ALGA
Australian Local Government Association

Building AI Infrastructure that works for Australia

Submission to the Office of AI, Department of Prime Minister & Cabinet

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Building Better Communities.

Summary

At ALGA's National General Assembly in June 2026, councils called for a national, coordinated governance framework for AI and data centres. ALGA is pleased to have the opportunity to provide input for how the Australian Standards for AI can support and protect councils, their service delivery, and benefit their communities.

Local government must be formally recognised and engaged in Australia's national AI architecture. Councils should have a seat at the table where decisions about AI and data centres affect their communities, and National Standards should support their roles. Equity and 'no council left behind' should be explicit objectives, so all councils can access the benefits, capability and protections they need. Reform should avoid shifting new financial, planning or administrative burdens to local government. Any additional council costs should be funded by other governments, recovered from industry, or both.

Governments and the AI industry should collaborate to build local government capability to use AI safely and effectively. Support should cover governance, trusted data, cybersecurity, procurement, workforce skills, assurance and community engagement, and be flexible enough to reflect councils' different levels of digital maturity. National safeguards should establish clear minimum protections without obstructing lawful, well-governed council services. Investment should also scale proven council-led tools, retain human oversight, protect local jobs and strengthen councils' capacity to respond to misinformation and rising volumes of AI-generated public contact.

National data centre standards must recognise local government roles and protect host communities from unmitigated costs and impacts. Lowering and/or forgoing local rates should not be used as an incentive by state or territory governments to attract data centre investment. Councils and communities should be engaged through planning and decision-making, rather than bypassed by specialised or fast-track approval pathways. Developers should pay their fair share of council service and infrastructure costs, deliver agreed community benefits, and report transparently on energy, water, emissions and compliance. Standards should require renewable energy, responsible and locally appropriate water use, cumulative and place-based assessment, and funded decommissioning and e-waste plans. The Commonwealth should also provide practical planning guidance and capability support for councils.

Introduction

The Australian Local Government Association (ALGA) is the voice of local government in Australia, representing 538 councils across the nation. ALGA was established in 1947 and throughout its history has been actively involved in issues of national significance affecting local government and local communities.

In structure, ALGA is a federation of state and territory local government associations. This submission should be read in conjunction with any separate submissions received from state and territory associations as well as individual councils.

ALGA is an observer to Environment Minister's Meeting and Energy and Climate Ministerial Council where it advocates for recognition of local government roles in regulating data centre development. ALGA also provides advice to the Australian Government on more specific issues such as protection of privacy, productivity, cyber and digital risk.

As a rapidly evolving and complex technology, ALGA sees the Australian standards for AI (henceforth, National Standards), and their relationship with state and territory-based governance, as one step in a longer-term conversation about AI and data centre governance. ALGA would be pleased to facilitate further consultation with local government associations and their council members to evolve the governance approach in coming months and years.

This submission has been developed with the Local Government AI Working Group (chaired by the Municipal Association of Victoria), including resolutions at ALGA's 2026 National General Assembly (NGA), submissions made by ALGA's members to the Senate Inquiry on AI and Data Centres, and ALGA's submissions on national environmental and industry standards and reforms, including:

- Joint Select Committee on AI (not yet published by Committee)
- Department of Industry Science and Resource's consultation on Future Made in Australia community benefit principles (link)
- Department of Climate Change, Energy, Environment and Water's (DCCEEW) consultation on EPBC Act National Environmental Standards (link)
- DCCEEW's consultation on the Recycling and Waste Reduction Act Review (link)
- Australian Energy Infrastructure Commissioner's (AEIC) Community Engagement review (link)

Local government's touch points with AI

Councils are custodians of valuable administrative, community and in some instances, cultural data, providers of high-volume public services, managers of critical infrastructure, planning authorities for AI-enabling development, major employers and sites of workforce transition. They are also trusted sources of information during emergencies. Similar to other democratic institutions, councils are exposed to misinformation and AI-enabled civic disruption.

Being closest to communities, local government is the most direct, tangible connection that residents have with government as an institution. It follows that how AI is used by councils, and how AI mediates public service delivery, will influence how people experience and trust government as a whole.

ALGA encourages the Australian Government to consider local government as a key collaborator for shaping how AI is governed and used to serve the Australian public.

