The Local Government Association of Queensland (LGAQ) is the peak body representing the interests of Queensland’s 77 local governments.

We are dedicated to promoting the importance of councils as the level of government closest to the people. We have been advising, supporting and representing local councils since 1896, aiding them to improve their operations and strengthen relationships with their communities.

We do this by:

- Connecting them to people and places that count
- Supporting their drive to innovate and improve service delivery through smart services and sustainable solutions
- Delivering them the means to achieve community, professional and political excellence

As a membership based organisation, our Annual Report is an important way for us to communicate to member councils our activities during the 2017-18 financial year.
LOCAL GOVERNMENT AT A GLANCE

Queensland

- 77 COUNCILS IN QLD
- 579 COUNCILLORS
- 40,490 EMPLOYEES
- 294 OCCUPATIONS

- $108 BILLION IN ASSETS
- $37 BILLION IN WASTE WATER
- $9 BILLION SPENT PROVIDING SERVICES TO COMMUNITIES
- 22 MILLION VISITORS & TOURISTS

- 1 MILLION TONNES LAND WASTE MANAGED
- 3,000 COMMUNITY HOMES MANAGED
- 250 SWIMMING POOLS
- 30,000 + FOOD BUSINESSES
- 30,000 + ART GALLERIES
- 30,000 + FESTIVALS

- 153,000 KMS + LOCAL ROADS
- 2,800 + BRIDGES
- 314 WATER TREATMENT PLANTS
- 76,000 KMS WATER AND SEWER MAINS
- 328 LIBRARIES
- 53,000 HECTARES PARKS AND PLAYGROUNDS
The size and diversity of local government in Queensland is remarkable.

- $155 BILLION WORTH OF INFRASTRUCTURE
- 40,490 EMPLOYEES
- 294 OCCUPATIONS
- 53,000 HECTARES OF PARKS & PLAYGROUNDS
- 153,000 KILOMETRES OF ROAD

Councils look after everything from billion-dollar road tunnels to barramundi and crocodile farms.

This annual report of the Local Government Association of Queensland is full of stories that show the value of the local government sector and the rewards that come from successful partnerships with other tiers of government, the private sector and the community.

This report explains why it’s a good idea for all tiers of government to keep partnering with councils to produce great outcomes together - like we’ve done with Works for Queensland, First 5 Forever, training solutions, the QCoast 2100 initiative and so on.

The investment governments make in some of these programs is comparatively small, but the impact it has on local communities is substantial.

That’s the beauty of partnering with local government. The regional networks, the local intelligence, the sheer geographic reach when it comes to service delivery - these are the qualities that only councils have.

Leveraging those qualities not only helps governments to achieve their priorities, it also ensures a healthy supply of good news.

However, it is the day-to-day activities of local governments in their communities that remain the key to maintaining public confidence.

Meeting public expectations of improving the liveability and prospect of local communities is the reason why councils have to be about more than just roads, rates and rubbish - and why the LGAQ needs to be more than an advocacy body.

It’s the long-term financial sustainability of local government - its continued ability to deliver value for money services - which is a big driver of the new initiatives the LGAQ is pursuing now and into the future.

MAYOR MARK JAMIESON
LGAQ PRESIDENT
The past 12 months have been a period of significant achievement by the LGAQ for and on behalf of our 77 member councils. Most importantly, external funding to councils from the State grew to $570 million at a time when council budgets were significantly challenged by drought and a low wage economy.

On the advocacy front the LGAQ, through commissioned research and public opinion polling, has helped significantly fashion the direction of the State’s new strategy on waste, in particular ensuring there was a focus on zero waste to landfill, the circular economy, recycling and Energy from Waste plants, while securing a commitment to 70 percent of the soon-to-be-implemented waste levy proceeds. Compare this with the council share of similar levies in other states of just 20 percent.

We’ve also fought the good fight on matters associated with the implementation of the waste levy, saving councils about $20 million in costs. That said, the costs to councils from the levy will still exceed $10 million a year.

In relation to lifeblood rate income, the LGAQ both secured retrospective legislative enablement arising out of the court’s decision on the deemed illegality of Fraser Coast rating, saving councils hundreds of millions of dollars a year while co-funding the successful Mt Isa City Council action in the Court of Appeal to overturn a decision on that Council’s water charges which had ramifications across local government.

Of course, the LGAQ was at the forefront of the so called Belcarra reforms, responding quickly and firmly, issuing a public commitment to do better via two full page ads in The Sunday Mail, and vigorously advocating our own Beyond Belcarra policy position.

