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## **Budget support for local government needed to drive post-Covid recovery: ALGA**

Recognising and supporting local government's proven ability to work on behalf of its communities will help cement Covid-19 recovery, the Australian Local Government Association (ALGA) said today.

In its 2021-22 Pre-Budget Submission, ALGA has urged the Morrison Government to prioritise local jobs, infrastructure investment, and community wellbeing initiatives.

Economic recovery from Covid-19 and the 2019-20 droughts, floods and bushfires is imperative – and all governments must work cooperatively and to a common purpose if it is to be long-lasting and effective, the ALGA submission says.

In her introduction to the submission, ALGA President Linda Scott said: "Australia's communities have been through challenging times in the past 12 months.

"Now more than ever, Federal Government support for local governments to assist our communities is vital for creating local jobs and strengthening community wellbeing."

Cr Scott said local Government has a proven track record in delivering – with the states and the Commonwealth – significant programs such as Roads to Recovery, Bridges Renewal, Road Safety Blackspots, and drought and bushfire relief initiatives.

The sector employs nearly 200,000 people and owns, manages, and maintains roads, cycleways, footpaths, parks, pools, and other community assets conservatively valued at \$457 billion with an annual operation spend of more than \$38 billion.

"Australian local governments are expert at job-creation to suit local economic conditions," Cr Scott said, "and we welcome the opportunity to supercharge these efforts as part of Australia's economic recovery from Covid-19.

The measures outlined in ALGA's submission include:

- Continuing the \$1.5 billion Local Roads and Community Infrastructure Program with a focus on sustainable transport initiatives;
- Establishing a targeted disaster mitigation program of \$200 million a year for four years;
- Restoring the quantum of Financial Assistance Grants to at least 1 percent of Commonwealth tax revenue;
- Establishing a local roads investment program to address first and last-mile freight efficiency issues;
- Providing funding of \$120 million a year over four years for local government arts and culture; and

- Providing funding of \$100 million a year over four years for local government circular economy innovation.

ALGA estimates these and other Budget priorities for local government will create over 31,000 jobs and boost GDP by \$4.65 billion.

The submission notes that during the natural disasters and coronavirus pandemic, every council in Australia stepped up to play an important role in supporting their communities to minimise the social and economic impacts.

Historically, local councils have been relied on to deliver public services including waste management, road and freight infrastructure, childcare and early learning, aged care, land use planning, population management, building and development regulation, social cohesion, environmental management, and resources stewardship.

However, local government has increasingly taken a lead role in local and regional economic development – filling in the gaps left by other governments in investment attraction, business mentoring, training, networking, and incubation.

Cr Scott said: “During the pandemic, public trust in local government has increased – and communities now regard councils as fundamental to addressing issues like youth unemployment, health and wellbeing, and building more liveable neighbourhoods, towns, cities, and regions.

“Local government is genuinely recognised by other levels of government as a key agent of community relief, recovery and improvement – and so must be provided with the necessary support and resources.”

She said that with their on-the-ground connections and expertise, councils will, play a vital role in coming months and years to bolster local economies, make communities more resilient, and build a better, more prosperous Australia.

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**Available for interview:**

Councillor Linda Scott, President Australian Local Government Association.