Local governments are highly constrained in terms of the level of resourcing they have to deploy for adapting to new technologies, emerging opportunities, shocks and pressures. AI has the capacity to support councils to increase the value they deliver to their communities, but councils require support to do so.

Delegates to ALGA's NGA in June 2026 called on the Australian Parliament to urgently deliver an immediate increase in untied funding to local government via an emergency motion. The motion warned that the financial sustainability of councils and the services communities rely on are increasingly at risk. It calls for a multi-partisan commitment to a stronger funding partnership with councils. In this context of severe financial constraints, AI offers both opportunities for transformation and a daunting challenge for a local government sector already under extraordinary strain.

Resolutions carried at the NGA also demonstrate strong support for nationally coordinated action. Councils called for AI and high-quality local government data to be recognised as critical productivity infrastructure, alongside sustained investment in AI readiness, cybersecurity, workforce capability, shared standards and support for smaller, rural and regional councils (see Appendix A for list of relevant 2026 NGA resolutions).

Overarching principles

ALGA recommends the following:

1. **Equity and 'no council left behind' are explicit objectives and outcomes of the National Standards.** All local governments should have the opportunity to shape and access benefits of AI to serve their communities and improve their financial and operational sustainability. There also needs to be equity in access to protection and support for risk mitigation.
2. **Local government needs and value are embedded in Australia's national AI architecture.** Formally recognise the needs of local government in national AI policy, safety, workforce planning, infrastructure governance and intergovernmental coordination.
3. **Local governments are recognised as the local democratically elected institution in Australia's national AI architecture**. Council roles and functions should not be bypassed or obstructed through delivery of National Standards. When decisions are being made about AI and data centres on the ground, the relevant local government/s should have a seat at the table by default – each council is best placed to decide their approach and engagement with those decision-making processes.
4. **No new costs to councils result from implementing Australia's national AI architecture.** At a time when local government receives 0.5% of national taxation revenue, the Standards should not assume that councils will undertake unfunded new responsibilities or services. Any new costs or

services undertaken by councils must be cost-recoverable to industry, funded by higher levels of government, or both.

Artificial Intelligence

AI has impacts *in*, and *on*, local government.

AI has the potential to elevate local government service delivery and support workforce needs, however, it also represents significant risk should councils not be adequately supported to leverage AI and deliver their duty of care on their own terms.

It is important to note that there is a real distinction between local governments which have capacity to engage with AI at all, and those which do not. Councils range from large metropolitan organisations with sophisticated digital teams to small rural and remote councils with limited capacity to engage with AI in a formal manner.

Each council does not require the same level or type of assistance, but every community should have access to comparable capability, safeguards and service quality. Without coordinated support, Australia risks creating a two-speed system in which well-resourced institutions capture the benefits of AI while smaller communities inherit greater risks, costs and vendor dependence.

National AI policy should incorporate the following:

All levels of government, with the AI industry, should collaborate to ensure that public institutions all have adequate governance and technical capacity to engage with AI risks and opportunities.

Local governments, like all public institutions, are navigating how to establish the necessary technical architecture and institutional infrastructure that enables AI to be deployed safely and responsibly. This includes governance frameworks, appropriate data protections and systems, cybersecurity systems, staffing capacity and culture, procurement capability, workforce skills, assurance processes and public engagement.

AI is not a standalone application, but a capability that is relevant across the systems that underpin modern public administration. AI has the capacity to support service delivery, regulatory decision-making, planning, customer service, emergency management, infrastructure operations, workforce productivity and policy development.

Local government associations and councils have made important headway to establish these frameworks, guidance, products and tools. Further investment and support are needed to scale these and ensure that councils can access cost-effective and fit-for-purpose solutions when they need them.

Councils should not be left without the governance, technical and organisational capacity to navigate AI risks and opportunities. An industry contribution to shared capability uplift could contribute to this effort.

In Queensland, the Local Government Association of Queensland (LGAQ) established LGAQ Lab to develop practical AI applications in response to problems prioritised by Queensland councils; seeing delivery of products like an AI-supported dog barking compliance tool, mosquito outbreak prediction, and computer vision systems to detect flooded roads. LGAQ Lab leverages pre-existing digital, data and analytics capabilities and insight from LGAQ's membership, policy and procurement functions to design, develop and scale successful solutions.

