



## **Municipal Association of Victoria**

### **Submission to the 2010-11 State Budget**

**December 2009**

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## 1 Introduction

The MAV welcomes the opportunity to provide a submission to the 2010-11 State Budget. In developing this submission, the MAV has consulted with its members about the priority matters that require funding to achieve a positive resolution.

The submission focuses on major issues facing Victoria, including both long-and short-term challenges.

The MAV looks forward to working with the State Government and the Association's member councils to successfully resolve these issues.

In addition to this submission, the MAV supports the priorities identified by other local government groups, such as the position reflected in the Rural Council Victoria submission.

## 2 Key challenges facing Victoria

Victoria is one of the most liveable areas in the world, with good education, health and transport services; and an enviable natural and built environment.

Victoria faces a range of challenges, including: the unprecedented bushfires in early 2009, continued recovery from the recent global economic crisis, mitigation and adaptation to climate change, and the state's growing population.

These challenges will require cooperation between the State and local government to ensure Victoria's status as one of the most liveable places is maintained.

Following the 2009 bushfires, Victoria needs to continue its recovery and reconstruction effort as well as ensure the State is well prepared to prevent future natural disasters. Further effort is required in all facets of our emergency management regime – planning, prevention, response and recovery, particularly with increasing risks from climate change.

The nation and State face complex economic environments with the continued threat of increasing unemployment. Simultaneously, there are also risks that the expected return to growth will expose the capacity constraints that became evident in 2007, such as infrastructure bottlenecks and skills shortages. Given the short duration of the economic contraction and only modest increases in unemployment, it is likely that these capacity pressures will return sooner than in previous recessions. These dichotomous risks mean governments are operating in an uncertain policy environment and will potentially need to continue stimulating economic activity while also increasing the longer-term productive capacity of the economy.

Simultaneously, the Victorian population is projected to grow at unprecedented levels, placing pressure on infrastructure, services and the planning system. This will raise important issues about how Melbourne and Victoria can accommodate increased population, with rural and regional areas forming an important solution to these growth pressures. The expanding population is also putting pressure on social cohesion, as evidenced by growing community concerns about alcohol use.

The Victorian Government has been working on its climate change strategy throughout 2009 and it is expected that a white paper will be released in the new year. Climate change remains a significant and ongoing challenge for Australia; and Victoria, with its reliance on brown coal for its base-load power generation has a specific challenge. However, there are many opportunities for both local and State government to work together to encourage new, green industries to develop. The MAV believes that councils can play a role in ensuring the Victorian economy is ready for mitigation efforts and is well placed to retain its status as the predominant manufacturing base in Australia.

The MAV strongly believes that each of these challenges is best addressed through cooperative efforts between State and local government and looks forward to discussing these issues further.

### 3 Long-term challenges

#### 3.1 Economic reform

The economic challenges facing Australia are complex and varied. While it appears that the country has escaped the worst effects of the downturn, Australia still faces the risk of stagnant or below trend economic growth. At the same time, with unemployment remaining historically low, the capacity pressures facing the economy could return if strong growth occurs.

Given these divergent risks, it is essential the Budget addresses capacity and productivity constraints and could potentially address downside risks to the economy.

The MAV believes that one option to address these challenges is through a renewed focus on reducing regulatory burdens and increasing productivity in the economy. Victoria's plan of improving productivity has focused on improving the productive capacity of the economy by reducing red tape and regulatory burdens. Local government has a role to play by continuing recent efforts to improve its efficiency and effectiveness.

The Victorian Competition and Efficiency Commission (VCEC) is currently examining potential reforms to local government regulation to reduce the costs to business. This inquiry, while welcomed by the MAV, needs to be supported by further investment to promote improved service delivery models (focused more on cooperative delivery).

##### 3.1.1 Regulatory Reform Fund

The MAV has advocated for regulatory reform, greater shared service provision and enhanced procurement practices for Victorian local government. The MAV supports projects that will:

- improve the capacity and service delivery of councils
- generate cost savings
- promote consistency and systemic use of shared services, which currently occur in an ad hoc manner
- ensure councils can identify and improve their operation without external intervention
- establish structures to support further reform to service delivery and collaboration
- embed a culture of shared service delivery and collaboration in the sector

The Councils Reforming Business initiative provided a platform for the first round of these activities. This included a report on the potential benefits of improved procurement processes (which found savings of up to \$350 million per annum is possible), implementation of new procurement approaches in councils, including shared services and standardising council regulations.

