



POLICY PLATFORM

April 2025



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Introduction

Local Government NSW (LGNSW) is the peak body for local government in NSW, representing general purpose councils and related entities.

LGNSW aims to strengthen and protect an effective, democratic system of local government across NSW by supporting and advocating on behalf of member councils, including actively and persuasively representing the views of local government to the NSW and Australian governments.

The LGNSW Policy Platform consolidates the voices of councils across NSW, reflecting the collective positions of local government on issues of importance and guiding LGNSW in its advocacy on behalf of the local government sector.

Part 01

Fundamental Principles

Part 02

Position Statements

Role of the Annual Conference & LGNSW

THE LGNSW ANNUAL CONFERENCE

is the supreme policy-making body of LGNSW and an opportunity for councillors to come together to share ideas and debate issues that shape the way LGNSW is governed.

MEMBERS may put forward motions for consideration of the [Annual Conference](#). Where a majority of voting delegates at the Annual Conference vote in support of the motion, it is adopted as a resolution of LGNSW.

AFTER EACH CONFERENCE

LGNSW reviews resolutions and amends the Fundamental Principles and Position Statements as required. Conference resolutions rarely change the sector's views on high-level Fundamental Principles. Position Statements require refinements more regularly to reflect the sector's views on new or developing issues.

THE LGNSW BOARD

comprises councillors from member councils across NSW, who are elected to the LGNSW Board biennially at the Annual Conference.

The Board controls and governs LGNSW in between Annual Conferences and when decisions are required on policy positions for the local government sector (such as if there is no existing policy position on an issue that LGNSW must comment on), the Board and President can make that decision for the sector.



Part 01

Fundamental Principles



ECONOMIC

- A.** Local government must have control of its revenue raising and investment decisions and be fairly funded by the Commonwealth and State/NSW Governments to meet its infrastructure and service responsibilities.
- B.** Local government promotes local and regional economic development and employment growth

INFRASTRUCTURE

- C.** Local government is best placed to plan for, deliver and manage essential local infrastructure

PLANNING

- D.** Local government is best placed to lead and influence local and regional planning processes according to the needs and expectations of local communities
- E.** Our communities' quality of life is a priority of local government planning

ENVIRONMENT

- F.** Local government actions reflect Ecologically Sustainable Development. ESD requires the effective integration of economic, environmental and social considerations in decision making processes and is based on the following principles:
 - Intergenerational equity – today's actions maintain or enhance the environment for future generations
 - Precautionary principle – prevent environmental degradation and manage and mitigate risk
 - Conservation of biological diversity and ecological integrity
 - Improved valuation and pricing of environmental resources – recognising the value of the environment to the community.
 - Commit to the principles of the circular economy and minimise the consumption of finite natural resources

SOCIAL & COMMUNITY

- G.** Local government is committed to the principles of:
 - Equity – fair distribution of resources
 - Rights – equality for all people
 - Access – to services essential to quality of life
 - Participation – of all people in their community
 - Recognition – of the unique place of Aboriginal people in NSW and the right of Aboriginal people to be involved in all decisions affecting Aboriginal communities
 - Health and Safety – for all in the community

GOVERNANCE

- H.** Local government must be constitutionally recognised and respected as an equal sphere of government
- I.** Local government is democratically elected to shape, serve and support communities
- J.** Local government is committed to the principles of good governance

ACCOUNTABILITY

- K.** Local government is responsible and accountable to the citizens and the communities it represents, through consultative processes, legislative accountabilities, efficient delivery of services and effective customer service.
- L.** Local government is recognised as a responsible and place-based employer.
- M.** Local government reduces and mitigates the risk of climate change for the communities we serve

Date Re-endorsed: November 2024 by LGNSW Conference



Part 02

Position Statements



01 Financial Sustainability



Local government is a partner in the economic stewardship of NSW and responsible for the provision of a wide range of essential infrastructure and services.

However, the financial sustainability of councils has been undermined by rate pegging for over 40 years, which has resulted in the under-provision of community infrastructure and services and the deferral of infrastructure maintenance and renewal expenditure resulting in significant infrastructure backlog.

OUR POSITION

LGNSW advocates for the financial sustainability of local government through:

- 1.1 The removal of rate pegging and reform of the NSW local government rating system, including the removal of inequitable rate exemptions and greater autonomy and flexibility in rating policy, structure and practices.
- 1.2 Greater autonomy in determining fees and charges.
- 1.3 Financial Assistance Grants to be increased to at least 1% of total Commonwealth taxation revenue.
- 1.4 A review of the allocation methodology for Financial Assistance Grants.
- 1.5 Increased specific purpose grants from State and Commonwealth Governments to assist councils in meeting the infrastructure and service needs of their communities (e.g. Roads to Recovery, library grants) with allocation to be equitable and transparent.
- 1.6 An end to cost shifting onto local government by the State and Commonwealth Governments.
- 1.7 New and fairer financing opportunities for local government, with particular emphasis on infrastructure e.g. value capture, Voluntary Planning Agreements (VPAs) and fees and charges.
- 1.8 Permanent recurrent funding for Joint Organisations (JOs) to support their viability and effectiveness.
- 1.9 The introduction of a broad-based property levy to replace both the Emergency Services Levy on insurance policies and the 11.7% Emergency Services Levy on local government.
- 1.10 A more flexible procurement framework to enable councils to benefit from innovative procurement practices.
- 1.11 Inclusion of climate change considerations in approved terms of reference for investigations and reviews by IPART.
- 1.12 Ownership of Rural Fire Service mobile assets to be vested in the RFS to remove the depreciation expense from councils and provide consistency between emergency services and fund councils for all costs associated with the current ownership status.
- 1.13 The NSW Government to cover the full costs of local government financial audits.
- 1.14 Increased opportunities for councils to issue penalty notice where appropriate, to streamline compliance.
- 1.15 Establishment of a NSW Local Government Grants Agency to coordinate all the state and federal grants programs through one central agency. This would provide a single point of contact for councils and establish consistent grant application, reporting and acquittal arrangements.
- 1.16 Development and implementation of a new and agreed local government Performance Measurement Framework, and associated performance indicators.
- 1.17 The timely provision of key financial data by the State and Federal Government (grants, fees and charges) to assist councils with preparing their Operational Plans.
- 1.18 Capping increases in State Government statutory fees and charges on local government at the IPART determined council rate peg.
- 1.19 The NSW Government increasing and fully funding the pensioner rate rebate.
- 1.20 An end to imposing responsibility on councils for the collection of NSW Government fees, charges and levies such as the cemeteries tax and dam safety levy.



02 Economic Development

Councils have an active role in encouraging investment, place management and activation, and supporting businesses of all sizes. Whether the local economy is based on agriculture, mining, finance, manufacturing, tourism, hospitality, retail, education, forestry, fishing, renewable energy or other offerings, councils play a major role in creating the conditions for appealing and sustainable communities and local economies.

OUR POSITION

LGNSW advocates for the NSW Government and Australian Government to:

- 2.1 Identify opportunities to support rural and regional growth and reduce pressures in Sydney.
- 2.2 Work with councils to establish and implement more Local Activation Precincts (LAPs), including those on a smaller scale, based on an LGAs endowments to attract major employers, drive local economies and create a diverse range of local jobs.
- 2.3 Reduce unnecessary regulatory complexity affecting local economies to support events, cultural and business uses.
- 2.4 Commitment to sustainable procurement to drive quadruple bottom line outcomes across local government functions and services including improved efficiency, reduced waste to landfill, financial savings, stimulating markets for innovative and more sustainable products and services, social responsibility, supporting local communities and businesses and helping to achieve long term environmental and social objectives.
- 2.5 Implement, in consultation with councils, an Agricultural Enterprise Credit Scheme and/ or a Farm Management Deposit Scheme for businesses that rely on the agriculture sector for much of their revenue, to enhance economic sustainability of communities.
- 2.6 Invest in accessible, sustainable and low impact tourism experiences through:
 - a) Collaborating with councils on state-local destination plan development and collective marketing.
 - b) Broadening tourism funding eligibility for councils which do not benefit from the high levels of tourism associated with a higher density of state funded tourism facilities.
 - c) Establishing regional roadshows and touring schedules.
 - d) Funding councils to renew and maintain tourism infrastructure, and meet the additional costs from waste and cleansing services that are the direct result of high intensity tourist visitation.
- 2.7 Adequately regulate tourist and short-term accommodation and its impacts through:
 - a) Improving the NSW Government Short Term Rental Accommodation (STRA) register and requiring STRA participants to pay a fee to cover the costs of regulation and compliance.
 - b) Instituting a levy for online accommodation brokers using residential zoned and rated land, with funds raised to be distributed to councils to fund public infrastructure to support tourism.
 - c) Allowing councils to apply business rates to serviced apartments that provide tourist accommodation on a commercial basis.



