



Vote for Communities

**2022 VICTORIAN
STATE ELECTION**
MAV PLATFORM

AUGUST 2022



MAV MEMBER COUNCILS 2021-22

Alpine Shire Council

Ararat Rural City Council

City of Ballarat

Banyule City Council

Bass Coast Shire Council

Baw Baw Shire Council

Bayside City Council

Benalla Rural City Council

City of Boroondara

Brimbank City Council

Buloke Shire Council

Campaspe Shire Council

Cardinia Shire Council

City of Casey

Central Goldfields Shire Council

Colac Otway Shire Council

Corangamite Shire Council

City of Darebin

East Gippsland Shire Council

Frankston City Council

Gannawarra Shire Council

Glen Eira City Council

Glenelg Shire Council

Golden Plains Shire Council

City of Greater Bendigo

City of Greater Dandenong

City of Greater Geelong

Greater Shepparton City Council

Hepburn Shire Council

Hindmarsh Shire Council

Hobsons Bay City Council

Horsham Rural City Council

Hume City Council

Indigo Shire Council

City of Kingston

Knox City Council

Latrobe City Council

Loddon Shire Council

Macedon Ranges Shire Council

Manningham Council

Mansfield Shire Council

Maribyrnong City Council

Maroondah City Council

City of Melbourne

City of Melton

Mildura Rural City Council

Mitchell Shire Council

Moira Shire Council

City of Monash

Moonee Valley City Council

Moorabool Shire Council

Moreland City Council

Mornington Peninsula Shire Council

Mount Alexander Shire Council

Moyne Shire Council

Murrindindi Shire Council

Nilumbik Shire Council

Northern Grampians Shire Council

City of Port Phillip

Pyrenees Shire Council

Borough of Queenscliffe

South Gippsland Shire Council

Southern Grampians Shire Council

City of Stonnington

Strathbogie Shire Council

Surf Coast Shire Council

Swan Hill Rural City Council

Towong Shire Council

Wangaratta Rural City Council

Warrnambool City Council

Wellington Shire Council

West Wimmera Shire Council

Whitehorse City Council

City of Whittlesea

City of Wodonga

Wyndham City Council

City of Yarra

Yarra Ranges Shire Council

Yarriambiack Shire Council

PRESIDENT'S INTRODUCTION

At any time, elections are important. They present an opportunity to reflect, think about what matters and choose who will best represent us in the years ahead.

This year is particularly significant, having had a federal election and with a state election locked in for later this year, the role of each level of government is magnified. We're asking how well each level works with each other, and why it is critical that they do so.

The 2022 Victorian State Election provides a unique opportunity for local government to come together and ensure the delivery of more positive outcomes for councils and communities.

It is imperative that the next State Government – no matter its stripes – understands and acts on the needs of communities through their local councils. We strongly believe that government needs to focus on getting back to making decisions not just on the cost of living, but also the quality of living.

As a tier of government, councils are an effective and efficient delivery partner of services and programs as well as a driver of economic activity across many industry sectors including construction, public administration, community services and public infrastructure.

In Victoria alone, we employ nearly 50,000 people across some 300 different occupations. We are responsible for \$11.93B dollars of revenue and \$123B in community infrastructure and assets such as roads, bridges, town halls, recreation and leisure facilities, drains, libraries and parks

Councils deliver value in their service to their communities. Few people realise that, unlike their state or federal counterparts, they do not have the same revenue raising capacity. Nationally, local government rates account for about 3.6 per cent of tax collected in Australia.

In the lead up to this year's state election, the Municipal Association of Victoria (MAV) is highlighting the opportunities to work respectfully with local government.

The next State Government has the opportunity to harness the extensive local knowledge councils have to shape the future of the state – through better, locally targeted infrastructure projects, circular economy solutions and emergency management resources.

Now is the time to get involved. Our state election campaign will need the support of councils across the state to ensure our voice is collectively as powerful as possible.



Cr David Clark
President
Municipal Association of Victoria





THEME 1

Economically sound councils

KEY ISSUES: COVID-19 RECOVERY FOR COMMUNITIES AND COUNCILS; FINANCIAL CAPACITY



COVID-19 RECOVERY FOR COMMUNITIES AND COUNCILS

CURRENT SITUATION

The longer-term impacts of the last two years of the pandemic are becoming evident – there's joy as communities re-connect with others and get out and about. Serious economic and social impacts are also coming into sharp focus. Many shopfronts in local precincts still closed and those businesses which are open struggling to source skilled staff.

