

Make this Election Count: Vote for Communities

23 September 2022

As we race toward this year's Victorian State Election, Victoria's 79 councils are calling for local community aspirations to be at the forefront of your mind when you enter the ballot box.

Victoria's peak body for local government, the Municipal Association of Victoria, is highlighting the importance of an effective local government sector and encouraging councils to take similar messages to their communities across the state.

MAV President, Cr David Clark, said it was imperative that we make sure the next State Government – no matter its stripes – understands and acts on the needs of communities through their local councils.

"The next State Government needs to focus on getting back to making decisions not just on the cost of living, but also the quality of living," Cr Clark said.

"Whoever wins will have the opportunity to harness the extensive local knowledge of every Victorian council to shape the future of the state through better, locally targeted infrastructure projects, circular economy solutions and emergency management resources."

Overall, the key issues for councils in this election are:

- COVID-19 recovery for communities and councils; financial capacity
- Supporting our young families and senior Victorians; housing
- Planning and building; community resilience and emergency management; infrastructure and transport
- Sustainability and climate change
- Democracy in action
- State-Local government relations

"These are significant issues across the state of Victoria - increasingly we are seeing the State Government legislating through councils and expect councils to shoulder additional costs," Cr Clark explained.

"Or arrangements for co-funded services such as libraries, maternal and child health and school crossing supervisors have shifted in favour of the state. Increases in costs are being left solely for councils and it's time to address these issues and make a real difference to communities and the lives of the residents we serve."

The key asks from the local government sector are fully documented in the MAV's [State Election Platform \(PDF 3.8MB\)](#) or [State Election Platform \(Word - 34KB\)](#).

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BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

- Victoria's 79 councils provide trusted and reliable essential local services and as with all levels of government, councils suffered sizeable losses of revenue through the mandated closure of facilities, significant fee waivers and rates deferrals.
- Rising expenses and the ongoing rate capping system pose an increasing challenge and councils are carrying a large maintenance burden with an expectation from communities to expand and improve those assets as well as deliver increased services.
- Infrastructure contract prices are escalating due to supply pressures and competition from other state infrastructure projects.
- Increased local participation and more people working from home also means the services and work of councils supporting community health and wellbeing are more important than ever before.
- Current council workforces are stretched, with critical shortages emerging in a range of skillsets, from planning and building to environmental health, IT and project management.
- Utilising existing social infrastructure provided by councils is a smart way for the state to save on its own service delivery costs – healthy communities need less state services, not more.
- Protecting community voice in the planning system through council-based decision making, consultation and appeal processes is an ongoing priority concern for the local government sector
- The significant shortage of social and affordable housing across Victoria is exacerbating financial and emotional stresses for many families, households and individuals. Housing is a key social determinant of physical and mental health.
- Rural and regional councils grappling with population increases combined with tourism and visitor economy downturns are exploring innovative options with local businesses and government agencies to develop more short- and medium-term rental options, social housing and for-profit housing which will support employment, trades and skills development.
- In the critical area of emergency management, councils have supported communities through the pandemic, and coordinated relief and recovery from severe bushfires, storms and prolonged power outages. Higher levels of ongoing funding, reflective of risk and community expectations are essential.

For further information, contact MAV's Strategic Communications team.

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