



THE HON MARK COULTON MP

Minister for Regional Services, Decentralisation and Local Government
Assistant Trade and Investment Minister

Ref: MC19-004135

Cr David O'Loughlin
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Dear Mayor

Thank you for your letters of 14 August 2019 regarding the resolutions from the 2019 National General Assembly of Local Government to the Deputy Prime Minister, the Hon Michael McCormack MP, the Hon Alan Tudge MP, Minister for Population, Cities, and Urban Infrastructure and the Hon Scott Buchholz MP, Assistant Minister for Road Safety and Freight Transport. As Minister responsible for local government, the Deputy Prime Minister has asked me to respond on behalf of my colleagues across the portfolio.

The National General Assembly of Local Government continues to be the lead forum for discussions on national policy issues, the showcasing of innovative ideas and the sharing of practical solutions for the challenges faced by the local government sector. This year's focus encouraged councils to prepare for future challenges and opportunities was particularly insightful.

I congratulate you and your team on another successful National General Assembly of Local Government and thank you for bringing these matters to the Australian Government's attention. I am pleased to provide you with the enclosed response relating to the Infrastructure, Transport, Cities and Regional Development portfolio.

I trust this information is of assistance.

Yours sincerely

Mark Coulton MP

Encl.

- cc The Hon Michael McCormack MP, Deputy Prime Minister, Minister for Infrastructure, Transport and Regional Development
- cc The Hon Alan Tudge MP, Minister for Population, Cities and Urban Infrastructure
- cc The Hon Scott Buchholz MP, Assistant Minister for Road Safety and Freight Transport

Portfolio response to the Resolutions of the 2019 National General Assembly of Local Government

Resolution 6

That the National General Assembly calls on the Federal, State, and Territory Governments to engage with ALGA to explore more flexible and sustainable arrangements for debt models and vehicles to fund Local Infrastructure in light of growing community expectations for Councils to increasingly provide more services for less.

Response

The Australian Government is committed to working with state, territory and local governments to explore the potential for innovative funding and financing options to support the delivery of transport infrastructure. Innovative financing mechanisms may be appropriate for local infrastructure projects that demonstrate strong net economic and social benefits, and provide a reliable income stream to support the repayment of debt.

Resolution 7

That this National General Assembly calls on the Federal Government to support an economic stimulus for rural and outer regional Councils by developing a split competitive and allocative model of funding for projects such as the Building Better Regions Fund. That the Assembly recommends to the Federal Government that the BBRF guidelines be amended to include projects for scoping, planning and feasibility funding.

Response

The Building Better Regions Fund (BBRF) is a highly competitive program. It is designed to build infrastructure and create jobs. Under Round Three, 915 applications sought over \$1.4 billion of Australian Government funding, with a total of 330 projects approved for the \$200 million funding available. It is the Australian Government's preference to fund investment ready projects which enables projects to commence shortly after they are funded. This confirms community and stakeholder support for the project and ensure the relevant approvals are in place.

As with all Australian Government programs, stakeholder feedback and lessons learnt from previous funding rounds will be taken into consideration when developing future program guidelines. The Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Cities and Regional Development (the Department) is currently in the process of reviewing the BBRF program guidelines in preparation for Round Four, which is expected to open in the coming months.

Resolution 10

That the National General Assembly call on the Federal Government to direct Infrastructure Australia and the Infrastructure and Project Financing Agency to work with state infrastructure providers to identify risks and barriers to sustainable growth of cities.

Response

Infrastructure Australia and the Infrastructure and Project Financing Agency are independent bodies that undertake independent research and provide advice to the Australian Government. The Australian Government recognises the importance of these bodies engaging with stakeholders and notes that the Statement of Expectations for Infrastructure Australia includes that it will ‘consult and establish productive relationships with key infrastructure stakeholders’, including state and territory infrastructure providers. Infrastructure Australia has undertaken significant work on the growth of Australian cities, including its ‘Planning Liveable Cities’ report in 2018.

Resolution 11

That this National General Assembly calls upon the Federal Government to provide a funding stream that can be accessed by Metropolitan Councils for major infrastructure projects.

Response

The Australian Government is investing \$100 billion over ten years from 2019-20 in transport infrastructure across Australia to help support a growing population, meet the national freight challenge and get Australians home sooner and safer.