It is clear the mental health and wellbeing of some in the community has declined. Left untreated, demands on health services will increase in coming years.

Throughout this period Victoria's 79 councils have provided trusted and reliable essential local services. Local leadership by mayors, councillors and council staff have and continue to be vital to assisting the State's pandemic response and vaccine roll-out.

As has been the case with all levels of government, councils have suffered sizeable losses of revenue through the mandated closure of facilities, significant fee waivers and rates deferrals to local businesses and struggling community members. Infrastructure contract prices are also escalating due to supply pressures and competition from other state infrastructure projects.

As a significant employer across so many diverse roles and functions, councils significantly impact the state's economy. They provide a valuable pipeline and career opportunities for many occupations and industries. Currently their workforces are stretched, with critical shortages emerging in a range of skillsets, from planning and building to environmental health, IT and project management.

Increased local participation and more people working from home mean the services and work of councils supporting community health and wellbeing are more important than ever before.

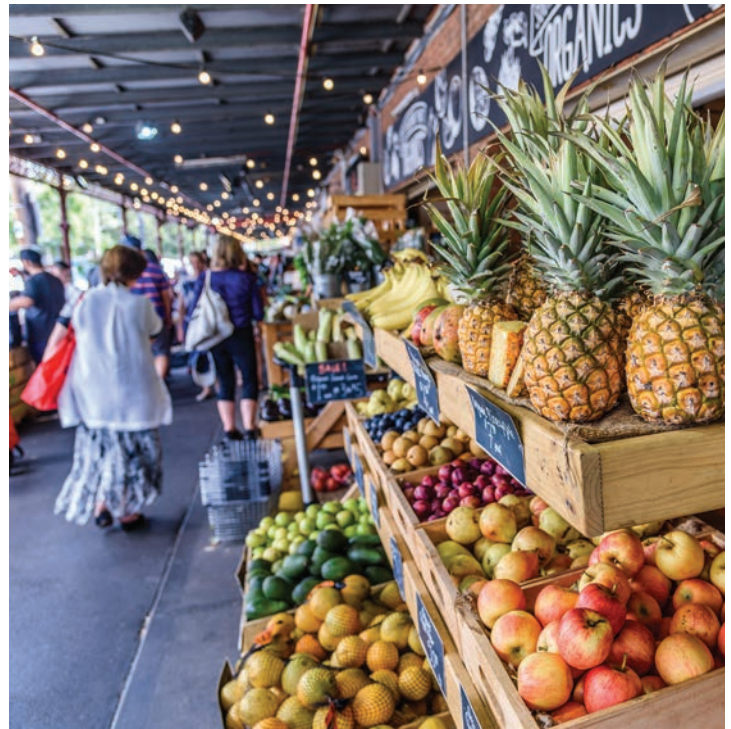
Utilising existing social infrastructure provided by councils is a smart way for the state to save on its own service delivery costs – healthy communities need less state services, not more. People with disabilities need to be able to participate fully in community and professional life. Councils collaborating closely with Victoria's Traditional Owners to support truth-telling will deepen and enrich local communities for all.

Victoria's arts and creative industries have been particularly hit hard by the pandemic. The Creative State 2025 Strategy provides a solid framework for recovery, however greater investment in some of the place-based initiatives is required to realise its vision.



WHAT WE NEED FROM THE STATE GOVERNMENT

- A local government-specific workforce development program generating local employment opportunities and addressing key local government workforce skill deficits
- Reduce duplication by using existing local government conduits to generate increased economic development and innovations which benefit local businesses
- Immediate rollout of the Local Community Collectives recommended by the Victorian Royal Commission into Mental Health to support for people with mental health needs connect with people and organisations close to where they live and work
- Support for reconciliation and strong constructive relationships between councils and local Aboriginal communities, including a capacity building program for councillors to partner with Victorian Traditional Owners
- An investment in new local, place-based creative industries strategies, which support collaboration and identify local priorities for investment; and an expansion of Creative Victoria's Regional Partnerships program to enable new entrants from regional and outer-suburban areas
- Restore funding to the Building Inclusive Communities program to local government to support the State Government's delivery of the Victorian Disability Plan through place-based approaches and involvement of local people, groups, businesses and services.



BENEFITS FOR OUR COMMUNITY

- Vital skilled workforces are in place to support local service delivery and economic development
- Service efficiencies and less duplication from multiple agencies will assist local businesses navigate government programs and better tap into available supports and networks
- Less illness and demands being placed on stretched health systems
- More people connected in community activities and civic life
- Councillors and communities are prepared for and supportive of the outcomes of the Yoorrook truth-telling and Treaty process.



