



The Hon Emma McBride MP

Assistant Minister for Mental Health and Suicide Prevention
Assistant Minister for Rural and Regional Health

Ref No: MC25-017786

Mayor Matt Burnett
President
Australian Local Government Association
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Dear Mayor

Thank you for your correspondence regarding resolutions from the 2025 National General Assembly of Local Government (NGA). I acknowledge all motions and the vital role that local governments play in supporting the health and wellbeing of their communities.

The Australian Government is committed to improving access to health services for all Australians, and recognises the unique challenges facing Australians living in regional, rural and remote areas.

I provide the following responses to the motions raised with me.

Motion number 46 Shire of Lake Grace Western Australia

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to increase the Financial Assistance Grants to local governments and recalculate distributions to those local governments in remote and rural locations that are providing financial incentives to assist in funds associated with attracting and retaining general practitioners, therefore redirecting ratepayer funds to local government responsibilities.

I note that this resolution was also sent to the Hon Catherine King MP, Minister for Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Local Government, and the Hon Kristy McBain MP, Minister for Emergency Management and Minister for Regional Development, Local Government and Territories. Minister King is best placed to provide a response to this resolution on Financial Assistance Grants. However, the Government maintains several programs designed to support general practice in regional, rural and remote areas.

The Government funds Primary Health Networks (PHNs) and Rural Workforce Agencies (RWAs), which work on behalf of the Government to assist communities experiencing difficulties attracting and retaining health professionals. These organisations collaborate with local general practices and communities to ensure that patients can access services.

The Government also funds a range of programs and incentives to strengthen primary care in areas of need. The General Practice Incentive Fund (GPIF) provides \$52.3 million over five years from 2022–23 to 2026–27. This initiative aims to stabilise and restore access to essential health services in communities with unstable or failed primary care systems.

Funding under the GPIF grant opportunity is limited, and the Lake Grace region has not been prioritised at this time. If additional funding becomes available, the Department of Health, Disability and Ageing will reassess priorities with jurisdictions and relevant stakeholders.

Motion number 115 Narrabri Shire Council New South Wales

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to extend financial support for the delivery of health services and equipment in rural and remote communities using a place-based and cooperative approach with local government.

The Government funds a network of 31 Primary Health Networks (PHNs) whose core functions are to coordinate and integrate local care services, commission primary care and mental health services and build capacity in primary care. PHNs play an important role in supporting improved access to primary care in rural and regional areas and determine priorities for commissioning based on identified and prioritised needs of their regions, allowing flexibility to implement approaches to best meet local needs.

PHNs may also receive additional Government funding for specific programs to support rural and regional communities, such as the GPIF which I have referred to under motion number 46.

Motion number 116 City of Kalgoorlie-Boulder Western Australia

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to undertake a full review of the Modified Monash Model (MMM) classification for health and aged care and develop a new model that will incentivise more doctors and other health professionals to regional areas in Australia.

The Government commissioned the independent Working Better for Medicare Review (Review) to examine the effectiveness of current health workforce distribution levers, including policies and geographic classifications, such as the MMM, used to distribute the health workforce across areas of need. The Review considered how to improve access to health care across Australia, including in regional, rural, and remote areas. The Review's final report was released in October 2024 and is available at www.health.gov.au/resources/publications/working-better-for-medicare-review-final-report-and-appendices.

A taskforce has been established in the department to work with the health sector to design and coordinate options in response to the reviews.

Motion number 134 Strathfield Council New South Wales

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to develop a National Mental Health Support Strategy, with local government collaboration to improve accessibility to mental health services at the community level.

The Government has been working to reform the mental health system at the national level. Efforts have been focused on a stepped-care approach providing early intervention and filling critical gaps. This approach aims to deliver person-centred services and equitable access to affordable care when and where Australians need it most.

The National Agreement on Mental Health and Suicide Prevention (National Agreement) is a key part in this reform agenda. It sets out the shared intention of all Australian governments to improve mental health outcomes, reduce the rate of suicide, and ensure service sustainability.

