



THE COUNTRY MAYORS ASSOCIATION OF NSW INC

"What we want is nothing more than equity"

MEDIA RELEASE

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CMA demands equity for the regions in the September Budget

The Country Mayors Association of NSW (CMA) has called on the NSW Government to address critical priorities for regional and rural communities as it approaches the September Budget.

The CMA represents 84 member councils and more than three million residents across the state, and surveys members annually to find out where action is most urgently needed.

CMA Chairman Mayor Jamie Chaffey said the NSW Government had a very clear responsibility to listen to the people of regional and rural New South Wales who were not only residents, but provided the state and the country with food, services, products and so much more.

"We are calling on the State Government not to forget the heart of New South Wales in the upcoming September Budget," Mayor Chaffey said.

"People deserve equity for their businesses, their communities and their families wherever they live within the state.

"After extensive consultation with our members, we are presenting the NSW Government with a document that lists the top five priorities for rural and regional New South Wales, and includes some very clear ways forward. Financial sustainability, housing, labour, transport and roads, and health are the key areas our members have asked us to go in to bat for them to demand equity for people who chose to live in regional areas.

"We are calling on the government to listen and to act to ensure regional and rural voices and needs are heard," Mayor Chaffey added.

CMA Deputy Chairman Mayor Rick Firman said the CMA 2023 State Budget Priorities document included realistic and achievable "asks" of the State Government that could have an enormous impact on rural and regional NSW.



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"In the current economic climate, financial sustainability for regional areas is always front of mind," Mayor Firman said. "We have been hit with escalating costs at every turn, and we have suggested ways this could be addressed, such as continuing extremely popular grant programs like Stronger Country Communities, Resources for Regions, Fixing Local Roads and Bridges, Safe and Secure Water, and Connecting Country Communities programs.

"Now is the time to support our regions, not withdraw programs that are already making a major difference.

"To meet the challenges of housing, we are seeking commitment to a four-year funding program called the Building Country Homes Program that would help member councils increase the housing stock available," Mayor Firman added.

Mayor Chaffey said other "asks" for government were a NSW Skills Board to oversee the Department of Skills and Training review of the Smart and Skilled Program to find solutions to the inadequate access to apprenticeship and pre-apprenticeship courses in country NSW.

The document also seeks a commitment to funding the Fixing Local Roads Program from 2023 to 2027, with provision for the inflation rate and changes to the terms for the program, as well as a review of the local health districts to address critical health care shortages.

"These are just some of the very specific requests we have put to the State Government ahead of the Budget," Mayor Chaffey said. "All have been very carefully considered by the CMA to best answer the needs of regional and rural New South Wales. We look forward to seeing these strategies adopted in the Budget."

The five priorities listed in the 2023 State Budget Priorities are:

- Financial sustainability
- Housing
- Labour shortage
- Transport and roads
- Health.

For further information, contact

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