CURRENT SITUATION

Rising expenses and the ongoing rate capping system pose an increasing challenge to the financial sustainability of councils. In turn, this negatively impacts the vital services and infrastructure delivered on behalf of the community.

Councils manage many of the services and infrastructure used by communities every day. Compared to their revenue, councils are an asset-heavy level of government. In 2020-21, Victorian councils managed \$123B in community infrastructure and assets with a revenue base of \$11.9B, a ratio of almost ten to one.

The Victorian and Australian Governments manage non-financial assets of \$200B and \$248B, with ratios of 2.75:1 and 0.45:1 respectively. This carries both a large maintenance burden and an expectation from communities to expand and improve those assets. This expectation for councils to do more also extends to services.

Increasingly the state government expects councils to shoulder additional costs on top of this. Arrangements for many co-funded services such as libraries, maternal and child health and school crossing supervisors have shifted in favour of the state. New responsibilities are also put on councils, or transferred from existing state agencies, without sustainable resourcing.

The Royal Commission into National Natural Disaster Arrangements aptly noted that where a state government delegates responsibilities to local government, councils must be resourced and supported to perform them. Unfortunately, this is too often not borne out in practice.

Regulatory change also has a financial impact on councils.

We do not support unilateral freezing of regulatory charges. Businesses adversely impacting communities should rightfully contribute to the cost of that regulation.

Ultimately this has a severe impact on local autonomy as councils are unable to pursue the infrastructure and service priorities of their communities. This risks reducing councils to mere service delivery agencies of the state government and diminishes the democratic voice and self-determination of communities.

WHAT WE NEED FROM THE STATE GOVERNMENT

- No shifting of new or additional costs and responsibilities to local government without ensuring adequate and ongoing resources to meet them
- Reform the rate capping system to support rather than hinder the ongoing financial sustainability of councils
- Renegotiate agreements for co-funded services that over time have shifted an increasing burden to councils.

BENEFITS FOR OUR COMMUNITY

- Councils will be better able to respond to the needs and priorities of their communities
- Greater capacity to explore innovation at an individual council level which can provide a blueprint for state-wide best practice
- Improved quality of local services and infrastructure across Victoria.





THEME 2

Healthy, diverse and thriving communities

KEY ISSUES: SUPPORTING OUR YOUNG FAMILIES AND SENIOR VICTORIANS; HOUSING



SUPPORTING OUR YOUNG FAMILIES AND SENIOR VICTORIANS

CURRENT SITUATION

Local government understands the importance of supporting young families and senior Victorians. It continues to formally embrace this through a range of plans, infrastructure provision, service delivery and support.

Childhood is a stage of life where investment has the greatest return and opportunities to intervene have the greatest impacts. Councils focus and support of early years and the opportunities for intergenerational opportunities which involve older people benefits all members of the community.

However, despite the essential nature of this support, there are threats to their future viability that require urgent attention. Across all caring professions, ongoing workforce shortages continue to affect service delivery to some of Victoria's most vulnerable people.

The State Government must develop comprehensive workforce strategies in partnership with local government to ensure the sustainability of maternal and child health nurses, early years educators and community aged care workers.

The sustainability of services is also reliant on appropriate community infrastructure. Councils are frequently relied upon to provide suitable infrastructure for State Government initiatives and communities. Councils bear the continued cost of maintaining these important community assets.

There is currently limited resourcing for ageing infrastructure used by councils to provide essential services and programs for young families and older people. The continuation of community groups such as senior citizens is currently under threat due to withdrawal of Federal Government funding used to maintain ageing centres in the community.

Councils have a long and proud history of supporting young families and older people to be active participants in the community, but action from the State Government is needed to ensure programs, services and infrastructure is available now and into the future.

WHAT WE NEED FROM THE STATE GOVERNMENT

- Immediate review of the State Government resourcing of the maternal and child health service and an ongoing commitment to the 50:50 partnership with local government in the provision of this essential universal service
- Review the MCH Key Age and Stage Framework, aligning and including evidence-based interventions, time allocation per consultation and funding of program hours per child, alongside the development of a comprehensive MCH workforce strategy for the sector to deliver the service now and into the future
- Commitment to work with local government to resource ageing infrastructure used for the programs and services that support young families and older people. Including recognition of the unprecedented volume of construction required for Three-Year-Old Kindergarten reform
- Commitment to work with local government on workforce planning to ensure the continuation of essential services such as maternal and child health, early years education and care and community aged care are available to support young families and older people
- Partnering with and investing in local government to plan and coordinate social recovery from COVID-19 for senior Victorians to age well in place.