The Government is committed to actively engaging with state, territory and local governments, and the private sector, to scope and develop pipeline projects.

Resolution 13

That the National General Assembly supports the Roads of Strategic Importance (ROSI) policy of the Australian Government and the associated future budget commitments.

Response

The Australian Government notes the NGA’s support.

Resolution 14

That this National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to establish an infrastructure fund for the construction of active transport initiatives including pedestrian and bicycle facilities.

Response

The Australian Government recognises the importance of active transport, including cycle paths and pedestrian paths. However, the associated infrastructure is primarily a matter for state, territory and local governments.

The Australian Government is committed to upgrading roads to ensure they are safe and less congested through the \$100 billion investment pipeline. For relevant infrastructure projects, this can include the addition or refurbishment of cycle and pedestrian paths and other upgrades to promote active travel.

The Australian Government will continue to work with other levels of government to encourage active transport, through activities like the National Road Safety Strategy

2011-2020, 'metre matters' road rule harmonisation, and as an observer on the Cycling and Walking Australia and New Zealand group.

Resolution 15

That the National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to develop a national Mobility as a Service (MaaS) framework and establish a fund to support and incentivise cooperation across state and local governments, the private sector and community organisations to deliver better, integrated mobility options for the community.

Response

The Australian Government supports the growth of Mobility as a Service in Australia. The Government is committed to the Transport and Infrastructure Council's National Policy Framework for Land Transport Technology (Policy Framework) and the associated National Land Transport Technology Action Plan (Action Plan). The Policy Framework sets out a nationally consistent approach to policy, regulatory and investment decision-making for emerging land transport technologies.

Successful development and uptake of Mobility as a Service will require close collaboration between all levels of government. In August 2019, the Council endorsed the 2020-23 Action Plan. The Action Plan supports collaborative work across a number of key priorities, including Mobility as a Service. To enable this priority, the Commonwealth will co-lead a project, along with state and territory governments, to investigate the role of governments in Mobility as a Service, and identify key priorities and enablers to support its effective use.

Resolution 16

That this National General Assembly calls on the Australian Local Government Association Board to advocate to the relevant authorities including the Federal Minister for Infrastructure and Transport, Austroads and the Australian Road Research Board that they consider a policy on traffic speeds in urban Australia which meets the needs of current and future Australians based on national and international evidence regarding safety, amenity, illness prevention and sustainability. That the policy be used to progress speed reform in urban Australia at a Federal and State level.

Response

Road safety is a priority and the Australian Government is committed to reducing the number of deaths and serious injuries caused by road crashes. The Australian Government works with the state, territory and local governments to improve road safety through the National Road Safety Strategy (NRSS) 2011-2020 and supporting action plans. Further information about the national approach to road safety is available at www.roadsafety.gov.au.

Following consideration of Transport Ministers at the August 2019 Transport and Infrastructure Council meeting, all jurisdictions committed to improve engagement and resourcing for road safety. The Australian Government is committed to working with state and territory governments through the Office of Road Safety to this

recommendation, including assisting local governments with a policy on traffic speeds for urban areas.

Resolution 17

That the National General Assembly call on the COAG Transport and Infrastructure Council to conduct a public review of Trackless Tram technologies from Europe and China as an autonomous, more timely and affordable option to fixed or light rail.

Response

The Australian Government recognises autonomous trackless trams are an emerging technology that may offer cost advantages over other forms of high capacity mass transit. The Government is committed to greater understanding of this potential, and is aware of research undertaken by academics and industry in this regard.

The National Policy Framework for Land Transport Technology outlines the roles and principles for Australian governments in supporting an integrated policy approach to transport technology, including facilitating research. The Policy Framework is underpinned by the 2020-23 National Land Transport Technology Action Plan, which was endorsed by the Transport and Infrastructure Council in August 2019. The Action Plan includes a future focus area to investigate national approaches to mass transit technologies, including trackless trams. The Government welcomes discussion on this and other issues with ALGA and other stakeholders in the context of consultation on the Action Plan over the coming months.

The Australian Government notes that, as a member of Transport and Infrastructure Council and the Transport and Infrastructure Senior Officials' Committee, ALGA can suggest agenda items for Council through the Council Secretariat.

