

State of the Sector

State Council
Communiqué

2025





ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF TRADITIONAL OWNERS

The Municipal Association of Victoria (MAV) 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.

We support local government's commitment to strengthen relationships with Victoria's First Peoples communities and for it to encourage greater unity, knowledge, cultural awareness, and respect for the first occupants of our land — through its strong community links and local representation.

MAV State Council

The MAV State Council is a forum where Victoria's 79 councils come together to shape the future of local government through evidence-based advocacy. Through their delegates, Victorian councils contribute to important decisions that guide the strategic priorities of the MAV's Intergovernmental Relations & Advocacy Framework, influence sector-wide priorities for Federal and State Government action and ensure the voices of communities across the state are heard.

Meeting twice a year, State Council plays a key role in strengthening local government by enabling collaboration, informed debate, and democratic decision-making. It provides an opportunity for councils to raise issues, propose solutions, and work collectively toward building stronger, more resilient and thriving local communities.



PRESIDENT

Cr Jennifer Anderson

**Welcome to the
return of our
ongoing State
Council
communique,
State of the Sector.**

Alongside the opportunity to identify the key challenges facing local government and shape the strategic direction of the MAV's Intergovernmental Relations & Advocacy Strategy, State Council strengthens how we connect, communicate, and collaborate to enrich the communities we represent.

The resolutions voted on reflect some of our sector's current advocacy priorities, again featuring the State Government's Emergency Services and Volunteers Fund (ESVF), but also including sector wide concerns for occupational violence and online harassment of councillors, increasing illegal dumping and the impact of planning reform on our sector.

State Council provides not only a clear snapshot of the key state-wide issues our communities face, but importantly it provides the MAV with a strong, united mandate for advocacy to Federal and State Government.

Thank you to all councils and delegates for your practical and thoughtful contributions.

Our team will take what we have heard at State Council for advocacy and action that delivers real outcomes for all Victorians.



CEO Kelly Grigsby

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Our October State Council was a prime example of the power of the sector coming together and raising our shared priorities. The MAV's intergovernmental relations and advocacy voice is at its most powerful when we have the united mandate our State Council resolutions provide.

This document captures the collective calls of local government and provides the direction for our advocacy on behalf of the sector.

State of the Sector is a vital tool in keeping all of you informed, aligned, and ready to act in support of our advocacy and intergovernmental relations work, on behalf of communities across Victoria.

It reflects our shared commitment to a coordinated, impactful intergovernmental relations and advocacy strategy that reflects the experiences of Victorian councils and designed to meet the challenges ahead.



Photo credit – Kate Longley

Executive Summary

Since the last State Council in May 2025, Victorian councils continue to face persistent pressures, including the implementation of the State Government's Emergency Services and Volunteers Fund (ESVF), planning reform challenges, and ongoing issues such as litter and illegal dumping. At the same time, new challenges are emerging most notably online harassment and occupational violence and the growing implications of artificial intelligence for service delivery and governance.

These developments underscore the evolving demands on councils to deliver essential services safely, and to guide responsible innovation to meet changing social and technological contexts, and the expectations of their communities.

Many of the themes in this State of the Sector report will inform the MAV pre-budget submissions to state and federal governments, as well as the MAV state election campaign in readiness for the state election in 2026.

125
Event
attendees

75
Motions
considered

72
Motions
passed

Key Resolutions

Occupational Violence

Together, councils have called for:

- **Research and Safety Measures** – Undertake statewide research into occupational violence against council staff and councillors, and seek WorkSafe support for initiatives to enhance safety, including a public awareness campaign.
- **Community Awareness Campaign** – Launch a statewide campaign to counter negative community behaviours and social media attacks, while promoting the important role of local government and the services it provides.
- **Establish a committee** to investigate harmful behaviour directed at councillors, including harassment, intimidation, and abuse, including via social media, to protect their safety and wellbeing.

“Councils in Victoria are affected by the growing challenge of negative public sentiment, misinformation, and online abuse directed at Councillors...”

These behaviours undermine trust in local government, discourage civic engagement, and impact the wellbeing of elected representatives.”

Litter and Illegal Dumping

Together, councils have called for:

- **Coordinated State-Wide Response** – Advocate for a Victorian Government-led strategy on litter and illegal dumping that includes increased education and enforcement, enhanced surveillance and data collection, and stronger support for clean-up efforts in known hotspots.
- **Stronger Penalties** – Review and increase penalty amounts under the Environment Protection Act 2017 or provide councils the ability to set locally appropriate penalties to reflect a zero-tolerance approach.

“...the current approach effectively penalises councils and their communities from actions outside their control.”

Key Resolutions

Road funding model to meet asset renewal demands

Together, councils have called for:

- **A per-kilometre road funding model that supports rural councils** – Advocate to the Victorian and Commonwealth Governments for the development and implementation of a per-kilometre funding model for local roads – sealed and unsealed – that is directly informed by each council's measured renewal gap.

“MAV’s leadership in coordinating sector data, establishing a consistent methodology and advocating to state and federal governments is critical to this reform.”

Emergency Services and Volunteers Fund (ESVF)

Together, councils have called for:

- **Full Repeal of ESVF Act** – Urgently introduce legislation to fully repeal the Emergency Services and Volunteers Fund Act 2025 and reinstate the Fire Services Property Levy framework.
- **Targeted Levy Relief** – If full repeal is not possible, extend partial levy rebates for primary producers beyond 2026–27 and introduce similar rebates for regional businesses to recognise economic pressures in rural communities.
- **Efficient Administration** – Transfer administration and collection of the Emergency Services and Volunteers Fund to the State Revenue Office from 2026–27 to reduce burden on councils and improve consistency and efficiency.

“While councils are supportive of the great work done by emergency service personnel and volunteers, the proposed levy places an undue financial burden on local communities at a difficult financial time”.

Key Resolutions

Planning Reform

Together, councils have called for:

- **Protect Rural and Local Character** – Ensure the review of the Planning and Environment Act 1987 safeguards local vision, heritage, natural areas, significant trees, and allows councils to remain the determining authority on local planning decisions.
- **Transparent and Fair Engagement** – Maintain opportunities for communities to access information, provide input, and retain balanced third-party objection and appeal rights, including for major projects affecting rural and regional communities.
- **Simplicity and Local Oversight** – Minimise unnecessary complexity in the Act while ensuring councils can continue to make local decisions that reflect community values.

“...changes should be made with input from all stakeholders, including local government and the communities they serve... local values and input into the planning system should remain strong in Victoria”.

Funding Based Resolutions:

- Advocacy for Department of Education School Focused Youth Service Funding
- Reinstatement of Funding for the Office for Women in Sport and Recreation
- Funding of Sleep and Settling Programs
- Best Start, Best Life Infrastructure Investment
- Protect the future of our public pools

Other Key Themes:

- Renewable Energy Zone Community Benefits Plan
- Guided approach to AI involvement in Local Government
- Support for local initiatives to accelerate climate action
- Landfill rehabilitation
- Drought Support and Realities
- Protecting and expanding urban tree canopy through planning and vegetation management reform





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