BENEFITS FOR OUR COMMUNITY

- Partnering with councils to act on the needs and aspirations of their young families and older people will have a direct and sustainable impact on the lives of all Victorian communities. Councils are the level of government best placed to support and work directly with these cohorts to produce local outcomes
- Young families and older people can access the services and programs they need to thrive and participate in age friendly communities
- Older Victorians can age well in place, with easy access to the supports they need to remain connected to their communities.



CURRENT SITUATION

The significant shortage of social and affordable housing across Victoria is exacerbating financial and emotional stresses for many families, households and individuals.

All communities are impacted, whether it be young people not able to consider owning their own home, communities unable to house key workers which support local businesses, or those who can't find a bed for the night.

Housing is a key social determinant of physical and mental health. Having somewhere to live where people have connections to family, work and community underpin thriving local economies which in turn generate the opportunities that will define the prosperity of the state now and into the future.

Victorian councils are critical players. As local planning authorities they are trying to require more affordable housing dwellings be established closer to existing infrastructure.

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.

Metropolitan and regional city councils are also working to generate more social housing dwellings for people on low incomes. Over 40 councils are part of the Inter-Council Affordable Housing Forum where council officers share their innovations and practical solutions.

All these locally-led innovations across the state can be escalated at pace and scale with increased federal and state resourcing.

WHAT WE NEED FROM THE STATE GOVERNMENT

- Formalised partnership arrangements between state and local government, underpinned by a state-wide agreement (Compact) which includes a mechanism to engage across the range of state agencies that influence social and affordable housing policy
- Recognition that councils are essential partners in the creation and ongoing sustainability of social and affordable housing., and that they must be properly resourced to fulfill necessary planning, support and community development functions to support their communities
- Implementation of planning mechanisms that empower councils to seek mandatory affordable housing contributions from developers and zoning options which require developments to include affordable housing options
- Shared planning around building renewal and development of state owned and managed public housing to ensure they conform to local planning schemes and are fully integrated into the urban landscape, including environmentally sustainable design
- Improving wrap-around outreach services for people with complex needs experiencing homelessness
- Development of a shared social and affordable housing data and monitoring system that provides transparency and a basis for joint planning
- A state-wide public awareness and community education campaign, matched with municipal engagement to encourage communities to be actively involved the planning and delivery of social and affordable housing.

BENEFITS FOR OUR COMMUNITY

- More affordable housing options are available so that people can live near where they need to work
- Fewer homeless people need to camp out in public places because they are searching for a place to live
- Trends to increasing inequalities and poor health outcomes from higher mental stresses are avoided – costs reduce on state funded health and welfare services.



THEME 3

Well-planned, connected and resilient built environment

KEY ISSUES: PLANNING AND BUILDING; COMMUNITY RESILIENCE AND EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT; INFRASTRUCTURE & TRANSPORT



PLANNING AND BUILDING

CURRENT SITUATION

The State Government has a critical leadership role to play in ensuring our built environment – our homes, our workplaces, our towns and cities – are safe, sustainable and great places to live, work, and visit.

Since the introduction of the Planning and Environment Act 1987, Victoria's planning system has become well known for incorporating community consultation in planning. It is a component of our system that is enshrined in legislation and provides democratic legitimacy to planning decisions.

In recent years there has been a shift away from local decision making, towards centralised decisions made by DELWP or the Minister for Planning. These decisions are often made with little or no public consultation and lack channels for further appeals. Protecting the community's voice in the planning system through council-based decision making is a priority concern for the local government sector

The planning system should deliver on the environmental and social needs and priorities of our communities. Too often planning is treated as a vehicle for short-term economic stimulus with little regard for the long-term consequences this has on our built and natural environment.

The Victorian building regulatory system is at a crisis point. It is unacceptable that so many homebuyers find themselves left with unsafe buildings, expected to bear the cost of rectification for defects they had no fault in. Urgent reforms are needed to ensure greater rigour is applied through building approval processes.

We are eager to engage with the State Government on significant reform to the building regulatory system and local government's role in it. However, the current push to transfer responsibility from the VBA to local government for addressing cladding rectification and orphaned building permits ignores the lack of building surveyors available to local government and hinders efforts to find a consistent and timely resolution for building owners.