02 Economic Development

- 2.8 Increase the availability of slots for regional air services into Sydney Kingsford Smith Airport and investigate with councils improvements to transport routes around the airport.
- 2.9 To support the goals of the '2030 Roadmap: Australian Agriculture's Plan for a \$100 billion industry' but make a principle-based commitment to ensure the plan is realistic.
- 2.10 Optimise water use and support existing regional and rural communities and industries by maintaining and promoting agricultural diversity.
- 2.11 Develop an economic roadmap for NSW for the transition from hydrocarbon-based industries (with a focus on directly impacted councils).
- 2.12 Work with councils, industry, and mines to support the diversification of coal-reliant economies by investigating legislative and procedural change that will better facilitate adaptive reuse of former and current mining lands, following decontamination and rehabilitation. This includes the NSW Government making sure that mining companies pay for remediation of land so that it is fit for reuse, or the NSW Government being responsible for remediation if the company fails to.





03 Roads & Infrastructure

Local government owns and manages \$176 billion in infrastructure assets including local roads, bridges, pedestrian and cycle networks, local water and sewerage utilities, stormwater and water management, buildings and facilities, regional airports and aerodromes, parks, recreation, cultural, family and community services facilities, and a range of other infrastructure vital to local communities, and is best placed to plan for and deliver this essential local infrastructure.

Local government also plays a key role in identifying and advocating for the provision of State Government infrastructure to meet the needs of their communities (e.g. schools, hospitals, state roads). State and Commonwealth Government growth plans and projects needs to make up front provision for the delivery of associated local infrastructure.

OUR POSITION

LGNSW advocates for:

- 3.1 Effective coordination of State and Commonwealth funding programs where co-contribution is required.
- 3.2 State and Commonwealth Government growth plans and projects must make upfront provision for, and ensure efficient and streamlined delivery of, associated local infrastructure.
- 3.3 The State Government to identify options to reduce the regulatory and financial barriers on local government when delivering essential infrastructure, including on biodiversity non-certified land.
- 3.4 Fairer funding and support from state and federal governments for shared responsibilities, including for Crown land management, and increased opportunity for community use of state and federal facilities.
- 3.5 Reinstatement of regular road classification and transfer processes.
- 3.6 Increased infrastructure funding to local government through Commonwealth and State Government revenue sharing and grant programs (e.g. Roads to Recovery, NSW block grants for regional roads, local water utilities, street lighting, library grants, waste and resource recovery).
- 3.7 The importance of sufficient local infrastructure funding, based on the principle of full cost recovery, through mechanisms such as Development Contributions and Voluntary Planning Agreements and the creation of other mechanisms for efficient and equitable value capture.
- 3.8 The removal of the caps on development contributions, or if this threshold is retained, to reset and then apply an appropriate annual indexation factor.
- 3.9 Ensuring any review or amendments to the infrastructure contributions system do not adversely affect local councils or their communities and any reforms incorporate adequate transitional arrangements.
- 3.10 Equitable infrastructure funding, so that Commonwealth and State assistance is directed to areas of greatest need.
- 3.11 Amendments to the Aboriginal Land Rights Act to streamline council acquisition of land held by Local Aboriginal Land Councils (LALCs) for infrastructure, but only where the LALC approves the acquisition.
- 3.12 The elimination of monopolistic practices by utility network operators (electricity, telecommunications, water and gas) that impose unjustified costs on councils and communities, and the establishment of an ombudsman to resolve disputes between councils and utility providers.
- 3.13 The removal of mobile black spots to improve connectivity and provide resilient networks across NSW.
- 3.14 Funding to assist councils to implement large-scale stormwater channel naturalisation and stormwater harvesting projects to achieve better environmental outcomes for growing communities.

03 Roads & Infrastructure

- 3.15 Funding for the adequate maintenance and upgrade of sewerage systems and treatment plants to prevent overflows and waterway pollution.
- 3.16 Funding and measures that reduce the impact of essential service infrastructure on communities and the environment, such as aerial bunding of electricity cables and undergrounding of transmission infrastructure.
- 3.17 The return of land that is compulsorily acquired for major projects to the care and control of the local council, where requested and agreed by the council, when the land is no longer required.
- 3.18 The protection of regional water utilities from privatisation, corporatisation and forced amalgamation.
- 3.19 The review of government contributions to road maintenance, including from Forestry Corporation and National Parks.
- 3.20 Improved freight connectivity to freight hubs including international airports.
- 3.21 Equitable access to public transport options.
- 3.22 Greater powers to enforce parking restrictions.



04 Rural & Regional Communities



Delivering the infrastructure and services needs of rural and regional communities is an ongoing challenge for local government. Small, widely dispersed and sometimes remote communities can struggle to reconcile high delivery costs with a small own source revenue base and face a range of economic, demographic and environmental challenges, such as structural change, ageing populations, skills shortages, population decline and water insecurity that undermine long term sustainability.

The abrogation of responsibility for service delivery by State and Commonwealth Governments has added to these challenges and councils often have no choice other than to take on additional responsibilities (examples include support for medical services and aged care).

OUR POSITION

LGNSW advocates for:

- 4.1 Equitable service delivery and funding flows into rural and regional NSW (including cross-border communities) by State and Commonwealth agencies.
- 4.2 State and Commonwealth Government accept that rural councils will never be able to fund the basic standard of infrastructure and public services to which all Australians are entitled from own source revenue.
- 4.3 Recognition of the higher costs of infrastructure and service delivery faced by rural communities due to inherent and unavoidable economies of scale.
- 4.4 New models for rural and regional infrastructure, service delivery, health, mental health care and aged care, including consideration of council coordination and/or implementation that avoids cost shifting and is built on close collaboration between local, state and federal governments and NGOs.
- 4.5 Improved commercial airline, public transport and banking services for regional communities.
- 4.6 Incentives and measures to increase domestic and international migration to inland rural and regional communities, including for experienced and qualified staff.
- 4.7 Action to address difficulties meeting Continuing Professional Development requirements for professionals working in rural and remote NSW
- 4.8 Increased funding for rural communities, including a strengthening of needs-based funding in the distribution of grants to local government.
- 4.9 Ensuring that regional and rural areas are adequately represented following electoral district redistributions and are adequately recognised with dedicated portfolios in the machinery of government.
- 4.10 The Australian and NSW Governments to recognise the socio-economic impacts of water buybacks and to implement measures to safeguard impacted rural and regional communities.

05 Drought



It is widely accepted that climate change and other factors may result in more devastating drought conditions in future, with an increase in the frequency and duration of droughts.

As the sphere of government closest to the community, councils have a critical local leadership role to play in planning, preparing, responding to, and recovering (PPRR) from drought and are uniquely placed to deliver services at the local level.

OUR POSITION

LGNSW advocates for:

- 5.1 Recognition by State and Federal Government that drought is a natural disaster and that it be eligible for natural disaster funding
- 5.2 Development by the State Government of an emergency plan, in consultation with local government and Aboriginal communities, to address the immediate water supply crisis afflicting NSW towns and communities and a disaster recovery plan for when the drought breaks.
- 5.3 Increased emergency funding to support people suffering hardship as a result of drought (including farmers, small businesses and individuals) and the appointment of recovery coordinators, through the Joint Organisations, to facilitate implementation of recovery plans.
- 5.4 Development and implementation of integrated National and State Drought Policies which:
 - a) clearly define when an area is deemed to be in "drought".
 - b) list the range of assistance measures and triggers for when those measures will be activated.
- 5.5 Development by the State Government, in partnership with local government and Aboriginal communities, of long-term water supply strategies for catchments throughout the State which mitigate risk from the predicted impact of climate change and to help ensure population and economic growth targets can be achieved and supported.
- 5.6 Substantial investment by State and Federal Government in regional and rural water supply infrastructure and demand management initiatives for drought proofing and water security measures and infrastructure.
- 5.7 Management of river systems to ensure the best possible social, economic and environmental outcomes are achieved, particularly during drought.

06 Natural Disaster & Emergency Management



All councils in NSW play a key role in all aspects of disaster and emergency management at the local and regional level. In addition to statutory or regulatory responsibilities and despite limited means, councils also play a major role in providing support to their communities, volunteers and charities.