In terms of member services it has been a memorable year. The LGAQ rolled out its LG Sherlock big data/data analytics offering to councils, developed a public release version of our Ready.Set.Go benchmarking tool set for release before the end of 2018, started the roll out of the new world class Jadu council interactive websites, implemented a new integrated communications engine, and completed a refresh of all LGAQ communications and the LGAQ’s public website. The research and development of our 2018-19 Proud To Be Your Council media campaign was completed and set for immediate release after annual conference.

A big focus this year has been boosting our expertise in trade and investment, a key area of economic development where our members need advice and guidance. The LGAQ now has a full-time trade and investment adviser as well as a trade mentor to help ensure councils are able to take full advantage of the global economy.

Additionally, the LGAQ continued to deliver the Q Coast 2100 $12m project funded by the state government, and the Queensland Climate Resilient Councils project.

Most importantly the LGAQ spent the equivalent of many staff years visiting our members. Either the President and CEO visited all but 12 councils over the last year. The Policy Executive also held an historic meeting on Palm Island in August 2018 to mark that community’s centenary year.

Very sadly it was a year of great tragedy for the LGAQ as the head of our world leading LG Sherlock Project, Ryan Goff, was killed on the way home from work in mid-August of this year. Ryan will forever be in our hearts.

GREG HALLAM AM
LGAQ CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

THE PAST 12 MONTHS HAVE BEEN A PERIOD OF SIGNIFICANT ACHIEVEMENT BY THE LGAQ
Year in Review
local government association of queensland

CREATION
PEAK SERVICES
JULY 2017

RECORD INVESTMENT
BIG DATA LG SHERLOCK
SEPTEMBER 2017

FUNDING
INVESTMENT
COMMITMENT
$200M BOOST TO $600M WORKS 4 QLD PROGRAM
NOVEMBER 2017

TRADE & INVESTMENT
MOU SIGNED $200K
FEBRUARY 2018

SUBMISSION
REGIONAL AIRLINE

SUBMISSION
LOCAL GOVERNMENT
COMMITS TO ADVANCING A ZERO WASTE FUTURE
APRIL 2018

SUBMISSION
LGQA STATE BUDGET

CLIMATE RESILIENCE
QCRC EXTENDED TO ALL COUNCILS

FIRST 5 FOREVER
$5M PER YEAR PERMANENT FUNDING

RECORD FUNDING
$570M BEST STATE BUDGET IN A DECADE

REGIONAL INEQUALITY
SUBMISSION
JUNE 2018

QWRAP
FOUR-YEAR EXTENSION
AUGUST 2018

COMMENT ON BUSH COUNCILS CONVENTION CHARTER TOWERS
JULY 2017-2022

SUBMISSION
QLD BIOSECURITY STRATEGY
AUGUST 2017

SUBMISSION
REEF 2050 QUALITY IMPROVEMENT PLAN 2017-2022
OCTOBER 2017

STATE ELECTION CAMPAIGN
NOVEMBER 2017

ELECTION COMMITMENT IMPLEMENT GRANT REFORM
FEBRUARY 2018

SUBMISSION
SOCIAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT GUIDELINE FOR RESOURCE COMMUNITIES

SUBMISSION
INTEGRITY REFORMS BELCARRA
MAY 2018

INSURANCE FUND
RETURNING $50 MILLION TO MEMBERS OVER A DECADE
JUNE 2018

OVERSIGHT ADVOCACY AGAINST PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION
JULY 2018

DIGITAL PARTNERSHIP WITH JADU
MARCH 2018

LEGISLATION RETROSPECTIVE SUPPORT FOR RATING DECISIONS
APRIL 2018

CAMPAIGN #DONTWALKAWAY INDIGENOUS HOUSING CAMPAIGN/DELEGATION TO CANBERRA
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CAMPAIGN #DONTWALKAWAY INDIGENOUS HOUSING CAMPAIGN/DELEGATION TO CANBERRA
AUGUST 2018
A concerted campaign by the LGAQ and other stakeholders, including the State Library of Queensland, resulted in a big win for child literacy, the renewal of the First 5 Forever Literacy initiative. In the 2018 State Budget, the Government agreed to renew the popular initiative delivered through public libraries. The program had been due to expire at the end of 2018. The success of the LGAQ's campaign was further sweetened when the Government went beyond our original ask to extend the $5 million a year program for a further four years and made it permanent.

