



**The Hon Greg Hunt MP**  
**Minister for the Environment**

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Mayor Dr Felicity-ann Lewis  
President  
Australian Local Government Association  
8 Geils Court  
DEAKIN ACT 2600

24 SEP 2014

Dear Dr Lewis

I refer to your letter of 25 August 2014 concerning the various environmental motions arising from the 20th National General Assembly of Local Government.

Please find below my response to each of the motions identified in your letter:

**Strategic Motion 10**

*Town of Gawler, SA*

**Motion**

The National General Assembly of Local Government called upon the Federal Government, through the Australian Taxation Office, to establish a federal heritage building restoration tax credit (\$1.30 for every \$1 spent on restoration) for commercial buildings listed as National, State and Local Heritage and for all residential heritage buildings being restored, materials used and other contract costs for restoration are deemed to be exempt (or provided with a refund or other mechanism) from Goods and Services Tax (GST).

**My response**

I note the innovative principles around this motion with interest. As this motion relates directly to taxation reform, I would encourage the National General Assembly of Local Government to engage with the Australian Taxation Office to further develop the potential of this reform proposal.

The draft Australian Heritage Strategy was released for public comment on 14 April 2014. Public comments received by the Department of the Environment, included recommendations for innovative partnerships and alternate funding models to help support heritage place owners and managers. These ideas will be considered for inclusion in the final Strategy, to be released in late 2014.

**Motion 20**

*Willoughby City Council, NSW*

**Motion**

That this National Assembly call upon the Australian and state governments to remove regulatory barriers to develop local decentralised renewable energy production facilities.

**My response**

This motion has been referred to the Department of Industry for response.

**Motion 24**

*Willoughby City Council, NSW- Manly Council, NSW*

**Motion**

That this National Assembly call upon the Australian Government to implement recommendations detailed in the House of Representatives committee report "Managing our coastal zone in a changing climate: The time to act is now".

**My response**

In response to a number of report recommendations which relate to scientific and vulnerability information, and adaptation guidance on managing coastal climate risks, the Australian Government is providing \$8.8 million to fund a second phase of the National Climate Change Adaptation Research Facility (NCCARF). NCCARF will deliver:

- an authoritative and objective framework for coastal risk management, to help local governments and other organisations make better decisions about managing risks from rising sea levels and storm surges. The framework should incorporate the views of end-users on its design, content, delivery and dissemination;
- effective, relevant and accessible climate adaptation information to policy- and decision-makers, based on the most actionable outcomes of NCCARF's Phase One research; and
- ongoing operation of four NCCARF adaptation networks to maintain core adaptation research capability in Australia.

Products will be developed in close collaboration with state, territory and local governments to ensure their practicality, and to promote their uptake among decision makers. NCCARF's outputs will be designed to support better decision making at the local level to manage future climate risks, particularly in the coastal zone.

**Strategic Motion 25**

*Shoalhaven City Council, NSW*

**Motion**

That the National General Assembly calls on the Commonwealth Government to establish a "National Coastal Policy".

### **My response**

The Australian Government understands the importance of protecting Australia's coastal environments. In addition to the Australian Government actions supporting improved coastal zone management described above (motion 24), the Australian Government also supports building coastal environment resilience through a number of environmental programmes:

- under the National Landcare Programme funding is provided to Australia's 56 regional Natural Resource Management (NRM) organisations to conduct environmental works according to their regional NRM plans. The plans outline the environmental priorities and long term goals for the region, including the management of coastal ecosystems, where present. Through the NRM Planning for Climate Change measure, the Australian Government is supporting each NRM region to update their plans to address predicted climate change impacts, based on detailed scientific data;
- through the 20 Million Trees Programme (part of the National Landcare Programme), there are opportunities for coastal communities to get involved in coastal zone revegetation. The programme provides funding via competitive grants to individuals, community groups and organisations to plant 20 million trees by 2020, to re-establish green corridors and urban forests;
- the Australian Government's Green Army initiative provides opportunities for coastal communities to get some hands-on, practical support for their local environment and heritage conservation projects;
- in March 2014, Oceanwatch was recognised by the Australian Government as a new NRM organisation. Oceanwatch will have a specific focus on improving the sustainability of the fishing industry through projects which enhance marine environments, improve water quality and help restore important coastal habitats; and
- the Australian Government's Reef 2050 Plan includes the establishment of the Reef Trust, which will combine Australian Government and private funds to support activities which improve the coastal habitat and water quality throughout the Great Barrier Reef and adjacent catchments.

I understand Local Government is seeking guidance on how it can deal with long-term planning issues, and delivering practical information to support local decision-making in the coastal zone will be a key role for NCCARF over the next three years.

### **Motion 27**

*Willoughby City Council, NSW- Manly Council, NSW*

### **Motion**

That this National Assembly call upon the Australian and state governments to develop and implement an intergovernmental National Marine Management Strategy.

### **My response**

Each jurisdiction in Australia has in place arrangements to manage areas of the marine environment that are under its control. The Federal government is responsible for areas beyond three nautical miles out to the edge of Australia's maritime area (generally 200 nautical miles).

Where there are issues that require management across jurisdictional boundaries, specific arrangements have been developed. For example, many fisheries are managed by state governments, even where fishing is undertaken in Commonwealth waters. It is not clear that a national strategy is needed to complement such case-by-case approaches.

**Motion 28**

*Willoughby City Council, NSW- Manly Council, NSW*

**Motion**

That this National Assembly call upon the Australian Government to establish an effective, integrated National Coastal Information System that provides publicly accessible information at the right scale for regional and local decision making via a consistent national application.


**My response**

The Australian Government is finalising the delivery of a national coastal flooding Visualisation Tool (VisTool). The VisTool is a web-based spatial tool designed to help coastal decision makers consider the risks of coastal flooding from tides, storm surge and sea level rise. The VisTool builds upon significant investment into high resolution elevation data and the development of consistent national methods by the Australian Government, the Cooperative Research Centre for Spatial Information, Geoscience Australia and state governments. The VisTool will be integral to the work of NCCARF as it develops a consistent national approach to management of climate change related coastal risks.

In line with my response to Motion 24, the Australian Government is providing \$8.8 million to fund a second phase of NCCARF. NCCARF's primary role will be to develop a national coastal climate risk management tool to assist local and regional decision makers to manage coastal climate risks, including inundation and erosion. The tool will draw on the existing coastal science and information products, including the VisTool.

Thank you for writing on this matter.

Yours sincerely



Greg Hunt