The projects focus on two main methods to achieve reform: (a) inter-council collaboration in service provision; and (b) internal reform of council systems and data management to drive consistency in standards across the sector. It contributes to both State and Commonwealth policy through reducing red-tape for businesses and the community and reforming council practice to ensure it can operate more effectively and credibly in the current economy.

The results of these activities demonstrate that local government has the appetite to engage in reform of regulatory burdens. However, the biggest impediment to continued reform and productivity gains is the lack of available capital to implement programs. For example, reforms to the WorkCover practices of councils could potentially reap significant savings, but require significant upfront investment.

This lack of change management capital in the sector is a serious constraint in achieving further efficiency. To achieve the best outcomes for the sector, it is proposed that an endowment is created to provide a source of funding for ongoing reform. It would be anticipated that this endowment would provide for a source of ongoing funding.

#### Request

The MAV seeks a further investment for regulatory reform and efficiency projects for Victorian local government through the establishment of a local government reform fund endowment.

#### 3.1.2 Local Infrastructure

Local infrastructure often plays an important economic role in supporting activities such as freight, which has been recognised by the State Government in its submission to Infrastructure Australia and in its Local Roads strategy. These documents recognise the important role of local government in supporting economic activity.

With the threat of capacity constraints facing the economy, it is important that funding is available to increase the capacity of strategically important elements of the road network, particularly those fundamental to industries such as timber, dairy and mineral sands.

Climate change will also exacerbate the cost to councils of maintaining and replacing infrastructure.

In addition, small councils have the greatest need for external funding support for the renewal of ageing infrastructure and the provision of new infrastructure needed by the community. However, these councils are often the most poorly placed to seek external funding when it becomes available because of limited staff to undertake suitable pre-construction planning and feasibility work.

Supporting the capacity of councils to undertake this work would better position them to access funding programs as they become available. Improving infrastructure planning of rural and regional councils is essential to build the capacity and flexibility required to deliver infrastructure works that will benefit the economy of regional communities. It will allow councils to attract external funding when it becomes available to be 'project ready', and position them to not only take a strategic approach to infrastructure planning, but work in collaboration where required to deliver broader regional benefit.

*MAV Proposal:*

Provide funding for strategically important local roads, through the renewal of the local roads to market program.

Support councils to improve their capacity to access funding by undertaking pre-construction engineering plans for infrastructure. This will expedite the construction of infrastructure when funding becomes available and will position Victoria to be 'project ready' ahead of competitive funding programs, such as the strategic component of the Community Infrastructure Program. This will also encourage those councils with the least financial capacity (and their communities) to benefit from these programs.

Support for councils to understand the potential impacts of climate change on local infrastructure and assets, and identify appropriate risk reduction responses.

### **3.2 Climate Change**

The impacts of climate change and the policies that seek to reduce Australia's emissions significantly affect councils and communities. In the short to medium term these policies will lead to changes in the way councils do business.

Over the medium to long term it can be expected that emissions will not be reduced sharply or fast enough to avoid many impacts arising from climate change. These impacts threaten to be wide-ranging for State and local government, including but not limited to decreased lifespan of infrastructure and increased maintenance costs, increased pressure on emergency management systems from more frequent and severe weather events, a rise in health risks for the young and elderly, declining agricultural productivity exacerbating rural population decline, threats to ecosystem health and pressure on coastal assets from rising sea levels with associated planning implications and liabilities.

As part of the MAV's consultation in preparing its submission to the Victorian Government's climate change green paper, the Association undertook detailed consultation with councils to determine their views on climate change. Victorian councils consider:

- That climate change is happening, and that on a balance of probabilities, takes as its starting point the majority view of the Australian and international science communities that climate change as we are experiencing is influenced by human activity.
- That Australia is already experiencing change in the climate system and that this will only exacerbate over time as the global community is unlikely to be able to cut global greenhouse gas emissions sharply enough or fast enough for many future impacts to be avoided. Further, it is recognised that a level of warming is already 'locked in' to the climate system.

- That Australia as an already dry, hot nation will be among the most severely affected developed nations, and that the three levels of government with communities, will have to find ways to respond and adapt, such that communities remain viable.
- That there will always be uncertainty about the timing and magnitude of impacts as will affect any one region or municipality and that uncertainty cannot be used as an excuse for inaction.

Victorian municipal councils, as the level of government that works most closely with communities and local industries, have much to offer by way of local knowledge, regional and sub-regional specialisations, and facilitated connections across a municipality.

