



The Hon Warren Truss MP

Deputy Prime Minister
Minister for Infrastructure and Regional Development
Leader of The Nationals
Member for Wide Bay

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Mayor Troy Pickard
President
Australian Local Government Association
8 Geils Court
DEAKIN ACT 2600

Dear Mayor Pickard *Troy*

Mayor Felicity-ann Lewis wrote to me on 25 August 2014 regarding a response to the resolutions arising from the Australian Local Government Association's 2014 National General Assembly of Local Government.

I am pleased to be able to provide you with the enclosed response to the resolutions related to my portfolio, Infrastructure and Regional Development.

The Australian Government welcomes the opportunity to continue to increase its understanding of local government issues. I thank the Australian Local Government Association for bringing this matter to my attention.

Yours sincerely



WARREN TRUSS

Response to Local Government National General Assembly Resolutions

1. Motion 7

Liverpool City Council, NSW

Motion

That the National General Assembly call on the federal government to work in partnership with local and regional growth councils and provide additional resources to support the delivery of critical employment, infrastructure and services that meet the demands of a growing population.

Response

The Australian Government will continue to work in partnership with state and local government to deliver its \$50 billion infrastructure plan. This initiative will build the vital national road and rail projects to improve efficiency, boost productivity and drive Australia's economy forward.

Infrastructure at the local and regional level is important to maximise the benefits from the Australian Government's investment.

The 2014–15 Budget contained extra funding for existing and new programmes, which include:

- the expanded \$565 million Black Spot and \$248 million Heavy Vehicle programmes;
- the new \$300 million Bridges Renewal programme;
- the new \$1 billion National Stronger Regions Fund;
- additional funding of \$2.1 billion for Roads to Recovery programme ; and
- increased funding of \$229 million for National Highways upgrades.

Round One of the National Stronger Regions Fund (NSRF) opened on 1 October 2014 and will close on 28 November 2014.

Local Government and incorporated not-for-profit organisations are eligible to apply for funding under the NSRF of between \$20,000 and \$10 million for capital projects which involve construction of new infrastructure, or the upgrade, extension or enhancement of existing infrastructure. Grant funding must be matched in cash on at least a dollar for dollar basis, and the funded part of the project must be completed on or before 31 December 2019.

Projects selected for funding should deliver an economic benefit to the region beyond the period of construction, and should support disadvantaged regions or areas of disadvantage within a region.

In addition the Financial Assistance Grant programme that is providing an estimated \$9.3 billion to local government over the period 2014-15 to 2017-18 (approximately \$2.3 billion per year).

In combination this investment will enable local government to ensure the infrastructure is in place to support economic growth in their areas.

2. Motion 8

Wyndham City Council, VIC

Motion

In order to realise the potential of population growth to boost jobs and national productivity, this National Assembly of Local Governments calls on the Australian Government to:

- Ensure that population growth is front and centre in its policymaking and investment decisions;
- Ensure that Infrastructure Australia has a focus on population growth and the projects required to unlock its potential; and
- Provide incentives to investors to develop the businesses and infrastructure that will drive the productivity gains.

Response

The Coalition's population policy places a sustainable population at its centre. Australia needs a population that our services can satisfy, our infrastructure can support, our environment can sustain, our society can embrace, and our economy can employ.

Population growth is a significant driver of infrastructure demand. Sustainable population growth in regional centres creates opportunities for private investment, in turn, creating jobs and boosting national productivity and competitiveness.

The Australian Government has tasked Infrastructure Australia with the responsibility of undertaking an audit of Australia's national infrastructure and to prepare a 15 year national infrastructure plan.

An integral part of the audit and plan is to consider the impact of population growth and diversity and the implications of different population and economic development scenarios for Australia's infrastructure. Funding arrangements to support investment in new infrastructure are also a significant issue receiving attention from Infrastructure Australia.

The forthcoming 15 year national infrastructure plan is expected to provide a framework for improvements in infrastructure decision-making including improving project selection processes and more disciplined project evaluation and decision-making.

3. Motion 26

Manly Council, NSW- Willoughby City Council, NSW

Motion

That this National Assembly call upon the Australian Government to implement policies and programs that ensure the maintenance of public ownership of and public access along the coastal zone.

