

## MUNICIPAL ASSOCIATION OF VICTORIA STATE COUNCIL - ENDORSEMENT OF MOTIONS

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Report Author: Advocacy & Government Relationship Advisor  
Responsible Officer: Chief Executive Officer  
Ward(s) affected: (All Wards);

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*The author(s) of this report and the Responsible Officer consider that the report complies with the overarching governance principles and supporting principles set out in the Local Government Act 2020.*

### CONFIDENTIALITY

This item is to be considered at a Council meeting that is open to the public.

### SUMMARY

The Municipal Association of Victoria (MAV) will hold the next State Council meeting on Friday 13 October 2023. The MAV has called for councils to submit proposed motions to be considered at the meeting. If supported by the member councils, motions become resolutions and policy positions of the MAV.

### RECOMMENDATION

***That Council submit the following motions to the Municipal Association of Victoria (MAV) for consideration at the State Council meeting on Friday 13 October 2023:***

- 1. That the MAV advocate to the Minister for Planning to consider permit exemptions for Rural Worker accommodation in the Green Wedge Zones and release of other reforms from the Planning for Melbourne's Green Wedge and Agricultural Land Review.***
- 2. That the MAV advocate to the Victorian Government to reinstate a broad strategic review of the School Crossing Supervisor Program, to address urgent outstanding issues, including***
  - (a) crossing supervisor staff shortages***
  - (b) regular unsupervised school crossings***
  - (c) unsustainable State Government funding model that puts increasing financial pressure on Councils.***
- 3. That the MAV advocate to the Victorian Government for a Maternal and Child Health Services policy that supports local government to implement a targeted service approach, as funding models and workforce challenges are preventing delivery of the full-service model.***

## RELATED COUNCIL DECISIONS

Council submitted three motions to the last State Council meeting, held on 19 May 2023. All motions were endorsed by MAV members at the State Council meeting. The motions related to:

1. Support for the Public and Environmental Health sector to address workforce shortages and implement substantive changes in legislation and regulations.
2. Addressing critical sector-wide shortage in Statutory and Strategic Town Planning specialists.
3. Safety at public Council meetings, and the need for a coordinated response to managing disruptive and unsafe behaviour.

Links to Council papers - [Motions 1 and 2](#); [Motion 3](#)

## DISCUSSION

### *Purpose and Background*

State Council is the MAV's governing body and is made up of representatives from each member council. State Council's powers include:

- determining the Rules of the Association
- electing the President and other members of the Board
- determining the Strategic Direction
- appointing the Auditor.

State Council meets twice a year, or more if needed. The MAV calls for councils to submit motions approximately two months in advance of State Council.

As decisions of State Council constitute policy directions of the MAV and remain active until the issue is resolved, motions should relate to either new policy directions, or variations to existing policy directions.

The MAV Rules require that motions: be of state-wide significance to the local government sector; link to the strategic outcomes in the MAV Strategy 2021-25; not be identical or substantially similar to a motion submitted to State Council at any of the previous four State Council meetings; and not seek to endorse a motion to be put to the Australian Local Government Association National General Assembly.

When submitting a motion, Council is required to identify whether the motion is supported by a council resolution.

The MAV Strategy 2021-25 identifies six strategic outcomes:

1. Economically sound councils
2. Healthy, diverse and thriving communities
3. Well-planned, connected and resilient built environment
4. Changing climate and a circular economy
5. Sector capability and good governance
6. Effective and responsive MAV.

### ***Options considered***

Council has considered various emerging issues and strategic risks impacting Council as an organisation as well as the broader community, and the suitability of these matters for advocacy through MAV State Council.

### ***Recommended option and justification***

Of the strategic risks and issues currently impacting Council and the community, the proposed motions have been determined as appropriately matched to the advocacy opportunity presented by State Council, in terms of both timing and MAV's submission criteria.

The rationale for each proposed motion is provided below.