The Victorian local government sector is keen to work with the State Government to actively explore opportunities for increasing energy efficiency such as street lighting, decentralised energy and water supply systems, and enhanced domestic food production, where decentralisation contributes to diversity and therefore security of supply, and to local jobs creation in the emerging green economy. Councils are also keen to work with the State Government on enhanced resource recovery and alternative waste treatment technologies to reduce emissions from the waste sector.

In thinking about adaptation to climate change, the Victorian local government sector recognises it can play an important role in working with the State Government to build community understanding of the potential impacts of climate change on a municipality and region, and facilitate adaptive responses.

### 3.2.1 Council Resource Profiles

The resource profiles of councils include components such as natural resources and the potential for alternative resources (e.g. solar power and recycled water), with demographic, social, local economic, technological and infrastructure resources.

Councils have expressed a keen desire to better understand their municipal resource profile to take advantage of short-and long-term opportunities from climate change and the transition to a low carbon economy. Improved access to this information will allow councils to plan for industry attraction and investment, and match municipal resources to the needs of potential industries for establishment or expansion. This will enhance the capacity of councils to encourage economic development, particularly as local economic activity adjusts to the changing environment.

An increased understanding of the municipal resource profile will place rural and regional councils in a position to plan for growth and attract and assist new businesses and industries.

#### *MAV Proposal:*

A program that allows councils to systematically profile their municipal resources to meet the needs of expanding industries, and plan to attract new potential industries that respond to the emerging low carbon economy, such as in the decentralised water and energy sectors or alternative waste treatment sector.

### 3.2.2 Supporting Local Economies and Communities

Local government has an important role to play in ensuring that local economic activity is maintained, with councils providing direct employment during the construction of infrastructure and facilitating building activity.

Councils anticipate that climate change and implications of emissions reduction policies will influence local economies by affecting how industries adjust, including whether they are forced to shed workers. Maintaining robust local economies is of vital importance to local government as it underpins viable communities.

To ensure that viability is maintained, councils are keen to work with the State Government to better understand the anticipated impacts of climate change and policy responses, so that appropriate adaptation and adjustment responses can be developed.

#### *MAV Proposal:*

A partnership program between councils and the State Government to identify the impacts of climate change on vulnerable industries and sections of their communities, and to develop transitional measures to minimise job losses and associated community hardship.

## 3.3 Planning for Future Growth

### 3.3.1 Growing population

Fundamental to the ongoing achievement of positive social, economic and environmental outcomes is effective regional and local strategic planning for our growing population and rapidly changing use of productive land.

Nationally through COAG, the LGPMC and Major Cities unit there is a shift to aligning federal investment in infrastructure with evidence of good cities planning.

The MAV has successfully advocated for support to councils for strategic planning and policy development – evidenced by the partnership with DCPD, MAV and local councils on the Housing Growth Requirements project and the Rural Land Use Planning Program.

The MAV has initiated significant projects and forums to assist councils meet their statutory obligations and improve their practice and levels of service. The investment by the Federal and State governments in e-planning initiatives has supported this work.

A key outcomes from the MAV's Planning Process improvement Program are time and cost savings to councils, service improvements to users of planning services and greater transparency and accountability by councils for planning decisions and outcomes.

#### **Key challenges for the sector include**

- planning for the impacts of a rapidly growing population in both Melbourne and regional Victoria

- ensuring that risk management and equity are addressed in planning for coastal hazards likely as a result of climate change
- ongoing support for performance improvement in councils and delivery of e-planning services
- ensuring rural and regional Victoria contribute to green jobs, and housing futures
- implementation of the (likely) P&E Act and revised State Planning Policy Framework (SPPF).

#### Request

- Re-funding the MAV/ DPCD Continuous Improvement program to enable:
  - \$600,000 over three years to deliver the successful Planning Process improvement program to all councils in Victoria
  - advice, documentation and training for councils to facilitate rollout of the new Act and SPPF (\$150K)
  - accelerating take up of standard agreements with referral authorities and councils (\$120K)
- \$300,000 over three years for a coastal hazard and climate change planning policy officer to ensure an integrated state/ local government response
- Refunding of the e-planning roadmap and program of activities

As with the regulatory reform and the Councils Reforming Business initiative, the current activities have built a strong platform for the sector to support continuous improvement in planning.

#### 3.3.2 Rural and regional growth

Rural and regional communities are at the front line in dealing with a changing climate, rapid population growth and demographic change, and the emerging “green economy”.

A long term view that provides a robust strategic framework to balance competing policy objectives is essential.

Building the strategic and operational capacity of councils to engage and influence in this context is critical for Victoria’s growth and development.