Resolution 18

That the National General Assembly call on the Australian Government to:

- *Fund a \$800 million Grey-spot program that provides pedestrian infrastructure in locations where there are older Australian (+65) to address high proportion of pedestrian deaths experienced by older Australians.*
- *Better manage pedestrian injury and risk, through a deeper understanding of the causes of death, injury and the operation of high risk locations.*
- *Use the Principle Pedestrian Network Tool to map future and potential pedestrian demand across our cities.*
- *Introduce policies to support the rapid up-take of electric vehicles.*
- *Re-align the proportion of transport federal funding so that the three levels of Government in Australia have a more efficient and equitable match between their public responsibilities and their finances.*
- *Support funding for other infrastructure to ensure safe walking routes for older pedestrians such as:*
 - *Rest areas and seats*
 - *Mobile battery charge stations*
 - *Crossing refuges*
 - *Water fountain*

Response

The Australian Government recognises the importance of active transport, including pedestrian paths. The Government has a strong focus on improving road safety, including for pedestrians and welcomes ongoing engagement with ALGA and local government more broadly on this issue.

Resolution 19

That the National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to consider appropriate support to regional airports in order to provide affordable travel.

Response

The Australian Government is committed to helping the Australian aviation industry grow in an environment that is safe, competitive and productive, and recognises the critical social and economic connectivity provided by regional aviation.

The Government also recognises the importance of affordable air travel for regional Australia, and welcomes the Senate Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport References Committee report on the inquiry into the operation, regulation and funding of air route service delivery to rural, regional and remote communities.

The Australian Government operates a range of programs to assist regional aviation, including the En Route Charges Payment Scheme, the Regional Aviation Access Programme and the new \$100 million Regional Airports Program announced in the 2019–20 Budget.

Resolution 20

That this National General Assembly call on the Federal Government to move from high-level vision to delivery for connecting major metropolitan centres through high speed rail. This infrastructure would transform Australia, enabling better connectivity between cities, regional centres and international gateways and improving the lives of most Australians.

Response

The Australian Government announced its 20-Year Faster Rail Plan (the Plan) in March 2019. The Plan intends to better align population growth with long term infrastructure investment, by better connecting major capital cities with surrounding regional centres. The Australian Government has established the National Faster Rail Agency (the Agency) to oversee the development of faster rail business cases under the Plan; and to provide advice on options to future proof corridors for High Speed Rail. The Agency will be supported by an Expert Panel.

Resolution 21

That the National General Assembly call on the Australian Government to establish a fund specifically targeted at those local government areas that are bearing the brunt of significant impacts of the Inland Rail project to partly compensate for their loss, hardship and the long-term amenity impacts.

Response

Inland Rail is a once-in-a-generation infrastructure project connecting regional Australia to national and international markets, transforming the way freight is moved around the country. Inland Rail will support Australia's farming regions, provide supply chain benefits and cost savings for producers, and deliver both economic and social benefits across the country.

The Australian Government has committed \$9.3 billion in equity financing and grant funding to the Australian Rail Track Corporation (ARTC) to deliver Inland Rail as a safe, reliable and efficient transport solution.

The Government wants regional Australia and local communities to maximise the benefits through employment and business opportunities throughout construction and into operation.

To achieve this, ARTC is implementing a social performance program that includes, among other things, a commitment to the development of skilled local and Indigenous workers and supporting opportunities for local and Indigenous business participation in Inland Rail.

Publicly available reporting from the construction of the first section of Inland Rail on Parkes to Narromine shows a positive impact in relation to local and Indigenous employment and the participation of local businesses. For example, as at August 2019, \$33.8 million has been injected into local businesses and the economy – with 72 local businesses directly benefiting from local supply and contract expenditure.

The Government's investment in Inland Rail centres on its potential to leverage wider benefits to the economy and local communities. Inland Rail is an enabler for other complementary initiatives to foster productivity and improve supply chain and community resilience.

Recently, through community, council and industry consultation, an opportunity was identified for the Government to provide funding to assess the productivity benefits of improving connections and capacity between supply chains and Inland Rail.

As part of the 2019-20 Budget, the Deputy Prime Minister, the Hon Michael McCormack MP, announced the Government's commitment of \$44 million to the Inland Rail Interface Improvement Program (II Program) to enable local communities, industry, local and state government to identify and assess projects that could potentially increase and maximise the long-term benefits of Inland Rail's connection to the national freight rail network. Through these investigations, the II Program has the potential to increase productivity for rail-based supply chains around regional centres and build capacity on key country rail lines to enhance regional connectivity.