Issues requiring addressing include allocation of responsibilities for emergency management, adequacy and timeliness of funding, the absence of funding for betterment or mitigation works and the funding of council day labour.

OUR POSITION

LGNSW advocates for:

- 6.1 The transfer of emergency management responsibilities to the NSW Government.
- 6.2 Prioritisation of the development and implementation of policies and programs to build the resilience of communities so that they can better withstand and recover from natural disasters. This includes a review of building codes, a review of the impact vegetation management in riverbeds has on flood management and authorising removal of dead timber from roadsides where it creates a hazard.
- 6.3 Increased Federal funding and review of the DRFA to expand eligibility of assets (to include water and sewer infrastructure) and:
 - a) Ensure that repair of damage to road and bridge infrastructure as the result of natural disasters continues to be funded under the DRFA.
 - b) Streamline DRFA processes to help ensure funding is obtained on a timely basis.
 - c) Recognise rehabilitation of significant environmental damage for funding under the DRFA.
 - d) Allow payment of day labour and council equipment costs under the DRFA.
- e) Fund voluntary buyback schemes.
- 6.4 Increased funding for mitigation and betterment measures, both in advance of disasters where the risks are identified and in the recovery stage.
- 6.5 Legislate to give councils power of entry to construct and maintain flood mitigation works.
- 6.6 Financial support for restoration, remediation and betterment of local community infrastructure that has been severely damaged by natural disasters including climatic conditions and drought.
- 6.7 The NSW Government to work with councils to support rebuilding and recovery after natural disasters by streamlining the approvals processes and providing funding and other assistance to review and update local plans.
- 6.8 NSW and Federal Government fully fund the clean up of damaged or destroyed buildings and structures, particularly those that contain asbestos, following natural disasters and establish and operate an Asbestos Emergency Management Flying Squad to provide expert advice to councils.
- 6.9 The NSW Government to support cultural burning for fire management on Crown land, National Parks and State Forests (and training and employment of Indigenous people for this task).
- 6.10 Streamlining approvals for constructing and maintaining asset protection zones (APZs) or undertaking hazard reduction burns, requiring appropriate APZs for urban settlements that interface with natural areas, and ensuring government managed forested areas maintain fire trails.
- 6.11 Appropriate recognition for individual first responders via

06 Natural Disaster & Emergency Management

a local government service award.

- 6.12 Urgent implementation and funding of the recommendations of the NSW Bushfire Inquiry.
- 6.13 An inquiry into insurance arrangements for natural disaster events to develop a more effective model.
- 6.14 Recognition of heatwaves as natural disasters and federal legislation and development of a national urban heat mitigation and adaptation strategy.
- 6.15 Funding for councils' Local Emergency Management officers and permanently embedded Community Recovery Officers.





07 Planning

Councils support an efficient, fair, and locally led planning system that prioritises quality of life and meets the needs and expectations of local communities.

Councils across the state support actions to address the housing crisis and acknowledge the need for new and more diverse housing in well-located areas across NSW. However, decisions of successive state governments have gradually diminished councils' and communities' authority to determine what and how this development occurs in their local areas. Restoring community-led planning powers to local government is a longstanding advocacy priority for LGNSW.

OUR POSITION

LGNSW advocates for:

- 7.1 The planning system to ensure the voice of local communities is heard through:
 - a) The well understood and accepted councillor representation system, which provides transparency and accessibility to communities.
 - b) Genuine local representation, including councillors, on regional planning panels, and
 - c) Third party merit appeal rights in respect of all categories of development applications, including decisions made by the Independent Planning Commission (IPC).
- 7.2 Local government to retain control over the determination of locally appropriate development. Local planning powers must not be overridden by State plans and policies or misuse of State Significant Development (SSD) provisions.
- 7.3 The NSW Government to commit to a collaborative approach in co-designing and implementing planning reforms with councils, to ensure:
 - a) Reforms are responsive to different planning contexts (in particular, to avoid land with high-risk from natural hazards, such as flood and bushfire) and deliver high quality, livable and sustainable housing, neighbourhoods and communities.
 - b) Plans and provisions are made for the funding and timely delivery of both state and local infrastructure needed to support increased density.
 - c) Changes aimed at increasing development density uplift include the provision of affordable housing in-perpetuity.
 - d) There is robust, transparent and regular monitoring by the NSW Government of the outcomes of planning reforms with a holistic approach to the roles of all players in the planning and development process.
- 7.4 Strategic (local, district and regional) plans that reflect the agreed planning outcomes from community engagement at local, regional/ district and metropolitan levels.
- 7.5 Measures to address land banking associated with residential land.
- 7.6 A review of provisions for local and regional planning panels so that:
 - a) The establishment and role of Local Planning Panels (LPPs) is made voluntary not mandatory. Where panels are mandatory, councils should be allowed to establish the thresholds and processes for public determination of matters referred to the Panel.
 - b) State appointees on Regional Planning Panels avoid potential conflicts of interest.
- 7.7 State Environmental Planning Policies (SEPPs) being subject to parliamentary scrutiny and disallowance, and reviewed so that:
 - a) They include appropriate controls to minimise impacts on health and safety, environment and amenity, including by strengthening stormwater management controls (during and post-construction).
 - b) Housing solutions developed by councils are not undermined.



07 Planning

- c) Planning decisions relating to the location, type and design of local development are returned to councils.
 - d) Provisions are introduced to mitigate clustering of boarding houses and co-living and to ensure occupants have good access to public transport and essential services.
- 7.8 Councils and communities to be able to determine how housing is delivered in their local areas based on their local housing strategies and in particular:
- a) Provide more discretion for councils to amend the SEPP (Exempt and Complying Development Codes) when applying it to their area, and
 - b) Allow for the Low Rise Housing Diversity Code to be optional, not mandatory.
- 7.9 State and federal governments to identify opportunities and legislative arrangements to allow councils greater flexibility to support growth in rural and regional areas and reduce growth pressures in Sydney.
- 7.10 Reforms to the planning system to:
- a) Improve its efficiency and effectiveness, by streamlining plan-making and development assessment, improving the quality of development applications and property information certificates, revising thresholds and building in realistic timeframes
 - b) Ensure councils have adequate powers, and resources and cost recovery to implement compliance and other provisions.
 - c) Address the issue of ‘zombie developments’ whereby the delayed implementation of decades-old development consents results in development proceeding that is out of step with contemporary planning and environment standards.
 - d) Establish best practice policy and review legislative powers to assist councils to manage derelict sites, particularly where these buildings are negatively impacting economic activity.
- 7.11 A planning framework (with actions, responsibilities and timeframes) and statutory mechanisms to deliver high level objectives in regional and city plans (including protecting employment lands, food security, open space, livability, sustainability).
- 7.12 Greater independence and integrity in the development application process by introducing provision for councils, rather than proponents, to appoint independent consultants to undertake the reports needed for development assessment (such as Statements of Environmental Effects and Environmental Impact Statements).
- 7.13 The NSW Government to urgently improve the NSW Planning Portal in close consultation with local government by:
- a) Urgently improving operation of the NSW Planning Portal with particular focus on the length of time the portal is adding to assessment timeframes.
 - b) Formalising an agreement with local government on the operation and ongoing development of the Planning Portal, including covering all costs incurred by councils to implement and operate the portal.
- 7.14 The NSW Government to increase support for councils to assist housing delivery through:
- a) development assessment fee recovery and other resourcing, including remunerating councils for their role in assessing SSD applications,
 - b) funding for strategic planning,
 - c) increased funding for enabling and supporting infrastructure.
- 7.15 Recognition and retention of the intrinsic social, environmental, economic and cultural value to local communities of built and cultural heritage, through increased funding and legislative support for councils to ensure ongoing preservation of local heritage items and maintenance and promotion of existing local built and cultural heritage.



08 Housing & Homelessness

Local councils, as the level of government closest to the community, play an important role in engaging with and planning for the needs of their communities. This includes planning to ensure there is an appropriate supply and mix of housing to meet the community's diverse and changing needs. Councils help shape and deliver housing policy objectives through their land use planning and community service responsibilities.

Councils also prepare local housing strategies in consultation with communities, to detail how and where housing will be provided in local areas.

Councils also work closely with a range of specialist housing and homelessness services, domestic violence agencies and police to respond appropriately and with compassion to rough sleeping. However, the NSW and Australian Governments are ultimately responsible for ensuring that all households have access to housing that meets their needs and they are able to afford.

