

Queensland Local Government

# ADVOCACY ACTION PLAN 2020

**Our priorities for stronger  
local governments and more  
resilient local communities**



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## A MESSAGE FROM LGAQ PRESIDENT, MAYOR MARK JAMIESON

There is no denying the first half of 2020 has been tougher than any in recent memory. The new decade began with devastating bushfires. We are now navigating a global COVID-19 health pandemic and arguably the worst economic crisis since the Great Depression.

Despite this turbulent start, councils successfully navigated a local government election and Mayors and Councillors got straight down to the business of supporting our local communities. So too, did the Local Government Association of Queensland (LGAQ).

The Queensland Local Government Advocacy Action Plan is a roadmap designed to highlight policy and funding priorities councils believe are critical to ensuring Queensland flourishes and our communities thrive. The AAP is built on endorsed member policy and motions from our annual LGAQ Conference. While significant focus is being directed to the COVID-19 recovery effort, it is important to recognise that Queensland councils have a broader agenda to deliver for their communities.

**Queensland councils play a critical role in building the infrastructure and providing the jobs and services to improve the liveability of our communities and support the state's ongoing prosperity.**

Our 77 councils across Queensland employ more than 40,000 people and through their broader activities are creating crucial job opportunities right across the state. Councils also support local businesses, which in turn boosts employment and investment and drives stronger local and regional economies.

Councils build and maintain the roads and bridges and are the custodians of over \$150 billion in public infrastructure that is needed to keep Queensland moving and provide the physical connectivity to support regional economic development.



They provide the waste and water services needed to keep Queenslanders healthy and create sustainable environments. Local governments plan for growth, climate adaptation and cultural change to ensure our communities are safe, strong, diverse, and welcoming places to live and raise a family.

Councils are also there to help their communities respond to, and recover from, natural disasters and build resilience to ensure we are all better prepared for the cyclones, floods, and fires and other challenges that will inevitably come.

**Councils are the frontline. They read the pulse. They fill the gaps.**

They bring communities together and are so much more than roads, rates, and rubbish. But they cannot do it alone.

Local governments receive just 3 percent of total government revenues but shoulder more than a third of the public infrastructure responsibility and deliver more than 280 services.

The only way Queensland thrives is if all three levels of government work together.

In response to the COVID-19 crisis, the LGAQ has pursued strong engagement with the Queensland and Federal Governments in the best interests of our member councils. Engagement guided by our advocacy priorities.

This year heralds the start of a new decade and the start of a new term of local government in Queensland. When councils work together and unite behind the things that matter, our voice is powerful and our reach is wide and deep. These trying times provide the perfect opportunity to reinforce to Queenslanders that when the State and Federal Governments work in partnership with local councils, our communities are the winner.

On behalf of Queensland's 77 councils, I encourage you to work hand in hand with the LGAQ, the peak body proudly representing Queensland's local governments and our local communities, to ensure the following priorities become a reality.



**Mayor Mark Jamieson**

President, Local Government Association of Queensland  
Mayor, Sunshine Coast Council

# SUSTAINING LOCAL JOBS

With more than 40,000 people employed by local governments across Queensland, Councils are a significant employer. Federal and State Government support is essential for sustaining council workforces – particularly in our rural, remote, and regional communities. Through their local investment and projects, they create thousands more in local businesses across the State.



## To do this, local government asks:

### The State Government to:

- 01**  
Support the Battleplan for Queensland Local Communities for four years to deliver 14,000 local jobs in response to COVID-19.
- 02**  
Allocate \$100 million each year through the Works for Queensland program to create 4000+ local government jobs, support local infrastructure and deliver community projects.
- 03**  
Provide \$50 million per year for four years to create 2000+ jobs in areas of socio-economic disadvantage and high unemployment in South East Queensland.
- 04**  
Allocate \$1 million to develop a digital training and upskilling program for older workers and provide \$500,000 per year for three years to roll out training across all local government.
- 05**  
Support modernisation of employment conditions for trainees and apprentices, and variation of current awards, to better harmonise employment conditions of local government employees.

### The State and Federal Government to:

**06**

Implement programs to assist councils ensure apprentices and trainees constitute five per cent of their workforce.

### The Federal Government to:

**07**

Restore Financial Assistance Grants (FAGs) to one percent of Commonwealth taxation revenue to support direct and indirect local government jobs, in staged increments that reflect Federal government priorities.



