

The Hon Nick Staikos MP
Minister for Local Government

Local Government

Public Accounts and Estimates Committee

10 JUNE 2025



Government
Services

Local Government Sector

The Local Government Portfolio delivers policy, legislation, and programs to support a responsive and accountable local government sector



618 elected councillors represent community interests and are responsible for council decision-making and determining priorities



Councils provide critical partnerships with the State Government so Victorians can access public services and infrastructure that meet local community needs



Councils support their communities by providing more than 100 critical services and essential infrastructure



The Minister for Local Government oversees the local government system, engages with councils and sector on issues, intervenes when necessary and advocates for the sector within the State Government

Local Government Priorities



Supporting councils

- The Victorian Government provides grants to councils through various programs to support efforts in providing critical community services, maintaining infrastructure, and preserving the environment.
- Supporting libraries in their role as vibrant community hubs delivering vital services and programs.



Emergency management support

- In partnership with the Victorian Government, councils have provided significant support to their communities following emergency events.
- Councils will continue to support their communities after emergencies in 2025/26 including through:
 - \$35m Council Support Fund after the October 2022 floods
 - \$8m Council Support Fund after the December 2023 storms and floods
 - \$10m Council Support Fund after the February 2024 bushfires and storms
 - \$4.9m annually through the Municipal Emergency Resourcing Program



Working with the sector to continue strengthening good governance

- The Victorian Government is continuing to drive action to address and improve local government culture and councillor conduct and governance, alongside councils, local government peak bodies and other key stakeholders.

Government has invested more than \$517 million over the last 10 years to support the delivery of library services

Key achievements for 2024-25

| 4

The Victorian Government has been collaborating with the local government sector to drive the best outcomes for Victorians.

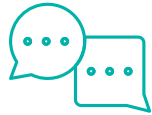
Progress has been made on key government priorities in the local government portfolio, including supporting good governance

- Launching the McCrae Board of Inquiry.
- Preparing for the October 2024 Local Government elections.
- Delivering Operation Sandon recommendations, including:
 - mandatory ongoing training for councillors and mayors
 - a uniform Model Councillor Code of Conduct
 - stronger sanctions for misconduct.
- Supporting councils to meet statutory reporting and planning requirements.
- Partnering with peak bodies and councils to lift governance standards across the sector.
- Engaging with integrity agencies to support good governance and taking appropriate intervention actions with councils where required :
 - Whittlesea Commission of Inquiry
 - Currently 6 councils have Municipal Monitors appointed
- Delivering \$860.7 million in grant funding to Councils including Commonwealth Financial Assistance Grants and State Government programs
- Announcing Victoria's first Public Libraries Ambassador
- Maintaining avenues of direct feedback with local councils by establishing the Local Government Mayoral Advisory Panel

Forward look to the next 12 months

| 5

Local government is uniquely positioned to drive the change we need to build stronger, more resilient communities.



Creating more supportive governance structures

- Continuing to review and improve mechanisms to help address governance early.
- Continued delivery of Operation Sandon recommendations, including the delivery of a Model Transparency Policy and Model Governance Rules to support good governance in councils.
- Enabling the creation of safe environments for councillors to work.
- Delivering Hardship Guidelines to better enable councils to support their community members during a cost-of-living crisis.
- Referring to integrity agencies to identify and investigate issues where required.



Financial sustainability and supporting critical infrastructure

- Reviewing service rates and charges to ensure transparency and consistency for ratepayers.
- Continuing to support councils to deliver library services through the 2025-26 Public Libraries Funding Program, Premiers' Reading Challenge Book Fund and the Living Libraries Infrastructure Program.
- Responding to the Auditor-General to improve budgeting, financial and performance reporting practices and standards
- Seeking advice from the Essential Services Commission (ESC) on rate capping indices.
- Advocating strongly to the Commonwealth regarding Financial Assistance Grants.



Improving diversity of representation

- Focusing on supporting diverse representation across Victoria's councils.
- Working with peak organisations to deliver a Local Government Gender Equality Strategy.
- Promoting the Victorian Aboriginal Local Government Strategy and work with Traditional Owners and councils to support Recognition and Settlement Agreements.