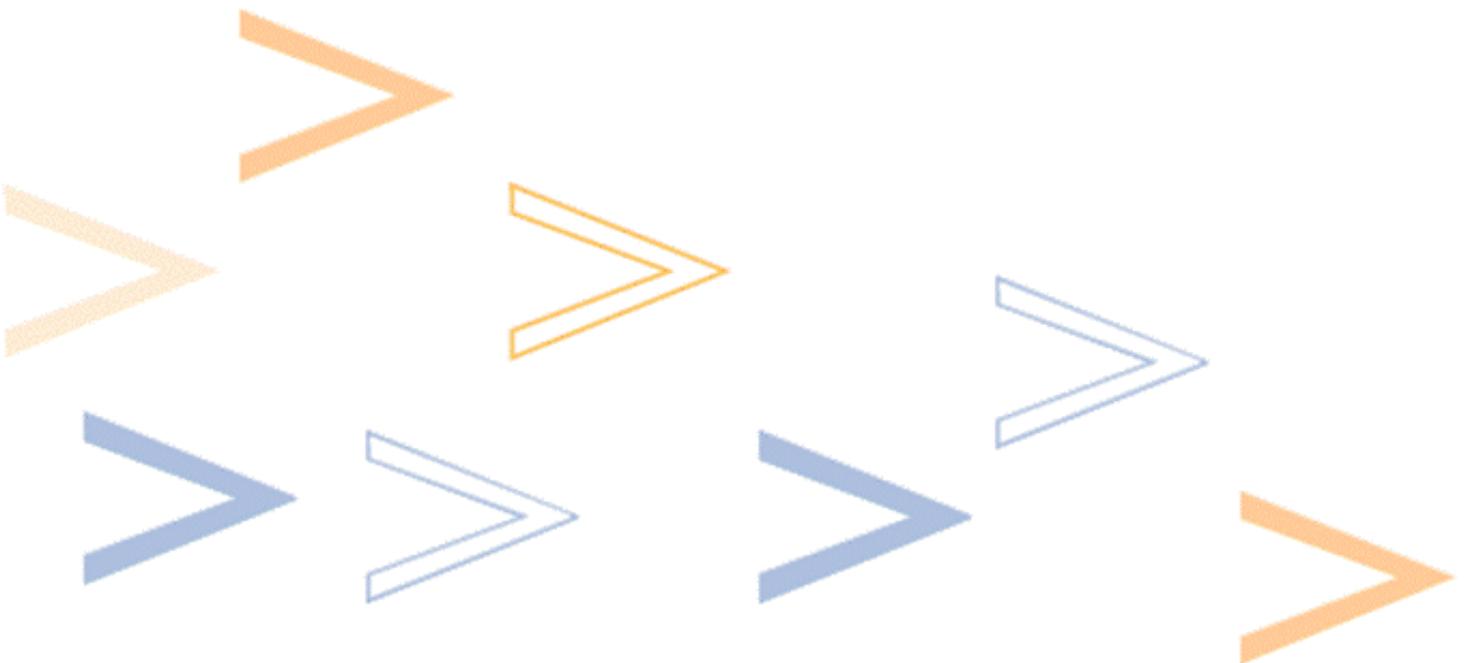


State Council Strategic Directions

May 2023



Message from the President

As many of you are aware, the Municipal Association of Victoria (MAV) brings together our members for State Council twice a year.

Councils submit motions and delegates then debate the big-ticket items for the local government sector. In May we came together at Melbourne Town Hall with a newly elected board and a number of new delegates.

The results of the lively discussion are collated for you as asks within this document, highlighting how State and Local Governments can work together in the interest of our communities.

There was particular focus on threats to local democracy in the face of increasingly unpredictable and disruptive protests at council meetings and events, the urgent need for various reforms to improve the supply of social and affordable housing, and the impacts of continued cost-shifting by the State onto local government.

The asks below are ordered to align with the MAV's Strategic Plan, which ensures the focus is on:

- economically sound councils;
- healthy, diverse and thriving communities;
- well-planned, connected and resilient built environment;
- changing climate and a circular economy; and
- sector capability and good governance.

We encourage parliamentarians of all persuasions to take advantage of the connections and understanding councils enjoy with their local communities and hope this document provides insights for you on the issues important on a local level.

I'd welcome meeting with you to provide further details on these or any other issues. Feel free to email me via dclark@mav.asn.au to set up a meeting.

