



LOCAL GOVERNMENT POLICY



WHAT WE BELIEVE

Local councils are supposed to be the closest level of government to the people, yet too many have become little more than administrative outposts carrying out decisions made elsewhere.

Regional communities know what their towns need. They should not have to seek permission from Sydney bureaucrats, state agencies or unelected council executives before fixing local problems.

Over recent decades, local democracy has been steadily eroded. Councils have been forced to absorb more responsibilities, more compliance costs and more reporting requirements while receiving less freedom to make decisions and less funding to deliver services.

At the same time, power has increasingly shifted away from elected councillors and into the hands of CEOs, General Managers and government departments. The people elected by local communities are too often sidelined while unelected bureaucrats control the agenda.

We believe councils should focus on roads, infrastructure, essential services and community outcomes, not political activism, bureaucracy or endless paperwork.

Local government should be accountable, transparent and financially sustainable. Decisions should be made locally by people who understand local communities.

We believe regional councils deserve fair funding, genuine autonomy and the freedom to put their communities first.



OUR ACTION PLAN

- Restore power to elected councillors by strengthening their authority over major policy, strategic planning and expenditure decisions instead of allowing unelected executives to dominate council decision-making.
- Oppose any future forced council amalgamations and support communities seeking de-amalgamation where local representation and service delivery have been weakened.
- Stop Sydney-based interference in local government by strengthening legal protections against unnecessary State Government intervention in council affairs.
- End cost shifting by legislating that State and Federal Governments must fully fund any new responsibilities, services, maintenance obligations or regulatory functions imposed on councils.
- Publish an annual Cost Shifting Report identifying every instance where councils are being forced to subsidise responsibilities that properly belong to higher levels of government.
- Slash unnecessary compliance burdens by removing duplicated reporting requirements, excessive red tape and bureaucratic processes that consume council resources without improving services.
- Force greater transparency in council procurement by requiring public disclosure of major contracts, tender processes and significant spending decisions.
- Strengthen conflict of interest laws and disclosure requirements covering councillors, senior executives, developers, lobbyists and major contractors.



OUR ACTION PLAN - Continued

- Open council decision-making to greater public scrutiny through improved access to council records, meetings and community consultation processes.
- Strengthen oversight of governance failures while protecting local democratic control and preventing politically motivated intervention by higher levels of government.
- Properly resource and strengthen the Office of Local Government to investigate serious misconduct, corruption and governance failures while ensuring consistent standards across NSW.
- Increase penalties for serious corruption, fraud and breaches of public trust within local government.
- Guarantee a fair share of infrastructure funding for regional councils based on road networks, service obligations, land area and community needs rather than population figures alone.
- Fix the roads local communities rely on by increasing funding for council-managed roads, bridges, drainage infrastructure and freight routes across regional NSW.
- Expand funding for community facilities, sporting infrastructure, parks, public amenities and recreational assets that strengthen local communities.
- Ensure disaster-prone councils receive dedicated funding for flood mitigation, bushfire preparedness, emergency infrastructure and community resilience projects.
- Improve telecommunications and mobile coverage across regional communities by empowering councils to partner with industry and



OUR ACTION PLAN - Continued

community-led solutions to eliminate coverage blackspots.

- Establish long-term infrastructure funding agreements that provide councils with certainty and allow proper planning instead of forcing them into endless grant application cycles.
- Return decision-making to local communities by expanding opportunities for direct community input on major local projects, planning decisions and strategic priorities.
- Ensure local government remains focused on delivering practical services, maintaining infrastructure and representing community interests rather than pursuing ideological agendas disconnected from local needs.