Life Long Learning and strong community connections are core business for Queensland’s 328 public libraries. Council-run libraries are well placed to deliver early learning and family literacy services. First 5 Forever has helped council-owned libraries do what they do best to work together to make a collective difference for all Queensland children.

The success of the LGAQ’s advocacy can be attributed to a number of factors:

- The popularity and effectiveness of the program
- A series of independent evaluation reports which demonstrated the significant reach of the program
- The partnership between State Library of Queensland and council libraries
- The resolution passed unanimously at the 2017 LGAQ Annual Conference calling for the renewal of the program
- The concerted campaign run by the LGAQ, including through social media
- The inclusion of this ask in the LGAQ’s 2017 State Election Plan and 2017 and 2018 Advocacy Action Plans and State Budget submissions.

Libraries have the potential to reach 98 per cent of the population, especially babies and children under five years and their families/carers at a critical time in their life and development.
NEW PARTNERSHIP CREATES GREATER DIGITAL ENGAGEMENT WITH QUEENSLAND COUNCILS

In March the LGAQ signed a 5-year contract with Jadu, a leading global provider of web experience management and digital services to local governments across the US, UK and Asia-Pacific region.

The LGAQ will be migrating more than half of its membership across to the Jadu Continuum platform in the 2018-19 financial year.

The announcement followed a 12-month strategic review that found councils were eager to transition more services online and allow residents to transact and communicate more readily with them. eCommerce has also become a greater area of focus, particularly for online rates payments and councils operating as tourism providers.

After assessing a number of world leading providers the LGAQ decided Jadu was the right fit for what was needed now and into the future.

Jadu Continuum software enables councils to deliver rich and engaging websites, provides transactional online forms that work across devices, and a ‘Digital Concierge’ allows citizens and businesses to better self-serve.

The LGAQ’s is also committed to a comprehensive re-imaging of how digital services can better support council operations, communications and service delivery.

Partnering with Jadu will deliver stability, smart integrations and a whole lot of new capabilities and tools. Member councils will also be able to better leverage our investments in social media and customer service through integrations with back-of-office systems.

Today, Jadu powers many of the UK’s local authority websites, including Europe’s largest local authority, Birmingham City Council. Its platform eradicates large, costly upgrades in favour of frequent updates.

The LGAQ is now working with councils to make the migration of sites as seamless as possible and developing tailored plans.

TOURISM TALKS

The LGAQ this year began a concerted effort to understand the type of support councils need in their efforts to develop their tourism economies.

We held a Tourism Round-table in Brisbane in December 2017, followed by a series of 10 regional workshops in March and April 2018 and talked with participants at the Indigenous Leaders’ Forum in June 2018. More than 40 councils contributed to the discussions, aimed at identifying the LGAQ’s tourism priorities for the next two years.

The LGAQ subsequently developed a tourism agenda, with action areas including developing the capability of elected members and professional officers and enhancing councils’ understanding of tourism trends in their local area through improved data collection and analytics.

The LGAQ’s tourism advocacy agenda will focus on tourism as an economic development opportunity, including advocating for a funding model that supports the development of regional tourism economies, as well as greater collaboration between the State Government and local government in growing Queensland’s tourism sector.

These priorities add to the LGAQ’s existing tourism-related advocacy agenda that encompasses securing Federal and State Government investment in roads and digital infrastructure; reform of aviation and other travel costs; and reform of State Government grant arrangements to facilitate long-term planning.

These efforts have seen increased recognition by the State Government and other stakeholders of the critical role local government plays in developing Queensland’s tourism sector.

The Department of Innovation and Tourism Industry Development has established a high-level working group to examine Queensland’s current tourism governance and funding framework.

The LGAQ will use this group to seek improvements in the way stakeholders collaborate with councils to develop their tourism economies, including more emphasis on developing tourism products and experiences, as well as more effective delivery of tourism marketing and promotion services.
BOLD NEW TRADE INITIATIVE FOR COUNCILS

Local governments are big influences of their local economies as well as a good source of intelligence regarding trade and investment activities. That intelligence involves planning and regulation responsibilities through to infrastructure investment, marketing and promotion and in some instances, to co-investment and public private partnerships.

Councils also understand the positive impacts that trade and investment have on their local economies. It is for these reasons that councils are increasingly undertaking proactive trade and investment missions to overseas markets, investing in local capacity building, and facilitating inbound investment opportunities.

However global markets are often tough and competitive, and much of the world is looking to penetrate them. The LGAQ supports and encourages its members to embrace these opportunities and has initiated several programs designed to further enhance their activities and initiatives.

