

MAV >> in Motion

10 October 2025

Advocacy
Update

MAV
MUNICIPAL ASSOCIATION OF VICTORIA



Dear Delegates,

MAV in Motion is a new publication coinciding with each State Council to highlight, celebrate, and share insights into the work of the MAV on behalf of the local government sector. It provides a summary of progress, collaboration, and action with councils, reinforcing our commitment to our shared advocacy and innovation agenda.

The past several months since the last State Council in May have been both busy and successful as we continue to work toward the vision set out in our 2024 - 2027 Strategic Plan, 'Shaping our Future' and build the partnerships required to deliver on it.



**Take a look at
our Strategic Plan**

Recent innovation highlights

- An overwhelming response of more than 160 entries to the inaugural MAVlab Innovation Awards, celebrating and sharing the insight, passion, ingenuity, leadership, collaboration and innovation of council staff.
- Our new report, Adopting AI for Planning in Victoria's Councils, offers a practical roadmap to help councils embrace AI responsibly and ethically.



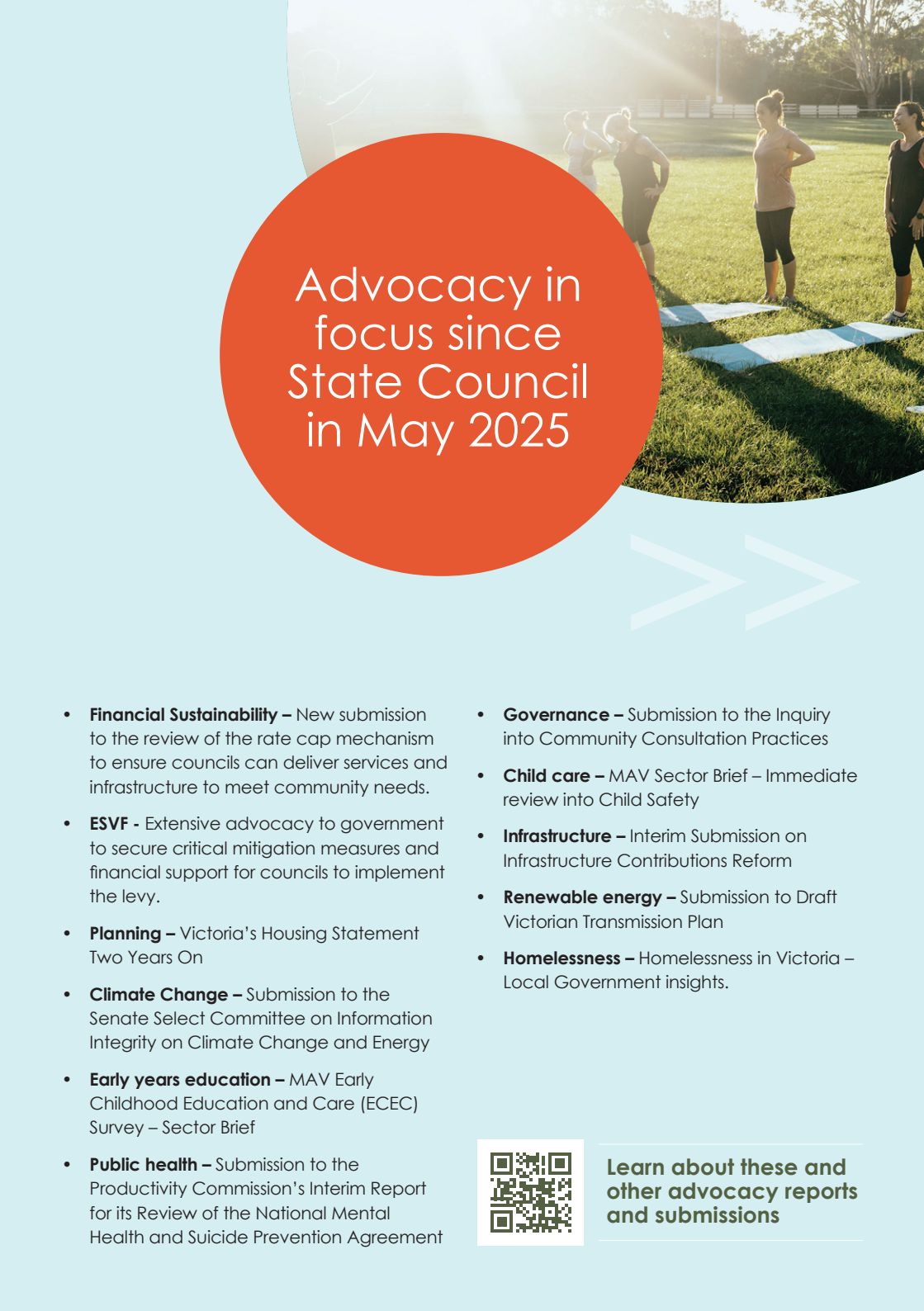
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latest updates**

The Future is Local

In addition to the current issues in focus, the Future is Local Taskforce, including several council CEOs, is currently working to develop the longer term vision for the transformation of Victorian local government, reimagining the role of councils in designing and delivering scalable local solutions to global challenges that help create thriving, resilient, and inclusive communities.

