would be able to create more jobs, including traineeships and apprenticeships, to address an emerging skills gaps in local government that threatens to slow decentralisation efforts aimed at rejuvenating regional and rural Australia.

Longer term certainty with Federal funding will enable Council's to invest in workforce planning and training.

In many communities, we are proud to be a major employer of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. Local governments are willing to support opportunities for skill training, new jobs, and business opportunities for indigenous people and their communities to help close the gap on indigenous disadvantage.

An added benefit of increased federal funding to local government is that it will help achieve equitable levels of services across all parts of Australia, build community resilience and wellbeing, and improve productivity-generating infrastructure.

Don't leave our regional communities behind



Commonwealth Financial Assistance Grants support equitable service levels for all Australians and ensure that no community is left behind.

These grants are particularly vital in many regional communities, but over the past twenty years they have significantly declined as a share of total Commonwealth taxation revenue.

North Burnett Regional Council Mayor Rachel Chambers, pictured, said a number of factors including amalgamation, changes to Financial

Assistance Grants, and increasing depreciation expenses placed the region in a predicament, and could cost local jobs in her community.

“Our back is against the wall. We’re running out of money, we’re running out of options to save jobs, and we’re running out of time,” she said. “We have to use depreciation as an expense so our expenses have increased and that has been an issue. Then we have had budget cutbacks by the state and federal governments over the years.”

Economic Recovery

Failure to secure future federal funding creates the real risk of communities being disproportionately impacted in this period of economic recovery.

Councils are also grappling with the budget repair challenges that are facing state and federal treasuries.

Funding certainty is critical to the short and long-term planning of councils, particularly in rural and regional areas where there is a greater reliance on external funding.

We are seeking:

1: An initial injection of Financial Assistance Grants to local government worth \$1.3 billion to support communities and jobs and also resolve the current practice of bringing forward two quarterly Financial Assistance Grant payments each year.

If funded:

Jobs created: 13,213
Contribution to annual Gross Domestic Product (\$b): \$1.928

2: A commitment to return Financial Assistance Grants to at least one percent of Commonwealth taxation revenue - an additional (\$b) 1.598 per year - via a phased approach to be agreed with the Government.

If funded:

Jobs created: 16,242
Contribution to annual Gross Domestic Product (\$b): \$2.370

Local Government Offer to the Australian Government

To partner with the Federal Government to create more jobs, while addressing the nation's skills shortage through training and upskilling Australian workers.

Local Government Ask of the Australian Government

To commit to a progressive increase in Financial Assistance Grants to at least one percent of Commonwealth taxation revenue (at least \$4.5 billion per year), and an initial injection of additional Financial Assistance Grants funding.

Better Transport and Community Infrastructure

Well-targeted infrastructure investment generates lasting economic, social and environmental benefits.

It lowers costs for business and government and better connects workers to their jobs. It increases community resilience and ensures we as a nation are protected against the extreme weather events associated with global warming.

We are responsible for 33 percent of Australia's public infrastructure, including 75 percent of the country's roads by length. Much of this infrastructure is ageing and needs renewing or replacing so it meets community and industry needs.

Roads represent 39 percent of the total local government infrastructure with a total replacement cost of \$204 billion. Bridges represent four percent of the total infrastructure with a replacement cost of \$26 billion. Park and Recreation assets represent \$16 billion or 3 percent of the total infrastructure replacement cost.

However, we collect only 3.5 percent of all taxes raised in Australia, while faced with the mammoth task of maintaining a third of the nation's infrastructure.

Councils are committed to providing quality infrastructure and creating sustainable jobs.

We need additional funds to achieve this commitment and a longer-term funding assurance that allows councils to recruit trainees and apprentices, upskill workers, and attract skilled workers into rural, regional and remote areas.

Access to affordable housing underpins the economic and social fabric of local communities. We are calling for a national housing summit that can develop a national housing strategy to address the current housing challenges in our communities. Local governments must be involved with national housing governance arrangements.

Successfully delivering for Perth suburban communities



Thornlie Community and Sports Hub (\$5.6 million, partially funded through Community Development Grants Programme) City of Gosnells, WA

"It's been very exciting to watch this building rise from the ground," Gosnells Mayor David Goode says.

"The hub will provide important facilities to keep local residents active, provide a welcoming meeting place, and support local community groups. I look forward to the day when we can welcome the whole community to enjoy it."

Better Transport and Community Infrastructure

We are seeking:

1: A \$500m per annum four year continuation of the Local Roads and Community Infrastructure program which allows councils to deliver projects that respond to local needs.

If funded:

Jobs created: 3,974
Contribution to annual Gross Domestic Product (\$m): \$604

2: A strategic local roads investment program of \$300m per annum over four years to address road transport first and last mile issues and congestion on local roads.