WHAT WE NEED FROM THE STATE GOVERNMENT

- A commitment to protect the democratic legitimacy of the planning system by respecting local decision making
- Reform of Victoria's building regulatory system to provide safe buildings and adequate resources to councils to play an increased role
- Review of the planning system to ensure that community benefit is prioritised over private financial windfalls, including through improved infrastructure contribution mechanisms and greater provision of social and affordable housing
- Transparent reporting on the net community benefit and economic gain expected from major planning decisions and reforms
- An evidence-driven and state-led approach to ensure that planning schemes accurately reflect and manage environmental hazards and increasing climate change risks
- Improvements to the planning scheme amendment process to ensure councils can develop and implement local policy in an efficient and timely manner.

BENEFITS FOR OUR COMMUNITY

- Communities provided with meaningful input into the planning decisions that shape their neighbourhoods
- Improved safety of buildings, consumer protection for building owners, and restored confidence in the construction industry
- Infrastructure, including social and affordable housing, that meets community expectations
- Communities that are safer from environmental hazards.

CURRENT SITUATION

Local government's cradle-to-the-grave involvement in people's lives, and links to community groups and local businesses provide a solid foundation on which to build effective community resilience.

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.

In 2019, a state-facilitated assessment through the State Government's Councils & Emergencies project found sector-wide capability and capacity gaps in several of councils' critical emergency management roles.

Despite this, there has been no investment in sector training and development, nor an increase in funding commensurate with their expanding role.

Emergency management is complex and the stakes are high. It is critical that councils are empowered and adequately funded to lead local resilience building, support local planning and effectively coordinate local-level relief and recovery.

While there has been significant reform and investment in family violence prevention since the Royal Commission into Family Violence, the opportunities available through local government are yet to be fully realised. Recent co-design of the Local Government Guide for Preventing Family Violence is a significant step forward, particularly for the 15 funded councils. The next step will require ongoing resourcing and support to be fully embedded across the state.

Introduction of the Gender Equality Act (2020) has been welcomed by the local government sector, however, the absence of resourcing or sector-specific guidance has resulted in duplication of effort and reduced the potential impact.

WHAT WE NEED FROM THE STATE GOVERNMENT

- Expand the annual \$4.98M Municipal Emergency Resourcing Program to cover all 79 councils, with a reviewed formula based on risk and capacity, and invest immediately in training for councils' statutory emergency management roles. Significantly higher levels of ongoing funding, reflective of risk and community expectations are essential. As an immediate step, an additional \$7M is needed to fund one FTE in each council, while a transparent risk and capacity based formula is developed
- Dedicated funding for local hazard mitigation works and community resilience building
- Support councils to expand implementation of the Local Government Guide for Preventing Family Violence and meet obligations under the Gender Equality Act to strengthen community safety and cohesion.

BENEFITS FOR OUR COMMUNITY

- Building on recent investment in councils to support primary prevention of family violence by expanding the Free from Violence program to engage additional councils will fast track and consolidate this work across the state
- The Free from Violence investment is an example of the State Government recognising councils' reach into and understanding of local communities. Similar investment through councils to support community resilience and pandemic recovery is needed
- Sufficiently funding and supporting councils' emergency management role will mean communities are better supported to prepare for emergencies and help lead their own recovery
- Adequate resourcing of councils to implement obligations under the Gender Equality Act will be more cost effective, reduce duplication, ensure the intent of the Act is actualised and lead to more equal outcomes for communities at the local level.



INFRASTRUCTURE & TRANSPORT

CURRENT SITUATION

Communities across the state are seeing increased pressures on paths, roads, transport, infrastructure, and community services driven by population changes and economic growth and the increasing cost of asset maintenance.

Better integration of state and local land use and infrastructure planning and improved data is essential to improve safety, productivity and accessibility for critical services and improve community connection.

Six years of rate capping has fuelled the crisis for local road networks and many other community assets and services. The current State Governments' preference for inflexible, time-limited grants programs often overlooks the need to renew existing infrastructure, such as ageing swimming pools, which is often the local preference.

Compounding factors, such as Victoria's Big Build and supply shortages, have impacted the cost and availability of materials and contractors.

Locals know what locals need so increased autonomy for councils to direct grant funds will deliver better local outcomes.