#### Request

The MAV calls for \$2 million over two years to assist the 48 rural and regional councils and eight interface councils to:

- Work collaboratively on shared research and regional strategic policy development and embed it into planning schemes
- Integrate transport and infrastructure planning with regional plans
- Progress implementation of shared services and other efficiency initiatives
- Participate in the whole of sector Planning process Improvement program
- Develop a workforce strategy to identify emerging skills required and the capacity of councils to respond

## 4 Immediate Challenges

### 4.1 Bushfires and Emergency Management

Following the unprecedented 2009 bushfires, the State, councils and the community must work cooperatively to reduce the risk of fire.

The events of 7 February have exposed the need to review the emergency management regime. The sheer ferocity of the fires, their speed and intensity meant that homes previously considered defensible, were destroyed.

With the prolonged drought and the threat of hotter and drier conditions from climate change, we must ensure the safety of the community against similar emergency events and prepare for further dangerous conditions.

#### 4.1.1 Local Government's Role in Emergency Management

Local government has a wide range of responsibilities in Victoria's emergency management arrangements as designated in legislation and the Emergency Management Manual Victoria (EMMV). The EMMV outlines the role of councils in all stages of emergency management: prevention; mitigation and risk reduction; response; and recovery.

Some of these responsibilities are legislated in the Emergency Management Act 1986, the Country Fire Authority Act 1958, the Metropolitan Fire Brigades Act 1958, the Water Act 1989, and the Health Act 1958 and others are designated through the EMMV.

There are a number of positions in councils involved in emergency management including:

- the Municipal Emergency Resource Officer (MERO), who coordinates municipal level emergency planning and is a key officer in the Municipal Emergency Coordination Centre
- the Municipal Fire Prevention Officer (MFPO), who undertakes a range of fire prevention activities on both council and private land
- the Municipal Recovery Manager (MRM), who has a lead role in the community recovery processes
- the Environmental Health Officer (EHO), who ensures food, drink and the lodgings are safe, particularly from water borne disease.

Councils work in cooperation with key State government emergency management agencies such as the police, fire authorities, ambulance services and SES to ensure a coordinated approach to emergency events and a safer outcome for communities.

While local government is not the lead agency to respond to any emergency, it has a support role for a range of emergencies including bushfires, flood, earthquakes, and dam safety. Councils play the lead role in the recovery from any localised emergency events.

#### 4.1.2 Fire Refuges and Neighbourhood Safer Places

The Interim report of the Royal Commission recommended the introduction of Neighbourhood Safer Places (NSPs) and fire refuges to provide further options for people whose primary fire plans have failed and who have no other alternative. These are an essential part of the new bushfire management regime, which prioritises early relocation and avoiding high risk areas on dangerous days.

Under current guidelines, fire refuges are required to have stringent standards. The purpose of refuges is to provide the safest alternative after leaving early. NSPs aim to provide a safer alternative, without guaranteeing safety.

Under the recently assented Emergency Services Legislation Amendment Act 2009, councils are responsible for the designation and maintenance of NSPs. Under this Act, councils in the CFA area of the state will be required to designate NSPs on a 'best endeavours' basis by 1 July 2010. After this time it will be compulsory for councils to consider the designation of NSPs and if no NSP is designated within a municipality the council must be able to demonstrate why it was not possible.

With the introduction of NSPs, which provide a lower level of safety, refuges will become an important component of the bushfire regime. These facilities will be required for areas which have high risk but have not been able to identify compliant NSPs or which have single access and egress points.

Rural shires with a low rate base often have a high risk of bushfire. This factor limits the capacity of the sector to construct refuges or bring existing facilities up to the appropriate standard. The Natural Disaster Resilience Program, under which councils in other states will be able to apply for funding for mitigation activity will not be available to Victorian councils this financial year.

With councils responsible for the designation and maintenance of refuges, the MAV therefore seeks a budget commitment for the upgrade and maintenance of refuges in the high fire risk areas.

It is estimated that the cost to bring an existing facility up to standard for a refuge is \$1 million and there are ongoing costs to maintain the facility at a safe level.

The MAV is undertaking a study to better understand the costs associated with the introduction of NSPs and will seek funding support in 2010.

##### Request

\$12 million over two years for the progressive introduction of fire refuges in high risk areas of Victoria

#### 4.1.3 Building Capacity in Local Government

With some exceptions across the state, the MFPO, MERO and MRM often hold multiple roles within councils and are rarely full-time positions.

Support for council emergency management personnel will result in greater allocation of effort to these functions, further training and development opportunities, leading to better emergency outcomes.