If funded:

Jobs created: 2,332
Contribution to annual Gross Domestic Product (\$m): \$366

3: An increase in Roads to Recovery to \$800m per annum (an additional \$300m per annum) and the Black Spot Program to \$200m per annum over four years, while addressing the South Australian road funding anomaly by making the additional \$20m per annum to SA in 2021-22 and 2022-23 permanent, to more sustainably manage local government's 75% share of the national road network and boost productivity and road safety.

If funded:

Jobs created: 3,214
Contribution to annual Gross Domestic Product (\$m): \$502

4: Continuation of the Stronger Regional Digital Connectivity Package at \$55m over four years to improve community resilience and local economic recovery.

If funded:

Jobs created: 99
Contribution to annual Gross Domestic Product (\$m): \$18

5: \$200m over four years to assist councils to develop and implement innovative housing partnerships.

If funded:

Jobs created: 469
Contribution to annual Gross Domestic Product (\$m): \$68

Local Government Offer to the Australian Government

To partner with the Federal Government to create infrastructure that will improve the safety, liveability and productivity of our communities, while contributing to Australia's economic recovery.

Local Government Ask of the Australian Government

To invest \$500 million per year for four years extending the Local Roads and Community Infrastructure Program, while increasing roads funding and improving digital connectivity in our regions. To invest in an innovative housing partnerships of \$200m over four years to support affordable housing in communities.

Resilient Communities Building Back Better

Communities across Australia are doing it tough – their physical, financial and mental reserves depleted by years of drought swiftly followed by the Black Summer bushfires, the coronavirus pandemic and severe storms and flooding.

All levels of government have worked hard to address the challenges thrown up by these rolling disasters.

They have supported businesses, communities, and individuals –and they are now focused on engineering a national economic recovery.

Although mass vaccinations diminish the health threats posed by COVID-19, the swift succession of natural disasters has demonstrated that communities need to be better prepared.

The likelihood of more frequent severe weather events in future underlines this need.

Investing in programs to mitigate natural disasters is critical to building community resilience.

Communities derive substantial co-benefits from investments in mitigation and adaptation – including new employment opportunities, regional growth, lower insurance premiums, and faster reductions in greenhouse gas emissions.

Working in partnership with the Australian Government, we can deliver highly effective projects that greatly assist communities to be better prepared and better able to adapt to future climatic conditions.

Successfully delivering for communities in rural Victoria



Rokewood Bridge upgrade (\$541,000) Golden Plains Shire, Victoria.

“It’s terrific to see that works have now been completed to replace the old, single lane bridge over the Kuruc A Ruc Creek with a double lane and unrestricted structure, that is safer for all bridge-users”, Golden Plains Shire Mayor Cr Helena Kirby, pictured, said.

“Golden Plains Shire is home to many older bridges, and thanks to the Australian Government’s Local Roads and Community Infrastructure program, we’ve been able to get on and

upgrade the Reserve Road Bridge for the benefit of the surrounding community.

“Reserve Road Bridge is the first of four bridge upgrade projects that Council will complete in 2021, with works underway or soon to begin on bridges in Meredith, Rokewood and Rokewood Junction.”

Resilient Communities Building Back Better

We are seeking:

1: A targeted disaster mitigation program of \$200m per annum for four years which will reduce the costs of response and recovery and is a sound investment in strengthening community resilience.

If funded:

Jobs created: 1,833
Contribution to annual Gross Domestic Product (\$m): \$280

2: A commitment to ensuring betterment funding as a core element of disaster recovery funding arrangements.

3: A commitment to include community infrastructure that is publicly accessible and owned, and local government waste, water and wastewater assets under the Disaster Recovery Funding Arrangements.

4: A Local Government Climate Response Partnership Fund of \$200m over four years to enable planning and preparation to minimise the impacts of climate change in local communities and enable councils to achieve climate neutrality as soon as practicable.

If funded:

Jobs created: 467
Contribution to annual Gross Domestic Product (\$m): \$73

5: \$100 million per annum over four years provided directly to local governments to support the capabilities of indigenous councils and implementation of the Closing the Gap local/regional voice.

If funded:

Jobs created: 804
Contribution to annual Gross Domestic Product (\$m): \$117

Local Government Offer to the Australian Government

To partner with the Federal Government to grow the resilience in our communities, mitigate against the impacts of future disaster events, while focussing on local opportunities to reduce our carbon emissions and to Close the Gap between Indigenous Australians and the nation.

Local Government Ask of the Australian Government

To provide \$200 million per year for four years for a targeted disaster mitigation program, while establishing a \$200 million Local Government Climate Partnership Program and supporting all councils to implement Closing the Gap targets with \$100 million per annum over four years.

