

**LOCAL GOVERNMENT  
ASSOCIATION  
OF QUEENSLAND INC.**

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Dr Anna Dacre  
Committee Secretary  
House of Representatives Standing Committee on Environment and Heritage  
Parliament House  
CANBERRA QLD 2600

Secretary: .....

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HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES  
STANDING COMMITTEE ON  
ENVIRONMENT AND HERITAGE

Dear Dr Dacre

**Local Government Association of Queensland submission - Sustainable Cities 2025: A Blueprint for the Future.**

Thankyou for the opportunity to provide input to the House of Representatives Standing Committee, Environment and Heritage inquiry into Sustainable Cities 2025.

It is recognised that the sustainability of Australian cities is an issue of national significance in which Queensland Local Government holds key responsibilities and plays a strategic role. Local governments statutory responsibilities extend from land use planning, to infrastructure planning, water and wastewater management. At the same time Queensland Local Government is increasingly applying broad governance powers to initiate and commence broad programs and policy responses in the areas of community and economic development.

A comprehensive submission is attached which addresses key issues as raised in the "Discussion Paper - *Sustainable Cities 2025: A Blue Print for the Future*". The submission incorporates current Queensland Local Government policy and details four (4) recommendations for consideration by the Standing Committee on Environment and Heritage.

The Association looks forward to engaging in the Inquiry and providing additional information as necessary.

If you have any questions regarding the submission please feel free to contact, Planning and Development Policy Advisor Malcolm Griffin, on 07 3000 2291 or at email ([malcolm\\_griffin@lgaq.asn.au](mailto:malcolm_griffin@lgaq.asn.au)).

Yours sincerely

Greg Hoffman PSM  
Director  
Policy and Representation

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Attach

## **Local Government Association of Queensland Submission - House of Representatives Standing Committee on Environment and Heritage - Sustainable Cities 2025.**

The Local Government Association of Queensland (LGAQ) represents all 125 Queensland Local Governments and 10 Aboriginal and Islander Community Councils. This submission articulates the foundational and highly effective role that Queensland Local Government currently plays in progressing towards sustainable cities, towns and regions. It contains four (4) recommendations for consideration by the Standing Committee in directing, assisting, facilitating, and progressing towards sustainable cities 2025.

### **Queensland Local Government - Sustainability Cities 2025**

#### **Policy**

The Queensland Local Government Policy on ecological sustainability is:

Local Government recognises that the concept of ecological sustainable development including proper resource accounting, provides a potential for the integration of environmental, economic and social considerations in decision making for the balancing of the interests of current and future generations.

#### **Legislation**

Queensland Local Government's broad responsibilities and actions which address the sustainability of cities are based in the general competence powers of Queensland Local Government (*Local Government Act 1993*) and in the requirements of a raft of State and Commonwealth legislation.

The general competency powers of Queensland Local Government are the broadest of all Australian Local Government systems. For example, Queensland Local Government holds almost sole responsibility for water and sewerage supply systems. The Local Government Act 1993 states:

*Chapter 2, Part 1, Division 3, Section 25:*

#### *Jurisdiction of local government*

*Each local government has jurisdiction (the "jurisdiction of local government") to make local laws for, and otherwise ensure, the good rule and government of, its territorial unit.*

Key pieces of legislation which contain specific regulatory powers and planning responsibilities for local government include:

- Integrated Planning Act 1997 (IPA 97),
- Environmental Protection Act 1994,
- Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999,
- Building Act 1975,
- Coastal Protection and Management Act 1995,
- Vegetation Management Act 1999, and
- Water Act 2000.

## **Innovative Program and Projects**

Queensland Local Government utilises its general competence powers in initiating a broad range and large number of innovative projects and programs spanning environment, social and economic objectives.

The actions and responsibilities of Local Government have been grouped under the headings of Environment, Community Development and Economic Development. The three (3) headings were chosen, as they are the three (3) recognised elements of sustainability. It is however recognised that many of the activities and examples provided in this submission span environmental, social and economic considerations.

### **1.0 Environment: Land Use Planning (IPA 1997)**

Queensland Local Government has a primary role in progressing the sustainability of cities through the preparation and implementation of Planning Schemes. This responsibility is established under the IPA 1997, which identifies planning schemes as a key mechanism in achieving sustainability. The IPA 1997 states;

*Section 1.2.1 The purpose of the Act is to seek to achieve ecological sustainability by*

- (a) coordinating and integrating planning at the local, regional and State levels; and*
- (b) managing the process by which development occurs; and*
- (c) managing the effects of development on the environment.*

Within this purpose planning schemes determine urban form, protect environmental, cultural and amenity values, provide for population change and facilitate economic growth. In addition planning schemes establish and implement standards of development and construction which ameliorate the negative impacts of development.