OUR POSITION

LGNSW advocates for:

8.1 The NSW and Australian Governments to address homelessness, the housing affordability crisis and access to public, social and affordable housing in metropolitan, regional and rural areas, including through:

- a) Funding a significant increase in the supply of public and social housing to address current shortfalls and keep pace with population growth and demand (including following disasters).
- b) Implementing the Housing First model across NSW, with proactive outreach, crisis support and homelessness prevention measures including addressing co-morbidities.
- c) Undertaking an audit of all public, social and affordable housing assets in NSW and government land that can be used for this purpose.

- d) Ensuring that any public and affordable housing reforms provide for housing in perpetuity and introduce measures for the staged introduction of inclusionary zoning.
 - e) Setting minimum targets of 10 per cent social and affordable housing across NSW and at least 30 per cent on government-owned land.
 - f) Providing finance, government land and infrastructure for the supply of affordable housing to meet increased demand across NSW.
 - g) New models for social and affordable housing including equity share and covenant housing.
 - h) Taxation and other financial incentives that support the delivery of affordable housing.
- 8.2 The NSW and Australian Governments to address the rental affordability crisis in NSW by:
- a) Developing strategies to provide secure tenure rental housing.
 - b) Removing barriers and incentivising owners to put existing housing, including vacant dwellings, into the long-term rental market.
 - c) Enabling meanwhile use of NSW Government assets (land and building) for emergency, transitional and removable housing.
 - d) Ensuring housing security and safety for residents of caravan parks and manufactured home estates.



08 Housing & Homelessness

- 8.3 The NSW Government to help councils facilitate public, social and affordable housing in their local areas by:
- a) Working with local government and community housing providers to develop efficient and sustainable models to significantly increase the supply of affordable housing.
 - b) Removing legislative and other barriers to the provision of affordable housing such as use of council land for public, social and affordable housing, new and innovative methods of construction and other forms of housing (such as tiny homes).
 - c) Improving processes for the timely approval of affordable housing contribution schemes developed by councils under the Housing State Environmental Planning Policy (Housing SEPP).
 - d) Developing strategies and legislative tools to enable councils to manage the impacts of short-term rental platforms on the availability of long-term rental housing.
 - e) Providing funding and assistance for councils to develop and implement housing strategies and to deliver initiatives at the local level.
- 8.4 The NSW Government working with councils and Aboriginal communities and organisations to set clear targets to reduce housing disadvantage impacting Aboriginal people in NSW.
- 8.5 The NSW Government to improve housing accessibility and liveability through:
- a) An agreed legislated definition of accessibility incorporating universal design principles.
 - b) Adopting the Livable Housing Design Standards (Silver Level) introduced into the National Construction Code in 2022.
 - c) Mandating minimum accessibility standards at the Livable Housing Australia Guidelines Gold Level (Option 3) or an equivalent or higher standard.
 - d) Amending the 2023 Land and Housing Corporation Design Requirements, relevant planning instruments and legislation to mandate Livable Housing Design Standards (Platinum Level) for all new public, social and affordable housing.
 - e) Linking and alignment of state and federal housing, ageing and disability strategies.
- 8.6 Policies and plans that enhance holistic sustainability outcomes in housing by requiring consideration of housing design (including site selection), construction and operation over its lifetime, minimising economic harm and considering economic and social sustainability. This would include NatHERS 7-star energy ratings in multi-residential buildings 5 storeys and under.
- 8.7 The NSW Government to regularly review and adjust housing supply targets and seek concurrence with councils in setting these targets.
- 8.8 Housing growth that meets community expectations, by contributing to place-making and the safety and quality of the built form.
- 8.9 The State Government to work with regional and rural councils to find solutions that address the unique housing pressures associated with major infrastructure and state significant developments, renewable energy zones and seasonal demands for short-term and tourist accommodation in regional NSW. This should include consideration of permanent and temporary residential accommodation to support construction and operation phases of significant infrastructure projects.

09 Building Regulation & Certification



Successive NSW Governments have continued to extend the types of development that qualify as exempt and complying development, which is a policy that allows registered certifiers to approve development without the need for development consent from council. The use of private certifiers to approve these developments and to regulate the subsequent construction phase (such as commonly occurs for dwelling houses, dual occupancies and secondary dwellings) is an area of ongoing concern to councils and their communities.

LGNSW and councils have called on successive state governments to implement a system which ensures that all parties are responsible and accountable for their actions, and the community and public interest is at the forefront. This means taking actions that address deficiencies with building and certifier regulation and that ensure issues raised by community members are addressed.

OUR POSITION

LGNSW advocates for:

- 9.1 A properly resourced regulatory framework that ensures the building certification system (including fire safety regulation) delivers well-built, safe and compliant buildings that protect the public interest and the environment.
- 9.2 The introduction of mandatory Decennial Liability Insurance (DLI), replacing the Statutory Warranty requirement, as another means to promote quality building works.
- 9.3 A more effective framework for regulation of private certifiers, with improvements to address complaints management and notification processes, strengthen probity arrangements and increase penalties for non-compliance.
- 9.4 A gradual return of certification functions to councils if the NSW Government's building reforms do not deliver meaningful solutions to problems with the private certification system and address potential and perceived conflicts of interest.
- 9.5 Complying development to be limited to low risk or low impact development, with clearly defined parameters.
- 9.6 Support from the NSW Government for more affordable access to the full suite of Australian Standards for the local government sector.
- 9.7 The NSW Government to require manufacturers to declare carbon emissions of new building products to better inform consumers of sustainable building material choices.



10 Climate Change



Local government has a significant role in reducing carbon emissions and adapting to the impacts of climate change. Councils are responsible for \$176 billion worth of assets. Reducing emissions can lower operating costs associated with these assets. The effects of climate change also have the potential to damage council assets, cause serious disruptions to the delivery of council services, generate unbudgeted financial impacts and affect the wellbeing of the community.

OUR POSITION

LGNSW advocates for:

- 10.1 Urgent action to address the climate emergency in a bipartisan manner to make clear, effective and unambiguous steps to avert a climate crisis in NSW under four priority areas:
 - a) reduction of Australia's carbon emissions through effective mitigation strategies;
 - b) planning for and adapting to a changing climate;
 - c) significant structural adjustment in businesses and communities which may arise from transitioning to a low carbon economy and adapting to the impacts of climate change; and
 - d) the provision of leadership and support for both councils and their communities.
- 10.2 Ambitious but realistic policies and practices that promote council, community, industry and government commitment to renewable energy, energy conservation and energy efficiency.
- 10.3 An integrated approach to climate change mitigation and adaptation strategies, including shared responsibility and collaboration across all levels of government, industry and the community.
- 10.4 Long term consideration of climate change issues across all government functions and services, including ensuring new government buildings and infrastructure includes provision of renewable energy in their design and construction where feasible.
- 10.5 Emission reduction measures through a market mechanism across all sectors of the economy including energy generation, mining, transport, waste, construction, buildings and agriculture (excluding a cull of national livestock).
- 10.6 State Environmental Planning Policies that achieve improvements in liveability and sustainability of housing to:
 - a) ensure developments and precincts include measures to alleviate the urban heat island effect.
 - b) apply (or enable councils to apply) higher Building Sustainability Index (BASIX) targets and include other sustainability outcomes to improve housing stock resilience.
 - c) enable innovative approaches to community and public transport.
 - d) improve provisions to ensure the resilience of housing stock under future climate scenarios.
 - e) Provision of point-of-sale consumer information about the environmental impacts of building products, considering the use of Environmental Product Declarations (EPDs).
- 10.7 A roadmap to transition away from natural gas, including updating of BASIX to remove installation of gas in new dwellings and renovations.



10.8 Greater support to local government for coastal and estuary management especially in areas experiencing climate change or severe weather induced erosion.

10.9 Other spheres of government to work with and support councils to build resilience to current and future climate risks on the community and businesses, such as:

- a) Introducing a range of funding mechanisms including a special purpose 1% increase in local government rates.
- b) Encouraging urban greening and the adoption of tree canopy targets across all urban areas with funding support from the NSW Government and recognising street trees as essential community infrastructure.

10.10 A mandatory government reporting framework for climate risk exposure.

10.11 Enable the uptake of zero and low emission technologies including electric vehicles through appropriate investment, concessions, guidelines and legislation.