# STRENGTHENING OUR REGIONS

Local government is responsible for one third of public infrastructure but only has access directly to three per cent of the government taxes nationally. Federal and State Government funding is necessary to build new and maintain existing infrastructure such as critical road and transport networks. In Queensland, the most diversified state in Australia, this supports growth in our larger communities and provides resilience in smaller communities to support critical industries, such as agriculture and mining. Evidence shows direct allocative funding to councils achieves rapid and direct economic stimulus relevant to the unique requirements of local communities.

## To do this, local government asks:

### The State Government to:

08

Provide \$50 million per year for four years to continue the successful Building Our Regions program which has already created more than 2760 jobs across 264 projects and generated an additional \$538 million worth of investment in building infrastructure and developing a pipeline of projects that support and diversify local economies.

09

Allocate \$50 million per year for four years to the Growing Tourism Infrastructure Fund and the Outback Tourism Infrastructure Fund to provide economic stimulus for rural, remote, and indigenous communities and create 116 jobs and ensure we retain our premium tourism status globally.

10

Increase funding for the Transport and Infrastructure Development Scheme (TIDS) to \$80 million in 2020-2021 and increase to \$100m by 2024 to build safer road networks in regional communities and support 452 jobs, and enhance flexibility to support rural communities.

11

Introduce statutory measures to require resource project proponents to compensate councils for their participation in Social Impact Assessments to ensure employment and business opportunities for resource communities can be progressed without impacting day-to-day council services.



**Local government is a critical partner in driving regional economic development. No other level of government or industry sector has that innate ability to connect to every person in every Queensland community like our Councils. We are best placed to target and manage local economic stimulus in the hardest of times, when community needs it most.**



*- Townsville City Council Mayor Jenny Hill*

### The Federal Government to:

12

Provide \$200 million per year for five years to fix 'first and last mile' issues impacting supply chains.

13

Provide \$800 million per year for four years for the Roads to Recovery Program nationally to support effective management of the local government road network.

14

Fund a permanent Bridges Renewal Program so Councils can address freight and oversize, overmass access issues.

15

Establish a \$3 billion per year road safety fund as recommended by the Inquiry into the National Road Safety Strategy.

16

Introduce a "per passenger charge" that spreads the costs of airport security across the aviation sector nationally, thereby providing a sustainable and equitable funding mechanism that supports regional airport operations.

17

Fully implement recommendations of the Rural Telecommunications Independent Review Committee Report benefitting rural and indigenous councils.

18

Provide \$300 million per annum over four years for community infrastructure to create jobs, support liveability and support community need.



Photo credit:  
Matthew Taylor/Tourism and Events Queensland

# KEEPING COMMUNITIES SAFE

Councils are on the front line in shaping the liveability of their communities. Their role extends far beyond roads, rates and rubbish. Local governments provide essential public health infrastructure like safe, reliable water supply. They are there before, during and following natural disasters, playing a lead role in disaster preparedness and recovery. They lead the way on climate change adaptation to protect their communities and build resilience. This has never been more tested or more evident than during COVID-19.

## To do this, local government asks:

### The State Government to:

- 19** Fund a Rural Water and Wastewater Guarantee of \$100 million per year for five years to secure safe reliable drinking water and address the imminent water and wastewater infrastructure funding shortfall and secure 1161 jobs.
- 20** Adopt a policy that moderates costs and strengthens property rights in urban (town) water allocations and ensures equity in water allocations to local governments.
- 21** Provide \$2 million per year in permanent funding to extend the highly successful Queensland Water Regional Alliance Program (QWRAP).
- 22** Establish a transparent and sustainable pricing method for regional bulk water providers.
- 23** Fully fund the compliance costs of new dam safety standards to ensure those costs are not passed on to councils.
- 24** Provide an additional \$850,000 per year for two years to the QCoast2100 Program to allow seven partially funded coastal councils to complete their Coastal Hazard Adaptation Strategies.

- 25** Establish clear PFAS limits and methodology as part of the "End of Waste Code" for biosolids.
- 26** Fully implement the recommendations identified in the State Emergency Services Review.
- 27** Ensure a fairer distribution of funding collected via the Emergency Management Levy so funds deployed can better support both the emergency management system and the full breadth of emergency management services supporting Queenslanders.