In February 2018, the LGAQ signed a memorandum of understanding (MOU) with Trade and Investment Queensland to improve support and coordination of state and local trade and investment activities, such as trade missions, provide support to regional councils through training. These initiatives help build relationships with potential partners, clients and broader networks which is vital for successful long-term diplomacy and business opportunities across Queensland.

From its 2017-18 budget submission, & vigorous lobbying, LGAQ successfully secured $200,000 from the state government to deliver programs to support councils opportunities across Queensland.

The LGAQ was proud to announce a bold, new initiative which supports Queensland councils to develop successful economic and social relationships with international cultures, particularly in Asian markets: A cultural intelligence program designed to build participants’ awareness and confidence when dealing with foreign companies and communities. Being culturally aware and adapting behaviour is critical to maximising opportunities and avoiding often embarrassing misunderstandings which can terminate a potential deal.

The LGAQ in August 2018 appointed the former Queensland Trade and Investment Commissioner to North America David Camerlengo to the role of Mentor, created as part of a new push by the LGAQ and Trade and Investment Queensland (TIQ) to bolster the capacity of councils to attract international investment to their regions and to provide advice on strategies for attraction plans. This is in addition to a dedicated trade and investment expert whose role is to directly support councils in their trade and investment attraction activities.
HITTING THE ROAD TO SHOWCASE INNOVATION

Understanding the future trends of technology from global leading corporations and applying its benefits were key messages to nearly 40 council delegates at three LGAQ Innovation Roadshows held in Sydney during the past year.

The roadshows, including a two-day interactive workshop that brings together senior executives form Amazon Web Services (AWS), Microsoft, MasterCard and Apple as well as the NBN and Telstra, aim to demystify technology and provide practical solutions to address council problems.

Mayors, councillors, CEOs and general managers from the Torres Strait to Balonne and Mt Isa attended the events, which included live demonstrations of technology solutions, access to decision making executives, and advice on change management strategies needed for a disruptive digital environment.

The roadshows were the result of research identified in the LGAQ Digital Productivity Reports.

The roadshows start with discussions about connectivity – what’s happening in the telecommunications networks that allows councils, people and things to connect – to case studies and demonstrations on why councils are investing in technology to obtain business outcomes, to discussing the importance of corporate culture.

Case studies on areas such as how councils are claiming fleet reimbursement through the Commonwealth Government’s Fuel Tax Rebate, business cases for adopting IOT solutions and the benefits of operating cloud-based network are demonstrated.

Cyber-security at both the network and human levels, the massive impact of the future 5G mobile network, and the AWS model for leadership in a disruptive environment are key focus areas.

One of the key themes in the roadshow is the concept of the broad reach of digital impacting everyday aspects.

Some roadshows include a visit to the NRL Bunker.

The NRL is using big data, analytics and social media in ways that improve the game for players, fans and the general public.

It becomes an understandable illustration of how digital touches everything. Some aspects are transferable to local government.

Recent roadshow have also included visits to MasterCard.

Mobility is recognised as the gorilla in the room when it comes to smart strategies because of the importance in understanding how things – people, vehicles, goods and data - move around a community.
ADVANCING A ZERO WASTE FUTURE

Councils and private sector waste operators have confronted significant challenges in the past 12 months, including the independent investigation into interstate transport of waste, the impact of China’s National Sword policy on recyclables and the State Government’s determination to introduce policy reform, including a waste levy and container refund scheme set for introduction on 1 November 2018.

In March, the State Government announced its intention to reintroduce a waste levy as part of a broader waste strategy for Queensland. Premier Palaszczuk also gave a guarantee in Parliament on 20 March, that ‘Queensland families will not face the cost of this levy’ and made the commitment that the Queensland government would not increase taxes on ordinary Queenslanders.

In response, the LGAQ Policy Executive proactively committed in April to ensuring Queensland is a world leader in waste management while maintaining councils’ long-held policy position that a waste levy should not be applied to domestic waste.

Colmar Brunton research commissioned by the LGAQ highlighted the value Queenslanders place on the importance of waste and recycling with 77% of residents expressing concerns with Queensland’s waste management plan for the long term. Most importantly, 83% of those surveyed supported a zero waste goal and 75% supported Energy from Waste (EfW) technology investment.

However, if a levy is introduced in Queensland the LGAQ has resolutely maintained it should:

- Directly target problem waste streams or those where there is potential for considerable gains in terms of recycling;
- Provide industry with the confidence to invest in new waste management and recycling infrastructure and technology knowing that there will be consistent application of principles and standards; and
- All funds raised through a waste levy should be fully returned to waste management and resource recovery activities.