Under the two-year II Program there will be two streams of funding – \$24 million for a Country Lines Improvement Program (CLIP) to assess the costs and benefits of proposed improvements to country lines that intersect with Inland Rail; and \$20 million under the Productivity Enhancement Program (PEP) to assess opportunities to improve the interface between supply chains and Inland Rail.

The Department will allocate specialist service providers to work with eligible proposal proponents on the development and assessment of proposals consistent with infrastructure best practice gateway assessment processes that will include pre-feasibility and feasibility studies and strategic business case development.

The Department has published further information on its project website on the objectives of the II Program and next steps for interested local communities, industry and government.

Information sessions for interested proponents will be held from late September 2019 to lead in to an Expression of Interest process for submitting project ideas.

The II Program is a pathway for local government, among other stakeholders, to investigate further freight and agriculture productivity from Inland Rail and improve regional connectivity. The Government is committed to improving efficiencies in supply chains to help push costs down and support industry market access here and internationally.

Resolution 22

That the National General Assembly calls for:

- 1. The Australian Government to recognise that the escarpment crossings of the Great Dividing Range connecting the coastal plain highways to the inland highway networks are roads that are of vital importance to the economic development of Australia and the regions.*
- 2. The escarpment crossings that support, or can induce, a significant freight task should be earmarked to be upgraded to ensure compliance for Higher Mass Limit freight vehicles and that these key freight links be included in the National Freight and Supply Chain Strategy and National Action Plan.*

Response

The Commonwealth is committed to working with state, territories and local governments as the responsible entities for the planning, provision and management of freight infrastructure in their jurisdictions, to drive national productivity and support growth in regional Australia. This commitment includes funding local government programs which support the maintenance and upgrade of local freight network assets, contributing to community sustainability.

The National Freight and Supply Chain Strategy and associated National Action Plan demonstrate the commitment of all Australian governments to an integrated approach to optimising the use of freight assets over the next 20 years. The development of road asset information management systems, restricted access vehicle route assessment tools, and improving training and education programs for last mile access will improve network efficiency and productivity in the use of local government network assets.

Resolution 23

That the National General Assembly call on the Federal Government to provide sustainable funding that will allow Councils to strategically plan for the maintenance, to an all-weather standard local road, that form essential "first and last mile" links in modern logistics chains for agriculture and other time-sensitive goods. Further, that such funding be based on the productivity benefits of improved logistics together with an assessment of the benefits of a shift to rail, in particular to the Inland Rail project.

Increasing attention is being given to "just-in-time" logistics chains from farm gate to port. The on-land component of transportation from farm to port represents the largest single component of production for many agricultural products. Improved international competitiveness requires a substantial reduction in the costs in the logistics chain which can only be achieved through "just-in-time" methodologies supported by parallel digital paths. Current funding models for roads are generally based on travel time savings around private motor vehicles and to date there has been little or no attention given to road funding based on agricultural productivity and strengthening this key export sector.

There is considerable merit in supplementary Commonwealth funding being allocated to rural and regional areas where there is a demonstrable benefit to sustaining agricultural productivity and facilitating increased reinvestment in agricultural development.

Response

The Australian Government's \$9.3 billion investment in Inland Rail centres on its wider benefits to the economy and community. Inland Rail aims to foster productivity and deliver economic and social benefits for all Australians, including the agriculture sector.

Inland Rail is expected to be fully operational in 2024-25 and improve safety by reducing approximately 200,000 trucks from our roads per annum from 2050.

The Department is working closely with state and local governments as they gear up to make the most of the project for their communities.

Resolution 24

That the National General Assembly call on the Federal Government to commit to a review of the nation's freight hubs and analyse where the creation of new/upgraded Ports, rail corridors, highway duplications and airports will best service the country, in line with a commitment to decentralisation.

Response

The National Freight and Supply Chain Strategy, was endorsed by the Council of Australian Governments Transport and Infrastructure Council on 2 August 2019. The Strategy and associated National Action Plan provides a 20 year framework for governments to optimise the use of freight assets. Action 1.1 commits governments to ensuring that domestic and international supply chains are serviced by resilient and efficient key freight corridors, precincts and assets. The Commonwealth is

dedicated to working with state, territory and local governments to achieve the goals of the Strategy.