This is particularly important given the noted difference between the capacities of councils. This approach would allow local level capacity to be expanded, resulting in a significant increase in the amount of fire prevention and emergency planning that could be undertaken.

As the risks of emergencies increase over time with climate change, local government will continue to have a key role in local planning, prevention, response and recovery.

In addition, the MAV has been funded by the Office of the Emergency Services Commissioner to employ a Local Government Liaison Officer to cooperatively support the capacity of councils. In order to build upon this successful partnership approach, the MAV requests funding for this position.

**Request**

\$3.1 million over four years for the deployment of additional emergency management capacity in councils.

\$300,000 over three years for an emergency management liaison officer to assist sector-wide capacity development.

#### 4.1.4 Continued Recovery

For communities affected by the 7 February fires, the recovery process is underway and will continue for many years as the social and psychological trauma diminishes and the built and natural environment is restored.

An important resource for communities is the Community Development Officers (CDOs), funded by the State Government, who provide an essential service in assisting the community to recover. These officers provide a single point of community contact in the heavily affected areas and are vital in providing ongoing support. They coordinate community recovery committees and empower, build capacity and support affected communities.

Funding for these positions is scheduled to conclude in April 2010 and the MAV believes that given the scale of the fires, longer-term community support is required.

**Request**

The MAV seeks funding for CDOs until April 2011.

## 4.2 Youth and Social Programs

### 4.2.1 FReeZa

The FReeZa program provides support for young Victorians to assist in the organisation of entertainment events, such as music, artistic and cultural events, for other youth. These events could involve, for example, live bands, BMX/Skate competitions or other events. They are drug, alcohol and smoke-free and aim to provide a valuable form of safe entertainment for young people aged 14 to 18.

A key component of the FReeZa program is the provision of support to young people to organise these events, building their project and event management skills. It also

provides a specific opportunity for more marginalised youth to contribute positively to their community, with young people taking a lead in the program and event development.

Through local youth-led FReeZA committees, young people have the chance to:

- determine what types of events and cultural activities they want in their communities
- participate in delivering events and cultural activities for young people between 14 – 18 years of age
- be involved in decision making
- be involved in volunteering
- be involved in youth development and training activities.

In 2008-09, there are FReeZA Committees across metropolitan Melbourne and regional Victoria who will run over 450 events with an attendance of over 130,000 young people in over 110 venues.

#### Request

That the State Government provide \$8 million over four years for the continuation of the FReeZa program.

#### 4.2.2 Public Libraries

The MAV urgently seeks greater financial contributions from the State Government for public libraries services. Support should focus on the key challenges facing councils: maintaining their operation and staffing in the rapidly changing environment; their collections, both electronic and paper; and improving their ICT capacity; continuing the State's successful contributions to library buildings through the *Living Libraries Program*, and considering the ongoing recurrent needs of this vital service.

There are over 300 library service points across Victoria, covering all 79 councils. Nearly 50 per cent of Victoria's population is registered with a public library, and over 27 million visits were made to libraries in 2007-08.

Although library costs have been growing, there has been no substantial increase in staffing numbers over this time, and the per capita employee levels have been steadily falling.

At the same time, the State Government's contribution to public libraries has fallen from 23.3 per cent to 19.5 per cent. This reduced contribution has required local government to pick up the funding shortfall.

While State grants have been indexed to the consumer price index (and from 2004-05, population), library costs have been growing in line with labour, technology and book costs. Over time, this has eroded the effectiveness of grants as a source of revenue, placing increased financial pressure on services.

Due to a marked growth in the importance of information and communication technology (ICT) in the modern economy, there is a corresponding risk that people will be excluded from accessing this technology based on their geographic location or socio-economic status.

Accordingly, libraries are playing a vital role in providing universal access to ICT infrastructure and the Internet, but will need to keep pace with rapid change in technology.

### **Living Libraries**

The MAV seeks further funding to extend the successful *Living Libraries* program for a further four years. This program has led to significant improvements in the quality of libraries across the state. Further funding would be utilised to continue to improve and update library facilities to ensure they achieve modern standards. This includes ensuring they are appropriately sized, located and can accommodate ICT infrastructure.

#### **Request**

The MAV seeks \$20 million over four years for an extension of the Living Libraries project.

### **Recurrent Funding**

The MAV has maintained that the biggest single financial concern facing public libraries is the declining importance of recurrent expenditure over time.

Although recurrent funds are indexed in line with the CPI and population growth each year, increasing community expectations have resulted in additional costs to libraries. These expectations include the provision of services aimed at particular demographics, such as aged, disabled, or migrant groups, in areas such as IT and language development.

