

THE FUTURE IS LOCAL

A unified voice for Victorian Councils

2026 MAV State Election Campaign



MUNICIPAL ASSOCIATION OF VICTORIA

Victoria stands at a crossroads. The prosperity and social cohesion of our state depend on the strength of our communities and the capacity of local systems to adapt in the face of unprecedented disruption.

Climate volatility, demographic shifts, digital disruption, and rising costs are reshaping the way we live, work, and connect.

Local government is the first tier of government where democracy meets daily life – where trust and resilience is built through the services, spaces, and connections that sustain more than seven million Victorians.

By strengthening local governments, we strengthen the foundations of prosperity, equity, and resilience across Victoria.

Victoria's councils have the courage and commitment to lead this change, and they need the partnerships, investment, and support to do so.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

The Municipal Association of Victoria acknowledges the Traditional Owners of Country throughout Victoria, and recognises 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.

FIVE priorities for Victorian councils this State Election:

Together with Victoria's 79 local councils we have identified five themes representing the most pressing priorities for Victorian communities.



Growing futures

Connected housing



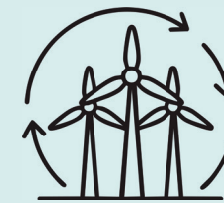
Local futures

Safe and cohesive communities



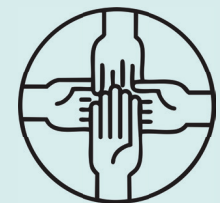
Productive futures

Safer roads and local transport connections



Regenerative futures

Community legacy benefit sharing



Transformative futures

Securing the future of Victoria's local government sector

The Future is Local. The time is now.

Growing futures

Connected housing



CASE STUDY

New infrastructure delivers on climate action, community connection and wellbeing for a growing community.

The new Northcote Aquatic and Recreation Centre is a fully electric, 6 Star Green Star facility that delivers bold climate action, social connection and wellbeing. Replacing a 40-year-old gas-powered centre, it now runs entirely on renewable energy, with water reuse systems, green infrastructure and a 450kW solar PV array.

“The old centre was part of our lives for decades – it’s where my kids learned to swim, and where I’ve stayed active as I’ve aged. It’s amazing to see it transformed into something that’s not just for us, but for the planet too.”

Local resident, Northcote

THE ASK

Fund the Gap: Community Infrastructure Fund over three years to ensure councils can continue to provide essential enabling infrastructure to support housing delivery and community wellbeing.



THE NEED

The reformed infrastructure contribution scheme is due to commence in 2027/28. Between now and then, councils must be able to provide the community infrastructure to support housing growth targets.

THE OUTCOME

Livable, connected communities where critical infrastructure keeps pace with growth and supports long-term wellbeing.



Local futures

Safe and cohesive communities



THE ASK

Launch a statewide *Community Cohesion Action Fund* coordinated by the MAV leveraging local assets to re-build local community connections for safer, more engaged and more socially cohesive communities.

THE NEED

Growing social fragmentation, incidents of community violence and tension, and increasing emergencies related to natural disasters require initiatives that help prevent anti-social behaviour, reduce social isolation, protect democracy and promote community safety, resilience and wellbeing.



THE OUTCOME

A coordinated statewide funding program that leverages existing local assets and grassroots knowledge to create safer and more engaged communities across Victoria.

Transferable Co-Design Framework

The Merri-bek Democracy Lab's co-design methodology, which involves participants and alumni in shaping and delivering the program, is not location-specific and can be adopted by other councils.

CASE STUDY

Empowering community voices, shaping Merri-bek's future together.

Launched in 2019, the Merri-bek Democracy Lab – a partnership between Merri-bek City Council and The Public Value Studio – empowers diverse community members to engage in civic life.

Through an 8-week skill-building program, participants gain confidence, build connections, and lead community projects. Outcomes include 88% reporting increased civic awareness and 92% stronger social ties.



Productive futures

Safer roads and local transport connections



THE ASK

Fast track and prioritise investment in state-managed arterial roads, public transport and active transport links that unlock local economic growth and housing supply in the local areas that are missing out.

THE NEED

State-managed arterial roads, public transport, and active transport links in underserved areas need targeted and timely investment to unlock local economic growth and support housing development.

THE OUTCOME

A more productive Victoria, where investment in state infrastructure unlocks local economic growth, housing supply and workforce participation.