Resolution 25

That National General Assembly calls on COAG to develop a National strategy for the rollout of fast charging stations to facilitate the growth of the electric vehicle market and to encourage their broader uptake by the Australian community.

Response

On 25 February 2019, the Government announced that it would develop a National Electric Vehicle Strategy to plan and manage the transition to new vehicle technologies and infrastructure. The National Electric Vehicle Strategy is being developed as part of the Government's Climate Solutions Package, a \$3.5 billion investment to deliver on Australia's 2030 emission reduction targets.

The strategy will build on grants from the Australian Renewable Energy Agency (ARENA), finance from the Clean Energy Finance Corporation and the current work of the COAG Transport and Infrastructure Council to coordinate action—across governments, industry and community, in both urban and regional areas.

On 26 August 2019, ARENA announced \$15 million in funding to Evie Networks to roll out the largest ultra-fast electric vehicle charging network along Australia's highways. This will support the first phase of the \$50.2 million intercity highway ultra-fast charging network along the 'National Land Transport Network' and beyond. ARENA previously provided \$6 million in funding to Chargefox Pty Ltd to roll out Australia's first ultra-rapid charging network for electric vehicles powered by renewable energy.

Resolution 50

That the National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to undertake to:

- 1. Develop an Urban Water Policy and an Integrated Water Management Strategy for the Greater Sydney region (and other cities) addressing water security solutions and best practice water management principles for urban areas.*
- 2. Incorporate best practice Water Sensitive Urban Design model provisions /Sustainable Urban Water Management Principles into the standard planning instruments (LEP/DCP or equivalent).*
- 3. Review BASIX (or equivalent.) to enhance and ensure the best practice implementation of Water Sensitive Urban Design into all new developments and retrofitting into existing developments.*
- 4. Commit to a long-term investment program for the management and maintenance of water infrastructure in cities.*
- 5. Introduce a standard requiring Water Utilities, as a minimum, to undertake secondary treatment of sewage released from ocean outfalls.*

Response

The Australian Government is establishing the National Water Grid Authority (the Authority) to bring together world best science to work with the state and territory governments (the states) to develop a national water infrastructure framework to identify a pipeline of strategic water infrastructure initiatives to increase the capacity and connectivity of Australia's water supply networks.

The states are responsible for the regulation, planning, allocation and management of water resources and the urban water services in their jurisdictions, including ensuring supply of reliable and appropriately treated water for critical human needs.

The Australian Government is working with the states to implement the National Water Initiative (NWI) and the findings of the Productivity Commission's 2017 triennial assessment of the implementation of the NWI, as part of its strategy to help meet future water needs in Australia.

The full implementation of the NWI reform is critical to underpinning and further encouraging investment in water infrastructure, including renewal of existing water infrastructure. The Australian Government's commitment to build new water infrastructure through the \$1.3 billion National Water Infrastructure Development Fund and the \$2 billion National Water Infrastructure Loan Facility also provides an impetus for the states to fully implement the agreed NWI reforms.

The Australian Government through the Authority will provide national leadership to work with the states to ensure that the response, at all levels, to the challenge of water supply, planning and reform is cohesive and well targeted to meet the needs and support the growth of industry and communities across Australia.

Resolution 74

That this National General Assembly advocate to the Federal Government through the Minister for Regional Development, that appropriate policies are put in place to support centres located in and around mining areas in terms of population growth, investment and job creation.

Response

The City Deals initiative is part of the Australian Government's Smart Cities agenda. City Deals are a genuine partnership between the three levels of government and the community to work towards a shared vision for productive and liveable cities.

Seven City Deals have been signed and are in progress in: Townsville, Launceston, Western Sydney, Darwin, Geelong, Hobart and Adelaide. Two more City Deals have been announced in Perth and South East Queensland.

Additionally, the Government is currently piloting a small number of Regional Deals, similar to the City Deal model, which brings together three tiers of government as part of a new long-term place-based strategic approach to regional planning, governance and investment. Regional Deals are based on the City Deals model.

A Regional Deal for Barkly, NT is underway. Negotiations for potential Regional Deals in Hinkler, QLD and Albury Wodonga Deals are also underway.