IMPORTANTLY, 90% OF QUEENSLAND RESIDENTS ALSO BELIEVE THAT 100% OF FUNDS RAISED FROM A WASTE LEVY SHOULD BE FULLY RETURNED TO WASTE MANAGEMENT INITIATIVES AND PROGRAMS.

In June 2018, the LGAQ secured a significant win for councils when the Minister announced to take the necessary measures to continue the local government waste management provisions in Part 2A of the Waste Regulation (i.e. Section 7) and Chapter 5A of the EP Regulation past 1 July 2018. The removal of the regulations’ sunset clauses will ensure that these essential provisions remain in operation while the department undertakes further consultation.

As part of driving toward a zero waste future, the LGAQ has also facilitated a State Government commitment of $200,000 to develop an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island council waste strategy and $5 million to facilitate delivery of a project with the State Government to the remove bulk metal legacy waste from Torres Shire, Torres Strait Island Regional council and Palm Island Aboriginal Shire.

The LGAQ hosted a Local Government Waste Forum for councils in June, followed in August / September with an International Zero Waste Study Tour through the UK, Denmark, Spain and the USA, unpacking the leading technologies from around the world and how they could be transferred to the Queensland setting.

The LGAQ submission on the Bill highlights ongoing concerns with the mechanics of the Bill which is flawed in several key areas including:

- the timing of both the introduction of the levy and the annual calculation of increments
- the application of the levy to domestic waste
- the requirement that councils advise rate payers of the advance payment rebate for domestic waste
- lack of clarity on the treatment of several council waste streams and impacts on ratepayers
- demarcation of waste levy zone
- hypothecation of waste levy funds
- waste levy-ready funding and eligibility
- regional impacts of waste levy.

In September, the Waste Reduction and Recycling (Waste Levy) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2018 was introduced into Parliament. The LGAQ is extremely concerned that many of the practical issues raised by councils have been overlooked or ignored in the draft Bill, particularly as they relate to impacting the direct costs to households (albeit some wins on street sweeping / public parks / gardens waste). Fundamentally, if no changes are made to the Bill, many of these issues will impact the Government’s implementation of the levy and the bottom line impact on households. This legislation will herald the biggest change in the governance of waste management in Queensland in decades.

QUEENSLAND COUNCILS OPERATE IN EXCESS OF 500 WASTE FACILITIES INCLUDING LANDFILL SITES, TRANSFER STATIONS AND RESOURCE RECOVERY AND RECYCLING FACILITIES.

Councils continue to grapple with how they are expected to collect this new tax for the State, without the confidence that costs will not be shifted to them ahead of the proposed waste levy commencement date of 4 March 2019.
UNLOCKING LOCAL GOVERNMENT’S BIG DATA

The LGAQ’s bi-annual Digital Productivity Surveys have recorded a growing acknowledgement of the value of council data, and the untapped opportunity that lies with better understanding the stories within.

Big data, which brings together extremely large data sets for the purposes of identifying patterns, trends and insights, is already used successfully in other industries such as financial services, retail and mining and is increasingly being used by governments to improve delivery of social services and maximise the efficiency of infrastructure.

At the local government level it’s only early days, yet the progress made by the LGAQ’s LG Sherlock project is already paying dividends.

LG Sherlock consists of a dedicated team of data scientists with access to a contemporary set of smart data analytic tools tasked with identifying data projects that will benefit councils.

The team’s early priorities have centred on projects where there is known to be useful data that could be used to help reduce operational risks and identify financial savings for participating councils. Two of the lead projects have been in the areas of energy and fleet management.

LG Sherlock has developed an Electricity Invoice Anomaly Detection Tool which has the ability to convert the large and difficult to understand electricity invoices received by councils into an easy to understand format that can help to quickly identify faulty electronic equipment and suggest other actions for energy efficiency. Every council that participated in the pilot phase was able to bank ongoing savings from these new insights.

LG Sherlock’s Fleet Tool is helping councils to bring together fleet data from several different council systems to provide a more comprehensive picture of the make-up and efficiency of their fleet vehicles. What’s more exciting is that as participation in this project grows a deeper understanding of what makes for the best local government vehicles is being uncovered, which will help councils to make better informed purchasing decisions into the future.