Response

The Australian Government acknowledges community concerns relating to coastal amenity however, coastal management and planning is a matter for state and territory governments.

All states have introduced coastal management and planning regulations and policies. Further information about coastal zone management including the public ownership of and public access along the coastal zones are best directed to state governments.

4. Motion 43

Etheridge Shire Council, QLD

Motion

That this NGA seek to have greater access for Local Councils as contractors for any planned construction work on National and State highways.

Response

It is a requirement of the *National Land Transport Act 2014* that State or a State authority must call for public tenders for certain work. Local councils rightly have the same access to, and are subject to the same obligations of other entities seeking to access commercial contracts as the rest of the market.

5. Motion 44

Parkes Shire Council, NSW

Motion

That the National General Assembly congratulate the Australian Government for identifying the Melbourne to Brisbane Inland Railway as nationally significant infrastructure required to meet the burgeoning growth in freight, which is anticipated to triple by 2050, and for allocating \$300m for planning and acquisition to commence this project. Further that, the National General Assembly call on the Australian Government to now allocate funds to construct the Melbourne to Brisbane Inland Rail, to a modern-standard sufficient to drive modal shift from long-haul road to rail.

Response

The Australian Government welcomes the National General Assembly's support for the progress being made on the Melbourne to Brisbane Inland Railway project. The Australian Government remains committed to constructing the Melbourne-Brisbane Inland Railway. A project as big and as complex as Inland Rail requires careful planning to ensure the proposed railway meets the needs of users.

In December 2013, the Deputy Prime Minister set the Implementation Group, chaired by the former Deputy Prime Minister, John Anderson AO, the ambitious task of providing the Government with the advice on how to deliver an Inland Railway that optimises demand, cost, above rail operations and financial viability.

Inland Rail is being developed to be upgradable as the future needs arise. Ultimately, Inland Rail must be an integral element of our supply chain, delivering what customers want at a price they are willing to pay.

The Implementation Group's delivery plan will allow the Government to be in a position to take key decisions on implementing and financing Inland Rail in the New Year. These decisions will include strategies for developing private sector funding opportunities, and how we will work with state governments to construct the railway. The Group's recommendation will also assist us in determining the best strategy for using our current \$300 million development commitment.

6. Motion 45

Willoughby City Council, NSW

Motion

That this National Assembly call upon the Australian Government to fund development of high speed rail from Sydney to Canberra to Melbourne during this term of parliament as a major infrastructure project. The proposed rail would provide rapid transportation of people and goods, reducing demand on the very busy air corridors. As the high speed rail has long been proposed, it needs clear direction and funds to expedite its development. It would provide a much needed major infrastructure project, providing lean efficient transport and create jobs.

Response

The Australian Government is currently considering what role high speed rail (HSR) could play in Australia's long term transport planning. Any decision to proceed needs to ensure that all implications are properly identified and carefully managed. All relevant governments need to be involved in working through the considerations highlighted in the Phase 2 HSR report before any final decision could be taken whether to proceed with HSR.

The Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Infrastructure and Regional Development, the Hon Warren Truss MP, has been consulting with counterpart Ministers in Queensland, New South Wales, Victoria and the ACT.

7. Motion 46

Albury City Council, NSW

Motion

That the National General Assembly supports the proposition that the National Stronger Regions Fund provides social and economic infrastructure support to all regional communities.

Response

The Australian Government welcomes the support of the National Assembly of Local Government for its recently announced National Stronger Regions Fund (NSRF).

The NSRF will help communities with poor socio-economic circumstances and higher than average unemployment, by improving local facilities, creating local jobs and building needed infrastructure.

The Coalition understands it is people, not processes that make strong communities. Local people are best placed to know their own needs. Successful projects will emerge from local communities.

We will work with local communities by backing successful projects and contributing up to 50 per cent of the funds needed to construct them. The remaining funds for the projects will come from local government, state governments, the community and the private sector.

8. Motion 47

Wyong Shire Council, NSW

Motion

That the National General Assembly calls upon the Commonwealth Government to review the structure, operation and funding arrangements to Regional Development Australia to ensure its strategies and outcomes align to the strategic directions that the Local Governments in the regions are taking on delivering essential infrastructure to support economic growth and to create local jobs.