### The State and Federal Governments to:

- 31** Establish a Great Artesian Basin Infrastructure Investment Program ahead of the 2027 sunset clause for all bores to be capped and piped.
- 32** Establish a risk management framework to guide responses to emerging contaminants in water, wastewater and waste businesses.
- 33** Adopt a transparent funding methodology for local government disaster mitigation projects.
- 28** Provide \$10 million to provide greater access to expert assistance, guidance, and ongoing support to assist local governments undertake local disaster risk assessments as guided by the Queensland Emergency Management Risk Framework (QERMF).
- 29** Modernise current disaster management legislation and regulations to reinforce the importance and authority of locally led disaster responses and to improve transitional arrangements across council terms.
- 30** Introduce statutory protections akin to section 733 of the New South Wales Local Government Act 1993 to support council decision making in relation to natural hazards and climate change.
- 34** Adopt a long-term, sustainable water supply strategy for inland Australia.
- 35** Adopt the Queensland Local Government 8 Point Drought Action Plan to ensure a systematic approach to the prevention of, preparation for, response to, and recovery from drought.

# SUPPORTING THE BUSH

Queensland's bush councils face unique challenges and opportunities in helping their communities thrive and prosper due to scale, access, and distance. 40 of Queensland's 77 Local Government Areas have a population of fewer than 5,000 people and 60 have a population of fewer than 50,000 yet their economic contribution is more than three times per capita of metropolitan areas.

Large geographic land areas with small, widely dispersed and often declining populations and limited own source revenues challenge their capacity to deliver essential services, support their region's critical industries and attract and retain skilled staff. Despite these challenges, bush councils often step in to fill community service gaps and deliver significant benefits to state and national economies.

Federal and State government policies, regulations and funding decisions often fail to recognise these unique challenges and the financial and non-financial impact of government decisions. One size fits all policies continue to reinforce disadvantage and market failure in the local economies of rural and remote communities. Councils often have to deliver many services communities elsewhere take for granted as being available from other sources.

## The Federal Government to:

- 36** Establish a National Coastal Hazards Adaptation Framework to build resilience in communities most likely to be impacted and provide \$500 million per year for four years for implementation of coastal hazard adaptation strategies.
- 37** Include essential public infrastructure like water and sewerage infrastructure within the definition of an 'eligible undertaking' in the Disaster Recovery Funding Arrangements.
- 38** Ensure NBN communication services incorporate uninterruptable power supply to support emergency management.

## To do this, local government asks:

### The State Government to:

- 39** Sign a Bush Councils Compact that seeks to reflect their unique challenges and opportunities and facilitates policy development, resource allocation and reporting to ensure these communities are not being left behind.
- 40** Reinstate the Western Roads Upgrade Program with \$25 million per year for four years to sustain 119 local government jobs in rural and remote communities.

41

Provide \$100,000 to review the Darling Downs Moreton Rabbit Board Land Protection Fund payment area and the methodology used for the Wild Dog Barrier Fence.

42

Provide \$5 million per year over four years to fund cluster fencing and extend the Queensland Feral Pest Initiative for weed and feral animal control and support 200 + jobs.

43

Provide \$5 million to stop the spread of prickly acacia following the North West floods.

44

Provide \$75,000 per bush council to support rural mental health and work with local government and mental health stakeholders to review mental health funding, models and programs to develop more appropriate and responsive service delivery to rural and remote communities.

45

Establish a Stock Route Network Advisory Group and provide \$120,000 per year to provide effective coordination to resource it.

# PROTECTING OUR ENVIRONMENT

Local governments are striving to create sustainable communities by embracing a zero-waste future through effective waste management. Councils play a significant role in protecting our environment through stringent biosecurity controls and natural asset management that facilitates environmental sustainability but economic prosperity.

## To do this, local government asks:

### The State Government to:

46

Commit \$200 million per year for four years to a local government Sustainability Fund financing Energy-from-Waste facilities, resource recovery and recycling initiatives and legacy landfill challenges and creating 1328 jobs.

48

Commit 100 per cent of waste levy revenue to the funding of sustainable resource recovery, recycling infrastructure and programs to build a circular economy.

47

Continue the \$143 million financial commitment to providing advance payments to councils to ensure Queensland households are not negatively impacted by the waste levy.

49

Acknowledge the costs of managing Queensland National Parks waste and adopt a policy to enable cost recovery for local governments managing this waste.