Given the increased community expectations placed on public library services, a review of the recurrent funding model is required. In light of the approaching expiration of the current funding agreements in June 2011, this review would serve to highlight service areas in need of greater attention and support.

#### **Request**

The MAV seeks \$100,000 to support a review of the allocation and adequacy of the current recurrent funding for library services.

### **ICT and Collections**

A significant and growing cost associated with broadband provision in public libraries is that of downloads. As more patrons become aware of the high level of internet services provided by public libraries service usage increases, and so too the costs incurred by the libraries. In addition more and more public libraries are providing wireless access to their communities, compounding the challenge of these usage costs.

The exponential rate of increase in the use of public library provided internet points and the associated costs mean that funding requirements in this area are constantly increasing. Having successfully supported public libraries in the early stages of

internet provision, the Victorian State Government must ensure it continues to adequately support this service.

In addition, a Strategic Asset Audit of Victorian Public Libraries undertaken in 2006 revealed State public libraries were experiencing a fall in collection items per capita, and a corresponding fall in real per capita expenditure on new library materials. This trend was accompanied by strong growth in the emerging area of audio-visual materials. These patterns indicate the changing focus of library collections, as well as the need for ongoing funding to ensure service and material standards are maintained.

1. An investment from the Victorian Government of \$2 million in funding per year for the provision of internet
2. An investment of \$20 million in funding four years to support the new investment in resources for public libraries.

## 5 Appendix 1

The MAV and its members have identified that further funding is required through the following State Council Resolutions

### **COAG EARLY YEARS REFORMS**

The MAV advocate for

1. Full cost recovery to offset the impacts of COAG Early Years Reforms on service accessibility and affordability for families with young children
2. Clarity of roles and responsibilities for the planning and implementation of the COAG Early Years Reforms
3. Any costs and associated risks from the COAG Early Years Reforms are not passed onto local government or families, or result in diluting the role or powers of local government to serve the community
4. A partnership approach between local government and the State Government in planning for the new early years policy directions
5. To the State Government to provide full capital and operating funding of 3 year old kinder programs in line with funding for four-year old programs.

### **DROUGHT SUPPORT**

That the MAV advocate to the Victorian and Federal Government to provide continued and targeted support to farming families and rural communities to respond to the ongoing drying and drought condition

### **EXTENSION OF COMMUNITY PLANNING FUNDING**

That the MAV lobby the State Government to continue the funding for Community Planning for at least another 3 years.

### **EXTENSION OF NATURAL GAS SUPPLY**

That the MAV lobby the State & Federal Governments to extend the natural gas network throughout Victoria.

### **FINANCIAL SUSTAINABILITY FOR COUNCILS**

That the Municipal Association of Victoria reaffirms its commitment to the unanimously passed resolution and rationale of 2007 which stated:  
*“MAV asks the State and Federal Governments to immediately commit to finance the ongoing roles of Local Government in an ongoing, permanent, predictable way. This requires ‘formula funding’. The formula should use Municipality attributes similar to those used in the calculation of FAG or R2R amounts. It is most important that the entitlement to funding is a right and not a Grant.”*  
and pursues this issue vigorously.

### **GRANT FUNDING EQUITY**

That the Municipal Association of Victoria (MAV), on behalf of the Local Government Sector in Victoria, continue to lobby the Victorian and Federal Government for a fairer share of Grant funding on an ongoing basis.

### **IMMUNISATION**

That the Municipal Association of Victoria call upon the Federal and State Governments to provide funding to Councils to administer all vaccines provided by the Department of Health.

### **INCREASE IN POLICE NUMBERS AND RESTRICTION ON LATE LICENCES**

Due to the community concerns about emerging violence in the wider community fuelled by alcohol, that the State Government be requested to:

- increase police numbers in Victoria by at least 3,000 personnel;
- review the hours of late licences; and
- allocate more resources for monitoring licensing provisions so that the service of alcohol to those who are inebriated be diminished.

### **METROPOLITAN COMMUNITY ARTS AND CULTURAL FACILITIES**

That MAV pursue with State Government the availability of funding for provision of metropolitan community arts and cultural facilities operating locally (as distinct from regional performing arts centres and galleries outside metropolitan Melbourne).

### **NEW NEIGHBOURHOOD HOUSES**

That the MAV advocates to State Government for the provision of increased funding opportunities to support the operational costs of both establishing new Neighbourhood Houses across the State and funding of existing Neighbourhood Houses, which do not currently receive operating funding.