In Victoria, MAVLab convenes experts, compiles extensive case studies, AI procurement guidance and evaluation criteria, a vendor register, use-case guidance, an AI Roadmap and supports collaborative council pilots.

These examples demonstrate the value of a member-based model for uplift in AI. However, not all local government associations nor councils are able to offer and access such services. Further Commonwealth, state, and territory, and industry engagement and support could help with scaling these solutions to service council needs cost effectively.

AI national safeguards should support local government to manage risks, while avoiding obstructing service delivery where adequate governance frameworks already exist.

Local governments comply with existing obligations in respect to duty of care and privacy and data protection obligations. National Standards should avoid inadvertently obstructing data collection and use that enables effective local government service delivery and is already governed appropriately.

In some circumstances, local governments hold and protect cultural and heritage information, and other sensitive data, while delivering services which contribute to better outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in their communities. The National Standards should specify principles, use permissions, conditions and protections for Traditional Knowledge and Indigenous knowledge holdings in an AI training context. These rules should be informed by Indigenous Data Sovereignty principles and practices, and designed and decided by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. National standards for community benefit should also specify how self-determination and constructive outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples will be supported by this technology.

AI training should be required to help propagate a strong local government workforce and help address persistent gaps.

The 2026 Public Skills Australia Local Government National Skills Audit found that technology transformation is one of the defining factors for service delivery complexity in local government. The report states: "Legacy systems, digital literacy gaps and rising cyber security risks are accelerating the need for change, particularly in local councils with limited council rate funding or internal specialist skills, resulting in variable digital maturity and uneven service outcomes."

AI transformation compounds other drivers of complexity, including tighter regulatory and assurance requirements, impacts of climate change and adapting to generational workforce change; along with rising community expectations.

While these drivers are challenging the local government sector, if driven by the sector and well governed, AI also represents opportunity to support local governments to make progress on addressing workforce constraints and elevate service delivery.

AI training should not weaken council service capability or displace local government jobs. Engaging the sector on workforce priorities and protections could help ensure AI training supports workers and services.

AI training should demonstrably support Australia's democratic processes and constructive public debate.

Generative AI is dramatically increasing the volume, speed and sophistication of information flowing through public systems, contributing to degraded information environments where misinformation, disinformation and synthetic media can spread rapidly and at scale.

This means that AI is compounding the increasing expectations of governments while lowering the cost of generating public submissions, complaints, service requests and coordinated campaigns. This is increasing the administrative and response burden on councils and creates the potential to overwhelm consultation processes, customer service functions and democratic governance processes.

Local elected representatives and local government staff are experiencing increasing levels of hostility. For example, research undertaken by the Local Government Association of Tasmania (LGAT) found that 80% of surveyed elected representatives in Tasmania have experienced abuse in the past two years. Poor conduct and bullying represent a threat to vibrant local democracy where it harms individuals and disincentivises community members from seeking election on their council.

Councils, elected representatives and staff should not be left to bear the consequences of AI-generated or AI-exacerbated abuse. Clear accountability and accessible avenues for recourse could help reduce this risk.

Data centres

Local government positions on council roles in respect to data centre development are still developing across the sector. Councils are closest to the communities; they consider a range of emerging industries and technologies in their local government areas (LGAs) and engage with their communities to decide whether and how those will play a role in their future.

National data centre policy should:

Local government's roles in data centre decision making should be recognised. While the configuration of these roles varies across states, territories and specific local circumstances, local governments have formal and informal roles in:

a) strategic, economic and land use planning; which informs a long-term view of how emerging development opportunities can feed into delivery of genuine, lasting value that supports the structural needs and aspirations in each community and place.

b) provision and maintenance of enabling infrastructure and services, which are both fundamental for making Australia an attractive and viable place to invest in new projects *and* requiring significant new, sustained investment to continue serving communities well.
c) where a council has community mandate and resourcing to do so, relationship brokerage and advice between developers, residents, local businesses and other levels of government to deliver community value and problem solve, which promotes the region as a stable place to invest and develop.