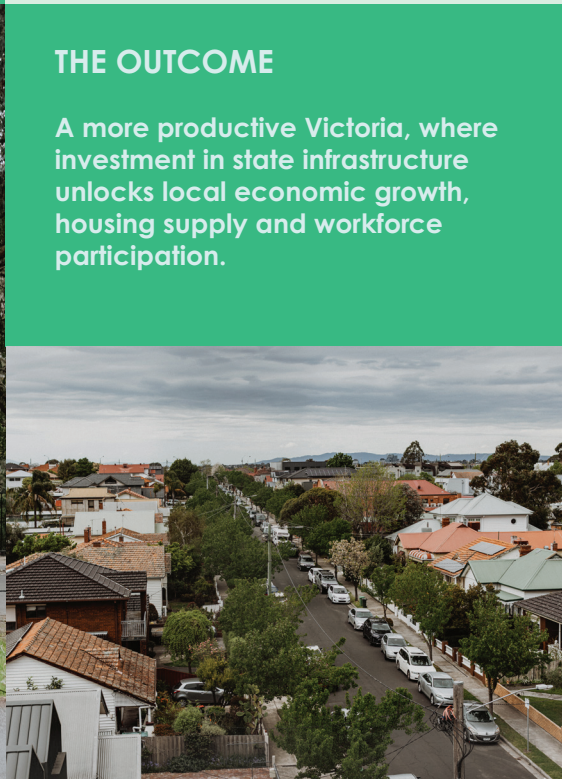
CASE STUDY

Western Highway Duplication: Ballarat to Stawell (Ararat Section).

The duplication of the Western Highway between Ballarat and Stawell remains incomplete, with the stalled section near Ararat requiring urgent action. Immediate investment and streamlined approvals are needed to restart works without delay.

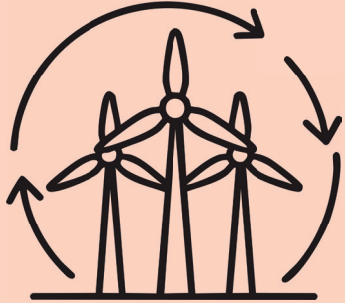
"We've seen multiple incidents on this road, particularly on the section between Buangor and Ararat in recent months. We'd really like to see this project made a priority by both the State and Federal Governments."

*Cr Jo Armstrong,
Ararat Rural City Council*



Regenerative futures

Community legacy benefit sharing



THE ASK

Mandate developer engagement with the Local Governments hosting the transition to renewable energy and critical minerals projects.

Councils are best placed to coordinate a regional approach to driving community dividends and industry engagement for renewable energy and critical minerals projects.



CASE STUDY

Sharing the benefits of the renewable energy transition with First Nations communities.

Wellington and East Gippsland Shire Councils are working in partnership with the Gunaikurnai Land and Waters Aboriginal Corporation and the State Government to plan land use and enabling infrastructure for renewable energy and offshore wind development. This collaborative planning process ensures investment is well-sequenced, locally appropriate and community-informed, delivering tangible outcomes including local jobs, skills development and long-term economic benefits for the Gippsland region.

THE NEED

Under the current VicGrid framework, engagement with local government is treated as voluntary "best practice" rather than a requirement for energy developers and specific guidance for critical minerals projects is not yet in place to ensure communities share in benefits and are not left bearing the impacts of extraction without return.

THE OUTCOME

Legacy community dividends, strong regional economies leading the clean-energy transformation, supporting the delivery of the Victorian Critical Mineral Roadmap and supporting Victoria's pathway to net zero.



Transformative futures

Securing the future of Victoria's local government sector



THE ASK

Establish a Multi-Year Transformation Fund – to lead the local government sector to be more efficient and responsive to changing community needs.

Establish a Local Government Accord – formalising local government as an equal partner with the State government, enabling structured engagement to shape policy, strengthen service delivery, and improve outcomes.

THE NEED

Climate volatility, demographic shifts, digital disruption, and rising costs are reshaping the way we live, work, and connect. Financially constrained councils are under pressure to deliver more with less.

THE OUTCOME

A future-fit local government sector that better delivers essential community services and harnesses technology to continue to meet the growing and changing needs of seven million Victorians.



CASE STUDY

Investing in a future-fit, technology-enabled local government.

83% of Victorian councils consider digital transformation a top priority, yet most lack the resources to implement it safely and equitably.

“At Whitehorse our AI capability uplift program is about creating a safe space for experimentation, learning and exploration of what’s possible, so that’s where I see the role of AI stepping in not as a replacement for staff but as a powerful enabler to allow them to focus their energy on the work that requires their human judgement, their care and creativity.”

*Lisa Ippolito,
AI Enablement Lead,
Whitehorse City Council*





The Future is Local seeks to unlock the power of local government over the long term to deliver place-based solutions to global challenges.

This state election is the moment to invest in a thriving, resilient and inclusive Victoria, built locally and contributing globally.

The Future is Local.

The time is now.

Imagery throughout this document includes projects from our MAVlab Innovation Case Study Library, featuring: Darebin City Council, Casey City Council, Mount Alexander Shire Council, Yarra Valley Shire Council, Whitehorse City Council, Melbourne City Council, Brimbank City Council, and Maribyrnong City Council.

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