10.12 Retention of the uranium mining ban in NSW, and support for sustainable and clean energy initiatives and jobs, including power sharing, community battery schemes and expansion of the Smart Energy Schools Pilot Program.



11 Renewable Energy Development



Renewable energy is now rapidly developing across NSW, forming an increasing proportion of wind and solar in the NSW electricity generation mix.

The cumulative impact of this rapid development is significantly affecting the local labour market, housing, infrastructure, water, waste services, emergency response and transport routes. However, there are opportunities for rural and regional communities associated with the transition, including economic diversification, investment and the creation of highly skilled and well-paid jobs.

Local government must be a key partner in the roll out of renewable energy generation, storage and transmission infrastructure. Councils are well-placed to understand their communities' needs and the local opportunities and challenges the transition presents.

OUR POSITION

LGNSW advocates for:

- 11.1 The NSW Government's ongoing commitment to the renewable energy transition, and action to increase investment in renewable energy projects in metropolitan and regional areas to achieve net zero emissions by 2050.
- 11.2 The NSW Government to amend the State Environmental Planning Policy (Transport and Infrastructure) 2021 and Standard Instrument Local Environmental Plan to include reference to renewable energy zones and appropriateness of renewable energy types within specific locations across NSW.
- 11.3 The NSW Government to improve transportation of renewable energy infrastructure by resolving road constraints, reclassifying impacted local roads as State roads for the duration of the renewable energy construction works, and enabling communities to track the passage of oversize vehicles.
- 11.4 The NSW Government to ensure adequate compensation for renewable energy development by:
 - a) Increasing the per megawatt value of community benefits for wind and solar farm development adopted in the NSW Energy Policy Framework.
 - b) Introducing a standardised community benefit contribution/payment for battery energy storage systems and transmission lines.
 - c) Establishing significant Community Enhancement Funds for impacted local government areas.
- 11.5 The NSW Government to prepare cumulative assessments for renewable energy zones and state significant developments, addressing:
 - a) The social, environmental and economic impacts during construction and operation, including on neighbouring communities and agricultural land.
 - b) The impact on council resources and council-managed infrastructure and services. Councils should receive development contributions to fund the required infrastructure upgrades.
- 11.6 The NSW Government to prepare regional master plans for renewable energy zones and state significant developments, and further strategic planning including strategic studies regarding appropriate locations and a process to sequence and strategically locate new projects to reduce acute cumulative impacts.



- 11.7 The NSW Government to take steps to reduce the administrative burden on councils to support the renewable energy assessment process, and provide appropriate funding for councils to conduct and update their strategic planning, including:
- a) Fund councils to complete rural land use and other strategies, as well as update their existing strategies that require amendments to meet additional demands resulting from the influx of workers to an area.
 - b) Fund councils to engage with renewable energy development proponents and develop community consultation plans.
 - c) Fund and make available town planners to relocate to rural and regional areas to support councils' planning responsibilities for reviewing SSD applications.
 - d) Introduce a limit on permissible amendments to renewable energy SSD applications to a maximum of two iterations before final determination.
- 11.8 The NSW Government to work with regional and rural councils to deliver permanent and temporary residential accommodation to support construction and operation of significant infrastructure projects.
- 11.9 Require renewable energy proponents to commit to an environmental management bond to ensure the land is returned to its pre-use state (or other defined future state).
- 11.10 The Australian Government to provide leadership and support so that a larger proportion of renewable energy is generated in the capital cities of Australia, including offshore wind farms close to major demand centres.

12 Waste & Recycling



Councils provide waste, recycling and resource recovery services to the community, navigating the complexities of sourcing and/or generating recycling and disposal options. Framed by circular economy principles, they work tirelessly to reduce the amount of waste ending up in landfill and the environment. Councils recognise that dealing with waste is a whole of community exercise and seek to engage and educate residents, businesses and schools about waste avoidance, recycling and diversion from landfill.

Councils continue to face significant challenges from increasing waste generation and lack of markets for Australian recycled content. All levels of government, as well as business and the community need to work together as we move to a more circular economy where materials and products remain within the economy for longer and waste is reduced.

OUR POSITION

LGNSW advocates for:

- 12.1 Measures to address waste and recycling challenges, including through the reinvestment by the NSW Government of 100% of the NSW waste levy to:
- a) Urgently fund regions of councils to develop and implement regional waste plans for the future of waste and resource recovery in their regions, which include infrastructure and circular economy solutions to address the needs of our cities and regions.
 - b) Fund the delivery of priority infrastructure and other projects, procured by local government, that are needed to deliver the regional-scale plans, particularly where there is market failure identified in the regional plans.
 - c) Offset the full costs of implementing mandated FOGO services.
 - d) Increase local and state government procurement of recycled goods made with domestic content, for example by:
 - Adopting recycled content targets to help drive demand and provide incentives to deliver on these targets
 - Funding further research, development and delivery of recycling technologies and products generated from recyclables, particularly by local or regional councils.
 - e) Fund and deliver state-wide education campaigns on recycling to encourage the right way to recycle, the purchase of products with recycled content, as well as promote waste avoidance.
 - f) Work with the Federal Government to introduce:
 - extended and compulsory producer responsibility schemes for soft plastics and other emerging problem wastes such as paints, batteries, chemicals, mattresses, electronic waste and sharps.
 - bans or tariffs on plastics that cannot be recycled in Australia.
 - reforms to support consumers' 'right to repair'.
 - g) Rehabilitate orphan dump sites and address illegal dumping, including enhanced enforcement powers and permanent funding streams for councils.
- 12.2 No expansion of the Waste Levy boundaries, and alignment of Waste Levy Metropolitan and Regional classifications with the classifications used by the Office of Local Government.
- 12.3 Transitioning to a circular economy and keeping materials in use for longer which requires a focus on higher-order waste management options, noting that lower-order options can have negative impacts on human and environmental health. As such we:

- a) Acknowledge concerns regarding the impact of waste to energy incinerators on communities and the environment.
 - b) Note that the Draft Regulations and the EPA's Energy from Waste Infrastructure Plan would prohibit waste to energy incinerators in some places and not others.
 - c) Consider burning waste material to generate energy as an outdated technology, and encourage diversion rather than incineration.
- 12.4 Support for innovative solutions to reduce waste and waste transport requirements.
 - 12.5 Avoidance and minimisation of waste, including from building and construction sites with appropriately scaled fines for non-compliance.
 - 12.6 The NSW Government to apply the same planning process to identify future landfill precincts as it has with energy from waste infrastructure.
 - 12.7 Clear policy direction with regulatory certainty, achievable targets and implementation and funding pathways for delivery through e.g. NSW Waste Strategy, National Waste Policy, COAG targets.
 - 12.8 Access to credible data and improved accountability to achieve best value for the community.
 - 12.9 The NSW Government to establish a new Waste Authority for NSW to assist with the planning and development of critical waste infrastructure.
 - 12.10 The NSW Government to extend the roll-out of mandated food organics and garden organics (FOGO) services to multi-unit households until 2035 and refrain from mandating collection frequencies.
 - 12.11 The NSW Government to ban per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) and other chemicals in all products that may impact health, especially including food packaging and products..
 - 12.12 The NSW Government to repeal or adjust the Waste Tendering regulations adopted December 2023 to ensure value for money outcomes in waste service provision for communities.



13 Biodiversity



Local Government supports the conservation of biological diversity. Councils are a key influence on local biodiversity management and have an essential role to play. This includes through planning and approval processes, community education and engagement activities, and as public land managers.

Councils can develop biodiversity strategies and plans, protect biodiversity through their land use planning instruments, and manage biodiversity actively through specific programs and projects.

Councils also have a legislative mandate to manage the ongoing challenge of development pressure, natural disasters and maintenance of environmental values. Councils have responded through improved knowledge of, and strategic planning for, their local biodiversity including undertaking mapping and assessments, developing biodiversity strategies, policies and processes, and building staff capability.