WITH OVER 60 POTENTIAL BIG DATA PROJECTS ALREADY IDENTIFIED, THERE REMAINS PLENTY OF SCOPE FOR ADDITIONAL BENEFITS TO BE REALISED.

LG SHERLOCK REPRESENTS A TWO-YEAR, $6 MILLION COMMITMENT ON BEHALF OF MEMBERS TO UNLOCK THE VALUE OF BIG DATA FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT.
Round 1 of the Fund saw $2.55 million allocated to 33 projects in the 2017-18 financial year, benefiting 40 councils. Many of the projects funded through Round 1 focused on the adoption of new user-friendly technologies, online systems and improved customer service initiatives, including real-time access to property, development and mapping information. Through the LGAQ’s ongoing advocacy efforts, councils were able to secure financial support from the State Government to assist in transitioning to the new planning legislation and implement new and improved ways of delivering planning for local communities.

The State Government’s $4.5 million Planning Innovation and Improvement Fund has been a huge success in supporting councils to go beyond business as usual and drive leading practice in strategic land use planning and development assessment.

Round 1 of the Fund saw $2.55 million allocated to 33 projects in the 2017-18 financial year, benefiting 40 councils. Many of the projects funded through Round 1 focused on the adoption of new user-friendly technologies, online systems and improved customer service initiatives, including real-time access to property, development and mapping information.

The Sunshine Coast community, for example, can now easily keep track of new development happening around them using Development.i - a new intuitive and easy-to-navigate web-based platform, and a game changer for access to development information. You no longer need to know an application number or exact address to find what you are looking for. Development.i provides enhanced searching options, ability to visualise activity on a map and easily change filters, save searches, favourite properties and applications and receive email alerts of new applications or application progress. Think of a ‘realestate.com’ for development applications!

Excitingly, Round 2 of the Fund was heavily oversubscribed with the quality of council proposals truly ‘raising the bar’ for planning in Queensland. The remaining $1.95 million of funding will deliver projects focusing on leading-edge ways for councils to engage with their customers and communities about development, planning schemes and local government’s role in planning.

But we don’t want it to stop there. The success of the funding program so far demonstrates how co-operation between State and local governments is making it possible to improve the planning framework and outcomes for Queensland communities.
Queensland local government punches well above its weight when it comes to providing infrastructure and services to communities. It manages assets worth more than $50 billion across roads and transport, water and waste as well as public facilities like parks, cultural centres and community housing. All this supports regional economies and the communities they sustain.

However, the funding support for councils to provide this infrastructure is seriously lacking. Nationally, local government collects just three per cent of public sector revenue, yet is responsible for 30 percent of the nation’s public assets. By contrast, the Federal Government collects 80 percent of public sector revenue, yet is responsible for just 10 percent of public assets.

This is why the Association is focussed on increasing baseline funding to local government - and the last 12 months has been no exception.

In 2017-18 funding to local government hit a long time high of approximately $570 million. Most notably through the Works for Queensland program. Consequently, the centrepiece of the LGAQ’s Queensland Local Government 2017-18 10 Point State Election plan was maintaining this baseline funding to local government.

This was re-enforced in the Association’s 2018-19 State Budget Submission which called for $500 million in baseline funding and a further $100 million in special purpose local government initiatives.

Success at the State level is only part of the challenge. Federal funding, in the form of Financial Assistance Grants, is a critical component of local government’s revenue stream – amounting to $240 million for Queensland and $1.2 billion at the national level (based on standard annual program payments excluding ‘pre-payments’).

But these figures work to hide the fact that baseline funding for Financial Assistance Grants has declined by about 43% in relative terms over the past 20 years, and now only amounts to 0.55% of Commonwealth taxation revenue, nearly half the proportion of 20 years ago. This is just not sustainable.

In response, the LGAQ along with its State counterparts and the Australian Local Government Association, have designed a national campaign to restore baseline funding for Financial Assistance Grants to one percent of Commonwealth taxation revenue in the lead up to the next Federal Election.
Securing and increasing ‘baseline’ funding to local government is a principal advocacy platform for the LGAQ. But, so too is how the money is provided to councils.

Greater funding for councils over time has meant a rapid increase in the number of different grant programs available to councils. Unfortunately, these grant programs are often structured to be contestable (pitching one council against another) and involve different criteria and are released at various times throughout the year. All this fragmentation creates unnecessary administrative costs. It also results in sub-optimal investments in local infrastructure and services for communities.

