



**The Hon Christian Porter MP**  
Minister for Social Services

ALGA MAIL
ITEM No:
DATE RECEIVED: 19.10.16
FILE No:

MC16-007558

**17 OCT 2016**

Mayor Troy Pickard  
President  
Australian Local Government Association  
8 Geils Court  
DEAKIN ACT 2600

Dear Mayor Pickard *JP*

Thank you for your letter of 29 August 2016, on behalf of the Australian Local Government Association, concerning resolutions which were passed at the National General Assembly of Local Government meeting.

As requested, the following advice is provided with regard to current government policy:

**Resolution 54 (submitted by Knox City Council, Victoria)**

The Australian Government remains committed to ensuring all children have access to quality early learning. The Government knows that a quality preschool education is essential for laying the foundations for successful learning, including transition to full-time school and future school success. Preschool offers a range of educational and social development benefits, including helping children overcome developmental vulnerabilities and longer-term impacts.

The current National Partnership provides \$840 million to states and territories to support preschool program delivery throughout 2016 and 2017.

Future funding arrangements for preschool are currently under consideration. The Government has undertaken to make an announcement well before current arrangements expire in order to provide certainty for services and families.

**Resolution 59 (submitted by Port Phillip City Council, Victoria)**

The Government understands that housing affordability is a real issue for many Australians. This is why in 2016-17 the Commonwealth will provide around \$1.3 billion to the states and territories through the National Affordable Housing Agreement for housing assistance. Additionally, the Commonwealth will provide approximately \$4.5 billion in Commonwealth Rent Assistance to around 1.3 million individuals and families in the private and community housing rental markets.

Housing affordability is a complex issue determined by the interaction of both housing supply and housing demand. The Government considers that the key to addressing housing affordability, for both purchasers and renters, is to ensure that housing supply is better able to respond to increases in housing demand. While the Government has been encouraged by the recent improvement in new housing supply, more needs to be done to support these increased levels of supply.

To this end, on 7 January 2016, the Commonwealth announced that it would establish an Affordable Housing Working Group (Working Group) to investigate innovative ways to improve the availability of affordable housing, including for older Australians. The Working Group has members from the Commonwealth Treasury and Department of Social Services, and from the New South Wales, Victorian and Western Australian Treasuries. The Working Group will provide a final report, including recommendations, to the Heads of Treasuries by the end of 2016.

You may also be interested to know that on 11 December 2015, the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) noted the importance of affordable housing for Australians on low incomes and agreed that reforms to housing and homelessness services would be taken forward by relevant Ministers in the context of existing work on housing affordability. The report is due to COAG at the end of 2016.

#### **Resolution 78 (submitted by Wyndham City Council, Victoria)**

The Australian Government believes that every child with disability has the right to participate fully in their community and to have the same choices, opportunities and experiences as other children. Early childhood intervention can help children with disability fulfil their potential and to participate in an inclusive society. The Government has focussed on childhood intervention through Helping Children with Autism (HCWA) and Better Start for Children with a Disability (Better Start) programs.

The HCWA and Better Start programs provide early intervention to children with identified disabilities, as well as a range of supports to their families and carers. Since the commencement of HCWA in 2008 and Better Start in 2011, over 63,000 children have been able to access over \$482 million in funding for early intervention services. Better Start and HCWA will be transitioned to the National Disability Insurance Scheme as it expands nationally.

#### **Resolution B13 (submitted by Leichardt, New South Wales)**

The Council of Australian Governments (COAG) has made addressing domestic and family violence a national priority. The Australian Government and state and territory governments are implementing a range of activities in response, including initiatives in the education area.

In September 2015, the Government announced a \$100 million Women's Safety Package, including \$5 million to develop education resources for teachers, parents and students on respectful relationships. Resources produced and disseminated under the initiative will be freely available to all Australian schools through the Safe Schools Hub website at [safeschoolshub.edu.au/](http://safeschoolshub.edu.au/).

Two projects are now underway to provide a strong evidence base for the development and dissemination of these resources:

- Education Services Australia is undertaking a stocktake and gap analysis of existing resources (and resources in development); and
- TNS Social Research has been commissioned to conduct qualitative research that will engage directly with principals, teachers and other school staff to gain a better understanding of the 'on the ground' context in which respectful relationships education resources are used. Through interviews, focus groups and case studies, this research will investigate participants' preferences, attitudes and needs in relation to delivering or supporting respectful relationships education.



To help consolidate and extend COAG's efforts to address domestic violence through school education, a Respectful Relationships Education Working Group was set up under Education Council in March this year. Members include representatives from all states and territories and the non-government sector.

**Resolution B15 (submitted by Leichhardt, New South Wales)**

The Australian Government recognises that homelessness is a complex issue that affects many Australians. It requires a long-term and systematic effort across agencies, sectors and the community.

Under the 2015-17 National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness (NPAH), the Commonwealth is providing \$115 million each year, over two years, which all states and territories have agreed to match, to fund frontline homelessness services. The current NPAH gives priority to frontline services focusing on women and children experiencing domestic and family violence, and homeless youth.

Thank you again for writing on behalf of the Australian Local Government Association. I trust this information is of assistance.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be 'C. Porter', written in a cursive style.

**The Hon Christian Porter MP**  
Minister for Social Services