1. Addressing planning barriers for regional workers accommodation.

Motion	That the MAV advocate to the Minister for Planning to consider permit exemptions for Rural Worker accommodation in the Green Wedge Zones and release of other reforms from the Planning for Melbourne's Green Wedge and Agricultural Land Review.
Rationale	<p>A lack of worker accommodation has created significant problems for industries across Victoria, particularly for agricultural businesses that have struggled to attract both permanent and seasonal workers.</p> <p>The Victorian Government's recent announcement of an additional \$150 million for regional workers accommodation will go some way to addressing this problem.</p> <p>However, accommodation shortages will remain, particularly in regional parts of peri-urban areas where rural worker accommodation is subject to a planning permit process in the Green Wedge zones.</p> <p>The Commonwealth's Pacific Australia Labour Mobility scheme (PALM scheme) – which is critical to facilitating the agricultural industry's seasonal workforce – requires that host farmers and labour hire companies comply with any regulations required by the state, territory or local government/council (for example fire safety, overcrowding).</p>

	<p>Furthermore, in 2022, the Public Health and Wellbeing Act 2020 definition of prescribed accommodation was expanded to include accommodation provided as part of a labour agreement. This means that all farmers that provide accommodation to seasonal workers as part of their working agreement must be registered under the Act and comply with the minimum standards for prescribed accommodation outlined in the Public Health and Wellbeing (Prescribed Accommodation) Regulations 2020.</p> <p>These requirements make it clear what is expected of farmers and labour hire providers. Combined with the Victorian Government's investment, there is an opportunity to significantly increase supply of compliant accommodation for seasonal workers.</p> <p>However, if barriers embedded in the planning system remain, it can reasonably be expected that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Key businesses and industries will be unable to benefit the Victorian Government's investment in workers' accommodation.</li> <li>• Accommodation supply will continue to fall short of need, meaning businesses may be unable to participate in Commonwealth programs such as the PALM Scheme.</li> <li>• Agricultural industries of local, statewide and national significance will struggle to meet demand for their products.</li> </ul>
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## 2. Strategic review into the School Crossing Supervisor Program

<p>Motion</p>	<p>That the MAV advocate to the Victorian Government to reinstate a broad strategic review of the School Crossing Supervisor Program, to address urgent outstanding issues, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Crossing supervisor staff shortages</li> <li>• Regular unsupervised school crossings</li> <li>• Unsustainable State Government funding model that puts increasing financial pressure on Councils.</li> </ul>
<p>Rationale</p>	<p>The safety of children walking safely to and from school is a priority for us all. That's why it is imperative that we have a school crossing system that works.</p> <p>However, a survey of 40 Victorian Councils revealed 97% of municipalities have school crossings that are unsupervised due to operational challenges. At these locations, children are crossing roads without assistance and where poor driver behaviour impacts safety.</p> <p>Additionally:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 82% regularly face crossing supervisor staff shortages, and</li> <li>• 87% of Councils surveyed consider the system no longer fit for purpose.</li> </ul>

	<p>In 2016, the Labor Government committed to a review of the school crossing program. This review was welcomed by Local Government who were eager to work with the government on addressing the shortcomings in the program, including the current funding arrangements.</p> <p>Unfortunately, this review has not progressed, and remains urgently needed. A broad strategic review should address the key outcomes the program intends on achieving and an updated model that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Considers other models of services used in other jurisdictions, and their potential application in Victoria.</li> <li>• Strengthens State Government funding contribution towards the School Crossing Service to ensure it remains sustainable and cost effective.</li> <li>• Supports addressing challenges in recruiting and retaining crossing supervisors.</li> <li>• Delivers safety improvements and increased use of technology in and around crossings.</li> <li>• Funds safety improvement initiatives, including infrastructure treatments.</li> <li>• Promotes safety around schools to the broader community and road users.</li> </ul>
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### 3. Targeted approaches to delivering Maternal and Child Health services

Motion	That the MAV advocate to the Victorian Government for a Maternal and Child Health Services policy that supports local government to implement a targeted service approach, as funding models and workforce challenges are preventing delivery of the full-service model.
Rationale	<p>The State Upper House will soon be undertaking an Inquiry into Local Government Finances.</p> <p>A key component of the inquiry will be to examine councils' capacity to undertake statutory obligations, including Maternal and Child Health (MCH) services.</p> <p>There are persistent challenges facing MCH services, including chronic workforce shortages and unsustainable funding models that have increasingly shifted costs onto Councils, alongside increased obligations.</p> <p>While the sector has advocated on these issues, in line with recent MAV State Council resolutions, the Victorian Government has not effectively addressed them.</p>