Kind regards,

Cr David Clark
MAV President



Economically sound councils

On behalf of our member councils, the MAV is asking:

THE STATE GOVERNMENT TO:

1. Review the method for determining the rate cap taking into consideration councils' costs and establish a review into the short, medium, and long-term financial sustainability of local government.
2. Commit to not placing additional responsibilities on local government without a sustainable revenue stream to support them and revisit recent decisions that have resulted in cost-shifting onto local government.
3. Provide support and funding to councils to ensure that changes to legislation and regulation can be adequately implemented, and fund administrative overheads incurred in the management of state government systems.
4. Distribute a one-off untied grant equivalent to 0.5% of each council's general rates revenue to bridge the gap between the Essential Service's Commission's recommendation and the rate cap set for 2023/24.
5. Write-off bad debts not collected by Fines Victoria in excess of 24 months by compensating councils with an equivalent amount, and review Fines Victoria's service performance levels noting the significant technical and systems issues experienced to date.
6. Provide support and early information to councils to ensure that changes to legislation and regulation are practicable to implement and accommodate the administrative costs councils incur to comply with mandatory state-wide technology platforms, such as the new FoodTrader registration system.

Healthy, diverse and thriving communities

On behalf of our member councils, the MAV is asking:

THE STATE GOVERNMENT TO:

7. Actively work with the local government sector and other relevant stakeholders to support councils and their communities to hold inclusive activities and events that celebrate our collective diversity of gender identity, sex, sexual orientation, religion, colour, disability, cultural and language backgrounds, and all protected attributes.
8. Introduce regulatory reforms to prevent and reduce gambling harm, including a mandatory cashless pre-commitment scheme for all electronic gaming machines; venues to be closed between 2am and 6am daily; amend “community benefit” definition to apply to genuine philanthropic organisations or charities; and introduce a fund to support gaming venues wanting to transition away from EGMs.
9. Review the Maternal and Child Health program model and funding including the Key Ages and Stages framework to address increased scope, workforce attraction and retention, database functionality, capital funding, and better support for family violence and mental health.
10. Expand capital funding for kindergarten infrastructure to ensure that eligibility recognises individual needs and usage patterns of funded kindergarten programs across different local government areas and considers the ability of non-growth areas to expand facilities with limited land availability.
11. Ensure funding streams and associated agreements offered by the State for kindergarten infrastructure can work in partnership with each other to enable larger projects to be co-funded.
12. Reconsider the strategy applied for infrastructure planning for funded 3-year-old kindergarten and develop a new approach to plan for future infrastructure for expanded 4 year old kindergarten.
13. Provide detail on how the Victorian Government plans to fund and deliver infrastructure for the Kindergarten – Best Start, Best Life reform. Establish long-term funding streams for local government, which covers the full cost of expanding or building new kindergarten infrastructure to facilitate the Victorian Government’s kindergarten reform; and take responsibility for the costs associated with implementing and the ongoing servicing of the reform.
14. Implement an ongoing funding stream and prioritisation framework to support the delivery of critical higher order community infrastructure such as public libraries, cultural and community centres, aquatic centres, bicycle infrastructure, and recreation facilities.
15. Establish regional targets for the supply of social housing to better match the number of vulnerable households.
16. Expand the Big Housing Build to further increase the supply of social and affordable housing.
17. Provide permanent and ongoing funding to address the critical shortage of social and affordable housing.
18. Conduct an audit of state government land for social housing development opportunities.
19. Introduce legislation in relation to short-stay accommodation, including AirBnB, to alleviate amenity impacts and limit the amount of time dwellings can be rented out on a short-stay basis

in areas where housing availability is a particular issue.

20. Review private rental assistance programs, undertake immediate legislative reform to strengthen minimum standards for rooming houses, and recognise that private market mechanisms are not fit-for-purpose for many people experiencing homelessness to secure long-term rental housing.
21. Explore innovative models to support people sleeping rough into social and affordable housing and roll out the Zero model across the state, supported by state government funding.
22. Improve mental health services by increasing funding support for the delivery of flexible and dynamic youth outreach and support services with an increased focus on mental health prevention.
23. Advocate to the Australian Government for the removal of the Lifetime Health Cover loading to allow more people to access private health insurance and improve the waiting period for public medical treatments and local government in-home supports.
24. Adequately resource the Safer Communities Taskforce to enable proactive policing in local streets and neighbourhoods.
25. Provide funding for homeless outreach psychiatric services and assertive outreach teams to attend incidents with Victoria Police where mental health, homelessness or alcohol and other drug (AOD) misuse is a driving factor.
26. Support local governments to adopt a localised approach to crime prevention by bringing together police, outreach support services, business and community groups to ensure a coordinated response that focuses on both safety and wellbeing.
27. Provide additional resources for Victoria Police and related government agencies to support councils addressing anti-social, illegal and challenging behaviour by individuals in public spaces.
28. Develop effective regulation to stop hoon driving, because of the impact of anti-social hoon driving on communities.



