

Local Government & Shires Associations of NSW

NSW Election Priorities 2011

SUMMARY

This document summarises key issues in each of the six themes outlined in the LGSA's *NSW Election Priorities 2011*.

The full description of each issue, the current situation and the proposed LGSA solution is available at www.lgsa.org.au/election2011

A copy of the LGSA's *NSW Election Priorities 2011* has been sent to all political party leaders on 7 February 2011 for their comment and written response by 28 February 2011.

The Local Government Association of NSW and the Shires Association of NSW (LGSA) are the peak bodies representing Local Government in NSW. Their membership comprise of all 152 NSW general-purpose councils, special-purpose county councils and regions of the NSW Aboriginal Land Council.

The LGSA's NSW Election Priorities 2011 outlines to all parties contesting the 2011 NSW Government Election the issues of significance for councils and the communities they represent, and the LGSA's proposed solutions.

Effective and efficient Local Government is vital to the communities of NSW, and it is essential that our communities get the support they need. Local Government is also central to many of the infrastructure and service offerings of the NSW Government.

Local Government is one of the biggest industries in NSW, spending approximately \$8 billion per year and managing non-financial assets (infrastructure and land) worth \$89 billion, as well as employing more than 50,000 staff.

The LGSA call on all political parties contesting the 2011 NSW Government election to address and respond to the issues of concern to Local Government in the following core themes:

- 1 **Improved Local Government financial viability.**
- 2 **Restore the balance to land use planning.**
- 3 **Stronger support for communities.**
- 4 **Greater natural environment protection.**
- 5 **Enhanced infrastructure provision and maintenance.**
- 6 **Better local governance.**

1. Improved financial viability

To improve Local Government financial viability, the LGSA request that the incoming NSW Government:

- a Abolish rate pegging.
- b Cease the practice of cost shifting and enact legislation that requires Local Government's agreement to take on additional responsibilities. If taken on, provide corresponding funding or allow adequate revenue raising capacity.
- c Provide \$6 million to improve Local Government's capacity to undertake financial planning and asset management to support Community Strategic Planning.
- d Implement a broad based property levy for funding emergency services. If a broad based property levy is rejected, allow councils to recover their contribution through a corresponding increase in their council rates.
- e Introduce competition, transparency and accountability, in providing and costing energy for general electricity and street lighting.
- f Allocate a share of mining royalties to Local Government through a system that provides funding to all councils, with additional funding for councils impacted by the mining industry.

2. Restore the balance to land use planning

To restore the balance to land use planning, the LGSA request that the incoming NSW Government:

- a Undertake a major review and rewrite of the *Environmental Planning and Assessment Act (NSW) 1979* to restore the balance in the NSW planning system, and recognise that councils and the NSW Government each have a role to play in planning for and managing the sustainable development of local communities.
- b Repeal Part 3A and similar provisions such as the Major Projects SEPP, and in close consultation with Local Government devise and implement a genuine test for matters of state significance.
- c Abolish Joint Regional Planning Panels (JRPPs).
- d Revise the Affordable Rental Housing SEPP to include additional assessment provisions relating to consultation, council involvement, access to public transport, residential character, density, site suitability, accessibility and payment of appropriate development contributions.
- e Treat Local Government as a partner in future reviews of the Metropolitan Plan for Sydney (2036), Regional Strategies and the State Plan.

3. Stronger support for communities

To provide stronger support to communities, the LGSA request the incoming NSW Government:

- a Guarantee continuing Local Government management of Home and Community Care (for those councils presently involved) in the transfer of control from the NSW Government to the Australian Government. A guarantee of improved local service levels in all areas is also sought.
- b Provide a \$20 million enhancement to NSW recurrent funding for those councils presently involved in prevention and early intervention services for children.
- c Increase funding for public libraries by \$5.2 million each year for five years to reach a new recurrent target of \$51.5 million per year by 2015/16.
- d Create a Local Government arts and cultural development fund, with a key objective being to improve arts infrastructure outside the Sydney CBD.
- e Scale down the size of the Central West and Murrumbidgee Local Health Networks and give local councils a seat on the governing councils of all country Local Health Networks.
- f Provide a \$10 million increase to NSW recurrent funding for those councils presently involved in preventative health initiatives.
- g Work in collaboration with Local Government to ensure the Australian Government carries out proper socio-economic analysis in developing the Murray-Darling Basin Plan, and provides early, well-targeted mitigation and transition measures to help communities adapt to the final Murray-Darling Basin Plan.
- h Strengthen programs to support population growth and economic development in regional and rural NSW (including programs such as, or similar to, Evocities and PORTS).
- i Set new requirements for Government strategic planning to address social justice or social inclusion.
- j Introduce new restrictions on the sale of alcohol at pubs and clubs across NSW as proposed in the *Last Drinks* campaign.
- k Give due consideration to the five issues for future NSW Government action to reduce the impact of cancer on all NSW communities (as outlined in the Cancer Council of NSW "Saving Life" Campaign).
- l Provide additional recurrent funding to NGOs offering mental health services in rural areas.
- m Work in collaboration with Local Government to ensure the Australian Government provides more funding for residential aged care and for ageing in regional and rural NSW.
- n Reform NSW Police recruitment, transfer and sick leave policies to ensure all regional, rural and remote stations are always staffed at authorised operational levels.

