

2015

**LGNSW's
STATE ELECTION
PRIORITIES 2015**



Introduction

Local Government NSW's State Election Priorities 2015 outlines to all parties and candidates contesting the 2015 NSW election the issues of significance for councils and the communities they represent. It also includes Local Government NSW's (LGNSW's) proposed solutions.

LGNSW is the peak industry association that represents the interests of all 152 NSW general purpose councils, 12 special purpose councils and the NSW Aboriginal Land Council.

In essence, LGNSW is the sword and shield for NSW councils. Our objective is to strengthen and protect an effective, democratic system of Local Government across NSW. We do this by supporting and advocating on behalf of NSW councils and delivering a range of relevant, quality services to our members so they can better support NSW communities.

LGNSW seeks, from all parties contesting the 2015 NSW Parliamentary election, commitment to a stronger Local Government sector via:

1. Greater autonomy in governance
2. Autonomy in council revenue raising
3. Fair funding for shared infrastructure and service responsibilities
4. Agreed pathways on voluntary structural reform
5. Mutual positioning on social policy priorities
6. Improved environmental legislation and settings
7. Balanced land use planning.



**PRESIDENT OF LOCAL
GOVERNMENT NSW
CR KEITH RHOADES,
AFSM**

Message from the President

Every single day, NSW councils work with their communities to ensure their needs are being met – whether these are economic, social, cultural, or environmental.

Councils not only foster a strong sense of local identity, they plan and manage natural and built environments, and provide essential economic and community infrastructure. They also offer a raft of local services, regulate commercial and private activities for the benefit of the whole community, and are central to many of the programs and services offered by other spheres of Government.

As an industry, Local Government in NSW spends \$9.905 billion per year, owns and controls infrastructure worth over \$85 billion, and employs more than 45,000 staff.

As a government sector, we are facing considerable change. As we look at improving efficiencies, our finances and working better with our neighbouring councils, it is important to recognise councils do not operate in an autonomous space.

This document, *Local Government NSW's State Election Priorities 2015*, highlights the main priorities of NSW councils in the lead up to the March election and the solutions offered by LGNSW to address many of our sector's challenges.

These include:

- Ceasing cost-shifting on to councils by the NSW Government
- Improving funding for roads and public libraries
- Removing unfair and inefficient rate exemptions
- Improving environmental legislation, and introducing a Container Deposit System
- Developing mutually-agreed guidelines for Disability Action Planning.

Importantly, we are seeking a commitment from all parties that amalgamations, or other governance models, will not be forced on to councils post-election.

I call on all political parties and candidates contesting the 2015 NSW State Election to commit to *Local Government NSW's State Election Priorities 2015*.

GREATER AUTONOMY IN GOVERNANCE

GREATER AUTONOMY IN GOVERNANCE

LGNSW seeks, from all parties contesting the 2015 NSW Parliamentary election, greater autonomy in governance, via commitment to the following:

- Amend the NSW Constitution to strengthen recognition of elected Local Government
- Cease the practice of cost shifting, enact legislation that requires Local Government's agreement in taking on any additional responsibilities and provides funding or a funding mechanism, and ensure assessments of impact of change specifically to address and mitigate impact on rural councils

- Remove the concept of a 'body politic' from the *Local Government Act 1993*
- Provide legislation or Premier's directive for NSW Government agencies to incorporate local Community Strategic Plans in state planning processes
- Adopt and promote an integrated and holistic approach to the mutual achievement of economic and environmental sustainability and community well-being in decision-making
- Provide funding to LGNSW for a significant long-term women's development program aimed at improving the diversity of councillors (\$600,000 per year for eight years).



Credit: Ballina Shire councillors and senior staff in chambers during a council meeting.

AUTONOMOUS REVENUE RAISING

AUTONOMOUS REVENUE RAISING

LGNSW seeks, from all parties contesting the 2015 NSW Parliamentary election, autonomous council revenue raising, via commitment to the following:

- Abolish rate pegging
- Remove regulations on council fees and charges
- Review and remove unfair and inefficient rate exemptions

- Implement a broad based property levy for funding emergency services
- Work with Local Government to develop long-term solutions for funding community infrastructure requirements in both greenfield and infill areas (Section 94 contributions).



Credit: The area under City of Canada Bay's John Whitton Bridge includes cycling and walking paths, and seating areas.

FAIR FUNDING FOR SHARED RESPONSIBILITIES

FAIR FUNDING FOR SHARED RESPONSIBILITIES

LGNSW seeks, from all parties contesting the 2015 NSW Parliamentary election, fairer funding of infrastructure provided through long established partnerships between NSW State and Local Government, via commitment to the following:

- Improve road funding assistance to Local Government, especially regional roads, timber bridges and higher mass limits (HML) vehicle routes such as the *Bridges for the Bush* and *Fixing Country Roads* programs
- Increase funding for public libraries to reach a new recurrent target of \$30 million per annum with this \$30 million indexed each year thereafter
- Guarantee continued funding for council-owned and operated local water and sewerage utilities in regional NSW, including the remote communities water and sewerage program and Aboriginal Communities Water and Sewerage Program
- Increase NSW Government funding allocated to weed management to \$20 million per year, including adequate resourcing of a weed incursion fund
- Provide continued recurrent funding of Local Government ageing and disability workers, extending it to all councils seeking such roles (\$6.5 million per annum)
- Provide funding to support development of Disability Action Plans and associated infrastructure renewal (\$5 million per year for five years)
- Provide new funding and resources to councils to help address and mitigate the significant environmental, economic and social impacts of climate change (\$3 million per annum)
- Create a Local Government arts and cultural development fund, with a key objective being to improve arts infrastructure outside the Sydney CBD (\$5 million per year)
- Provide funding to improve Local Government's capacity to undertake long-term financial planning and asset management to support Community Strategic Planning (\$1 million per year for five years)
- Provide funding to assist in mapping heritage values and development of detailed management plans under the proposed Aboriginal culture and heritage legislation
- Provide funding for cycleway route extensions
- 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.