### **PUBLIC LIBRARIES GRANTS PROGRAM**

That MAV State Council:

Express its disappointment with the recent announcement of the 2009/2010 Public Libraries Grants Program - a minor increase in funding for libraries per capita of 2%, which falls substantially below cost increases and represents a further cost shift from the State to local government. Request the funding formula be reviewed and the State government contribution increased in response to the real costs incurred by libraries

### **RAILWAY CROSSING UPGRADE**

That the MAV initiate discussions with the Victorian Government, Vic Roads, V Line and Vic Track to determine a mechanism for funding the upgrade of rail crossings.

### **STREETLIGHTING ADVOCACY AND COMMUNITY AWARENESS CAMPAIGN**

That the MAV work in partnership with Maribyrnong City Council and other interested Victorian councils to develop a street light advocacy and community awareness campaign targeting the State Government, private electrical companies and other key decision makers in order to facilitate:

- State Government funding of a minimum of \$150 per energy efficient street light changeover for every Victorian Council.
- Changes being made to the 'National Electricity Law' regulations that would require electrical distributors to continually improve the efficiency of the streetlight system as new technology becomes available.
- The banning of inefficient (80 watt MV) streetlights within Australia.

### **VALUATION OF LAND AMENDMENT BILL**

That the MAV pursue fair compensation for the transfer of the valuation database from local government ownership to Victorian Government ownership as a result of the Valuation of Land Amendment Bill and equal financial treatment for local governments who choose to complete valuation "in-house" rather than directly by the Valuer General.

### **SCHOOL CROSSING GRANT TO COUNCILS**

That the MAV write to the Victorian Minister for Public Transport, the Hon. Lynne Kosky MP, requesting an increase in the grant allocation pool to councils for the employment of School Crossing Supervisors.

### **SCHOOL CROSSINGS FUNDING**

That the State Government reviews the warrants criteria and funding arrangements for school crossings to lessen the increasing funding shortfalls for Local Government

### **PUBLIC LIBRARY FUNDING**

That the MAV continues to pursue the issues raised by councils and Regional Library Corporations, regarding the escalating recurrent costs by local government for the provision of public library services in Victoria.

### **INCREASE OF CAPITAL FUNDING TO JOINT-USE FACILITIES BETWEEN LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION AND EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT**

That the MAV lobby State Government to increase capital funding to joint use facilities between local communities and the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (DEECD)

### **PENSIONER RATE CONCESSION**

That the Municipal Association of Victoria lobby the Minister for Local Government to conduct a review of the pensioner rate concession with a view to increase the concession amount.

### **FUNDING FOR AGED AND DISABILITY SERVICES**

That the MAV in partnership with ALGA call on the State and Federal governments to increase real funding for service provision in the Aged and Disability area.

### **FUNDING FOR DROUGHT RESPONSE OFFICERS**

That the MAV request the State Government to continue to fund Drought Response Officers from 1 July 2009 to provide ongoing support for drought-affected individuals and families in Victoria.

That the MAV urge the State Government to review drought conditions and any progress in drought recovery by 31 March each year and make an early announcement regarding the availability of ongoing funding for Drought Response Officers so that affected staff and the communities they serve have certainty of ongoing support.

Expand the Drought Response Officer Program to all municipalities that are drought declared but not in receipt of the service.

### **FINANCIAL SUPPORT TO CHANGE TO ENERGY EFFICIENT STREET LIGHTS**

That the MAV advocate for financial support for Councils from both the Commonwealth and Victorian Governments to change over residential street lights to more energy efficient street lighting thereby reducing emissions and ongoing energy costs to communities.

### **ENERGY EFFICIENT LIGHTING**

That the MAV seek State and Federal government funding to develop a state-wide program to progressively replace public street lighting with low energy globes

### **ENERGY EFFICIENT STREET LIGHTING**

That the Electricity Distribution Businesses, Federal Government, Local Government and the State Government each contribute an agreed percentage towards bulk replacements of energy efficient street lighting globes across Victoria.

### **MEALS ON WHEELS**

That the MAV recommend to the Federal Government that it raise the subsidy for meals on wheels so that it is commensurate with other core HACC services, such as Home Care.