	<p>For instance, the sector has advocated for an increase to Key Age and Stage (KAS) consultation times to accommodate the substantial volume of additional requirements introduced over the past decade, as well as restoration of the universal 50:50 funding agreement. While the Victorian Government confirmed an increase to consultation hours from 6.75 to 8 in the 2023-24 Budget, it has not increased the MCH unit cost. As such, there remains a growing cost gap for councils and strain on an already stretched workforce.</p> <p>Given these challenges, it is critical that the inquiry considers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The changing policy context for MCH services.</li> <li>• Developing a policy or framework that provides: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ flexibility, and enables Councils to implement targeted service approaches that prioritise access to families likely to gain the greatest benefit.</li> <li>○ direction and support to maintain services through other innovative means, such as reallocating some KAS responsibilities to kindergarten services with the expansion of three-year-old kinder.</li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p>It is our recommendation that the MAV elevate these critical services challenges and innovation opportunities through the process of the inquiry, so that councils can continue to deliver quality services that are sustainable into the future.</p>
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## **FINANCIAL ANALYSIS**

There are no financial implications associated with submitting a motion to the State Council.

## **APPLICABLE PLANS AND POLICIES**

Council's participation in MAV State Council contributes to following action in the Council Plan:

- Consolidate and strengthen advocacy through evidence and stronger relationships to ensure other levels of government are effectively and efficiently engaged to support local services and programs.

## **RELEVANT LAW**

Not applicable.

## **SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS**

### ***Economic Implications***

Motion 1 seeks to achieve planning reform outcomes that would support the delivery of accommodation for rural workers in Yarra Ranges. If this advocacy were successful, there is potential for the region to attract investment from the Victorian Government and other sources to construct accommodation needed to house workers across key industries, particularly agriculture.

### ***Social Implications***

Motion 2 addresses the sustainability of the Councils' School Crossing Supervisor (SCS) program. This program is highly valued in the community for enhancing the safety of children and families travelling to and from schools, across busy roads and intersections. However, the cost of the service has become increasingly unsustainable for Councils to maintain, and there are broad opportunities to review and reform the service that would ensure it can be sustained.

Motion 3 addresses the sustainability of Councils' MCH services. This free universal primary health service is available for all Victorian families with children from birth to school age. It provides a comprehensive and focused approach for the promotion, prevention and early identification of the physical, emotional and social factors affecting young children and their families. Despite the success of the service and the high regard in which it is held, over the past decade MCH services have come under increasing financial and service delivery pressures, raising concerns about the ongoing sustainability of the service without some fundamental changes to the service structure.

### ***Environmental Implications***

Motion 1 calls for planning reforms that would enable the delivery of more accommodation options for Rural Workers within Green Wedge Zones (GWZs). GWZs have a significant role to play in protecting the environmental values and sustainability in Yarra Ranges and other regions across Victoria. These values have been considered and protected throughout the development of the proposed reforms.

## **COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT**

As the submission of motions to State Council is operational in nature and presents to change to Council's strategic direction, community engagement was not undertaken on this matter.

An internal process has been undertaken with Officers and Councillors to identify potential motions for submission. The proposed motions must support Council's existing strategies and Council Plan, which have been developed through community consultation and deliberative engagement processes.

## **COLLABORATION, INNOVATION AND CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT**

Motions 2 and 3 reflect and build on policy and advocacy positions that have been developed collaboratively with other Councils, specifically:

- Motion 2 – School Crossing Supervisor Program – reflects the advocacy campaign for SCSP reform, led by Monash City Council, developed and launched in 2022.
- Motion 3 – MCH services – builds on past research and advocacy efforts undertaken with other Councils in the Eastern Metropolitan Region.

## **RISK ASSESSMENT**

Motion 1 supports the mitigation of:

- Strategic Risk (SR31): Insufficient planning and support for future generations and vulnerable communities, leads to poorly planned communities, inadequate distribution of services and infrastructure and inappropriate land uses, resulting in low levels of amenity for and trust from the community.

Motions 2 and 3 support the mitigation of:

- Strategic Risk (SR27) Financial: Council's financial viability or long-term stability is compromised, resulting in negative impact to service and infrastructure delivery.

## **CONFLICTS OF INTEREST**

No officers and/or delegates acting on behalf of the Council through the Instrument of Delegation and involved in the preparation and/or authorisation of this report have any general or material conflict of interest as defined within the *Local Government Act 2020*.

## **ATTACHMENTS TO THE REPORT**

Nil