**Queensland's outback is iconic. It is integrally linked to the story of our past and the success of our future. Times are tough but Queensland's bush communities continue to punch above their weight when it comes to contributing to the state's economic success. Through meaningful partnerships with Queensland's bush councils, Federal and State Governments make our whole nation stronger.**



*- Barcaldine Regional Council Mayor Sean Dillon*



50

Commit \$6 million per year for four years to continue the regional recycling transport assistance program to ensure cost equalisation for regional councils in transporting recyclables.

54

Commit \$1.5 million per year for four years to a flying fox research and grant program to improve management and mitigation and reduce conflict between humans and wildlife.

51

Commit to ensuring State agencies comply with local government biosecurity plans to ensure effective coordination across government.

55

Increase resources and community awareness campaigns to combat the spread of invasive ant species in Queensland.

52

Provide \$5 million per year to combat illegal dumping and littering brought about by the introduction of the waste levy.

56

Provide \$6 million per year for four years to employ additional rangers to undertake wildfire mitigation works and pest control in national parks.

53

Provide \$325,000 per year for two years to deliver two NRM Governance pilot projects to improve NRM outcomes.

## State and Federal Governments to:

57

Invest \$200 million each per year for five years to match local government spending on the Great Barrier Reef, and deliver the Reef 2050 Plan so the Reef can maintain its \$6 billion economic and environmental asset value for the state and national economies.

58

Allocate a combined contribution of \$57 million to the Reef Councils' Rescue Plan to significantly improve urban water quality to the reef by 2027.



## Federal Governments to:

59

Allocate \$9 million over three years for environmental biosecurity to protect and maintain areas of local environmental significance.

62

Implement all recommendations from the House of Representatives Standing Committee on the Environment and Energy "Living with Fruit Bats" report to better support the 42 Queensland towns and suburbs significantly impacted by flying foxes.

60

Provide \$9 million annually to help eradicate weeds and feral animals in drought affected areas to generate more than \$1.9 billion worth of direct agricultural production benefits.

63

Provide \$200 million for targeted disaster mitigation over four years and effective Disaster Recovery Funding Arrangements.

61

Invest \$200 million over four years for climate adaptation initiatives.

Photo credit:  
Matthew Taylor/Tourism and Events Queensland



# ADVANCING FIRST NATIONS COUNCILS

Councils understand governments at every level need to lend support to the challenges encountered by our First Australians and their communities. Queensland has 17 indigenous councils that add value to the cultural history, present and future of this State.

In the spirit of reconciliation and with determination to close the gap for our First Nations people, local government asks:

## To do this, local government asks:

### State Government to:

64

Increase State Government Financial Aid (SGFA) by 10 per cent to recognise significant increases in labour costs and assist councils in retaining workers.

65

Extend the Indigenous Councils Critical Infrastructure Program by providing \$30 million per year for four years to deliver regional solutions for waste management and related essential service activities.

66

Review the Thriving Communities program by July 2021 to ensure the program aligns with, and delivers the desired outcomes of, recommendations made by the Queensland Productivity Commission report on service delivery in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander remote and discrete communities.

67

Allocate an additional \$2.5 million per year over four years to establish Indigenous Knowledge Centres to upskill Indigenous communities and provide essential community learning hubs for their children.

68

Allocate \$650,000 to develop four regional infrastructure plans in line with the Queensland Indigenous Waste Strategy.



Photo credit: Christine Howes

“

First Nation local governments have made good progress in advancing the needs of our communities. But there is more work to do. First Nations' Mayors seek strong partnerships with other levels of government to provide high-quality essential infrastructure. In doing so, we can stimulate our local economies, build skills and grow local businesses.

”

- Lockhart River Aboriginal Shire Council Mayor Wayne Butcher

### State and Federal Governments to:

69

Adopt policies to ensure investment in remote and discrete communities maximises local capacity and stimulates local economies in an open and transparent manner and reports progress.

