



Supporting our rural and regional councils

A suite of reforms has been recommended by a parliamentary committee to assist rural and regional councils provide the services and infrastructure all Victorians deserve.

In its report tabled in the Victorian Parliament today, the Environment, Natural Resources and Regional Development Committee has made 14 recommendations intended to strengthen rural and regional councils' financial positions.

"There is a certain level of service that all Victorians are entitled to and which is essential to maintain the liveability and economic contribution of Victoria's regional areas," Committee Chair Josh Bull said.

"It is critical that all levels of government ensure that councils have the means to provide this level of service," he said.

According to the Committee, decisions by other levels of government, decisions by the councils themselves and increasing demand from the community have all put pressure on councils to deliver more services.

The Committee said there is a need for a new approach to funding councils. While rates were considered to be an appropriate source for a portion of councils' revenue, the Committee recommended that the rating system should be reviewed to improve its fairness and equity. The Committee found that rates revenue also needs to be supplemented by grants, particularly in small rural councils, to make the rates burden manageable for households. The Committee found that most rural and regional communities supported rate capping.

The report also recommends that councils' responsibilities be reconsidered and reviewed, with a view to developing a clear set of core responsibilities and minimum service levels.

Managing community expectations was also highlighted in the report.

The Committee said it was important for councils to communicate the full range of services they deliver and the infrastructure they manage, along with information about how much these things cost and how they are funded.

"For changes to be successful, councils need to bring the community along with them," Mr Bull said.

"The suite of changes proposed in this report is designed to support rural and regional councils to fulfil their responsibilities without putting additional pressure on ratepayers."

The report is available from the Committee's [website](#).

Media queries

For media comment contact the Committee Chair, Josh Bull on 9740 4091.

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