



Senator the Hon Michaelia Cash
Minister for Employment, Skills, Small and Family Business

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Mr David O'Loughlin
President
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Dear Mr O'Loughlin

Thank you for your letter of 14 August 2019 regarding outcomes from the National General Assembly (NGA) of the Australian Local Government Association (ALGA) held in June this year. I congratulate you and the ALGA on a successful NGA.

The Australian Government is committed to supporting rural and regional Australia and has delivered significant investment in our regions. A priority for this investment is creating jobs and promoting growth in rural and regional Australia, by putting in place the right policy framework so that all Australians can take advantage of the job opportunities of tomorrow.

In consideration of the ALGA's resolution, I would like to give you an overview of some of the existing programs and initiatives in place to support regional employment growth.

The Government's largest employment program is *jobactive* – which assists job seekers to find and keep a job and ensures employers are connected to people who meet their business needs. The program is delivered in over 1,700 locations across Australia in metropolitan, regional and rural areas. There are 51 *jobactive* administrative regions which reflect different labour market conditions and job seeker characteristics across Australia.

The Department of Employment, Skills, Small and Family Business also undertakes employer engagement activities in targeted regions across Australia to increase employers' awareness of the government support available to make employing job seekers easier and to demonstrate how these services can be packaged to address recruitment or job creation challenges and opportunities.

The department also maintains a footprint in regional Australia and works closely with state governments and local councils to coordinate efforts to assist disadvantaged job seekers and promote employment growth.

In addition to Australia's mainstream employment programs, the Government delivers a number of programs and support mechanisms to support vulnerable regions and industries.

- The Regional Employment Trials program enables local stakeholders in 10 disadvantaged regions to identify local employment challenges and put forward targeted solutions. Between 1 October 2018 and 30 June 2020, Employment Facilitators will work with Regional Development Australia committees in trial regions to enable local stakeholders to implement projects that address their region's local employment challenges. Projects in trial regions are supported through a \$10 million Local Employment Initiative Fund. Further information can be found at www.employment.gov.au/regional-employment-trials-program.
- The Stronger Transitions package helps retrenched workers in five regions affected by structural change to find new jobs and take advantage of labour market opportunities across Australia. Support for workers is provided pre-retrenchment through voluntary partnerships with businesses, and post-retrenchment through intensive employment support with *jobactive*.
- The Government has the ability to put in place structural adjustment programs in areas or sectors affected by large scale closures and where future employment opportunities are low. Structural adjustment programs provide eligible participants with immediate access to intensive employment services through *jobactive*. Structural adjustment programs are intended to assist workers to maintain their connection with the labour market and re-enter employment early.
- The Government has also appointed Employment Facilitators to provide a local, on the ground presence in regions in transition. Employment Facilitators work directly with impacted workers to connect them with employment services, job opportunities, training and a range of other support services. Employment Facilitators work together with a range of stakeholders and service providers across Australian, state and local government to ensure a coordinated approach to service delivery.

Outside the Employment portfolio, the Government has a range of programs to support local economic development and facilitate major job creation projects. These include the Financial Assistance Grant Program – the Government's primary means of supporting the delivery of services by local government; and the Smart Cities Plan, which has overseen the development of City Deals and Regional Deals across Australia. The Deals bring together three tiers of government as part of a new, long-term strategic approach to planning, governance and investment in Australia's cities and regions.

These programs adopt a place-based approach that aims to promote economic and employment growth in Australia's regions by allowing them to make use of their competitive advantages. The Government is committed to building on these existing place-based initiatives to develop locally-tailored solutions that prepare rural and regional Australia for the jobs of the future.

I trust this information is of assistance.

Yours sincerely



Senator the Hon Michaelia Cash

06/07/2019