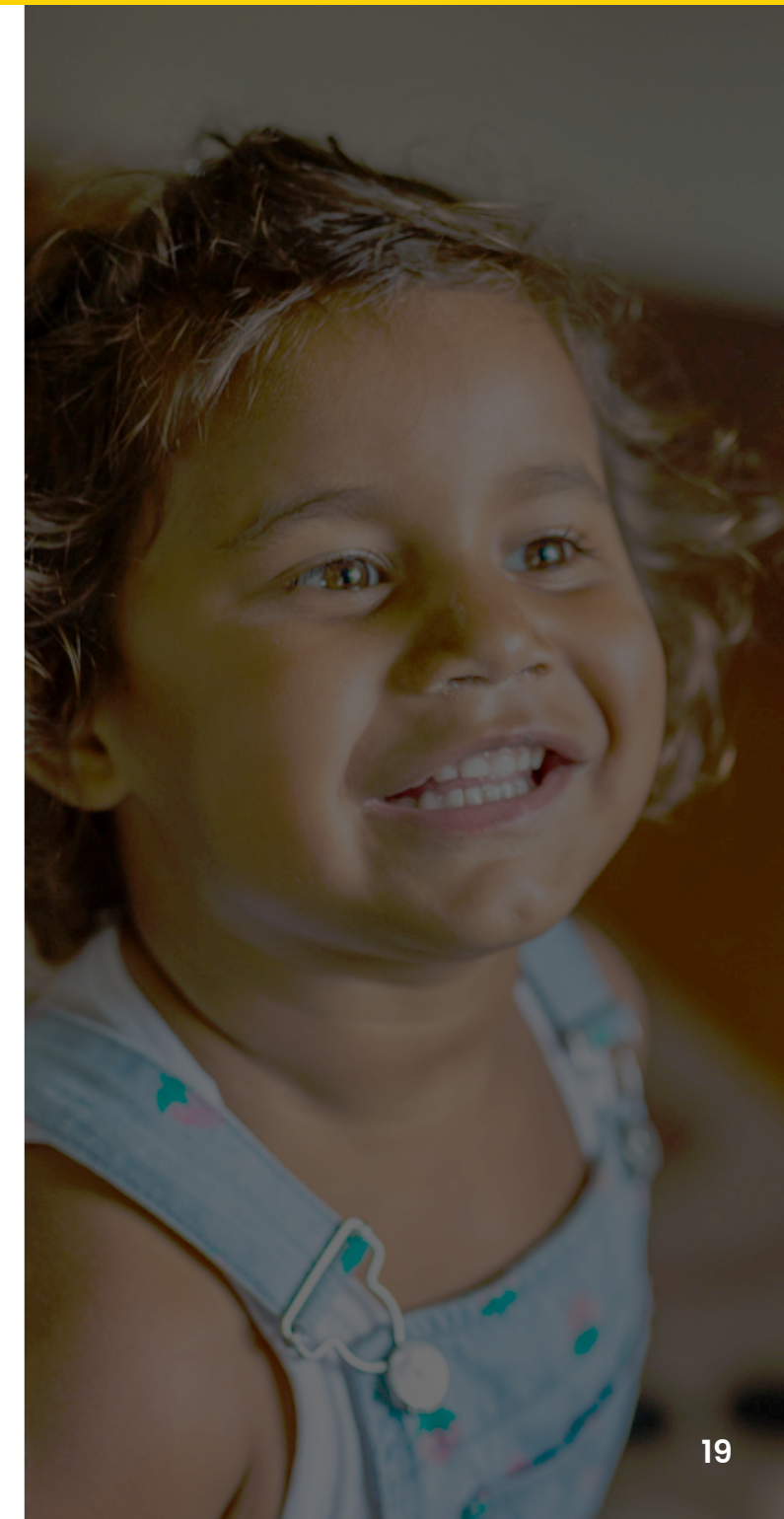
### Federal Governments to:

70

Allocate \$100 million per year for five years to increase housing supply in remote and discrete Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and reduce overcrowding and to help close the gap across education, health, incarceration, and employment.

71

Extend the operation of section 24JAA of the Native Title Act beyond its December 2020 sunset date to ensure timely infrastructure delivery in Indigenous communities.



# PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE

Councils are responsible for determining the shape and size of their communities and for ensuring they remain places where people want to live, work, play, learn and invest. They strive to grow entrepreneurial and globally connected communities able to pursue opportunities leading to a more prosperous future.

## To do this, local government asks:

### The State Government to:

73

Establish a statewide data sharing system and code of conduct for the short-term letting of residential properties, so councils can appropriately manage this use and the impact on local communities.

74

Provide \$2 million per year for three years for council-led planning innovation and improvement projects to drive leading practice in strategic land use planning and development assessment.

75

Commit to reducing the funding gap for trunk infrastructure that currently exists under Queensland's capped infrastructure charging regime.

76

Amend the Planning Act 2016 to confirm that councils can charge interest, in accordance with section 133 of the Local Government Regulation 2012, on unpaid infrastructure charges.

77

Work with local governments to review and streamline the process for making or amending a local government infrastructure plan.