Well-planned, connected and resilient built environment

On behalf of our member councils, the MAV is asking:

THE STATE GOVERNMENT TO:

29. Exempt local government from the windfall gains tax.
30. Hypothecate a proportion of the windfall gains tax collected in each municipality for projects within that municipality and partner with the relevant council to determine and prioritise the infrastructure needs of the community
31. Urgently review developer contributions schemes and develop a more efficient and clearer procedure for preparing and amending schemes to reduce the administrative burden and cost on councils.
32. Develop, prioritise and appropriately fund major infrastructure for communities in the rapidly growing urban fringe, including road, transport, and social infrastructure.
33. Double the Growing Suburbs Fund to \$100 million commencing from the 2024/25 Budget.
34. Simplify the methodology and data inputs required in Victoria to prove council's eligibility for Disaster Recovery Funding, bringing it in line with other states.
35. Ensure post-disaster funding programs for councils enable betterment to improve assets beyond the previous condition to provide resilience against future damage resulting from disaster events.
36. Financially support local government with an ongoing betterment program to upgrade existing public infrastructure in readiness for increased exposure to future disaster events.
37. Release a flood recovery roadmap outlining next steps, future engagement and potential policy changes in relation to flood recovery.
38. Take on the planning, designing and delivery of flood overlays across Victoria.
39. Increase funding available to local communities, local government, and individuals, and implement legislation, policy, and regulations to improve and support building resilience to natural disasters.
40. Implement mandatory contributions via the planning system that require the provision of land and/or dwellings for social and affordable housing as part of new residential development.
41. Create an integrated planning framework across state and local government departments for delivery of sufficient affordable housing that achieves best practice urban design whilst protecting existing neighbourhood character and heritage values.
42. Consult and work with local government on planning reforms to improve the operational efficiency and timeliness of planning decisions.
43. Review the statutory timeframes outlined in the Planning and Environment Act 1987 to better differentiate between simple, moderate and complex planning matters.
44. Tackle shortages of urban and regional town planners in councils by increasing support and funding for university placements and introduction of traineeships and short course certificates for entry-level planners.

45. Release qualified planners from state government roles to enable recruitment of qualified planners into local government positions.
46. Review requirements for placement of gas, water and electricity service infrastructure within front setbacks of new developments to ensure access and safety objectives are balanced with impacts on neighbourhood character and streetscape, and ensure requirements are published.
47. Progress the ESD Roadmap project to eliminate the need for gas services infrastructure in new developments.
48. Plan and fund safer pedestrian and cycling access along the arterial road network within activity centres.
49. Commit to creating a state that is climate-safe, equitable and liveable for all residents and visitors through ensuring an accessible and reliable public transport network.
50. Commit to the permanency of the Strategic Cycling Corridors pop-up bike lanes.
51. Improve active transport infrastructure safety through implementation of the Strategic Cycling Corridors; separation of trucks, pedestrians and bicycle riders; greater provision of separated and safe bicycle infrastructure; and improvement of walking networks for pedestrians.
52. Invest in greater public transport services including increasing non-peak train frequencies and implementing bus reform to provide high-capacity, high frequency, direct routes across metropolitan Melbourne.
53. Take back responsibility for maintenance of arterial roads and provide an appropriate maintenance response.
54. Enact legislative reform to confirm the power of municipal building surveyors (MBS) to issue a building order, including for minor work, to ensure that councils and the MBS can require remediation in instances of illegal building work or dangerous buildings or land.
55. Prioritise the conclusion of the green wedge and agricultural land review to ensure long-term protection of Melbourne's food bowl, with an accompanying commitment to development a state-wide food system and food security strategy and action plan.
56. Proactively manage community facilities located on Crown Land including regular maintenance and upgrades.