OUR POSITION

LGNSW advocates for:

- 13.1 All three spheres of government to collaboratively review the cumulative impacts of legislation governing land, water and natural resource management, and act to ensure the protection of biodiversity, threatened iconic species, water security, native forests and food security throughout NSW.
- 13.2 Protection and management of local biodiversity on an 'avoid, minimise, offset' basis.
- 13.3 Closer coordination across spheres of government, and with other biodiversity resource managers, to include local biodiversity information and mapping in regional and state-wide approaches to biodiversity management.
- 13.4 Resources and assistance to councils to build capacity, review systems and implement changes to NSW legislation in relation to managing biodiversity.
- 13.5 Continuation of funding streams to support local land management activities to achieve biodiversity outcomes.
- 13.6 Policies and practices that maximise biodiversity and the protection of threatened and endangered species, including:
 - a) The development and maintenance of habitat corridors.
 - b) Enforceable standards for the preparation of flora and fauna management plans
 - c) Development of a policy on light spillage in urban bushland areas
 - d) A ban on the sale of unsafe backyard netting and Second Generation Anticoagulant Rodenticides.
 - e) Increased protection for koala habitat when planning for new development.
- 13.7 The ending of logging in native forests in NSW. In the interim, additional funding for compliance and enforcement of private native forestry legislation.
- 13.8 A prohibition on carrying out sea bed petroleum, mineral exploration and recovery and related development in NSW coastal waters.
- 13.9 The urgent review of the legislative regime for tree protection particularly in environmentally sensitive areas, including increased deterrents and penalties for the destruction and vandalism of trees in NSW.



- 13.10 Wider recognition of the value of urban biodiversity and bushland areas and the implementation of management approaches to specifically meet the needs of these areas including incentives to protect mature urban vegetation.
- 13.11 Cross jurisdictional commitment to managing the threats to biodiversity including weeds, pests and other risks such as bushfires which impact on the integrity of local biodiversity and contribute to further losses.
- 13.12 A review of the 10/50 Vegetation Clearing Code of Practice to assess the safety benefits compared to the impacts on tree canopy.
- 13.13 Additional Ramsar site listings in recognition of the value of lake systems for aquatic biodiversity, supporting migratory bird species, fish nurseries and essential wetland processes.
- 13.14 Exploration of the recognition and protection of dingoes as a native species under the Biodiversity Conservation Act 2016.



14 Biosecurity & Companion Animals



Local government has a significant role in biosecurity including:

- as a local control authority (LCA) in regulating weeds under the Biosecurity Act 2015,
- as a land manager, to understand and implement its biosecurity responsibilities (e.g. weeds, pests).

Councils also have regulatory responsibilities under the Companion Animals Act 1998, for domesticated cats and dogs.

OUR POSITION

LGNSW advocates for:

- 14.1 A global ban on the trade in wild animals and wild animal products given their role in the emergence and spread of zoonotic diseases, and biosecurity response measures at all Australian entry points to prevent the entry of diseases such as foot and mouth and lumpy skin disease.
- 14.2 The concepts that underpin the Biosecurity Act, such as risk-based decision making and a tenure neutral approach to weed and pest management.
- 14.3 Changes to the weed management framework, including:
- An urgent increase in funding to local government for weed management, including funding stability and funding via the Weed Action Program to be increased to \$20M per year and indexed with CPI.
 - A review of the Weed Action Program administration to include a non-contestable allocation to LCAs to fund approved Weed Action Plans over 5 years, allow collaboration between neighbouring councils in developing plans, and minimise any duplication or excessive reporting and auditing requirements applied to councils and county councils.
 - Penalties for weed-related offences set at levels high enough to act as a deterrent.
 - Development of appropriate mechanisms to address current and emerging biosecurity (weeds) issues on parks and reserves under joint management arrangements with local Aboriginal communities.
 - Creation of biosecurity (prosecution) fund to support local control authorities with enforcement of the Biosecurity Act.
- 14.4 Local government to have input to the setting of relevant charges (for weed regulatory functions), and local government keeping any revenue from services or compliance and enforcement undertakings.
- In relation to companion animals, LGNSW advocates for:
- 14.5 Improvements to regulation of companion animals through:
- Enabling councils to more effectively manage the nuisance effects of cats on residents and wildlife, including:
 - Amending legislation to enable local governments to enforce the containment of pet cats in NSW, supported by funding to support implementation and enforcement,
 - streamlining the process of animal identification and registration,
 - further incentives for desexing before a transition to mandatory desexing laws to align with other jurisdictions,
 - state-wide awareness and education campaigns for responsible pet ownership,
 - empowering councils to take actions to reduce feral cat populations (such as euthanasing feral cats in accordance with animal welfare ethics and a council-adopted policy).
 - Increased funding and resources to enable councils to comply with animal rehoming requirements.
 - A mechanism for NSW accreditation of assistance animals and associated training organisations.
 - A review of companion animal penalties, with penalty amounts to be based on the severity of incidents.
- 14.6 Legislation/codes to strengthen companion animal breeding facility assessment and operation, to prevent the establishment of puppy farms in NSW and instigate a common database and better coordination across jurisdictions (e.g. NSW, VIC).



15 Health & Safety

All councils in NSW play an essential part in improving and safeguarding the health and safety of their communities. Local government also has statutory responsibilities for public health protection under the Public Health Act 2010 and Food Act 2003, regulating food businesses as well as premises that may pose environmental health risks through legionella, skin penetration or exposure to hazardous materials including asbestos. Councils also provide communities with access to additional services to contribute to community health, including immunisation clinics, sporting and recreation facilities and open space, mental health and physical activity programs, clean drinking water and no-smoking zones. Councils further have a role in considering how the built environment can be planned to promote health and safety. Council involvement in community safety and crime prevention initiatives is often in partnership with police and other government and non-government organisations, engaging with communities to understand and develop strategies to address local crime issues.

OUR POSITION

LGNSW advocates for:

- 15.1 Practical reforms and initiatives that improve public health and safety but do not represent cost shifting or burden the limited resources of local government without providing adequate funding or cost recovery mechanisms.
- 15.2 Legislative amendments to enable council rangers to issue fines and penalty amounts equivalent to NSW Health for breaches of the Smoke-free Environment Act 2000.
- 15.3 The NSW Government to take action to protect human health and the environment by:
 - a) Making asbestos identification, removal, transport and disposal cheaper, easier, and safer.
 - b) Working with the federal government to ensure that all vehicles imported into Australia meet the highest EU standards for emissions and introduce tax initiatives to encourage the up-take of electric powered vehicles.
 - c) Adopting the World Health Organisation Clean Air Guidelines and assisting communities to address breaches of national air quality standards and improving health through filtration and ventilation in public buildings.
 - d) Implementing tighter controls on facilities at high risk of causing dust and air pollution, including timely and tighter enforcement for malodorous emissions.
 - e) Amendments to noise control regulations to:
 - ensure that general activities within a park cannot be deemed intrusive or offensive during certain hours of the day.
 - enable simpler enforcement of excessive motor vehicle idling.
 - f) Improving water safety by developing a holistic inland water safety strategy, incentivising learn to swim programs, and funding safety measures including council-owned surf club facilities.
 - g) Phasing out the use of shark nets and replacing them with alternative mitigation strategies.
 - h) Increasing funding to council and other health and community services to address instances of hoarding and squalor.



15 Health & Safety

- 15.4 The NSW Government to ensure that any new schools constructed in a local government area provide appropriately sized off-street drop off and pick up zones.
- 15.5 Increased funding and policy measures for road safety (including for pedestrians and cyclists) from state and federal government.
- 15.6 Policy and legislation to enable and regulate active transport, including for e-scooters.
- 15.7 The NSW Government to allocate more resources for crime prevention and to holistically respond to youth crime and drug use. This should include increased police numbers and state regulatory inspectors, to improve response times, particularly in regional and rural NSW.
- 15.8 The state and federal governments to fund councils and community organisations to manage antiterror and security related risks at events and in crowded places.
- 15.9 The NSW Government to implement stronger minimum penalties and convictions for people who are found to illegally vandalise, damage or remove graves, monuments, memorials and statues.
- 15.10 Increased local government involvement in determination of gaming machine applications with priority consideration given to social impact and implementation of cashless poker machines with harm reduction features.
- 15.11 Funding, resources and initiatives to address the prevalence of domestic and family violence (DFV) in NSW, including Crimes Act recognition that coercive control and dowry abuse are forms of DFV, and funding a DFV prevention officer to work with NSW councils.
- 15.12 The NSW and Australian Governments to address the mental health crisis and ensure adequate access to care across NSW.
- 15.13 Community access to adequate sport and recreation facilities that are safe, accessible and fit for purpose, including the use of public and private school land and facilities.



16 Libraries, Arts & Culture



Local government provides art galleries, museums, libraries and cultural services which are vital in enabling communities to participate in artistic and cultural expression. Councils provide almost 400 free public library services in NSW, including central, branch and mobile libraries in NSW. The right to equitable access to basic information is a cornerstone of democratic society.