Queensland Councils have conservatively spent \$25 million dollars in the preparation of Planning Schemes over the previous three (3) years. The preparation of policy, its application and administration through planning schemes represents a major contribution to the sustainability of Queensland cities.

In addition to the land use component of planning schemes, Local Governments are preparing infrastructure plans and charging schedules. These plans directly tie infrastructure planning and provision to land use and also require the transparent costing and financing of infrastructure. The infrastructure systems required under legislation to be planned and costed are;

- Local roads,
- Water,
- Wastewater,
- Storm water, and
- Parks.

In addition to preparing Planning Schemes, Queensland Local Governments are engaging and supporting regional planning processes and urban design/centre improvement projects, both of which are fundamental elements in achieving sustainable cities.

### **1.1 Environment: Regional Planning**

Queensland Local Government is engaging effectively in regional planning processes. This commitment is being driven by the recognition that sustainability in the context of cities requires cooperation and coordination across local government boundaries and levels of government. A recent survey of Queensland Councils demonstrates the significant

commitment made by local government to regional cooperation. As demonstrated in the findings of the survey, regional cooperation is not based solely on land use issues but extends into issues such as economic development. The survey found;

- 83% of Queensland Councils are members of a regional organisation.
- Financial contributions to regional level activities increased from \$6.7 million in 1997/98 to \$12.8 million in 2001/02.
- Local economic development including tourism development is the most significant focus for funding regional initiatives by Local Government as well as having the greatest rate of growth for regional initiatives in the last five years.
- Some 70% of Queensland Councils identified scope for further regional initiatives capable of enhancing outcomes, improving services and more effectively utilising resources.

## **1.2 Environment: Centres/Urban Design**

In addition to the land use and infrastructure planning, Local Governments are addressing the sustainability of localities through planning for centres and urban design projects. It is recognised that the sustainability of urban localities in terms of liveability, economic growth and environmental performance is critical to overall sustainability of larger urban areas (cities). Examples of Queensland Councils, which have addressed these outcomes through urban design projects, include Cairns and Townsville foreshore redevelopment, Brisbane City's Suburban Centre Improvement Program (SCIP) and Urban Renewal Program. Importantly some of these programs were made possible through funding by the Commonwealth Government.

## **1.3 Environment: Resource Management**

The environmental management of key resources is critical in achieving sustainable cities. Queensland Local Government has primary roles in water and wastewater management, waste collection and management and natural resource management.

### **1.3.1 Water/Waste/Storm Water Management**

Queensland Local Government is actively pursuing improved environmental and economic performance of water and wastewater management systems. More sustainable use of water is being pursued through demand management practices utilising both price and non-price mechanisms. The use of water meters and appropriate charging is increasingly being applied and has resulted in significant improvement in water conservation. As examples of non-price mechanisms, Councils are increasingly regulating water use practices of households and industries as well as encouraging water conservation devices such as water tanks. In relation to waste/storm water Local Government is continually improving the standard of waste/storm water discharged into waterways. Further Local Government is exploring opportunities to utilise treated wastewater in alternate uses. An example of which is on-selling treated wastewater for agricultural uses.

### **1.3.2 Waste Management**

Local Government holds the primary responsibility for the management of waste in the community. Through effective waste management planning processes, Local Governments are endeavoring to achieve sustainable waste management systems that include the recovery of secondary resources and the limitation of environmental impacts associated with residual waste management.

However, to achieve long term sustainability in waste management outcomes, it is imperative that there is an attitudinal shift by waste producers and consumers in the

community to embrace shared responsibility for the life cycle management of waste. Accordingly, the Commonwealth Government should establish an integrated policy and governance framework to facilitate this paradigm shift. Within this framework Local Government can, with a degree of certainty, pursue and implement systems that deliver sustainable secondary resource recovery and residual waste management on a continual improvement basis for the community.

### **1.3.3 Natural Resource Management**

Queensland Local Government is increasingly engaging directly in natural resource management process and projects. Queensland Local Government are actively supporting the National Action Plan - Salinity (NAP) and National Heritage Trust I & II (NHT) projects and participating in regional exercises. In addition the LGAQ has commenced a three (3) year project to build understanding and capacity of Local Government to engage in and cooperatively support natural resources management projects.

