

Queensland Local Government

2017-18 LGAQ 10 Point State Election Plan



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There are few aspects of community life which do not involve the work of the local council. As the peak body for Queensland's 77 councils, the Local Government Association of Queensland (LGAQ) seeks to work with the state government to deliver on the needs of Queensland communities. Councils are not just another stakeholder, but the sphere of government closest to the community. With local government own source revenue highly constrained, working collaboratively with all spheres of government is vital.

The LGAQ has welcomed approaches to changing the way local government is funded and the opportunity to work towards more mature and sophisticated models of funding, where community aspirations can be achieved and value for money solutions result in enhanced economic activity. Reforming funding to local government is a once in a generation opportunity to put community needs first. Together with the state government, councils are on the cusp of achieving this aspiration. The policy proposals contained in this election plan will help councils across the length and breadth of the state continue to create strong, sustainable and healthy communities and we encourage all political parties contesting the state election to commit to the proposals contained in our plan.



Mayor Mark Jamieson, Sunshine Coast Regional Council
PRESIDENT

Cr Matthew Bourke, Brisbane City Council
DISTRICT 1 - BRISBANE CC

Cr Mike Charlton, Moreton Bay Regional Council
DISTRICT 2 - SEQ (NORTHERN)

Cr Karen Williams, Redland City Council
DISTRICT 2 - SEQ (SOUTHERN)

Cr Paul Tully, Ipswich City Council
DISTRICT 2 - SEQ (WESTERN)

Cr Jack Dempsey, Bundaberg Regional Council
DISTRICT 3 - WIDE BAY BURNETT

Cr Ray Brown, Western Downs Regional Council
DISTRICT 4 - DARLING DOWNS

Cr Cameron O'Neil, Maranoa Regional Council
DISTRICT 5 - SOUTH WEST

Cr Matt Burnett, Gladstone Regional Council
DISTRICT 6 - CENTRAL QUEENSLAND

Cr Anne Baker, Isaac Regional Council
DISTRICT 7 - WHITSUNDAY

Cr Robert Chandler, Barcardine Regional Council
DISTRICT 8 - CENTRAL WEST

Cr Jenny Hill, Townsville City Council
DISTRICT 9 - NORTHERN

Cr Bob Manning, Cairns Regional Council
DISTRICT 10 - FAR NORTH

Cr Belinda Murphy, McKinlay Shire Council
DISTRICT 11 - NORTH WEST

Cr Alf Lacey, Palm Island Aboriginal Shire Council
DISTRICT 12 - ABORIGINAL AND ISLAND COUNCILS

Cr Fred Gela, Torres Strait Island Regional Council
DISTRICT 12 - ABORIGINAL AND ISLAND COUNCILS

1 Real funding reform for local government.

Raising just three per cent of the national taxation share, councils need to be vigilant in their long term financial management so they can manage their community's assets responsibly. This can only happen when councils have greater certainty and input in directing funding to areas of genuine community need.

Local government seeks:

- A commitment to maintain baseline funding to local government of a minimum of \$500 million per annum plus indexation¹
- By July 2019, a State Government grants and subsidies framework that enables greater certainty and long-term planning for councils to better manage their assets and revenue forecasts
- During the transition to systemic grants and subsidies reform:
 - A state-wide dedicated allocative annual fund to support essential local government services and infrastructure that prioritises community needs and aspirations similar to the *Works for Queensland Program*
 - \$3 million over three years to establish a regional network of expertise which promotes and supports councils sustaining their local assets
- A commitment to maintain local government autonomy to set rates and charges (i.e. no rate capping)

2 Real support for the environment as a driver of the economy.

Councils are custodians of significant natural assets, protective of the environment and look to create sustainable communities. Local government in Queensland is a leading player in this space, having invested significantly in the environment through natural resources management, climate change and the Great Barrier Reef. In 2015-16, councils invested more

than \$260 million² in natural resources management and more than \$228 million³ in activities that directly benefited the conservation of the Great Barrier Reef making the local government sector the single largest investor in these areas in Queensland.