OUR POSITION

LGNSW calls on State and Commonwealth governments to:

- 16.1 Support the critical role of public libraries in communities by:
 - a) Reversing the significant decrease in the State Government expenditure as a proportion of total expenditure on public libraries that has occurred since the 1980s.
 - b) Creating a sustainable funding model for public libraries that indexes funding to CPI and is protected in legislation.
 - c) Investigating systems to provide communities throughout NSW with greater access to larger collections and library resources and materials.
- 16.2 Devise a museum strategy for NSW with sufficient resources to ensure cultural heritage led vibrancy, collection care and local storytelling initiatives are supported, developed and maintained for communities throughout NSW.
- 16.3 Ensure councils receive a fair share of funding from government arts and culture programs, particularly by investigating a model of funding that is similar to the library funding model.
- 16.4 Recognise the challenges for small, regional and remote councils and prioritise them for arts and cultural funding relative to the large State Cultural Institutions.
- 16.5 Provide funding to councils to promote and support arts and culture, including for galleries, performance, exhibitions and festivals.





17 Elections & Democracy

Councils are elected to shape, serve, support and give voice to their communities, to whom they are democratically accountable. The NSW and Australian governments must respect local government as an equal sphere of government and must not seek to impose decisions on local government that fundamentally affect the ability of democratically elected councillors to reflect the views of their communities on local government matters.

Councils for government elections to be conducted in a manner as similar as possible to State elections make democratic participation similar for voters and to support voter turnout.

OUR POSITION

LGNSW advocates for the NSW Government to:

- 17.1 Legislate to prevent the forced amalgamation of councils or significant boundary alteration without the support of a plebiscite.
- 17.2 Legislate to limit the power of the Minister for Local Government to suspend or dismiss democratically elected councils in all but the most extraordinary circumstances.
- 17.3 Permit newly amalgamated councils that have been divided into wards as part of a larger council area to revert to their status as undivided electorates.
- 17.4 Shorten the pre-poll voting period to the period including the Saturday to Friday of the week before Election Day.
- 17.5 Ensure councils and communities retain choice in their method of voting and does not impose universal postal voting.
- 17.6 Legislate to ensure that councillors and candidates who are members of a registered political party or have been a member of a registered political party during at any time during the 12 months prior to seeking council election/re-election, be prohibited from using the word 'Independent' beside their name on the ballot paper and on all electoral materials.
- 17.7 Legislate to ban the following from serving as councillors, and increase penalties for false declarations on this matter:
 - (a) Property developers and their relatives and close associates including investors, owners and beneficiaries
 - (b) Real estate agents (except in rural areas) and their relatives and close associates including investors, owners and beneficiaries
- 17.8 Legislate to ensure a person may only nominate for election to a particular council if they are a resident or ratepayer.
- 17.9 Remove the need for council by-elections, by eliminating the 18-month time limit on using election countback to replace a councillor casual vacancy.
- 17.10 Implement measures such as information sessions, published materials (in multiple languages) and training programs to increase the diversity of candidates standing for elections and electors' knowledge and awareness of the electoral process.
- 17.11 Legislate so that LG elections are to be conducted by the NSW Electoral Commission only.
- 17.12 Reduce the cost of conducting LG elections, including through:
 - a) a commitment that the NSW Electoral Commission not be permitted to increase the cost of elections by more than the rate cap limit imposed on LG rates
 - b) directly offsetting the cost of LG elections with significant fine revenue from non-voting
 - c) trialing online voting initiatives.
- 17.13 Legislate to ensure all mayors continue to hold their positions until a new mayor is elected following local government elections.
- 17.14 Ensure candidate safety by removing the requirement for street addresses to be included on candidate electoral material.



18 Governance

Local government is committed to the principles of good governance and is responsible and accountable to the citizens and the communities it represents, through consultative processes, legislative accountabilities, efficient delivery of services and effective customer service.

GOVERNANCE

LGNSW advocates for the NSW Government to:

- 18.1 Establish a panel of independent members with specific local government knowledge, for appointment to local councils' Audit, Risk and Improvement Committees.
- 18.2 Review the guidelines for Audit, Risk and Improvement Committees to:
 - a) reduce the exclusion period for former councillors and staff, to support rural and regional councils.
 - b) reinstate councillors as voting members provided that independent members remain the majority.
- 18.3 Legislate to strengthen requirements for general managers to provide councillors with the information required to perform their functions.
- 18.4 Improve the Code of Conduct framework to ensure:
 - a) complaints are dealt with efficiently, effectively and in line with principles of procedural fairness.
 - b) complaints are lodged directly with an independent tribunal with full responsibility for triaging, investigating and resolving complaints.
 - c) a central register of conduct complaints and investigation reports is published online.
- 18.5 Legislate to provide that a councillor's position becomes vacant if she or he is absent from three ordinary meetings of a council in any calendar year without having been granted leave.
- 18.6 Amend the gifts and benefits provisions in the Model Code of Conduct so that the token value amount be removed and replaced with the provisions that apply in the Code of Conduct for Members of the NSW Parliament.
- 18.7 Amend legislation and the Model Code of Meeting Practice to require councils to publish unconfirmed minutes of council and committee meetings and provide suitable legal protection for councils to act on decisions before the minutes are confirmed.
- 18.8 Ensure councils retain discretion to hold informal briefings and workshops with councillors as a supporting mechanism to formal meeting and committee structures.
- 18.9 Permit councillors to attend and participate in council meetings by audio-visual means, without need for their council's approval.
- 18.10 In the interests of safety and privacy, review the Information and Privacy Commission requirement for returns of interest disclosures to be published online.
- 18.11 Legislate to make it an offence for any person to threaten, incite violence, intimidate, menace or harass any person exercising functions under the Local Government Act or any other Act or regulation that confers functions on a council, and disqualify

any person who has committed such an offence from holding public office for local government in NSW.

- 18.12 Require Working With Children Checks and police checks for councillors.
- 18.13 Improve accessibility and compliance outcomes by simplifying all forms and processes for candidates and public office holders and permitting documents to be signed and lodged electronically.
- 18.14 Restore funding to ensure the independence of the Independent Commission Against Corruption in NSW.
- 18.15 Ensure regulatory and reporting requirements imposed on councils are proportionate to size and risk.
- 18.16 Support the development and implementation of tripartite governance frameworks between the three tiers of government.
- 18.17 Support local government in improving cyber security practices and infrastructure.
- 18.18 Ensure impacts on county councils are considered during any legislative reform.
- 18.19 Amend the Local Government Act to provide councils with greater discretion and flexibility to manage community lands.