Credit: Clarence Valley Council's award-winning Sir Earle Page Library and Education Centre in Grafton, designed by ThomsonAdsett. Photograph by David Young.

VOLUNTARY STRUCTURAL REFORM

VOLUNTARY STRUCTURAL REFORM

LGNSW seeks, from all parties contesting the 2015 NSW Parliamentary election, agreed pathways on voluntary structural reform, via commitment to the following:

- Guarantee no forced amalgamations
- Guarantee Local Government retains ownership and control of council water and sewerage utilities in regional NSW
- Ensure 'Fit for the Future' criteria and assessment process is recalibrated in response to Local Government sector feedback, especially relating to clarity and the quadruple bottom line
- Enhance incentives for voluntary mergers, responding to Local Government sector feedback
- Ensure voluntary merger processes involve community plebiscites
- Enable proper, fully-resourced trialling and evaluation of pilot Joint Organisations before rolling out to other areas
- Enable county councils full membership of Joint Organisations
- Guarantee no imposition of any 'rural council' model.

MUTUAL POSITIONING ON SOCIAL POLICY

MUTUAL POSITIONING ON SOCIAL POLICY

LGNSW seeks, from all parties contesting the 2015 NSW Parliamentary election, mutual positioning on social policy priorities, via commitment to the following:

- Codify a mutually-agreed role for councils under the proposed Aboriginal culture and heritage legislation
- Develop a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between Out of School Hours (OOSH) Care Services and School Principals (or another mechanism) to facilitate OOSH access to schools
- Develop mutually-agreed guidelines for Disability Action Planning that are integrated with council plans under the *Local Government Act 1993*, Chapter 13, Part 2 (Integrated Planning and Reporting)
- Provide support to Local Government across all Department of Family and Community Services (FACS) regions to develop Disability Action Plans
- Ensure Ability Linkers work with councils to plan for inclusive communities and provide feedback to councils on barriers to inclusion that are encountered in mainstream services.



Credit: An access swing for people with disabilities at the Woolgoolga Beach Reserve playground in the Coffs Harbour LGA.



Credit: Wingecarribee Shire Council's new outdoor exercise equipment was unveiled in picturesque Bowral during Seniors Week 2014.

IMPROVED ENVIRONMENTAL LEGISLATION AND SETTINGS

IMPROVED ENVIRONMENTAL LEGISLATION AND SETTINGS

LGNSW seeks, from all parties contesting the 2015 NSW Parliamentary election, improved environmental legislation and settings enabling councils to properly address environment priorities, via commitment to the following:

- Introduce a Container Deposit System and pursue extended producer responsibility measures for problem household wastes
- Provide scientifically-based sea level rise benchmarks for use in planning in the coastal zone
- Remove the s88 (waste) levy from asbestos disposal, and introduce legislation requiring that asbestos information be provided for all house sales in NSW
- Guarantee that the s88 (waste) levy will not be extended beyond the existing regulated area and undertake a review of councils in the Regional Regulated Area to ensure the councils included in the area are appropriate
- Invest in better coordination of natural resource management (NRM) data across NRM managers including NSW government agencies, Local Government and Local Land Services, to avoid duplication and ensure they use best available data
- Commit to an ongoing role for Local Government in strategic planning for weed management, based on the demonstrated strengths of local weeds authorities.

LAND USE PLANNING

LAND USE PLANNING

LGNSW seeks, from all parties contesting the 2015 NSW Parliamentary election, completion of the unfinished business of land use planning reform, via commitment to the following:

- Ensure refinements to the existing Act or any proposed new Act by:
 - Enshrining community participation at all stages of planning
 - Including the objects covering ecologically sustainable development (ESD) and the polluter pays principle
 - Maximising council status in local and regional planning decisions
 - Including the fundamental objective of a central cadastral database and a single document of development controls applying to each land parcel, similar to the title details available on the register
 - Recognising the importance of the agricultural sector and provide strategies by which agricultural land can be protected.
- Abolish the “pre-gateway” provisions to Part 3 of the *Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979*
- Tighten the regulation and supervision of Private Certifiers or remove the current structure that promotes the use of private certification in the development process
- Consult with LGNSW and Sydney councils in the design of a Greater Sydney Commission
- Work with Local Government in designing and establishing suitable mechanisms and/or groups through which councillors can have ongoing involvement in planning and decision-making at the regional level
- Ensure Local Government participation in Department of Planning and Environment (DP&E) expert working groups, to develop details and options for addressing reform issues
- Establish consultation processes for the development of materials on reform issues
- Enter into a MOU with LGNSW to specifically deal with partnership in the emerging planning system.

CONTACT

Location: Level 8, 28 Margaret Street, Sydney NSW 2000

Mailing Address: GPO Box 7003 Sydney, NSW 2001

Email: lgnsw@lgnsw.org.au

Phone: 02 9242 4000

Fax: 02 9242 4111