



Ref No: MC25-034068

Councillor Matt Burnett
Australian Local Government Centre
8 Geils Court
DEAKIN ACT 2600

Dear Councillor Burnett

Thank you for your correspondence of 14 August 2025 to the Hon Tony Burke MP, Minister for Home Affairs, Minister for Immigration and Citizenship, Minister for Cyber Security and Minister for the Arts, concerning the Australian Local Government Association's (ALGA) 2025 National General Assembly, and consequent resolutions. The Minister appreciates the time you have taken to bring this matter to his attention and has asked that I reply on his behalf.

Please find below a response to each of the motions outlined in your letter.

Motion number 22

The Australian Government is committed to uplifting Australia's cyber security preparedness and resilience, through the 2023-2030 Australian Cyber Security Strategy released in November 2023. The Department of Home Affairs is currently developing the measures for Government to take forward under Horizon 2 of the Cyber Security Strategy, between 2026-28. As part of this, consideration is being given to how we can foster greater cooperation with States, Territories and local Government authorities.

Motion number 41

The Data and Digital Ministers Meeting, which has oversight of the Intergovernmental Data Sharing Agreement (IDSA), is chaired by the Minister for Finance. Any enquiries around the IDSA should be directed to the Department of Finance.

Motion number 106

A number of different visa programs allow international health professionals to live and work throughout Australia, including both temporary (the Skills in Demand Visa) and permanent visa options (the Employer Nomination Scheme). Health professionals can also apply for independent migration options (Skilled Independent Migration) that allow them to work in Australia. A specialist regional visa is also available (Skilled Employer Sponsored Regional (Provisional) visa).

Skilled visa applications are processed according to Government policy priorities. Under Ministerial Direction No. 105, employer sponsored visa applications in relation to occupations to be carried out in regional areas are awarded first priority, followed by visa applications in relation to healthcare occupations.

In program year 2024-25 there were 10,590 Temporary Resident (Skilled) primary visa grants for healthcare occupations, while so far in the 2025-26 program year (until 31 August) there have been 1,572 Temporary Resident (Skilled) primary visa grants for healthcare occupations.

Motion number 118

The Department of Home Affairs has established the Office for Social Cohesion (OSC) in support of both social cohesion and democratic resilience, demonstrating a commitment to support inclusive and safe communities. The OSC has developed a 'Connections That Matter' engagement guide to strengthen social cohesion in Australia and is keen to use the guide with local Governments to foster social cohesion. The OSC's partnership with the Australian Libraries and Information Association will see 125 libraries deliver a total of 750 programs with a social cohesion focus, facilitating place-based engagement with a national footprint. The Department is currently exploring further program delivery opportunities and recognises the importance of purposeful community consultation to ensure sustainable outcomes.

The Government is committed to ensuring the safety of all Australians. Since October 2023, the Government has committed more than \$200 million in funding towards community safety and youth crime initiatives, such as the Youth Empowerment Program, the Strengthening Community Safety Program, and the Securing Faith-Based Places program. This funding includes more than \$23 million in funding for local Governments for upgrading security infrastructure such as CCTV, lighting and fencing to create safer communities.

The Government continues to look at options to ensure at-risk communities continue to get the protection and assistance they need. The Department encourages local Governments to monitor the Government's GrantConnect website for future grant opportunities.

Registration for email alerts is available at:

<https://www.grants.gov.au/RegisteredUser/Register>.

Motion number 124

The *Australian Citizenship Act 2007* (the Citizenship Act) and the *Australian Citizenship Regulation 2016* provide the legal mechanism for persons to acquire Australian citizenship. The final legal step in the acquisition of Australian citizenship by conferral is to make the Pledge of Commitment at an Australian citizenship ceremony. The Department of Home Affairs (the Department) acknowledges the ongoing support that councils play in facilitating Australian citizenship ceremonies and scheduling these throughout the year.

The Department does not provide funding to councils to conduct citizenship ceremonies. However, we understand that Councils receive untied Government grants through the *Local Government (Financial Assistance) Act 1995*. These grants allow councils to fund activities to meet local priorities, which may include costs associated with holding citizenship ceremonies. Further information is available at: <https://www.infrastructure.gov.au/territories-regions-cities/local-government/financial-assistance-grant-local-government>.

While it is open to Councils to incorporate additional features into a ceremony to enhance the occasion, such as framing of certificates, gifts and catering, these are not prescribed requirements under the Australian Citizenship Ceremonies Code and provision of these is at the discretion of the ceremony organiser. Recently the Department wrote to all Councils on behalf of the National Australia Day Council (NADC) to advise that the NADC, who confer the Australian of the Year Awards, have offered to facilitate requests for current and past recipients of the Australian of the Year award to attend and make a keynote address at citizenship ceremonies. This initiative may reduce costs associated with obtaining special guest speakers to attend ceremonies.

Motion number 146

The Government acknowledges the importance of ensuring safe and responsible adoption of emerging technologies, including artificial intelligence (AI). The Department is pleased to advise that the *Voluntary AI Safety Standard* (VAISS), released in 2024, provides practical guidance to organisations on the safe adoption and use of AI. The VAISS includes disclosure advice and an overview of the community consultation that informed its development.

The Department encourages local Government organisations to continue engaging with the National AI Centre as it develops further industry guidance on best practice adoption.

Motion number 147

Specific initiatives on the use of blockchain technology should be referred to the Department of Industry, Science and Resources.

Motion number 148

The Government appreciates the ALGA's interest in the Online Safety Amendment (Social Media Minimum Age) Bill 2024. The Government will consider funding programs to keep Australian children safe within the context of existing programs and support. The development of the Bill was led by the Minister for Communications, and any further enquiries around the implementation of the Bill should be directed to the Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications, Sport and the Arts.

Motion number 149

The Government is committed to supporting States and Territories develop the capability of local Government. Specific initiatives to develop local Government capability should be directed to the Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications, Sport and the Arts, the Department of Industry, Science and Resources, and the relevant State or Territory Government.

Thank you for raising this matter with the Minister.

Yours sincerely



Karin Maier
Assistant Secretary, Skilled and Temporary Visas Policy
Immigration Programs Group
10 February 2026