78

Articulate a prioritised list of key infrastructure projects in the State Infrastructure Plan to better inform statutory regional plans and planning schemes and align with State and local planning horizons.

79

Initiate a broad education campaign to explain performance-based planning under the Planning Act 2016, as well as the role of State and local government and the opportunities for community involvement.

80

Commit to greater coordination between State agencies, consultation with local government and resolution of any conflicts, prior to the release of State Government mapping overlays used in planning and development.

81

Amend the State Planning Policy to assist councils manage land use conflicts between high quality agricultural land and renewable energy projects.

82

Provide greater expertise and support to councils for the assessment of levee bank development applications and when preparing floodplain risk management plans in line with Queensland's levee regulatory framework.

83

Reinstate Heritage Assessment Officers throughout regional Queensland to support improved heritage conservation outcomes.

84

Implement recommendations arising from the review of the Strong and Sustainable Resource Communities Act 2017 that will improve the ability of councils to influence resource project conditions to the benefit of their communities.

85

Strengthen support provided to councils by the Queensland Building and Construction Commission to reduce non-compliance with Queensland's building and pool safety legislation, establish improved processes for complaint lodgement and increased training and support for building certifiers and pool safety inspectors.

86

Implement recommendations arising from the review of the Strong and Sustainable Resource Communities

87

Augment infrastructure, including car parking, at railway stations to encourage the use of public transport.

88

Adopt a cost recovery protocol for relocation or replacement of utility infrastructure for local governments undertaking road works.

89

Provide ongoing funding for the provision of social housing under the Queensland Housing Strategy 2017-2027, to adequately meet the needs and demand for accommodation for people experiencing, or at risk of, homelessness.



**Local government doesn't just provide roads, rates and rubbish. We provide leadership, build community, and plan for the future. We strive to make our communities strong and resilient so they can face any challenge head on and come out stronger.**



*- Gladstone Regional Council Mayor Matt Burnett*

## The Federal Government to:

**90**

Provide \$100 million nationally per year for a smart communities' program to support councils deliver innovative technology-based solutions to urban challenges that improve the liveability, productivity and sustainability of Queensland's cities, towns and regions while creating 700 new jobs and \$242 million increase to GDP.

# EFFECTIVE, EFFICIENT AND FINANCIALLY RESPONSIBLE LOCAL GOVERNMENT SECTOR

Councils strive to reflect the values and aspirations of their communities. Integrity, transparency, and accountability are fundamental to maintenance of public trust.

To ensure councils can continue to uphold the highest levels of integrity, accountability and financial sustainability, local government asks:

## To do this, local government asks:

### The State Government to:

**91**

Implement funding reform and replace annual competitive grant funding with four-year allocative funding supporting long-term planning, asset management, economic development and financial sustainability.

**92**

Rationalise workplace health and safety and site management regulations relating to local government extraction of gravel for roadworks.

**93**

Monitor, review and support the implementation of all integrity reforms to ensure they lead to increased transparency and accountability in practice, are proportional to the issues to be addressed and maintain local government as a highly functioning, responsive and flexible system of government that reflects the diversity of council operations and communities of interest.

94

Ensure conflicts of interest provisions do not inhibit First Nations councils from performing their responsibilities in a culturally sensitive and appropriate manner.

95

Resolve the legislative ambiguity and financial risk to councils in relation to the sale of land for overdue rates recovery where unpaid body corporate contributions exceed the value of the sale proceeds.

96

Timely implementation of recommendations for improvement to the Councillor Complaints System.

97

Maintain council autonomy in financial management including the choice to convene an external audit committee.

98

Increase procurement thresholds for both medium-sized and large-sized contracts under the Local Government Regulation 2012.

99

Extend legal protections for personal liability to elected councillors for the purpose of debate within council statutory meetings including those that are live streamed.

100

Adopt appropriate financial sustainability ratios and target ranges in the Local Government Regulation 2012 to allow alternative ratios that accommodate local governments of different size and systemic financial vulnerabilities.

101

Ensure local government interests are protected in responses to recent court rulings on financial compensation and native title.

102

Review requirements upon local government to apply fair value accounting in depreciation of long-life infrastructure assets, including evaluation of alternative approaches such as renewals annuities, to provide a more relevant set of accounting standards for local government operations.

## Federal Governments to:

103

Invest \$100 million to support local governments to develop best practice data and systems protection measures in line with the Federal Government's cyber security strategy 2020.

# JOIN THE CONVERSATION



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