Local government seeks:

- \$5 million for local government major integrated projects to improve Great Barrier Reef catchment health and urban water quality
- \$10 million over four years for local governments to deliver natural resource management programs in areas of local environmental significance to leverage existing local government investment
- \$20 million over four years to continue cluster fencing programs for the exclusion of wild dogs
- \$3 million over three years to expand existing State Government weed and feral animal programs to non-drought declared areas
- \$3 million over three years to protect and enhance Queensland's regional economies through the development of regional climate resilience strategies
- \$3 million over two years to fund local government waste infrastructure to support councils to proactively participate in the Container Refund Scheme and ensure legislative safeguards are in place to protect councils' existing kerbside recycling contracts
- A commitment to provide a clear head of power in legislation to maintain local government autonomy in the delivery of waste management services to the entire community and ensure the maintenance of public health, safety and amenity standards by protecting councils' ability to control and regulate collection activities
- A commitment that any State waste levy is not imposed on domestic kerbside waste and that funds raised are fully returned to waste related activities
- The inclusion of legal indemnity provisions in State legislation

providing greater assurance for councils for devolved public health responsibilities such as clandestine laboratories similar to the indemnity provided to councils for asbestos management

3 Real support for indigenous communities.

Twenty per cent of Queensland local governments cover discrete Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. In these communities, councils are not just responsible for public administration of local government services, but are key to community leadership and are fully committed to economic development. They seek to build local economies that provide job opportunities for locals and hope for young people. Moreover, they seek to remove the historical reliance on welfare in their community. However, each indigenous council is unique and must pursue its own journey to achieve economic prosperity.

Local government seeks:

- A commitment to maintain State Government Financial Aid (SGFA) as budgeted in the 2017 State Budget over the forward estimates, including indexation
- A strategy and funding to upskill local people in higher skilled roles in Indigenous communities
- Continued funding (\$1 million per annum) for the industry/VET indigenous capacity building program which is currently delivering 99 per cent completion rates and aligns training with jobs
- \$5.5 million to fund the removal of bulk metal including legacy car wrecks and white goods in the Torres Strait and other discrete isolated Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities where the problem has become extreme
- \$250,000 for the LGAQ to work in partnership with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander councils and the State Government to develop regional waste solutions that complement the overarching State Waste Management Strategy

- Review delivery of state government services currently provided by a fly-in fly-out workforce⁴
- A commitment to allow for freehold title to be granted to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander councils over land in their community when requested formally by council and where the land is specifically designated as part of a business precinct in the council's planning scheme
- \$70 million investment in scalable and robust core telecommunications, associated access services and redundancy for discrete Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities

4 Real support for water infrastructure, roads, freight and travel.

Councils are the enablers of connectivity and providers of essential and efficient services, managing \$108 billion in infrastructure assets, including \$25 billion in water and sewer infrastructure, more than 153,000 kilometres of local roads and 2,836 bridges. Importantly, in more rural and remote communities, this role extends to being a significant local employer and generator of economic activity.

Local government seeks:

- A dedicated \$200 million⁵ co-investment program to ensure the security of supply of drinking water and sustainable sewerage services to rural and regional communities
- \$80 million per year for the Transport Infrastructure Development Scheme (TIDS), including annual indexation and a revised contribution methodology for rural and remote councils
- Continuation of the \$40 million Western Roads Program to provide local employment and increased economic investment in rural communities
- Ten per cent of revenue generated from safety infringements to be returned to local governments to support local road safety initiatives given that 51 per cent of fatal and serious injury incidents occur on local roads

- An independent review of long distance passenger and freight services for rural and regional Queensland
- \$1 million per annum per region over four years for the Queensland Water Regional Alliance Program to support regional collaboration, planning and innovative approaches to the delivery of urban water security and supply

5 Real support for child literacy.

Life Long Learning and strong community connections are core business for the almost 350 public libraries in Queensland. Council-run libraries are strategically placed to deliver early learning and family literacy services. The successful First 5 Forever family literacy initiative has enabled councils to do what they do best by providing public libraries with a unique opportunity to work together to make a collective difference for all Queensland children.

Public libraries are answering the call to action on a scale never seen before. Libraries have the potential to reach 98 per cent of the population, especially babies and children under five years and their families/carers at a critical time in their life and development. The comprehensive 2015 evaluation undertaken by Morris Hargreaves McIntyre showed 445,000 attendances to in-library First 5 Forever activities and 19,000 parent and caregiver toolkits distributed in just one year, the first of the four-year program.

Local government seeks:

- \$20 million over four years for the First 5 Forever Family Literacy Initiative delivered through public libraries
- \$2.5 million in additional funding to Indigenous Knowledge Centres to support capacity building and digital literacy in discrete indigenous communities

6 Real support for resources communities.

Queensland's resource councils focus on improving access for their communities to the economic and job

opportunities arising from major resource projects, as well as putting community wellbeing and sustainability at the core of managing the impacts of resource projects on their communities.