19 Councillor Conditions & Remuneration

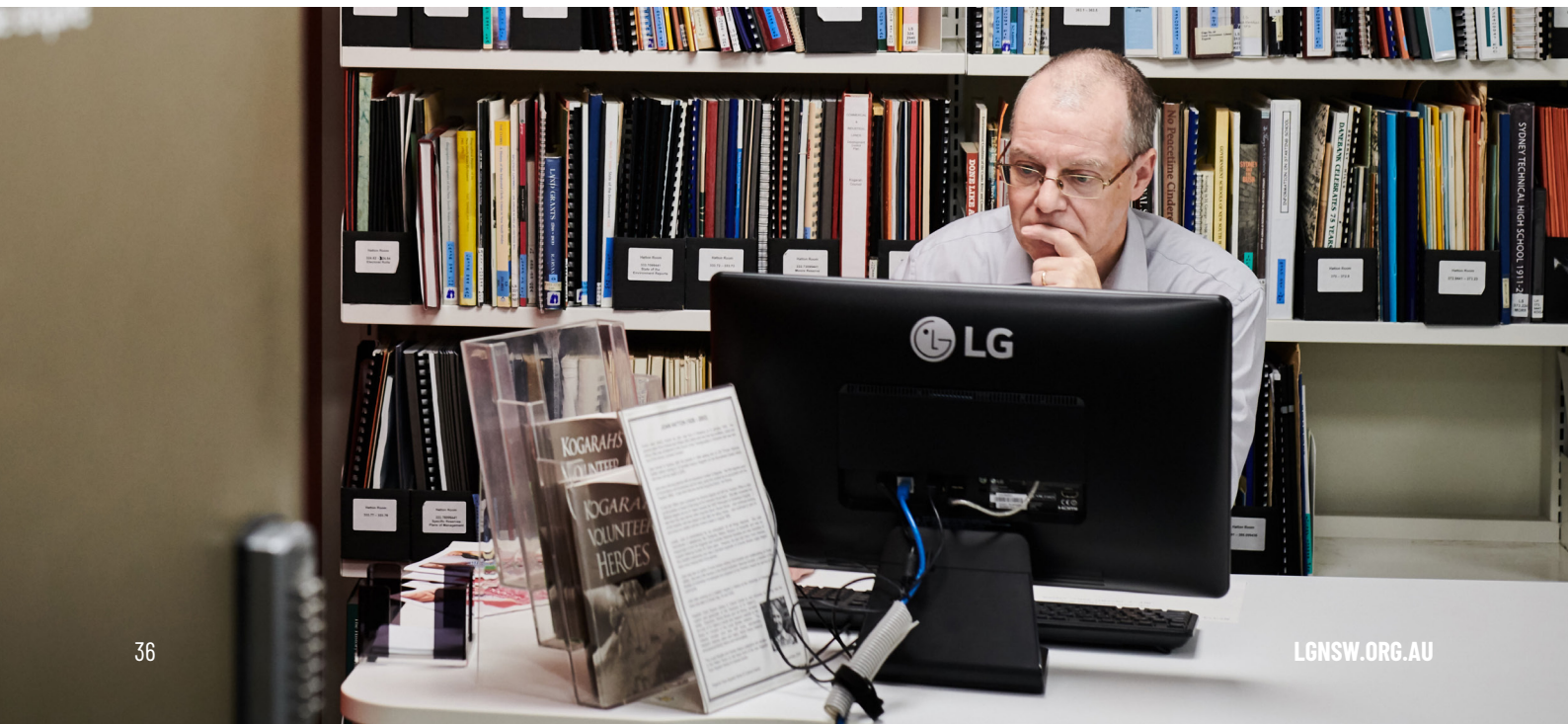


To attract a diverse array of talented candidates for election, the local government sector should be able to offer conditions and compensation, including superannuation, comparable to that available from the work activities mayors and councillors forgo in order to serve on councils.

OUR POSITION

LGNSW advocates for the NSW Government to:

- 19.1 Investigate options for full time councillors in NSW.
- 19.2 Fund ongoing, mandatory councillor professional development.
- 19.3 Repeal s242A of the LG Act so that the Local Government Remuneration Tribunal (LGRT) is able to determine fair and reasonable fees for councillors and mayors, unfettered by the Public Sector Wages Policy (and the LGRT to determine the maximum permissible remuneration increase for councillors and mayors while the NSW Public Sector Wages Policy still applies)
- 19.4 Amend s241 of the LG Act to remove reference to maximum and minimum fees payable, so that the LGRT determines the actual annual remuneration for councillors and mayors.
- 19.5 Amend s240(1) of the LG Act to include councils' financial position and/or performance as additional criteria that the LGRT must have regard to when determining categories for councils and mayors.
- 19.6 Consider dedicated remuneration for deputy mayors, in recognition of increasing deputy mayoral duties, including payment of the mayoral allowance when acting in that capacity (without depriving the mayor of this allowance).
- 19.7 Legislate to require compulsory superannuation payment to councillors and mayors at the rate equivalent to the rate set out in the Superannuation Guarantee (Administration) Act 1992 (Cth).
- 19.8 Require all councils, county councils and Joint Organisations to have personal accident insurance cover for all councillors while performing their functions, equivalent to the level of insurance employees receive under NSW workers' compensation legislation.



20 Strong & Inclusive Communities



Local government is a significant provider and supporter of essential and inclusive services to all members of their diverse communities. Councils also support refugee resettlement, provide services for newly arrived migrants and hold citizenship ceremonies and a range of culturally diverse programs and events. Councils fill the gaps in the provision of essential human services when there are no other providers, particularly in rural and remote areas, and advocate for equitable access to infrastructure and services.

OUR POSITION

LGNSW advocates for:

- 20.1 Continued State and Commonwealth funding to supplement the contribution of NSW councils of approximately 60% towards the cost of community development, ageing and disability staff positions.
- 20.2 Increased support for councils and communities that resettle refugees and welcome multicultural communities, including through:
 - a) A broader humanitarian resettlement strategy to encourage and support distribution of resettlement across NSW and Australia,
 - b) Support to areas where concentrated resettlement occurs to address social and economic impact gaps (including housing, employment, infrastructure and services).
 - c) Funding for councils' roles, responsibilities and activities that support anti-racism initiatives, multicultural communities and promote social cohesion, including for refugee resettlement and seasonal workers.
 - d) Improving the inclusivity and accessibility of asylum seeker assistance programs.
- 20.3 Funding to support participation of people with disability in their communities, including:
 - a) Funding to implement actions and projects identified in council Disability Inclusion Action Plans.
 - b) Funding to councils for community support, information, and referral and capacity building initiatives.
 - c) Equal access to National Disability Insurance Scheme services for people with disability over 65 years of age.
- 20.4 The NSW Government to support and encourage inclusive consultation and engagement approaches, in consultation with councils and including technological options for people with disability.
- 20.5 Funding and policy settings to address accessible and liveable housing design standards, housing affordability, access to public housing, and homelessness, including funding for councils to deliver initiatives at the local level.
- 20.6 Improvements to provision of aged care services through:
 - a) NSW Health to retain ownership of its aged care and disability facilities.
 - b) State and Federal Governments to provide increased funding to ensure the financial viability of local government aged care services.
- 20.7 Legislation to require councils to plan, implement strategies and report on gender equity in the workplace, with funding support from the NSW Government.
- 20.8 Legislation to require Equal Employment Opportunity management plans to include provisions for targeted programs to increase employment opportunities for First Nations people.
- 20.9 Funding support for volunteers and volunteer development programs, including for community organisations that engage volunteers.
- 20.10 An urgent increase in the rate of JobSeeker & Youth Allowance to a level sufficient to meet basic living expenses.



20 Strong & Inclusive Communities

- 20.11 An increase in Government support for vulnerable children and young people to meet demand for rehabilitation services, early intervention and justice initiatives.
- 20.12 High quality, universally accessible and affordable early childhood education and care.
- 20.13 Adequate funding for council-run youth and children services and recognition that councils are an essential provider of services to children and young people.
- 20.14 Initiatives to address skill shortages and impediments to employment and training, including:
- a) injecting significant funds into TAFE and the higher education system to redress recent funding cuts and the impacts of TAFE deregulation,
 - b) Ensuring funding for apprentice and trainee programs consider the costs associated with coordinating and supervising these employees.
- 20.15 Support and recognition from all three tiers of government for the important social and economic contribution that carers make to the community.
- 20.16 The administration and delivery of the NSW ClubGrants Scheme to remain under local control.
- 20.17 Funding and support for inclusive programs and frontline services that enable all members of the community to safely participate.



21 First Nations



LGNSW acknowledges the significance of the Statement from the Heart issued at the 2017 First Nations National Constitutional Convention at Uluru and supports the principle of the Constitutional recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians. Australia is one of the few developed nations with a colonial history that does not recognise its Aboriginal population in the Constitution.

LGNSW is a signatory of the NSW Partnership Agreement on Closing the Gap, alongside the NSW Government and the NSW Coalition of Aboriginal Peak Organisations. This agreement is a commitment to do things differently – by working in partnership and sharing decision making with Aboriginal organisations and communities to improve outcomes for all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

OUR POSITION

LGNSW:

- 21.1 Seeks that the NSW Government commit to state-based implementation of the Uluru Statement from the Heart – Voice, Treaty and Truth – by implementing the First Nations Voice to the NSW Parliament.
- 21.2 Supports the process of truth-telling, including through recognising the Frontier Wars which occurred during the British colonisation of Australia and considering opportunities for commemoration, healing and reflection.
- 21.3 Supports reforms to redress any disproportionate disadvantage experienced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and calls for the NSW Government to provide support and resources to councils to contribute to initiatives such as Closing the Gap and Reconciliation.
- 21.4 Advocates to both the NSW and Australian Government to prioritise blanket Aboriginal land claims and native title claims currently in the Federal Court, remove native title requirements for land owned by Local Aboriginal Land Councils, and provide clear guidance for assessing, valuing and resolving native title compensation within and across local government areas.
- 21.5 Encourages councils to develop a relationship with local First Nations communities to develop ways in which they can provide input into council decisions.
- 21.6 Advocates for compulsory First Nations cultural training as part of councillor induction training requirements, and mandatory cultural safety and cultural awareness for councillors and council staff.



ONE VOICE FOR COUNCILS

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