

Media Statement



6 April 2020

PM asked to protect local government jobs

Local government workers have written to the Prime Minister through their union – the Australian Services Union – to ask for urgent assistance to stem the loss of Council jobs after the Federal Government said Councils would not qualify for the JobKeeper payments.

The union's National Secretary Robert Potter said despite the fact that Councils deliver a wide range of essential services, dozens have already let go thousands of workers.

“Councils have wound back services like libraries, leisure facilities and community centres,” Mr Potter said.

“With almost 200,000 workers in the sector, it could be catastrophic for local economies if jobs continue to bleed in this sector.

He said there was a huge opportunity to supercharge local economies by investing in local government as part of the Government's efforts to stimulate local economies.

“Local Government is an essential service and the backbone of the small business economy in regional towns.

“The Federal Government needs to provide a stimulus package to keep Councils financially sustainable.”

The Australian Services Union is seeking:

- An urgent stimulus package to Local Government.
- A review of the decision to leave Councils out of the JobKeeper arrangements.
- A Federal Government direction to local councils to retain all current part time and casual employees, and if necessary, train and redeploy staff to sectors where support is needed in response to COVID-19.
- Relaxation of requirements of Government grant acquittals and KPI's to enable councils to focus on supporting their communities through this crisis.
- Free up access to funding, financial assistance and loans available to Councils for operational expenses, including consideration of extra assistance for rural councils.
- Restoration of Federal Assistance Grants to 1% of GDP.
- Certainty to Local Councils regarding allocations of Federal Assistance Grants for 2020-2021, in light of the Federal Budget being delayed until October.
- Where rate relief is contemplated or implemented, the Government should fund councils to ensure there is no loss in revenue that goes towards councils delivering support to their communities, during the crisis and recovery stages.

Mr Potter also said State Governments need to free up Local Councils to allow all means necessary to maintain the workforce.

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