Resolution 80

That the National General Assembly call on the Federal and state governments to implement the recommendations of the Parliamentary Inquiry into the Australian Government's role in the development of Cities, to provide financial support, in the form of grants, to projects which demonstrate potential to generate significant employment growth for all communities including the rapidly expanding, outer suburban communities of Australian cities and also where there is infill development.

Response

The Australian Government is finalising its response to the recommendations of the *Building Up and Moving Out* report.

Resolution 81

That the National General Assembly calls on the Federal Government to develop City Deals or Partnerships or an equivalent funding and delivery vehicle to:

- 1. Address opportunities and threats presented by rapid technological change.*
- 2. Better integrate economic, physical, infrastructure and employment assets.*
- 3. Improve governance and collaboration across all levels of government to ensure more resilient innovation and employment hubs that embrace the '4th Industrial Revolution' and create opportunities for young people and at risk workers.*

Response

The Government is using the City Deals model to align the planning, investment and governance required to drive urban renewal, plan for future population and technological changes, and accelerate growth and job creation. Seven City Deals have been agreed to date, in Townsville, Launceston, Western Sydney, Darwin, Hobart, Geelong and Adelaide. Further Deals in South-East Queensland and Perth are being progressed, and the Government has also announced an intention to work with the Victorian Government to progress City Deals for South East Melbourne and North West Melbourne.

The Government is now adapting the Deals model to regional centres. Regional Deals are tailored to each region's comparative advantages, assets and challenges and reflect the unique needs of regional Australia. A Barkly Regional Deal was signed in April 2019 and is now being implemented, and two further Regional Deal pilots have been announced, in Hinkler (QLD) and Albury Wodonga (NSW/VIC).

Resolution 88

That the National General Assembly call on

- *The Australian Government to provide grant funding for local governments who have adopted 'Smart City' parking sensor technology to implement infrastructure to enable the data to be made available in near real time to Open Data Platforms and technology providers to increase the benefit of this information to the community.*
- *All local governments with parking sensor technology, in the absence of any additional Commonwealth funding, to develop programs to provide information in near real time to Open Data Platforms and technology providers to increase the benefit of this information to the community.*

Response

Thirteen projects funded under the Smart Cities and Suburbs Program incorporated some elements of smart parking. These smart parking projects collected real-time information on parking availability to reduce traffic congestion. The Program encourages the use of open data platforms to maximise outcomes for the benefit of communities.

A Smart Parking Community of Practice has also been established to promote cross-council collaboration of project technology, including smart parking, to councils, universities and other stakeholders. Local Councils interested in the smart parking projects or in participating in the Smart Parking Community of Practice can access information on the Smart Cities Collaboration Platform.

Resolution 89

That the National General Assembly calls for state and territory local government associations to take a leadership role in developing and supporting members in their transition to Smart Communities; and for Australian, State and Territory Government bipartisan support for integrated policies and programs which encourage and support the development of Smart Communities.

Response

The Australian Government is focused on showcasing technology to complement infrastructure projects that address urban challenges, developing Australia as a leading smart nation and developing and managing urban environments.

Agencies from all levels of government are working to implement the COAG Transport and Infrastructure Council National Policy Framework for Land Transport Technology. The Policy Framework will foster a common approach to the development, adoption, and deployment of transport technologies.

The Australian Government supports uptake of technology to ensure transport is safe, efficient, accessible and sustainable, which is an important contributor to smart communities. The Council endorsed the 2020-23 National Land Transport Technology Action Plan in August 2019. The Action Plan supports collaborative work across a number of key priorities, including those that will support the development of smart communities. These priorities include future ready infrastructure and land use planning, supporting the safe uptake of innovations

such as automated vehicles and Cooperative-Intelligent Transport Systems, and identifying priorities and enablers for Mobility as a Service.

Resolution 96

That the National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government, to develop Australian standards for the provision of national standards for cycling infrastructure including separated bikeways.

Response

Please refer to the response for Resolution 14.

Resolution 103

That the National General Assembly calls on the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) Transport and Infrastructure Council to expand their Terms of Reference to include the prioritisation of identified Employment and Innovation Hubs across Australia as places to bring together new high-value and innovative businesses, educational institutions and researchers.

Response

The Transport and Infrastructure Council (the Council) brings together Commonwealth, State, Territory and New Zealand Ministers with responsibility for transport and infrastructure issues, as well as the Australian Local Government Association (ALGA). The Council plays a key role in delivering national reforms to improve the efficiency, safety and productivity of Australia's infrastructure and transport systems. As a member of the Council, ALGA can raise items for discussion at each meeting.

