

# Australian Local Government Association – 2019 National General Assembly

## Theme: Future Focused

### **Motion – Enhancing Future Drought Resilience:**

That the Australian Local Government Association lobby the Federal Government to develop options (in partnership with local governments, state governments, bulk water providers and water retailers) that improve drought resilience across Australia – particularly with regard to the agricultural sector – through more efficient storage, movement and use of all types of water, including recycled water and storm/rain water.

### **National Objective: (*why is this a national issue and why should this be debated at the NGA – max 250 words*)**

The aim of the motion is to encourage greater collaboration between all three levels of government to achieve longer-term water security for drought affected agricultural communities by considering options for delivering water to where it is needed most, when it is needed.

Strengthening the ongoing arability of drought affected land will have the flow on effect of generating greater resilience and productivity of the agricultural industry and improved food supply and economic outcomes for the whole nation.

From a local government perspective, a coordinated approach to water security solutions by all tiers of government will support the future viability and prosperity of towns and communities which support – and are supported by – the nation’s agricultural industry.

Whilst rain has fallen in parts across Australia, it remains crucial that the nation’s water security and distribution need to be improved to assist in mitigating the impact of future drought events.

### **Summary of key arguments: (*background information and supporting arguments – max 500 words*)**

The importance of improving water use efficiency and drought resilience across many parts of Australia has never been more apparent.

In its analysis of the 2018 drought, the Australian Bureau of Agriculture and Resource Economics and Sciences noted that rainfall to October 2018 had been “as poor as any period in the last 20 years”. The report further noted that rainfall in New South Wales alone was the third lowest in history. As at 1 August 2018, there were 23 local governments and four part local government areas in Queensland that were drought declared, representing around 60% of the state. The New South Wales government declared 100% of that state in drought that same month.

With the attention of both the Federal and State governments focused on supporting the agricultural sector survive the impacts of prolonged drought and the clear changes that are evident in our weather patterns, it is timely to be encouraging all levels of government and the water utilities to work together on more innovative approaches to moving water – including manufactured and recycled water – to where it is needed most.

Current indicators suggest that approximately 84% of the nation’s recycled water is discharged through ocean outfalls. Given the lack of water security and the impacts this has on the future of the nation’s agricultural sector, a more concerted analysis/effort as to how recycled and other forms of water are effectively transported to agricultural areas for irrigation purposes will provide greater, longer term resilience for this sector.

Many projects and feasibility studies are underway across the country. However, a coordinated approach involving all levels of government and water utilities is required to determine the viability and most cost-effective options to distribute water resources.

To this end, it is considered there is an opportunity to have this proposal encapsulated within the policy and advocacy platform of the Australian Local Government Association through the adoption of this annual conference motion.