Response

The Australian Government welcomes the support of the National General Assembly for a closer alignment between Regional Development Australia (RDA) Committees and local government.

The Australian Government has announced revised administrative arrangements for the 55 RDA Committees across Australia.

The Government's preferred approach is a tripartite model where Federal, State or Territory and Local Governments are all contributing partners to the RDA Committee initiative. Where States have indicated they intend to develop or maintain their own regional consultative arrangements, the Australian Government will continue to support RDA Committees as independent incorporated associations within the current funding allocation.

The importance of engagement with local government will be reinforced including through funding RDA Committees to maintain a three to five year regional plan that focuses on economic development of the region and takes account of Australian, State/Territory and Local Government plans.

Committees will be expected to focus more strongly on regional economic development and facilitating local projects that make a difference for their local communities, drive economic growth and make the most of the potential capability of their region.

There will be some changes made to streamline the RDA Committee appointment processes, reduce administrative burden and simplify governance arrangements.

The current appointment process will be simplified with the Chair and Deputy Chair appointments being made by the government, jointly with state and territories where they are funding partners. RDA Committee Chairs and Deputy Chairs will make the appointments to fill Committee vacancies themselves.

A further review into the RDA network will be undertaken in two years to assess the effectiveness of the arrangements, especially in light of the current federalism discussions.

9. Motion 68

City of Whittlesea, VIC

Motion

That the National General Assembly calls on the Commonwealth Government to:

- 1) Not implement the gambling reforms stipulated in the *Social Services and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2013*. This reversal of legislative requirements and commitment will have serious, regrettable impacts on the lives of Australians, particularly in vulnerable communities consisting of families, children and small business;
- 2) Minimise and prevent avoidable harm from gambling by implementing avoidable harm from gambling by implementing all of States and territories mandatory reforms to reduce detriment and increase consumer safety of electronic gaming (pokie) machine (EGMS); and
- 3) To mandate maximum allowable bets on EGIVIs to \$1 per spin with a maximum \$120 losses per hour in accordance with the Agreed Actions of the Productivity Commission's 2010 and the 2011 Parliamentary Joint Select Committee on Gambling Reform Reports.

Response

The Parliament has passed amendments to the *National Gambling Reform Act 2012* (Act), which reduces the bureaucracy and duplication of the former Act, returning the regulatory control of gaming machines to the states and territories. The legislative amendments, now known as the *Gambling Measures Act 2012*, received Royal Assent on 31 March 2014 and implement the first stage of a new approach to addressing problem gambling.

While state and territory governments have the primary responsibility for gambling regulation, the Commonwealth Government is committed to delivering real, meaningful and measurable support for gamblers across all forms of gambling, in consultation with the community, industry and state and territory governments.

The Commonwealth Government will not impose \$1 bet limits on gaming machines. While the Productivity Commission recommended \$1 maximum bet limits be introduced, they also noted that pre-commitment is 'the most targeted and potentially effective measure'.

10. Motion 69

Central Highlands Regional Council, QLD

Motion

That the National General Assembly call on the Australian Government to implement the Agreed Actions of the FIFO/DIDO report (*'Cancer of the bush or salvation for our cities; fly-in, fly-out and drive-in, drive-out workforce practices in Regional Australia'*) as a matter of urgency to protect regional workforces, and recognise local government as a key stakeholder to be included in all relevant policy review and development,

Response

Fly-in, fly-out (FIFO) and drive-in, drive-out (DIDO) practices have largely been driven by increased activity in the resources sector, which has been a significant contributor to Australia's economic performance over the past decade. While FIFO/DIDO is a legitimate way for employers to meet their skills needs, particularly in remote locations, the Australian Government acknowledges the unique impact of the continued use of these work practices on local communities.

The Government is currently considering the recommendations made by the former House of Representatives Standing Committee on Regional Australia into FIFO/DIDO work practices. As the report's 21 recommendations were wide-ranging and require a whole-of-government response, it is appropriate for Government to carefully consider these recommendations before responding.