In addition to the formal projects of NAP and NHT Local Government through its water management, vegetation protection and management and land use planning processes and responsibilities are currently planning for and managing natural resources including land, water and vegetation. As such a significant capacity exists for the utilisation and application of Local Government knowledge and skills in natural resource management.

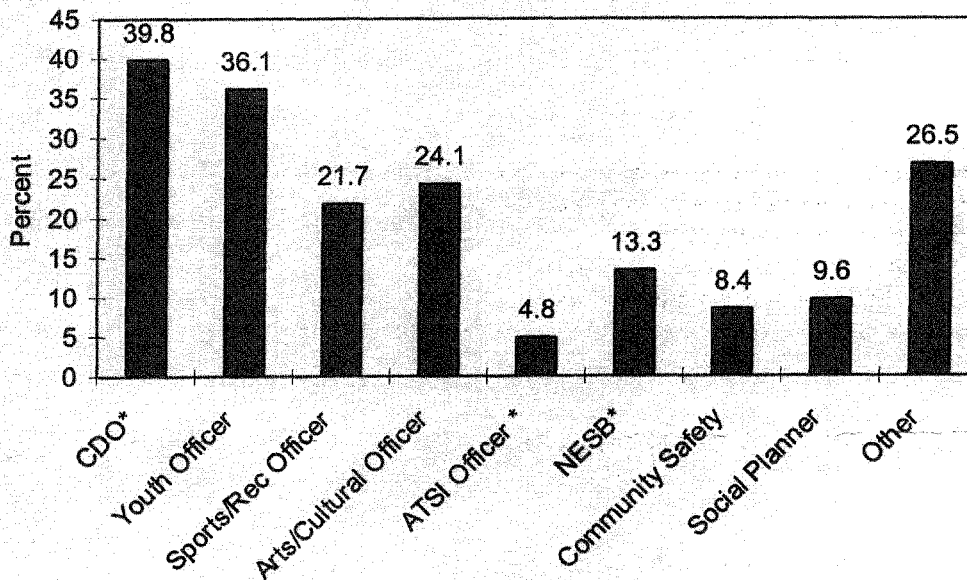
## **2.0 Community Development**

Queensland Local Government undertakes a crucial and significant role in community development activities and in fostering, building and sustaining social capital. Social capital and the community development role is foundational to the sustainability of cities.

The commitment of Queensland Local Government is demonstrated through the support and resources applied to community development and community planning initiatives. The reasons for the increasing role and focus by Local Government include, changing community expectations for Councils to respond to issues of social disadvantage and shifts to partnership arrangements with State and Commonwealth Governments. Fundamentally it is increasingly recognised that addressing social issues and more broadly community development is primary to the sustainability of cities. In this context local government is recognising that it has an important governance and delivery role in community development.

In 2000 - 2001, the University of Queensland undertook research in partnership with LGAQ entitled *Local Government Community Services Survey*. The research developed a profile of Local Government activity and commitment to community services and social policy issues demonstrated through the percentage of Queensland's Councils who employ staff with community development and social policy responsibilities.

Figure 1. Percent of Councils with Specific Positions



\* CDO: Community Development Officer, \* ATSI: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Officer, \* NESB: Non-English Speaking Background Officer.

Figure 1 demonstrates the broad range of social/community issues currently being addressed by Local Government and its commitment to achieving social outcomes as an element of the sustainability of cities. It is considered that the trend in engaging with social issues and the support of specific programs has continued since this survey.

### 3.0 Economic Development

More than 90% of all Queensland Councils identified play an actively role in local and regional economic development. This role extends from formal processes to less structured local and regional initiatives. In a 2003 survey of Queensland Local Government the following formal economic development activities were identified;

- Assembling information to assist developers (policy statement, land available, planning regs.),
- Actively distributing information on local capacity (key facts brochure to potential developers/industry),
- Actively promoting your local area outside region (promotion displays/videos/meetings),
- Researching local economic characteristics (profile of workforce, population (eg. age, cultural diversity), industry trends),
- Preparing long term economic development strategies (turning research into strategies and action plans),
- Coordinating business/industry interest groups (taking a leader role in mobilising initiatives),
- Establishing/supporting local development bureau,
- Identifying prospective firms and industries (targeting strengths/opportunities in local economy),
- Providing development incentives (rate remissions, low cost land, streamlined approvals),

- Provision of establishment loans to industries,
- Entrepreneurial actions (business operation/development, joint ventures), and
- Training programs/skill development.