Noting that light vehicles account for around 10 per cent of Australia's total carbon emissions, an accelerated transition away from internal combustion engine vehicles to zero emission vehicles (ZEVs) should be considered an urgent priority. An equally, if not more, important focus should be supporting mode shift away from private vehicle use to active, public and shared transport options.

WHAT WE NEED FROM THE STATE GOVERNMENT

- Commitment to a collaborative approach to transport and infrastructure planning, including project sequencing, by state and local government, as a valuable partner and community representative
- Fund councils for the delivery of local priorities. With diverse needs prioritised by different communities, this must allow for local projects such as walking and bike riding infrastructure, road safety and local road construction.

- The MAV calls for \$230M over four years for priority walking and cycling projects in all Victorian councils and the establishment of a Local Road Blackspot Treatment and Prevention program targeting local intersections, road segments or users to reduce risk, as well as funding for proactive treatment of sites identified as potential future priorities through safe system assessments.
- Support councils to access better data and information systems to improve their asset management capability.
- Continued state investment in safe school access, including provision of indexed annual funding to truly match local government contributions to the school crossing supervisor program, plus funding to deliver safe system works to reduce reliance on supervisors and encourage safe active school transport
- Commit to acting on findings of the Parliamentary Inquiry into Electric Vehicles, including exploring the feasibility of joint state/local government procurement of electric vehicles and improving electric vehicle infrastructure, including public charging stations, across Victoria.

BENEFITS FOR OUR COMMUNITY

- Councils use their strong community connections and intricate understanding of local needs to support decision making and investment
- A shift away from programs requiring quick delivery of shovel-ready projects to programs with minimal administrative burdens and greater flexibility will enable longer-term planning for asset maintenance and renewal, and support collaboration between levels of government and neighbouring municipalities
- Lower-scale infrastructure investment that recognises local priorities and needs has the potential to make a significant difference to Victorians' safety, health and wellbeing, all while increasing productivity and stimulating local economies
- Transition to electric vehicles is a necessary step to reducing emissions. The right policy settings and sustainable investment will encourage community uptake of ZEVs and support Australian innovation and business growth in this important industry.



THEME 4

Changing climate and a circular economy

KEY ISSUES: SUSTAINABILITY & CLIMATE CHANGE

SUSTAINABILITY & CLIMATE CHANGE

CURRENT SITUATION

The MAV recognises we are in a climate emergency that requires urgent action by all levels of government. Victorian councils have a strong track record of working to reduce emissions and increase organisational and community resilience to climate impacts. Improved state-wide policy settings are urgently needed to support this work.

The built environment is responsible for close to a quarter of Australia's greenhouse gas emissions. Changes must be made to the Victorian land use planning system to integrate climate change considerations and support the transition to net zero emissions. With communities already directly experiencing climate change impacts, significant investment in adaptation is also urgently needed.

As the level of government charged with collecting and disposing of household waste, local government knows well that our current model of production and consumption is unsustainable. Product stewardship is needed for all waste-producing products to drive meaningful change.

Victorian councils want to partner with the State to design and deliver waste and recycling services that best meet the needs of their local communities.

Councils are diverse in terms of their budget, land size, community capacity to pay, proximity to recycling facilities and other relevant factors. A one size fits all approach to council service design is not viable.

WHAT WE NEED FROM THE STATE GOVERNMENT

- A commitment to embed climate change as a priority consideration in land use planning legislation and the Victorian Planning Provisions in the life of the next Parliament
- Schedule 1 of the Climate Change Act amended to include decisions under planning, transport, agriculture, and energy legislation

- Establishment of a new strategic partnership between state and local government to accelerate the transition to net zero and to strengthen community resilience, with funding support for councils to reduce and manage climate risks
- Funding support for the implementation of priority urban greening projects
- A commitment to provide councils with the powers and capability to manage public drainage and stormwater assets to withstand more intense storm events and to achieve better use of stormwater and continued innovation in integrated water management
- A commitment to respect and protect councils' autonomy to determine the best recycling service models for their communities considering local conditions and community views
- A commitment to partner with the MAV to advocate for national product stewardship schemes and, where advocacy proves ineffective, introduce schemes at a state level.

BENEFITS FOR OUR COMMUNITY

- More energy efficient and sustainable development and better protection for Victorians from the impacts of climate change
- Improved whole-of-government approach to considering climate change in policy and programs
- Transition to a circular economy in a way that responds to local needs and circumstances
- Greater application of the polluter-pays principle through the adoption of product stewardship schemes.