These functions mean local governments are uniquely positioned to navigate cumulative opportunities, value creation, risks and impacts across the community, where they are resourced and supported to do so.

Local communities and councils being bypassed in decisions about data centre development should be avoided. Using established local government planning pathways, specialised land tenure, land use approval, development pathways and established place-based engagement mechanisms could provide a practical way to retain local input.

In their submissions to the Senate Inquiry on AI and Data Centres, the Local Government Association of the Northern Territory (LGANT), Local Government Association of South Australia (LGASA), Local Government Association of NSW (LGNSW) and MAV have explained the importance of local government having a deciding role in planning. They also refer to the importance of using existing place-based consultation and decision-making mechanisms for engaging affected communities where councils do not have formal planning powers, such as Local Authorities in the Northern Territory. The National Standards should work through these existing mechanisms and avoid creating parallel engagement processes.

In its submission to this same consultation, WALGA also points out that in WA, a growing number of councils are considering whether the established planning processes are appropriately designed to deal with infrastructure of this scale, complexity and strategic significance.

If governments look at changing planning processes to address a changing development profile, local governments should be part of that process. Bypassing councils and existing mechanisms that already work well, to simplify decision making in the face of complexity, is not supported by local government.

Specialised, fast track and state-led approval pathways can undermine the ability for local communities to define how data centres will play a role in their future. These can also create new, unmitigated costs for councils where new projects create additional infrastructure and servicing requirements that councils have no influence over. These poor outcomes on community assets and services undermine trust in emerging industries and technologies.

Data centres and AI companies should contribute their fair share of community benefits; pay for the enabling services that councils provide and any damage to local public assets. The National Standards have an important role in defining how quality benefits can be negotiated with communities to deliver enduring value not just to the Australian public, but to hosting and impacted communities.

Community benefits should not be designed or delivered without council involvement. Early engagement with the relevant councils helps deliver benefits which reflect local priorities and complement other investment.

As long-term strategic planners and providing enabling services, infrastructure, and workforce development and training (particularly in regional areas), councils know what quality benefits look like in their community. They are also uniquely positioned in having visibility of other relevant developments such as renewable energy projects, mining and quarrying, emerging green industries, and tourism, for example; to devise how data centre benefits complement or counteract the benefits being provided by other proponents.

However, additional capacity and staffing resourcing is required to meet additional development intensity beyond their core business – it is unfair to expect host community ratepayers to cover these enabling services where benefits of new industries are shared nationally, and by shareholders globally.

National policy settings should not diminish councils' rating capacity and that host communities should share in the economic benefits of major developments. Councils should retain their rating powers and revenue raising capacity.

Councils and host-community ratepayers should not have to subsidise the service and infrastructure costs of data centre development, and costs arising from damage to local roads, drainage, open space and other public assets should not fall to councils and their communities. A user-pays framework with an appropriate cost-recovery mechanism which sees funds flow directly back to councils could help allocate these costs to developers.

Data centres should be appropriately weighed against other uses for strategic, high value industrial land.

National Standards should recognise the strategic importance of industrial and employment land. Data centres are increasingly seeking locations within industrial precincts due to their need for large sites and access to electricity and telecommunications infrastructure. While these developments can represent significant capital investment, they may also compete with manufacturing, logistics, freight and other employment-generating land uses.

Future planning frameworks should support strategic assessment of how data centres are integrated within industrial land supply and employment planning objectives.

Developers should engage with communities and local governments in the spirit, and to the quality, that Australians expect. The Commonwealth already has several recent and relevant pieces of work which can set out what conduct is expected from developers.

Equifax's Renewables Developer Rating Scheme, established by the Australian Government in response to the AEIC's Community Engagement review, implements a conduct rating methodology across 7 criteria. ALGA served on the Stakeholder Reference Group informing methodology design, and convened a Local Government Lived Experience Panel comprised of 11 councils in 4 jurisdictions to provide their advice.

While this methodology would require tailoring for data centre industry, it provides a proof of concept and guidance on how to define good conduct on a single-developer basis.