Creating a Circular Economy

Guided by the 2018 National Waste Strategy and the 2019 National Waste Policy Action Plan, building Australia's transition from a linear economy to a circular economy is gaining traction.

By embracing the principals of circularity – retaining the value of materials for as long as possible, designing out waste and pollution, and regenerating natural systems – Australia will develop new industries and jobs, reduce greenhouse gas emissions, and make more efficient use of our natural resources.

As modelled by the Centre for International Economics in 2017, a five percent improvement in the effectiveness of recycling and resource recovery could benefit Australia's GDP by as much as \$24 billion.

In addition, for every 10,000 tonnes of waste recycled, 9.2 jobs would be created, compared with only 2.8 jobs when the same amount of waste is sent to landfill.

As an example, the South Australian Government has estimated that 25,700 new full-time equivalent jobs could be created in South Australia by 2030 by adopting a more circular economy.

Councils are major players in the management of household and domestic waste.

Local governments co-invest in new materials recycling facilities, lead community education and awareness campaigns, and help to create a sustainable market for recycled materials through procurement policies.

Australia can realise the full potential of a circular economy sooner if local government's engagement and capabilities are effectively harnessed.

Local Government Offer to the Australian Government

To identify and implement opportunities to reduce waste sent to landfill and support the development of a circular economy that will deliver environmental and economic benefits for all our communities.

Local Government Ask of the Australian Government

To provide \$100 million per year for four years to fund local government circular innovation projects, and support our communities to reuse wherever possible.

Creating a Circular Economy

We are seeking:

- 1: Support to provide guidance and advice to councils on how to unlock the circular economy locally, particularly in rural, regional, and remote areas.
- 2: Support to investigate and, if feasible, implement a national bin harmonisation program that will improve kerbside recycling, reduce contamination, and maximise opportunities for reuse.
- 3: Funding of \$100 million per annum over four years to fund local government circular waste innovation projects.

If funded:

Jobs created: 797

Contribution to annual GDP (\$m): \$136

What sustainably funded councils could deliver for communities



Upgraded municipal resource recovery infrastructure for South Australia's Limestone Coast.

Naracoorte Lucindale Council Mayor Erika Vickery OAM (pictured centre) says additional financial support from the Federal Government is a catalyst for state and local government and commercial investment in waste management infrastructure.

“By working together, we can all participate in and promote the use of materials that circulate through our economy again and again, providing ongoing value, efficient use of resources and knowledge-based jobs for the future.”

Intergovernmental Relations

The Australian Local Government Association was a foundation member of the Council of Australian Governments (COAG), and over 28 years made a substantial contribution to our federation.

When COAG was scrapped and replaced by the National Cabinet in mid-2020, local government was effectively sidelined from membership.

The result is that Australia's pre-eminent intergovernmental forum lacks a strong and effective advocate for local communities.

As the level of government closest to the community, we have a unique insight into how to create new jobs, drive economic growth, and build better lives for Australians.

Properly heard, our viewpoints would ensure that decisions are responsive to local needs and contribute to achieving the best outcomes at a local level and cumulatively at the national level.

Australians expect their governments to make decisions that reflect their unique circumstances and requirements.

At the same time, they want all three spheres of government to work together to achieve shared national objectives.

This can only be achieved through ALGA's participation in the National Cabinet or any subsequent structure.

Our place-based, community perspective should not be overlooked – nor our role as a voice for the concerns and aspirations of local communities.

ALGA's input would balance and complement the broader view of the First Ministers, helping to ensure that National Cabinet deliberations result in stronger and more resilient communities.

We are seeking:

- 1:** Full membership of the National Cabinet.
- 2:** A guaranteed seat at relevant Ministerial forums.

Local Government Offer to the Australian Government

To provide a local, place based community perspective to intergovernmental deliberations to ensure that decisions are responsive to local needs and have regard to the great diversity between communities.

Local Government Ask of the Australian Government

To reinstate local government representation to the primary intergovernmental forum in Australia, the National Cabinet, and ensure local government's ongoing voting membership of other Ministerial forums.



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Federal Election Priorities

The Australian Local Government Association (ALGA) is the national voice of local government, representing 537 councils across the country. In structure, we are a federation of state and territory local government associations.

ALGA's members include:



Local government key facts and figures

There are 537 councils Australia-wide. Of these, around 55 percent are regional, rural, or remote councils.

Local government employs 194,000 people.

The first local government established in Australia was in Adelaide in 1840.

Australia's largest council by population is Brisbane City Council, servicing a population of 1.25 million.

Australia's largest council by area is East Pilbara in Western Australia. It covers an area of 379,571 square km (larger than Victoria), has a population of 11,005 and 3,237km of roads.