THEME 5

Sector capability and good governance

KEY ISSUES: DEMOCRACY IN ACTION



DEMOCRACY IN ACTION

CURRENT SITUATION

The practice of good governance underpins the success of the operations of our 79 Victorian councils.

Our communities rightly expect councils to give priority to achieving the best outcomes for them and future generations and that decisions are made which promote economic, social and environmental sustainability.

Overtime councils have increased engagement with their communities in strategic planning and decision making.

Councils strive to continually improve, collaborate and partner with other levels of Government and organisations. Councils focus on their financial viability and put in place ways to ensure there is a transparency of Council decisions, action and information to ensure they are accountable to their communities.

The Local Government Act 2020 (the Act), the relatively new primary piece of legislation for Victorian councils, provides the basis for how councils practice good governance. The Act requires a suite of interdependent policies and procedures to be adopted.

However, these legislative mechanisms must be supported by acknowledging that good governance does not instantly arise from the adoption of such policies and procedures alone. Good governance also depends on continued investment in capacity building of our councillors and administrations.

New investment in this area is needed to enhance the skills and abilities required to achieve good governance in the local government setting. Supporting the development of such skills and abilities must be a multipronged approach to suit individual circumstances.

WHAT WE NEED FROM THE STATE GOVERNMENT

- Establish an accredited Diploma of Local Government for Councillors to enable Councillors to increase their skills and knowledge to confidently lead their community and fulfill their role and responsibilities as defined by the Local Government Act 2020

- Pilot a Councillor Development Fund to provide all Councillors with equal access to participate in a comprehensive training and development program which extends across the domains of leadership experience and capability, councillor journey and early intervention and effective dispute resolution
- Fund the MAV to deliver a Coaching and Mentoring Program for Councillors which is tailored to the needs of individual councillors who identify support they require to carry out their role
- Support establishing an online Council Good Governance Information Hub which has a focus on good governance information through a range of e-learning modules and information resources which are specifically designed to meet the needs of Councillors and potential candidates in the 2024 council elections
- Fund a program of governance and culture reviews which are conducted by an external party to assist councils upon request. The information gathered through this program will enable a deeper understanding of leading frameworks and approaches and the support and training required across the sector to continually improve the standard of good governance practices.

BENEFITS FOR OUR COMMUNITY

- Increased trust in elected representatives and local government as a tier of government
- Improved culture
- Increased transparency and accountability of council decision making processes
- Better equipped councillors and councillor teams to confidently meet the requirements of their roles and responsibilities
- Continued attraction of a diversity of candidates to the position of councillor
- Modern and contemporary approaches to good governance policies and practices by capitalising on the opportunities presented by the Local Government Act 2020.



THEME 6

Effective and responsive MAV

KEY ISSUES: STATE-LOCAL GOVERNMENT RELATIONS



STATE-LOCAL GOVERNMENT RELATIONS

CURRENT SITUATION

The Municipal Association of Victoria (MAV) is calling on the next State Government to enhance and expand consultation with Victoria's 79 councils. Increasing the engagement with local government will ensure that local experiences and insight inform State decision making. This will result in improved outcomes for community and build confidence in government service delivery.

State Government consultation and engagement with local government is currently patchy. In some areas of government, there is a strong and well-established practice of seeking the local insight and operational experiences of councils. Examples include maternal and child health services and building regulation.

Disappointingly, there have been a number of high-profile State Government activities where local government's insight and experience has been ignored. Examples include planning system reform and the social and affordable housing program.

Victoria's have the right to expect their State and local governments to work side by side in the planning, coordination and delivery of services and infrastructure that meet their needs and represent value of money.

The foundation of this cooperation is a new Victorian State Local Government Agreement (VSLGA). A new agreement must foster positive and productive relations between state and local government by committing to improved and sustained levels of communication, consultation and cooperation.