Under the 'Community' criterion, developers are rated on their demonstrated conduct against 5 maturity frameworks (Local Government, First Nations, Landholder, Community and Neighbour). Under the local government maturity framework, renewables companies are assessed for their demonstrated competency against the following:

1. *Engagement timing:* Whether developer engagement with council is early and proactive, rather than driven solely by compliance obligations or not engaging at all.
2. *Planning and resourcing:* Whether developer has formal engagement plans, proper governance that the outcomes are being reached, and resourcing to implement.
3. *Transparency and communication:* Openness, clarity and accessibility of information, regularity and responsiveness of communication.
4. *Relationship maintenance and trust:* Whether developer has consistent personnel, local presence, demonstrates respect, listening, and follow-through.
5. *Shared decision making:* Whether developer collaborates with council to influence project design, benefits and solution-finding.
6. *Benefit sharing and equity:* Whether developer acts consistently and delivers the benefits they promise, designing meaningful community benefits through collaborative relationship with council and community.
7. *Complaints and risk management:* Whether developer has accessible, fair and timely resolution pathways, they track and learn from issues raised.
8. *Accountability:* Whether developer demonstrates how feedback leads to change.

Data centres should use water responsibly and water security and drinking water should be protected. The National Climate Risk Assessment demonstrates that Australia is a dry - and drying - continent. Local governments have varying roles relating to water governance, but all are concerned with the long-term liability, vibrancy, security and sustainability of their communities and local environment.

This table is indicative and should be checked against current state and territory legislation or utility boundaries before use.

Jurisdiction	Local water utility	Sewerage and wastewater services	Stormwater drainage	Recycled water / reuse schemes	Integrated water planning / land-use planning input	Waterway, catchment or floodplain management role
NSW	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
VIC	—	—	✓	Limited	✓	✓
QLD	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
WA	Limited	Limited	✓	Limited	✓	✓
SA	Limited	Limited	✓	Limited	✓	✓
TAS	Indirect	Indirect	✓	Limited	✓	✓
NT	—	—	✓	Limited	Limited	Limited

Legend: ✓ = common or direct local government role; Limited = role exists in some places or through specific schemes/partnerships; Indirect = ownership, governance or advocacy role rather than direct delivery; — = generally not a local government function in that jurisdiction.

Data centre demand should not compromise community water security or constrain governments' responses during periods of water stress. Fit-for-purpose use, efficiency measures and regionally appropriate restrictions could help guard against this.

Development proceeding before lower-impact water options have been properly considered, or where water impacts would be unacceptable, should be avoided. A clear mitigation hierarchy and defined unacceptable outcomes could support consistent decisions. The National Environmental Standard for Matters of National Environmental Significance, recently established under the EPBC Act, provides a model for an impact mitigation hierarchy that sets a national baseline requirement which state and territory requirements can build upon or tailor if they wish.

Local governments require streamlining of administration across Commonwealth, state and territory environmental laws and regulations. As such, it could be appropriate that data centre water use be considered for assessment through the EPBC Act Water Trigger to streamline water use assessment with other nationally significant environmental protected matters, rather than setting up separate, parallel assessment process at national level.

National settings should avoid overriding or undermining applicable local government water policies. Recognising those policies within the Standards could preserve local decision-making while supporting national consistency. For example, ALGA notes Toowoomba Regional Council's recent decision to draft an Industrial Water Use Policy that will prohibit new data centres from using the region's potable reticulated water supply for cooling and operations. While not all councils will decide on the same approach, the National Standards must enforce support for local council decisions, which articulate the will of their community and how it wants water to be used.

ALGA agrees with the proposal for data centres to pay their fair share of water infrastructure and servicing costs. Local governments and water utilities should not be left out of pocket where they own and operate the infrastructure supporting data centres. Directly passing recovered funds to the relevant asset owner or operator, rather than adding it to consolidated revenue or relying on other levels of government to pass on funds, will avoid this outcome.

ALGA notes that water security, as a policy outcome, is governed through complex federated arrangements. With the Water Act and National Water Grid Fund currently under review, and a new National Water Agreement signed by the Commonwealth in 2026, there are opportunities to leverage these processes and agreements to take a more strategic and holistic view of how data centre requirements fit into water governance systematically.

To enable the National Standards to protect water security effectively, regional benchmarks and indicators collaboratively developed by Commonwealth, state, territory and local governments could provide a shared, place-based basis for assessing water security. This suggestion draws from ALGA's policy position that the Commonwealth should: "Seek agreement on the overarching social, cultural, economic

and environmental outcomes and goals for water on a national and holistic basis, and action planning and funding and achieve these outcomes and goals."