Specific informal and innovative projects and initiatives identified in the 2003 survey included;

- Developing industrial estates,
- Holding an economic development summit,
- Developing specific tourist facilities,
- Streetscaping initiatives,
- Establishing an enterprise company,
- Purchasing a hospital/medical centre,
- Establishing a business incubator,
- Linking contractors and suppliers rate deferral,
- Trade missions/delegations,
- Loans to industry,
- Purchase of industrial facilities,
- Facilitation of internet facilities, and
- Employment of Economic Development Officers.

In summary Queensland Local Government activities in economic development is significant, extensive and spans across traditional roles and innovative projects.

Despite the level of activity, over 60% of Councils considered that the access to 'up to date' regional and economic development information, resources, programs or methodology was constrained or unable to adapt to the developing needs of the local economy. Further, over 50% of all Councils believe that they are inadequately consulted on State or Commonwealth Government Regional Economic Development initiatives or program changes that directly impact them.

Recognising the wide range of local needs and developing regional agenda, Queensland Councils are seeking from both the State and Commonwealth Governments, a commitment to simplify arrangements and combine activities to increase impact, avoid duplication and to free up resources available for regional and local economic development.

#### **4.0 Incentives for Sustainable Community Action**

In scoping the broad range of regulatory, service delivery and planning functions undertaken across environmental, social and economic issues, a growing number of examples exist where Local Governments have utilised direct grants, assistance and support as direct incentives to sustainable community action.

Examples include:

- The introduction by numerous Councils of financial grants for residents who install rainwater tanks.
- Rate rebates for community groups who are non-for profit and provide a key community service.
- A positive example of an effective working relationship with the Commonwealth Government has been the Land for Wildlife project, which provides significant resources and assistance to individual landowners pursuing more sustainable practices.

These examples and many others like them have occurred in complimenting the regulatory framework. It is considered that incentives and programs, which enable the community to advance the sustainability of cities on individual properties and through modified behaviour, are highly effective when they compliment the regulatory framework.

## 5.0 Recommendations

In recognising the fundamental governance responsibilities, initiatives commenced and resources applied by Queensland Local Government to the sustainability of cities, the following recommendations are provided for consideration by the House of Representatives Standing Committee;

**1. That the Commonwealth Government continue to provide improved resourcing of programs/responsibilities and direct financial support for Local Government**

Adequate resourcing and assistance for Local Government in its land use and infrastructure planning and provision, waste management, community and economic development functions is fundamental to the achievement of sustainable cities. Current funding available through existing revenue raising and grants from the Commonwealth and State of Governments restricts the scope and capacity of Local Government to address sustainability.

Queensland Local Government clearly demonstrates its capacity to work cooperatively and productively with the Commonwealth and State Governments, industry and community and move toward more sustainable cities.

**2. That the Commonwealth Government facilitates the development and implementation of appropriate intergovernmental relations.**

Appropriate governance models and relationship need to be developed which draw on the experience, knowledge and capacity of Local Government. As such the fundamental role and responsibilities of Local Government in progressing towards sustainable cities 2025 needs to be reflected in the intergovernmental arrangements. Significant potential exists with the creation of appropriate arrangements, which harness Commonwealth, State and Local Governments, industry and the community resources for progressing towards sustainable cities 2025.

**3. That the Commonwealth Government applies financial, revenue raising and taxation powers to promote action by individuals, communities and industries.**

Queensland Local Governments are assisting residents and industries to act more sustainably. However they are restricted in the scope of incentives and initiatives through limited revenue raising powers. Significant scope exists for the Commonwealth Government to work in cooperation with Local Government and utilise the broad financial and taxation powers to provide greater incentives for individuals, industries and communities to implement and achieve more sustainable practices.

**4. That the Commonwealth Government more appropriately align its policy focus to reflect its role in the Australian Government system.**

The Discussion Paper identifies a range of very specific issues, which are part of seeking sustainable cities. While each policy issue is important, it is considered an inappropriately detailed and specific focus for the Commonwealth Government. The Commonwealth Governments focus should be on issues of national or inter state significance and then facilitating policy and program approaches at the nation and state levels.



For example, an appropriate policy focus for the Commonwealth Government would be policy that facilitates the identification and articulates the environmental, social and economic role of the Australian capital cities within each state and their role in the nation.