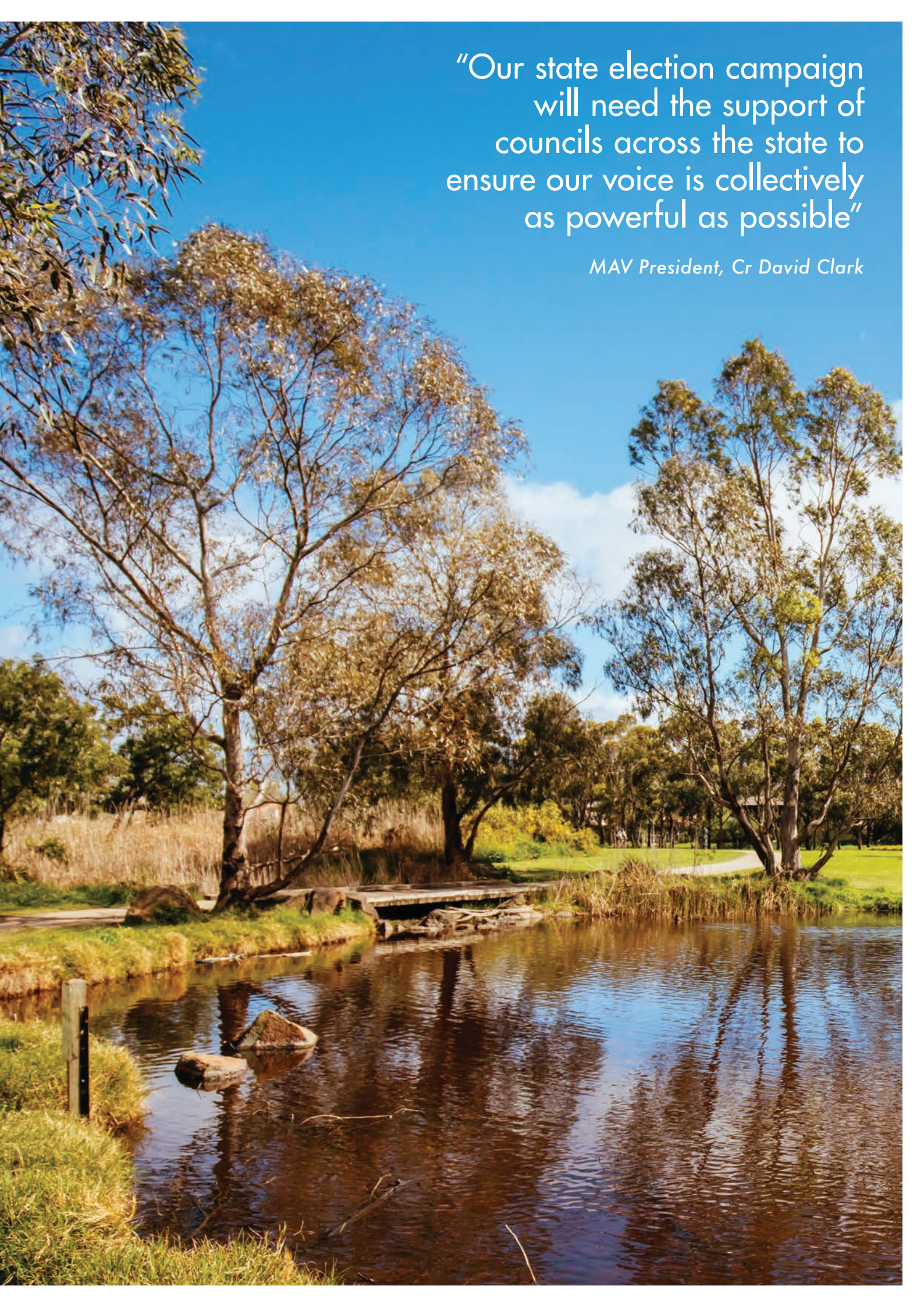
As a whole of sector peak body that presents all councils, enshrined in legislation, the MAV brings a highly valued and inclusive perspective to a new VSLGA. A future VSLGA must have practical significance and provide an overall framework for managing the future relationship between the state and local governments.

WHAT WE NEED FROM THE STATE GOVERNMENT

- Renegotiate the Victorian State-Local Government Agreement between the Premier of Victoria and the President of the MAV
- Establish an effective, respectful transparent program for consultation with Victorian councils on any government regulatory reform and change activity that impacts local government
- Institute a requirement for Cabinet decisions significantly impacting local government to require full consideration of the financial impact on local government.

BENEFITS FOR OUR COMMUNITY

- Greater confidence that services and infrastructure are relevant to local needs and cost effective
- Increasing influence of local insight and experience in State policies and reform activities.



“Our state election campaign
will need the support of
councils across the state to
ensure our voice is collectively
as powerful as possible”

MAV President, Cr David Clark

Municipal Association of Victoria

Level 12, 60 Collins Street, Melbourne VIC 3000

GPO Box 4326, Melbourne 3001

Telephone: 03 9667 5555

Email: inquiries@mav.asn.au Website: www.mav.asn.au

www.viccouncils.asn.au