Changing climate and a circular economy

On behalf of our member councils, the MAV is asking:

THE STATE GOVERNMENT TO:

57. Provide for an ongoing funding allocation to retrofit existing leisure centres and community facilities to be carbon neutral.
58. Ensure energy transmission infrastructure across Victoria is developed using existing easements, is located underground where practicable, is co-located with other lines to reduce impacts, and is subject to extensive consultation before any decision on implementation.
59. Significantly increase its investment in the Recycling Victoria: a new economy policy and action plan to boost processing capacity and markets for recycled materials.
60. Set and report on state-wide targets for the use of recycled content in the construction of State-funded infrastructure.
61. Work with councils to investigate options to provide alternatives to a fourth bin for glass, noting that the NSW and South Australian Governments both determined that an expanded container deposit scheme offered significantly better return on investment than introduction of a fourth kerbside bin.
62. Ensure that the container deposit scheme regulatory settings and collection network allow for future expansion of the scheme.
63. Work with local government to support the transition of industry and freight to low or no emissions operations by implementing low emission zones in freight and industry heavy areas near residential and other sensitive uses.
64. Provide grant programs and funding to support businesses to transition to zero emission methods of operation.
65. Undertake initiatives to achieve greater separation of trucks from where people live and learn.
66. Initiate a heavy vehicle buy-back scheme to incentivise more fuel-efficient heavy vehicles.
67. Increase investment in air quality monitoring stations.
68. Introduce stronger planning controls for new development to maximise the use of rooftop spaces for infrastructure that enhances the environmental performance of the building.
69. Review the Electricity Safety (Electric Line Clearance) Regulations 2020 to embed consideration of amenity, biodiversity, and urban heat island effect in low bushfire risk areas.
70. Sponsor a tree canopy aerial mapping service to provide communities across Victoria with consistent, comparable, long term tree canopy measurement data.
71. Provide a mechanism for councils to seek dispensation for payment of the landfill levy where this dispensation advances the strategic aim of the landfill levy.
72. Create a mechanism to allow for dispensation of the landfill levy for the disposal of contaminated sediments from urban wetlands and water sensitive urban design assets.

73. Develop state-wide communications campaign materials relating to the issue of illegal dumping, including development of specific material for culturally and linguistically diverse communities.
74. Allocate funding for fit-for-purpose relief centres and the ability to scale up relief centres regionally to support campaign-style emergency events.
75. Ensure that, in the event of an emergency evacuation order, that there is an ability for the response agency to be adaptive and provide warning systems for individual events.
76. Provide support to the local government sector to achieve no local species extinction.
77. Promote and incentivise local governments to redirect funds over and above operational cash towards authorised deposit-taking institutions that do not invest in fossil fuel industries, moving towards 100% divestment.
78. Support councils and regional library corporations to transition to alternate management models to meet the 30 June 2031 wind-up requirements set by the Victorian Government in the Local Government Act 2020.



Sector capability and good governance

On behalf of our member councils, the MAV is asking:

THE STATE GOVERNMENT TO:

79. Actively work with local government and other relevant stakeholders to develop state-wide measures that support councils to manage and prevent disruptive and unsafe behaviour, particularly at council meetings, and coordinate a response to the expanding and increasingly aggressive cohort in the community that have been targeting local councils in recent months.
80. Provide additional resources for the eSafety Commissioner, Local Government Inspectorate and other relevant bodies to address online bullying, harassment and trolling of candidates and councillors on social media platforms.
81. Expand the authority of the eSafety Commissioner to remove online abuse of councillors and candidates which would fall under the current threshold of content with the 'intent of causing serious harm' or under a new threshold of 'unintentionally causing serious harm'.
82. Work with local government to develop support and social media management programs for candidates and councillors through the eSafetyWomen program in the lead up to the 2024 elections.
83. Undertake ongoing benchmarking of cyber security incidents and mitigation activities at a local government level and provide councils access to these reports.
84. Amend the Local Government (Planning and Reporting) Regulations 2020 to remove the requirement for reimbursements of childcare costs or expenses incurred by a councillor who is a carer to be published as a reported expense item in the Annual Report or elsewhere.
85. Reconsider the fee structure for the 39 councils required to undergo the VEC electoral structural review forum, noting the financial burden that this represents for small rural shires, and encourage VEC panels to give greater consideration to council submissions on the most appropriate electoral structure for their communities.
86. Recognise the expertise of the Minister for Local Government's own appointed electoral representation advisory panels to recommend an appropriate constitution of a council, guided by consultation with local communities.
87. Publish a notice in the Government Gazette in accordance with section 13 of the Local Government Act 2020 enabling all Victorian councils to be constituted in any one of the three permissible manners.
88. Establish funded student placement and career pathway programs within local government with the support of tertiary institutions and coordinate a media and advocacy campaign to attract skilled resourcing to the local government sector.
89. Commit to an education recruitment program and support universities to undertake industry-based learning and work placements within councils to attract people to the fields of health sciences and environmental health.
90. Reinstate recurrent funding for the Know Your Council website.



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