The Council Terms of Reference (ToRs) have recently been updated and approved by Council at their meeting held in August 2019. The ToRs scope contains high level responsibilities of Council which does not mitigate exploring transport and infrastructure issues that intersect with innovation, education and research. For example, at the previous Council meeting the theme for the strategic industry engagement session focused on delivering rail infrastructure and industry's capacity to deliver. This included the skills challenge facing the industry.

The Australian Government recognises that local leadership by industry, research and education sectors, plus facilitation and long-term support from the three levels of government, are key to successful innovation precinct development.

In October 2018, the Australian Government released the Statement of Principles for Australian Innovation Precincts, emphasising that precinct development entails building partnerships and engaging with the surrounding community.

The Statement of Principles for Australian Innovation Precincts received endorsement from the States and Territories through the COAG Industry and Skills Council in April 2018. The Statement aims to facilitate greater coordination of the significant public and private resources already invested into Australia's innovation precincts. It has four principles, which emphasise the importance of:

- local leadership in innovation precinct development;
- removal of barriers to align policy;
- building up capability and connections; and
- coordinating skills development within innovation precincts.

The Department of Industry, Innovation and Science is implementing activities from the Statement, including:

- Encouraging precincts to share best practice approaches through communities of practice, and information sources like the Innovation Precincts Insights guides and the Australian Innovation Precincts Newsletter.
- Collating and sharing data on Australian innovation precincts through the Innovation Precincts Stocktake and the Innovation Map.
- Working with other jurisdictions including through the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) to highlight the value of precincts and to promote best practices in precinct development.
- Engaging with Austrade and state and territory government investment agencies to market innovation precincts to local and international investors.

Resolution 107

That the National General Assembly calls on the Federal Government to implement measures that aim to relieve local government infrastructure funding pressures, including:

- *The creation of a dedicated funding program for local government community infrastructure*
- *A more equitable distribution of infrastructure funding to the states, that takes into account population distribution and growth impacts.*

Response

The Australian Government has allocated \$2.6 billion under the Community Development Grant program from 2013-2026 to support needed infrastructure that promotes stable, secure and viable local and regional economies. A large number of local governments already receive funding under this program.

In addition, the \$841.6 million BBRF supports the Australian Government's commitment to create jobs, drive economic growth and build stronger regional communities into the future. BBRF is available through two funding streams including the Infrastructure Projects Stream which supports projects that involve construction of new infrastructure, or the upgrade or extension of existing infrastructure.

The Regional Growth Fund will provide grants of \$10 million or more for major transformational projects which support long-term economic growth and create jobs in regions, including those undergoing structural adjustment.

The Australian Government is investing \$100 billion over 10 years from 2019-20 in transport infrastructure across Australia through its rolling infrastructure plan. The Department is working with every Australian State and Territory to build much-needed infrastructure.

Further, in 2019-20 the Australian Government will provide \$2.5 billion in untied funding under the Financial Assistance Grant program. This untied funding can be used by councils to meet local priorities, including community infrastructure. The indexation rate for this program is set according to the *Local Government (Financial Assistance) Act 1995 (Cth)* which considers population growth and the consumer-price index (CPI). This formula has been used since 2001. Any changes to the current program arrangements would require legislative amendment.

Resolution 108

That the National General Assembly call upon the Federal Government to develop a long-term plan for investment in regional cities as a key to maintaining the liveability of the regions they support, attract business investment and to provide high quality health, education, recreation and cultural facilities.

Response

The Australian Government's Regional programs are an essential part of creating liveable cities investing in and maintaining the livability of the regions. The Community Development Grants, Building Better Regions Fund and the Regional Growth Fund all support economic growth, infrastructure investment, create jobs and provide secure and viable regional economies.

Regional Deals represent a new way to work with local communities. These Deals bring all the key players to the table – state, local and Commonwealth governments alongside community leaders – to decide on priorities and a long term plan with local strategies to support regional planning, governance and investment. The Australian Government is moving forward with three pilot regional deals – in the Barkly Region in the Northern Territory, Hinkler in Queensland and Albury Wodonga (NSW/Victoria).