Through MAV in Motion, we will continue to keep you informed and equipped to champion these shared initiatives in your communities, while recognising and celebrating the sector-wide effort that drives this work forward.

Many Thanks,
Kelly Grigsby



Advocacy in focus since State Council in May 2025

- **Financial Sustainability** – New submission to the review of the rate cap mechanism to ensure councils can deliver services and infrastructure to meet community needs.
- **ESVF** - Extensive advocacy to government to secure critical mitigation measures and financial support for councils to implement the levy.
- **Planning** – Victoria's Housing Statement Two Years On
- **Climate Change** – Submission to the Senate Select Committee on Information Integrity on Climate Change and Energy
- **Early years education** – MAV Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) Survey – Sector Brief
- **Public health** – Submission to the Productivity Commission's Interim Report for its Review of the National Mental Health and Suicide Prevention Agreement
- **Governance** – Submission to the Inquiry into Community Consultation Practices
- **Child care** – MAV Sector Brief – Immediate review into Child Safety
- **Infrastructure** – Interim Submission on Infrastructure Contributions Reform
- **Renewable energy** – Submission to Draft Victorian Transmission Plan
- **Homelessness** – Homelessness in Victoria – Local Government insights.



Learn about these and other advocacy reports and submissions

ACTION ON FINANCIAL SUSTAINABILITY

Sustainable and equitable funding is the foundation of strong local government. MAV has made a submission to the review of the rate cap mechanism, continuing its advocacy to ensure councils can deliver services and infrastructure that meet community needs. Current funding settings do not keep pace with costs, growth, and demand, placing long-term financial sustainability at risk.

MAV is calling for:

- Adoption of a Local Government Cost Index, rather than CPI, to set the rate cap
- A "catch-up" mechanism to align projections with actual figures
- A population-based mechanism to address gaps where supplementary rates fail to match population growth
- Streamlined, fairer processes for applying for a rate cap variation
- Examination of how Payment in Lieu of Rates schemes interact with the rating system

This advocacy builds on previous submission made by the MAV to both State and Federal Inquiries in 2024.



**Read about our
latest submissions**

ACTION ON EMERGENCY SERVICES AND VOLUNTEERS FUND (ESVF)

Councils strongly support emergency services and their volunteers. But the introduction of the State Government's Emergency Services and Volunteer Fund (ESVF) has not only placed an unjust cost burden on ratepayers but also created significant implementation and resourcing challenges for local governments across Victoria. MAV, in partnership with FinPro and the Revenue Management Association (RMA) has led extensive advocacy to government to secure critical mitigation measures and financial support for councils to implement the levy.

Achievements so far:

- SES and CFA volunteer exemptions are now implemented by the State Revenue Office, not councils
- \$4.9 million in 2025-26 implementation funding from the State Government (an increase of \$900,000 from the original commitment)
- 12-month freeze on ESVF charges for primary production land
- Establishment of a dedicated State Government Contact Centre to relieve pressure on council rates and customer service teams

Ongoing MAV advocacy includes:

- Full funding for IT upgrades in 2026-27
- Increased, ongoing administration funding from 2026-27
- Reduced annual reporting requirements for councils





ACTION ON REFORMING VICTORIA'S PLANNING SYSTEM

Victoria's planning system must be modernised to support liveable, sustainable, and resilient communities. MAV's submission, **Reforming Victoria's Planning System**, highlights local government's readiness to partner in reform but calls for systemic change rather than piecemeal adjustments.

Key MAV recommendations:

- A full rewrite of the Planning and Environment Act 1987 to reflect 21st-century needs
- Safeguards against reforms that strip councils of revenue or decision-making capacity
- Stronger integration between state and local government roles in planning system design and delivery
- Explicit inclusion of integrity, accountability, and transparency as objectives of the planning system
- Reforms that are evidence-based, multi-year, and co-designed with councils
- Mechanisms to enable mandatory affordable housing contributions and consistent delivery
- Systematic responses to climate change, natural hazards, and sustainability
- Protection of councils' ability to adapt planning controls to local needs

ACTION ON EARLY EDUCATION AND CARE

High-quality, accessible early education and care is critical to children, families, and communities. MAV's Early Education and Care (EECC) Sector Survey Brief highlights councils' perspectives as the Victorian Government implements the Best Start, Best Life reforms. The survey reveals challenges in infrastructure, workforce capacity, and change management, reinforcing councils' essential role in delivering equitable, high-quality services.