Lastly, local government is the most infrastructure-intensive level of government in Australia. ALGA's 2026 National State of the Assets report found that councils control $737 billion in total assets, of which $497 billion (67%) is attributed to non-financial infrastructure assets. Stormwater is the second largest asset class when it comes to replacement cost of $149 billion. Water and wastewater assets are some of the most capital-intensive local governments hold, accounting for 14% of the total local government infrastructure portfolio. The condition, function, and capacity challenges for water infrastructure are more severe than other asset classes.

Some councils have negotiated water infrastructure upgrades as part of enduring community benefits with renewable energy developers. For example, in collaboration with Squadron Energy, Dubbo Regional Council delivered a new advanced wastewater treatment facility worth $7.8 million which supports the water security of the community into the long term. Data centre developers should be encouraged to consider such investments should the hosting council deem it an appropriate and high-priority community benefit in their context.

Require cumulative and place-based impact assessment. ALGA cautions that, for all the reasons discussed in this submission, siting of data centres must consider an interplay of contextual factors, not only the ease and efficiency for connecting to the energy grid.

National Standards should use cumulative and place-based assessment as the dominant lens through which siting decisions are made; and as shared decisions between Commonwealth, state, territory and local governments. These need to incorporate assessment of outcomes across community benefit/risk/impact, ecosystems, catchment health and water resources, amenity, energy and grid capacity, local employment and impacts/opportunities for local productivity, co-location, decommissioning, and other factors.

National Standards should clearly articulate responsibilities across proponents, infrastructure providers and governments for cumulative impact assessment, infrastructure provision, mitigation, monitoring and compliance.

National guidance should also recognise operational amenity impacts associated with data centres, including noise from cooling systems and backup generation infrastructure, visual impacts, building scale and interface considerations where facilities are located near sensitive land uses. One of the top themes emerging strongly from the WA experience is that noise is often a determining planning issue. Thresholds for applying the National Standards should not allow the cumulative, place-based impacts of data centre development on councils and communities to go unseen. Pairing a project-level megawatt (MW) threshold with a cumulative regional measure for eligibility could provide a fuller, more realistic picture.

Require data centres to plan energy sources around community needs, so that households are protected from electricity disruption, energy costs do not rise, and emissions continue to fall. As ALGA's Adapting Together report shows, in a changing climate, councils are bearing significant rising costs and impacts on their community service delivery from increasingly frequent and severe disasters and increasing heat and coastal change. Councils are energy consumers, and some councils are also

supporting their residents with rate reductions as the cost of living remains high. It is therefore important that data centres do not contribute increases to emissions and energy costs.

ALGA notes that councils have differing views on whether the National Standard should specify what kind of energy data centres should be required to use, and encourages the Office of AI to engage with the diversity of perspectives relating to risks and opportunities in each local context.

Require data centres to stipulate how they will decommission responsibly, including how those costs will be covered. E-waste is already a significant burden on Australia's waste system and local government landfills, and solar panels are projected to further burden landfills (assuming some data centres may choose to use solar panels to meet renewable energy requirements). With many metropolitan landfills close to capacity, a significant increase in construction and e-waste from data centres cannot be permitted.

In a linear economy like Australia's, where companies are not required to reclaim the resources they put into the market or their facilities, local governments and the environment will receive it. In the absence of adequate mandatory national extended producer responsibility obligations, councils will increasingly be forced to choose to spend more on expanding landfills and other waste options, over parks, library hours and investing in safe local roads.

Councils and communities should not inherit unfunded decommissioning, construction-waste or e-waste liabilities from data centres. Costed lifecycle plans should be undertaken by the AI industry, assured financing for decommissioning and waste management should be required, and a review of the capacity and suitability of National Television and Computer Recycling Scheme (NTCRS) could help manage these risks before they arise. ALGA notes that with data centres refurbishing their servers and other electronic equipment every few years, the challenge is already here and the need to have a national approach is urgent.

Require transparent public reporting at facility and LGA-level on energy, water use, emissions, community benefits and value creation, stakeholder and community engagement outcomes and dispute resolutions, and against approval conditions.