Local government seeks:

- A statutory guideline on engagement between local government and the resource sector by 2019, including requirements for negotiating and implementing Infrastructure Agreements
- By December 2018, a Queensland Productivity Commission review of resource project procurement processes which examines current impediments as well as opportunities to build the capacity of local businesses
- Implementation of a Transition Plan that ensures that all resource projects undertake a Social Impact Assessment and have in place a Social Impact Management Plan by 31 December 2020
- A requirement for the Minister to report annually to Parliament on the cumulative social impacts of resource projects, including actions taken by the state government, local governments and resource companies to manage these impacts
- A working group (state and local government and industry representatives) to guide and develop the implementation of social impact management measures in the Strong and Sustainable Resources Communities (SSRC) Policy Framework and legislation

7 Real support for planning and better connectivity.

Council decisions reflect how people want their communities to develop. They are on the front line in determining the shape, size, liveability and connectivity of the places in which people live, work and recreate. Councils have been exposed to constant legislative reform over the last two decades, and along with their communities and industry generally, they would benefit from a period of stability and certainty.

Local government seeks:

- \$6 million over three years for collaborative local government led planning innovation and improvement projects to drive leading practice in land use planning and development
- A commitment to local government autonomy in land use planning and rejection of mandatory, externally appointed, development assessment panels
- A commitment to amend the Local Government Infrastructure Plan process to align with the Planning Act 2016 and remove red tape, unwieldy processes and unnecessary costs on councils
- A legislative exemption for local government from liability for advice given, or acts done in good faith in relation to planning for and managing the risk associated with natural hazards (including flooding, bushfire, landslide, storm tide inundation and coastal erosion)
- Development of digital strategies for councils and regions to take better advantage of, and navigate the digital economy and protect communities and councils from cyber security risks

8 Real support for partnerships in government.

Every day local government affects the lives of people across Queensland – our local services, where we live, and the look and feel of our communities. Local government is a genuine partner in the Australian government system, and not just another stakeholder. The state government maximises community and economic outcomes when there is genuine consultation and engagement with local government.

Local government seeks:

- Partners in Government Agreement reaffirmed
- A commitment that the State Government will prepare a whole-of-government overview of funding to councils as part of the state

budget process

- Local government portfolio led by a senior Cabinet Minister
- Implementation of the 2016 local government election review report recommendations in consultation with the LGAQ

9 Real support for transparency, openness and accountability.

Councils reflect the values and aspirations of their communities. They are leaders in open and transparent government, value scrutiny and understand the obligation to be accountable to their communities. The LGAQ has contributed actively to efforts to overhaul the councillor complaints system and increase transparency in local government election campaign funding.

Local government seeks:

- A commitment to work with the LGAQ on the implementation of the Councillor Complaints Review Report and Operation Belcarra recommendations
- Simplification of the councillor complaints process with strong front end triage system to minimise frivolous and vexatious complaints
- Implementation of the recommendation of the Crime and Corruption Commission (CCC) to make it an offence to publicise complaints in the three months leading up to local government elections
- Support for LGAQ proposals to increase transparency in local government election campaign funding, including compulsory register of interests for candidates, campaign expenditure caps, requiring councillors with a conflict of interest arising from a developer donation to remove themselves from the meeting, banning donations from a political party to a non-endorsed candidate, and strengthening the definition of a group
- No ban on donations from certain sections of the community, including property developers. No move to allow councils to force individual councillors to leave a council meeting due to a real or perceived conflict of interest.

10 Real support for the workforce.

Local government currently employs in excess of 40,000 employees who are essential to the delivery of services to their communities. Local government in Queensland desires a contemporary industrial relations system that demonstrably values the contribution of employees and positions the sector to embrace the future. Councils in Queensland require a system that allows for resilience and flexibility in the face of constantly evolving business and community demands and expectations. Councils and their employees demand a system that respects and values freedom of association laws and the rights of individuals.

Local government seeks:

- Reform of the Industrial Relations Act to allow employees to determine whether to pursue a union collective agreement or employee collective agreement (whilst allowing for unions to represent individuals who request their assistance)
- Reform of Industrial Relations legislation to allow for the Queensland Industrial Relations Commission to independently determine the number of awards and their concomitant coverage within the Queensland jurisdiction
- Continued funding for targeted local government employment and traineeship programs to continue local governments' contribution to the training and supply to the Queensland economy of skilled and capable tradespeople and technicians

Footnotes:

- 1 Indexation – to be calculated using the council cost index (CCI).
- 2 *Natural Resource Management in Queensland: Role of Local Governments*, LGAQ, 2017.
- 3 Study of Investment by Local Councils in Activities to Protect and Enhance the Health of the Great Barrier Reef, RPMG, 2015.
- 4 Refer to LGAQ Submission, *Inquiry into service delivery in remote and discrete Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities* (June 2017).
- 5 As part of the \$500 million minimum baseline funding.



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