The Association has persistently advocated for a review of the structure of grants and subsidies to local government. Over the last 12 months, we have worked with the Government on a Review of Grants to Local Government: Current and Future State Assessments. Undertaken by KPMG in conjunction with the AEC Group Ltd and completed in late 2017, the review confirms that current grant program structures are not only fragmented and administratively costly, they undermine the ability of councils to engage in long-term planning and add to the difficulties councils have managing their assets and achieving financial sustainability.

Responding to the LGAQ’s Queensland Local Government 2017-18 10 Point State Election Plan, Premier Annastacia Palaszczuk stated that:

"With regard to the review of grants to local government: current and future state assessment, I can confirm the Queensland Government’s commitment to work with the LGAQ and other stakeholders to respond to and implement the recommendations of this review."

In another success, Local Government, Racing and Multicultural Affairs Minister Stirling Hinchliffe announced on 12 September 2018 that “communities right across Queensland are set to benefit from a simpler, more streamlined and more efficient approach to local government grants, following the Government’s commitment to develop a new model for grant funding”.

“Grant programs supporting State priorities and objectives and responding to Council strategies and needs have been grouped under six outcome focussed program streams:

- Security of essential services
- Safe and efficient road and transport network
- Resilient communities
- Sustainable natural resource management
- Community well-being
- Jobs and economic growth”.

Over the next few years the LGAQ will continue to work with the Government and other stakeholders on this framework with the aim of ensuring the structure of grant programs support the needs of the local government sector and the communities they serve.

WHAT’S STRUCTURE GOT TO DO WITH IT?
Australia is the driest inhabited continent on the planet. Communities and businesses depend on the availability of water, particularly in agricultural areas. When there is not enough, as is the case in the Murray-Darling Basin, the challenges are enormous and have been for decades.

For the 11 Basin councils in Queensland, this has been an uncertain journey. The stated need to recover almost 2,118GL per year from the system, with southern Queensland’s effort being the equivalent of shutting down all the taps in the State’s southeast for two months, meant a massive rethink in using and managing water.

The communities of St. George and Dirranbandi were hardest hit, with double-digit unemployment figures and declines in both school enrolments and overall populations. As the review noted, “For the communities most adversely affected by the proposed recovery of water targeted structural adjustment assistance may be needed to help those communities adapt to the changes.”

Despite some initial setbacks and frustrations, relevant amendments to the Water Act 2007 were achieved through a deal struck between the Federal Government and Opposition. The deal also included funding allocated to several communities to directly address the damage that had already been done.

The highlights of winning this deal were the importance of the Annual Conference process, the need for a proactive campaign and also nuanced political advocacy behind the scenes.

The LGAQ's 2016 Annual Conference overwhelmingly supported Balonne Shire Council's emotional plea to lobby the State and Federal governments to abandon buybacks and to explore other options. For the next year, the LGAQ worked with impacted councils, particularly Balonne Shire to convince the federal and state governments to reduce the sustainable diversion limit to a more reasonable level and provide on-the-ground support for the most affected communities to guide them through their economic transition.
CANBERRA CAPERS: #DONTWALKAWAY CAMPAIGN

In early 2018, the LGAQ launched its #DontWalkAway campaign to highlight the impact of the Federal Government’s looming withdrawal from its long running Remote Housing Partnership with the state. This program provided direct funding for the construction and maintenance of houses in remote and discrete Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT’S OWN REVIEW CONFIRMED THE SUCCESS OF THE PROGRAM AND, IMPORTANTLY, STRONGLY URGED THAT FEDERAL INVESTMENT CONTINUE.

The LGAQ supported councils’ conclusions that this decision would cost hundreds of jobs in the communities and undo the hard-won gains in closing the gap on several areas of disadvantage in these communities.

Over ensuing months, under the #Dontwalkaway banner, the LGAQ launched a range of actions to influence the government to reconsider its position. These included:

- Written submissions to the Senate Economics Legislation Committee;
- Several delegations of mayors to Canberra to promote the benefits of the program with government ministers, influential backbenchers and members of the Opposition;
- Raising the matter at the ALGA National Assembly;
- Correspondence with every Queensland state and federal member of parliament promoting the need for ongoing housing program in these communities;
- Arranging for the matter to be raised at the federal government’s review of its closing the gap progress;
- Having the issue raised during question time in federal parliament and the Senate as well as at the Senate’s estimates hearings;
- Collaborating with other stakeholders such as QShelter and the Queensland Government;
- Engaging the interest of the state and national media;
- Conducting an extensive social media campaign supporting the housing program.

While the Government has yet to make a firm commitment to a prescribed amount of funding for a continuation of the program, some positive signs have begun to emerge.