Resolution 109

That National General Assembly call on the Federal Government to:

- 1. Increase the Roads to Recovery funding to \$800 million per annum; and*
- 2. Broaden the Bridges Renewal Program criteria.*

Response

Increase the Roads to Recovery funding to \$800 million per annum

The Roads to Recovery program forms a key partnership between the Government and local government in delivering the vital infrastructure required to grow and strengthen our economy. The Australian Government demonstrated its ongoing commitment to this important partnership by removing the sunset clause for the Roads to Recovery program in the National Land Transport Act 2014; meaning no new legislation will be required for the continuation of the program.

As part of the Local and State Government Road Safety Package announced at the 2019-20 Budget, the Australian Government committed to an extension of the Roads to Recovery program, with a further \$100 million per annum from 2019-20 onwards. This brings the annual commitment to \$500 million. A total of \$2.5 billion will be provided under Roads to Recovery over the 2019-20 to 2023-24 period.

Broaden the Bridges Renewal Program criteria.

Under the Local and State Government Road Safety Package announced at this year's Budget, funding for the Bridges Renewal Program increased from \$60 million to \$85 million per year from 2019-20. Although the timing of the next round is yet to be decided, the additional funding means that a new round can be held sooner.

Round Four of the Bridges Renewal Program was only open to local governments, which were eligible to apply for funding for up to two timber bridges that will enhance access for local communities or facilitate higher productivity vehicle access. Under the Program, the Australian Government contributes up to 50 per cent of the total project cost.

The Department is currently considering advice to the Deputy Prime Minister regarding the timing and criteria for Round Five of the Bridges Renewal Program. Once a decision has been made on timeframes for the next round, the Department will contact all councils via email.

Resolution 109.2

That the National General Assembly calls on the Federal Government to continue the Bridge Renewal Program to ensure security of transport networks for industry and connected communities alike.

Response

Under the Bridges Renewal Program, the Australian Government is providing \$640 million from the commencement of the program in 2015-16 to 2022-23 to upgrade and replace bridges to enhance access for local communities and facilitate higher productivity vehicle access. The most recent round of the program was only open to local governments.

The Australian Government recognises the importance of ongoing infrastructure funding to local government. That is why, as part of the Local and State Government Road Safety Package announced at the 2019-20 Budget, the Australian Government has committed an additional \$25 million per year to the Bridges Renewal Program from 2019 20.

Resolution 118

That the National General Assembly call on the Federal Government to adopt an integrated and sustainable planning framework for the rapid population growth in Australia's cities and regions including a National Settlement Plan.

Response

The Australian Government recognises the need for better, more integrated planning around population. The Government has released its plan for Australia's future population and is working closely with state, territory and local governments to develop a National Population and Planning Framework. The Government is also taking action to support population growth in Australia's cities and regions, including through a \$100 billion investment in transport

infrastructure, changes to migration settings, implementing City and Regional Deals, and continuing to roll out the National Broadband Network.

National population planning requires cooperation between all levels of government, and the Australian Government will maintain an ongoing dialogue with state, territory and local governments to identify opportunities and pursue national solutions where possible.

Resolution 120

That this National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to extend and increase the funding of the Smart Cities and Suburbs Program.

Response

Eighty-one projects were funded under two rounds of the Smart Cities and Suburbs Program. The Program will be evaluated to identify its benefits and impacts, opportunities which may be leveraged (e.g. replicability or scalability), lessons learnt, and to inform possible future strategic policy directions.

Future policy approaches, programs and packages to support local governments to apply innovative, technology-based approaches to improve liveability of cities and regional areas across Australia will be considered by Government in line with other Budget priorities.

Resolution 121

That the National General Assembly call on the Australian Government to support local government to collaborate, be entrepreneurial and embrace innovation through the provision of incubator grants.

Response

The Australian Government is committed to fostering innovation and entrepreneurial ideas to increase productivity in all levels of government and boost economic growth.

This includes establishing the new Office of Road Safety in 2019 within the Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Cities and Regional Development. The new Office will administer an Innovation Fund (\$12 million) to assist with road safety solutions and technologies; and an Awareness and Enablers Fund (\$4 million) for road safety awareness, education and collaboration initiatives.

I understand that further information on this response will be provided by the Hon Karen Andrews MP, Minister for Industry, Science and Technology.

(Resolution also sent to The Hon. Karen Andrews MP)