4. Greater natural environment protection

To provide greater natural environmental protection, the LGSA request the incoming NSW Government:

- a Fully hypothecate the waste levy so councils can use alternative waste technologies, joint ventures and education to reduce the waste stream.
- b Endorse the *NSW Climate Change Action Plan* and provide resources to councils to address the significant environmental, economic and social impacts of climate change.
- c Increase funding allocated to weed management to \$20 million and commit to an ongoing role of Local Government in weed management.
- d Fund a "City and Country 2" Environment Restoration Program, including a significant funding allocation to Local Government.
- e Review the NSW Building Sustainability Index (BASIX) to establish whether it is meeting its goals, where improvements can be made (including whether it can be extended to commercial premises) and whether it can be converted to a minimum rather than maximum standard.
- f Support the continuation of Catchment Management Authorities, reviewing their role with the aim of improving their autonomy and enhancing their funding.

5. Enhanced infrastructure provision and maintenance

To enhance local infrastructure provision, and maintenance, the LGSA request the incoming NSW Government to:

- a Create a \$1 billion Local Government Infrastructure Fund.
- b Quarantine town water supplies from the application of sustainable water diversion limits set by the Murray-Darling Basin Authority.
- c Ensure Local Government retains ownership and control of council owned and operated local water and sewerage utilities in regional NSW.
- d Continue to provide capital funding for council owned and operated local water and sewerage utilities in regional NSW, including a remote communities water and sewerage program. Also commit to funding new infrastructure necessary as a result of impacts of climate change on water supplies.
- e Continue the Aboriginal Communities Water and Sewerage Program and widen the program by adding adequate funding for capital works required to upgrade water supply and sewerage systems in Aboriginal communities.
- f Work with Local Government to develop long term solutions for funding community infrastructure requirements in both greenfield and infill areas.
- g Improve road funding assistance to Local Government, with special emphasis on regional roads and timber bridges.

6. Better local governance

To provide better local governance, the LGSA request the incoming NSW Government:

- a Further develop and implement the NSW and Local Government Intergovernmental Agreement to establish a mechanism that will determine which sphere of government should deliver a particular service in a given scenario. Also ensure that the sphere of government which is given the responsibility is also given corresponding adequate funding or revenue raising capacity.
- b Support the national Local Government campaign to recognise Local Government in the Australian Constitution, to ensure the Australian Government can directly fund Local Government nationwide.
- c Create the option for councils to run their elections locally, with an independent returning officer, to save money and restore local confidence.
- d Set up an Intergovernmental Commission for Future Local Government involving representatives from all levels of Government, the LGSA and independents. The aim of the Commission would be to guide a comprehensive program to strengthen Local Government for the coming term and future 40 years, as outlined in the outcomes of LGSA' *Modernising Local Government Initiative*.
- e Provide legislation or Premier's directive for NSW Government agencies to incorporate local Community Strategic Plans in state planning processes.
- f Provide funding for a significant long-term mentoring program aimed at improving the diversity of councillors (\$600,000 per year for eight years).
- g Remove the concept of a 'body politic' from the *Local Government Act (NSW) 1993*.

Council services and facilities

Local councils in NSW offer a huge variety of services and facilities, including:

- Waste removal, treatment and disposal facilities and services.
- Water and sewerage works and facilities.
- Roads and transport infrastructure, facilities and services.
- Sporting, recreational and entertainment facilities and services.
- Cultural, educational and information facilities, services and programs.
- Community facilities and human services.
- Environment conservation, protection and improvement facilities, services and programs.
- Storm water drainage and flood prevention, protection and mitigation infrastructure and facilities.
- Public health facilities and services.
- Tourism development and assistance.
- Pest control services.
- Housing.

Councils are also involved in strategic and regulatory land use planning and a variety of regulatory functions including animal control, alcohol free zones, food safety, parking, control of public open space and many more.

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www.lgsa.org.au
GPO Box 7003
Sydney NSW 2001

Policy Enquiries:

policy@lgsa.org.au or 02 9242 4014

Media Enquiries:

media@lgsa.org.au or 0427 109 593

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