Despite this, the Government persisted with its view that the program would cease in June 2018.
MANAGING ROADS
WITH AN ALL NEW PORTAL

From December 2017 to April 2018 the LGAQ provided 20 training sessions across Qld, which included over 100 council officers and 55 Queensland councils. The LGAQ and the NHVR also provided a recorded webinar to councils that were unable to attend regional sessions with the remaining councils were transitioned onto the full portal in mid-April.

Feedback from councils so far has been positive, many noting the improvements to data quality and the communication process. According to NHVR’s Portal Program Director David Carlisle, using the Portal Full saves time and streamlines the administrative work involved in processing permits.

“PORTAL USERS EXPERIENCE A NUMBER OF ADVANTAGES SUCH AS BETTER EDITING AND REPORTING CAPABILITIES, THE ABILITY TO CREATE CUSTOMISED PROFILES TO SUIT SPECIFIC NEEDS, HAVING MULTIPLE ACCOUNT USERS AND VARYING LEVELS OF ACCESS. “IN ADDITION, THE PERMIT LIBRARY ALLOWS IMPROVED AND EASIER RECORDS MANAGEMENT.”

With system improvements underway, councils will see better GIS reporting to assist them in understanding the number of heavy vehicle movements on local government roads, providing data necessary for network planning and better access to federal and state funding opportunities.

LGAQ’s Project Manager – Heavy Vehicle Access, providing training to councils in Wide Bay Burnett on the NHVR Portal Road Manager Module.

NATIONAL CLASS 1 SPECIAL PURPOSE VEHICLE (SPV) NOTICE

Over the last two years the LGAQ has collaborated with the National Heavy Vehicle Regulator and the Crane Industry Council of Australia to boost the number of road networks signed up to the National Class 1 Special Purpose Vehicle (SPV) Notice in Queensland.

To date 63 Queensland councils have provided consent to the SPV Notice which has significantly reduced red tape for industry and saved administrative costs for council officers.

By working collaboratively with councils, the NHVR and CICA to explain the benefits to consenting to the SPV Notice has resulted in an increase in the number of Queensland councils signed up, from 7 councils in June 2016 to 63 councils as of September 2018.

"THIS HAS GREATLY REDUCED THE NEED FOR PERMITS ACROSS QUEENSLAND, SAVING COUNCILS AND THE INDUSTRIES IN THEIR COMMUNITIES BOTH TIME AND MONEY".

The map of Queensland (pictured), shows regions highlighted in green that have already signed up to the crane notice. The NHVR have identified that developing national notices for councils is the most efficient way to give access to the road network for agreed vehicle types or combinations. “The work we are doing on the development of national notices will ultimately increase productivity and safety for the transport industry and wider community,” they said.
This year the Q CRC welcomed its 32nd council to the program, making it fully subscribed. However, more councils wanted to take advantage of the program. The LGAQ advocated for funding to make the program available to all Queensland councils and was awarded an additional $1.25 million over three years in this year’s State budget.

The presentations, governance assessments and growing community of practice among elected members and staff has been so well received that the State is rolling out its own Queensland Climate Ready program for its departments.

Climate change is the greatest threat to our Great Barrier Reef. Reducing emissions to keep global warming under 1.5°C to save the Reef, is a global responsibility, but there are things we can do locally to support the Reef’s resilience – like tackling water quality.

Councils are investing between $220 and $600 million a year collectively in actions that help the Reef, but an extra $57 million over 7 years could turbo charge results up and down the Reef catchment. That’s the investment figure to deliver three new initiatives in the LGAQ’s Reef Councils Major Integrated Projects (MIP) proposal – an investment prospectus we hope will get the funding councils need to ‘get behind the Reef’.

The Court of Appeal unanimously set aside the orders from the original decision, which invalidated Mount Isa City Council’s water utility charge due to failure to comply with the Local Government Regulation 2012 and Local Government principles.

The LGAQ made the strategic decision that the issue had the potential to affect all councils.

The Mount Isa case follows several other instances where the LGAQ has invested in protecting the interests of councils before the courts.

The LGAQ has spent time and resources ensuring justice is done for local government in Queensland - and has saved them billions of dollars in the process.

The 2018 Court of Appeal decision to set aside the Supreme Court’s orders arising from its December 2017 invalidation of Mount Isa City Council’s water utility charge was the result of an appeal co-funded by Mount Isa City Council and the LGAQ.
PROUD TO BE YOUR COUNCIL