The National Agreement can be found at <https://federalfinancialrelations.gov.au/agreements/mental-health-suicide-prevention-agreement>.

The Final Review of the National Agreement has been undertaken by the Productivity Commission (PC) to assess and make recommendations on the effectiveness, accessibility, affordability, and safety of the mental health and suicide prevention system. The PC delivered its Final Report to Government on 16 October 2025. The Government is considering the Review findings and will work with other governments, the sector and those with lived experience on next steps.

Motion number 138 Mount Alexander Shire Council Victoria

This National General Assembly calls on the Federal Government to ensure rural and remote communities have access to the medical care they need by maximising place-based allied health services in the regions.

The Government has provided \$79.4 million over four years for PHNs to commission multidisciplinary team care. Commissioned teams will support small or solo general practices, and Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisations (ACCHOs), who may be unable to access multidisciplinary care through other avenues.

The goal of multidisciplinary care is to address specific needs in each region, such as managing chronic diseases, coordinating care, or providing social support for at-risk patients. The program will improve access to, and affordability of, holistic care for young people (25-40 years) living with chronic health conditions.

Motion number 139 Shire of Campaspe Victoria

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to promote how and where people can access sexual and reproductive healthcare across regional and rural Australia.

Supporting, protecting, and promoting the health and wellbeing of Australian women and girls, including through safe and affordable access to sexual and reproductive health services is a key priority for the Australian Government.

The Government recognises that there are additional challenges faced by people living in rural and remote communities to access the health services that they need.

States and territories are primarily responsible for healthcare service delivery. However, the Commonwealth is making significant investments including through the 2025-26 Budget, providing \$792.9 million to deliver improved healthcare access and affordability for women and girls. This includes:

- \$159.9 million to make it easier for women in Australia to access and afford long-acting reversible contraception (LARCs), one of the most effective and reliable methods of contraception.
- \$64.5 million to improve access to more effective and high-quality models of care for endometriosis and pelvic pain, and perimenopause and menopause management and support.
- \$109.1 million to support women's health trials through pharmacist services for the treatment of uncomplicated urinary tract infections and to access contraceptives. These trials will make it easier for women to get the care they need from a pharmacist.
- \$443.4 million for the listing of more medicines on the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS) to provide women with increased access to cheaper medicines. From 1 March 2025, the oral contraceptive pills, Yaz and Yasmin, and menopausal hormone therapies EstroGel, Prometrium, and EstroGel Pro were

made available. In addition, the oral contraceptive pill Slinda and Ryeqo for endometriosis was listed on the PBS from 1 May 2025.

- \$16 million to support the provision of maternity services for women and their babies in the Central Coast region of New South Wales and Hobart and its surrounding regions.

This investment further includes \$64.5 million to improve access to more effective and high-quality models of care for endometriosis and pelvic pain, and perimenopause and menopause management and support, which also provides \$12.8 million for a national public health campaign to help raise awareness and increase understanding of perimenopause and menopause symptoms and managements options. The national public health campaign is anticipated to go live in 2026.

This funding builds on the \$160 million allocated through the 2024-25 Budget to support women's health outcomes. This includes \$20 million in sexual and reproductive health funding to increase access to sexual and reproductive health information and services for women, girls, and gender diverse people.

The Government also supports and implements national campaigns to promote sexual health and health seeking behaviours, reduce stigma, and increase testing and treatment of blood borne viruses (BBV) and sexually transmissible infections (STI). This includes:

- The Beforeplay campaign raised awareness of the importance of STI prevention, testing and treatment and promoted safe sex behaviours, it also addressed stigma around testing and seeking care for STIs. This campaign launched in January 2024 and work is underway on a new phase of the campaign.
- An STI campaign targeting people aged 18 to 34 years was officially launched on 1 August 2025 with the primary message being 'Many STIs are hidden, all are treatable'. The campaign will run for 3 months from August to November 2025, promoting booking an STI test.

We welcome the NGA's support for cooperative approaches with local government and will continue to explore opportunities to strengthen these partnerships through targeted investment and shared planning frameworks.

Yours sincerely



Emma McBride

3 November 2025