Establish best-practice data centre planning guidance and supports, which enable local governments across the country to navigate complexities of data centre development. The Office of AI should engage with counterparts in countries which have already seen significant data centre development to aggregate and customise guidance for sub-national levels of government. This kind of work has already been started by the Net Zero Economy Authority (NZEA) in respect to governance models and regional industry planning for renewables and green industry development.

There is precedent for Commonwealth entities extending support to the local government sector to uplift capacity to meet new regulatory requirements and support their duty of care. For example, DCCEEW demonstrated leadership by providing guidance to support state, territory and local government by customising its Climate Risk and Opportunity Management Program for local government users. The Department of Health, Disability and Ageing (DHDA) resourced and supported the development of a Disability Inclusion Guide for Councils to support implementation of Australia's Disability Strategy 2021-2030.

ALGA, with our state and territory local government association members, would be pleased to discuss any of these suggestions further on request.

Sincerely,

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Appendix A

ID	Sponsoring council/s	Resolution
89	City of Charles Sturt, SA	That this National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to recognise artificial intelligence and high-quality local government data as critical productivity infrastructure, and to partner with local government to invest in the systems, standards and capability required to safely leverage council-held data to improve service delivery, regulatory efficiency and long-term financial sustainability.
124	Strategic Motion Leeton Shire Council, NSW |Moyne Shire Council, VIC | Charters Towers Regional Council, QLD | Knox City Council, VIC | Noosa Council, QLD | Newcastle City Council, NSW | Narrabri Shire Council, NSW | Maribyrnong City Council, VIC.	This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to provide sustained national leadership by delivering a consistent, adequately funded approach to local government cyber security, fraud resilience and the safe use of artificial intelligence. This includes a shared and scalable cyber defence capability, minimum assurance standards aligned to national frameworks, workforce and governance uplift, protection of critical infrastructure and sensitive community data, and targeted support for small, rural and regional councils.
125	Hume City Council, VIC and Bega Valley Shire Council, NSW	The National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government and pending outcomes of the currently open federal inquiries into data centres to report by end 2026, and other state or territory expectations papers, to establish a nationally consistent, performance-based policy and regulatory framework for data centres that recognises the national importance of artificial intelligence and digital infrastructure, promotes best-practice siting, design and operation, ensures efficient and transparent management of energy and water use including renewable energy integration and low-water cooling technologies, safeguards and enhances human oversight and jobs, including local government jobs, and formally recognises local government as a key partner in planning, sustainability and community impact management.
127	Narrabri Shire Council, NSW	This National General Assembly call on the Australian Government to establish a dedicated Local Government AI Readiness Program, aligned with the 2025 National AI Plan, to ensure councils have the funding, tools, digital infrastructure, and skills necessary to safely and effectively adopt artificial intelligence in community service delivery, infrastructure management, and local decision-making, and that any solutions for improved productivity and service delivery prioritise fairness, transparency, and accountability, identify opportunities for increased efficiencies for workers and operations while ensuring adequate human oversight and no loss of existing jobs, and prioritise ethical considerations and responsible use of all technology to protect the privacy and other rights of the community.
142	City of Melbourne, Victoria	That the National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to: 1. Recognise that artificial intelligence and digital infrastructure are critical to Australia's future productivity, research excellence, sovereign capability and global competitiveness,

		and that local government is a key partner in delivering sustainable digital infrastructure. 2. Establish a nationally consistent, performance-based policy and regulatory framework for data centres that supports best-practice siting and design, mandatory renewable energy integration, fit-for-purpose water use, innovation in low-water and non-water cooling technologies, measurable community benefits, and transparent reporting of energy, water and emissions.
237	Penrith City Council, NSW	The National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government, in their development of national data centre principles & approval processes to include: 1. Strategic assessment of: a. Suitability of location, ideally where services are available and where other important land uses are not compromised as a result b. Local place-based impacts–e.g. potential strain on energy grids, water supply and ecosystems effects, land use trade-offs, clustering issues, impacts on local jobs c. Meaningful community engagement d. Transparent public reporting 2. That councils have a central role in decision-making 3. Engaging with councils for feedback into the preparation and finalisation of these documents.