MAV is calling for:

- Stronger partnerships between state and local government through the MAV/Department of Education Partnership Agreement and regular ministerial engagement
- Long-term, sustainable funding for infrastructure, workforce development, and change management
- Ongoing resourcing and regular updates to Kindergarten Infrastructure and Service Plans (KISPs)
- Adequate support for councils as infrastructure owners, service providers, and key reform partners
- Continuation of MAV-led sector surveys to monitor progress and guide advocacy



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ACTION ON MATERNAL AND CHILD HEALTH

Victoria's universal Maternal and Child Health (MCH) service is a cornerstone of child and family wellbeing. MAV has established a Strategic Advisory Reference Group of 26 MCH leaders to guide its advocacy as the Maternal and Child Health Accord is renewed. This process is a critical opportunity to ensure the long-term viability, relevance, and impact of the service.

MAV is calling for:

- A contemporary funding model that reflects the true cost of delivery and sustains workforce and digital infrastructure
- A modernised Key Ages and Stages (KAS) framework, aligned with contemporary evidence and family needs
- A statewide workforce strategy to strengthen professional pathways, leadership, and rural support
- Leadership development initiatives to build resilience and innovation across the system
- Multi-year innovation funding to pilot and scale best practice programs
- Investment in digital transformation to improve access, streamline reporting, and support evidence-based practice
- A statewide outcomes framework to track child and family wellbeing
- A 10-year strategic outlook for workforce, infrastructure, and service delivery sustainability
- Stronger support for rural and regional councils to ensure equity
- Greater integration of MCH services with hospitals, early education, and community services

ACTION ON FEDERAL ELECTION 2025

This year MAV led the Make Good Happen Federal Election Campaign, a unified advocacy platform to ensure the needs of Victorian councils and communities are prioritised. The campaign called for targeted federal investment and reforms across five key areas where councils deliver essential infrastructure, services, and democratic participation.

Through the pre-election campaign and recent Mayoral Delegation to Canberra MAV called for:



Making Community Infrastructure Happen: Establish a Building Connected Communities Fund to deliver the facilities growing communities need



Making Safer Roads Happen: Create a Community Roads Repair Blitz Fund to accelerate local road maintenance and renewal



Making Fairer Energy Happen: Invest \$5 million in a coordinated Powering Communities initiative to support energy transition and benefit-sharing



Making Resilient Communities Happen: Establish a Build to Withstand Fund for pre-disaster upgrades and resilience planning



Making Local Democracy Happen: Provide \$4.5 million for a Local Issues, Local Solutions Active Democracy Fund to counter disinformation, strengthen trust, and boost civic participation



MAKE
GOOD
HAPPEN

ACTION ON CLIMATE AND ENERGY TRANSITION

The shift to renewable energy must be trusted, equitable, and responsive to local communities. MAV's submissions to the Senate Select Committee on Information Integrity in Climate Change and Energy, and to VicGrid's draft Victorian Transmission Plan, emphasise the critical role of councils in building trust, countering misinformation, and brokering community benefit. Councils need resources, recognition, and structural support to fulfil this role effectively.

MAV is calling for:

- Investment in training and capability-building for councillors, mayors, and staff to counter climate and energy misinformation
- Formal recognition of councils as key partners in building social license for the energy transition
- Clear governance mechanisms to mandate and administer community benefit-sharing arrangements, with defined council roles
- Centralised, publicly available information on renewable energy projects and consistent communication across governments
- Resourcing for councils to engage and prepare communities in renewable energy zones
- Independent, state-funded readiness and impact studies in renewable energy zones to support informed decision-making
- Investment in councils' role as locally embedded hubs for disinformation response and connectors between government, industry, and community

ACTION ON COMMUNITY SAFETY

Misinformation and disinformation are not theoretical threats. They are having a real, human impact on Mayors, Deputy Mayors, and Councillors here in Victoria, across the country, and around the world. We are already seeing the effects on the health, wellbeing, and safety of elected officials.

Alongside the Australian National University, we hosted the *Addressing Information Manipulation & Harassment of Local Leaders* roundtable.

MAV will be focused on:

- Improving support for councillors and council staff experiencing harm
- Leading sector-wide action to identify all levers to ensure safety from harassment for councillors and council staff
- Driving the development of stronger protocols, protections, and responses with governments, media, and key partners to ensure consistent, enforceable approaches that safeguard democratic participation and public trust.



Visit mav.asn.au
to learn more





ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

The Municipal Association of Victoria acknowledges the Traditional Owners of Country throughout Victoria, and recognise their continuing connection to lands, waters, and culture. We pay our respect to Elders past and present who carry the memories, traditions, cultures, and aspirations of First Peoples, and who forge the path ahead for emerging leaders.



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