### **SUPPORTING IMPLEMENTATION OF THE EARLY YEARS REFORM AGENDA**

That the MAV call upon the Commonwealth and Victorian State Governments to ensure that:

- A partnership approach is taken with local government to develop and implement the national early years reform agenda;
- Adequate financial resources are allocated to ensure the availability of the required numbers of appropriately qualified early years professionals to implement the reform agenda;
- Adequate financial resources are provided to ensure that well designed facilities can be developed or refurbished to meet the expanded and integrated early years services needs, including the universal platform of 15 hours of preschool program per child per week; and

- Appropriate transition timelines and financial support arrangements are in place to ensure local service and facility planning can be undertaken to successfully meet the goals of the early years reform agenda within local communities.

#### **LEVEL RAILWAY CROSSINGS – GRADE SEPARATION**

That the MAV calls on the State Government to:

- Release the current priority list for grade separation of level railway crossings in Victoria.
- Ensure that construction starts on these projects by 2010/11.
- Increase investment in grade separation over and above the \$440 million outlined in the Victoria Transport Plan.

#### **ASSISTANCE FOR CLIMATE CHANGE ADAPTATION AND MITIGATION**

That the Municipal Association of Victoria calls for greater financial support for councils from the Commonwealth and Victorian Governments for climate change mitigation and adaptation strategies and actions. Climate Change is substantially impacting on the lives of most Australians and more action is required in the short term to provide for sustainable communities and infrastructure.

#### **A PACKAGE TO REDUCE CARBON EMISSIONS, CREATE JOBS AND SUPPORT ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**

That the MAV State Council calls upon the Australian Federal, State and Territory Governments to resource a package of measures to reduce carbon emissions in local areas and which also stimulates job creation and economic development.

#### **Pre May 2009**

#### **DOMESTIC WASTEWATER**

That the MAV continue to lobby government to provide ongoing funding support for the implementation of Domestic Wastewater Management Plans.

#### **RAIL FREIGHT**

That the MAV be requested to lobby the State Government to commit to supporting Victoria's future development and prosperity by immediately adopting the recommendations of the Victorian Rail Freight Network review and committing to necessary funding to ensure the upgrade of Victoria's Rail Network.

#### **PUBLIC LIGHTING**

The MAV lobby both State and Federal Governments for financial support to fund the capital cost of the change over from the current MV80 watt globes to lower energy fluorescent globes thus saving energy consumption while reducing greenhouse gas emission and the State Government review the Essential Services Commission determination of OMR costs for public lighting in view of the excessive increases, and encourage the Essential Services Commission to be more responsive to emerging technologies in street lighting infrastructure

#### **SCHOOL CROSSING SUPERVISORS**

That the MAV calls on the State Government to:-

- reinstate the level of subsidy for school crossing supervision to a proportional level equivalent to that of the original scheme that was implemented in 1975; and require Vic Roads to not make any further amendments to the subsidy eligibility criteria for crossings, in particular special needs, without adequate consultation with local government.

That the MAV, VicRoads, Worksafe and the Department of Education and Training conduct a full review of the children's crossing service which incorporates:

- Fair and equitable funding covering the ongoing crossing service and any infrastructure change that may result from the review;
- Recruitment and retention of staff;

- Road safety measures in place around schools and complementary occupational health and safety measures;
- The dismissal times of children at schools which is within the safety measures in place; and
- Review of crossing infrastructure (flags, posts, road markings) to ensure that they meet necessary high visibility and safety requirements.

That the State Government urgently address the re-establishment of an effective partnership between the State Government and Local Government in respect of the School Crossing Supervisor Program and return to the original proportionate level of subsidy namely 70% State and 30% Local Government.

That the MAV State Council and VicRoads be requested to accelerate and finalise as a matter of urgency, the joint MAV/VicRoads Review of the School Crossing Supervisor Scheme and that the review include consideration of the following:

- a) The criteria for the school crossing supervisor subsidy including the appropriateness of using existing traffic and pedestrian count data for a proposed supervised crossing which does not recognise potential increased use with a school crossing supervisor.
- b) How existing supervised school crossings that don't meet the funding criteria are addressed.
- c) Increasing the proportion of funding from the State Government of the actual cost to provide school crossing supervisors to better reflect the proportion that existed when the program was introduced.
- d) Cost shifting to Local Government in the provision of the program
- e) Recruitment and retention of staff
  - Funding by the State Government for the physical installation of school crossings
  - Other mechanisms to deliver the program including schools directly delivering the program
  - Planning and delivering the program be a partnership between Local Government, VicRoads and Schools.
- f) That the MAV be requested to consult with Councils about the content of the draft final report to the Minister before the report is finalised by the joint MAV/VicRoads working Group.
- g) That the MAV call upon the State Government to urgently increase the level of the School Crossing Supervisor Subsidy for each crossing to recognise the cost shifting to local government since the inception of the program.