



Communique

2023 National Local Roads, Transport and Infrastructure Congress

250 local government leaders and engineering and works staff from across Australia gathered in Canberra from 6-7 September for the 2023 National Local Roads, Transport and Infrastructure Congress.

We acknowledged the Ngunnawal and Ngambri people as traditional custodians of the ACT and recognised any other people or families with connection to the lands of the ACT and region. The Congress paid its respects to their elders past, present and emerging, and acknowledged the vital and ongoing contributions First Nations peoples continue to make to our nation.

The congress provided participants from across the nation with a forum to learn from each other and address urgent issues fundamental to Australia's economic and social growth.

Natasha Bradshaw from the Grattan Institute provided an opening keynote address, outlining preliminary research findings which indicate federal funding to local government is not keeping up with soaring construction costs. Delegates look forward to the final release of this research later this year.

ALGA estimates the cost of repairing flood damaged roads across Queensland, NSW, Victoria and South Australia is \$3.8 billion, and for many regional, rural and remote councils this will not be possible without increased support from other levels of government.



ALGA will continue to advocate for the \$500 million federal Roads to Recovery fund to be increased to \$800 million per year, and Financial Assistance Grants to be restored to at least one percent of Commonwealth taxation revenue.

We welcomed and thanked the many federal members of parliament who attended and spoke at the Congress or associated events, including the Hon Chris Bowen, the Hon Kristy McBain, Senator the Hon Carol Brown, and the Hon Darren Chester.

We also heard about the opportunities that a new National Automated Access System (based on the Tasmanian Heavy Vehicle Access Management System) that will be rolled-out nationally in the coming months will provide, and ALGA will continue to advocate for \$300 million per year that will support local councils to support this roll-out.

This year's Congress included a broader focus on community infrastructure, with sessions on emissions reduction, housing, active transport, disaster response and recovery, waste and recycling, telecommunications infrastructure, and affordable housing.

Councils need more funding to build, maintain and revitalise the local infrastructure vital for liveable and productive communities, and extending the Local Roads and Community Infrastructure Program – or replacing it with an untied funding stream – will deliver long lasting benefits for all Australian communities.

Delegates affirmed their commitment to working with state, territory and federal governments towards building better, more resilient infrastructure that will serve all Australians, and help build communities that are safer, stronger and smarter.