



# The role of local government

Local government is the level of government that works most closely with you and your local community. They look after the different areas that people live in. The areas are known as councils, and each can differ in size, resources, and population. What all local governments have in common is their role to govern and manage the local area.

The main role of council is to provide services and facilities for local communities, improve the quality of life for people in the council area and act in the best interests of both current and future communities.

Local government makes regular decisions on local issues. There are many ways they engage their community. This can include running public meetings, local events and opportunities for people to have a say on local topics. The local community has opportunities to speak during public meetings or give feedback at other times about what they need, what problems they think the community has and how it can be improved.

The role of local governments is to look after the things that make our community a welcoming, vibrant and safe place to live, work or visit. By law, councils must provide the following services and facilities:

- Waste collection
- Zoning, planning and building safety
- Fire prevention and hazard management
- Dog and cat management and control
- Parking control
- Public health and food inspection

Councils have a big impact on the lives of local people. Councils offer many more services tailored to community needs such as:

- Neighbourhood libraries and information services
- Bike paths and walking trails
- Community centres and learning resources
- Recycling services
- Local arts, festivals and culture events
- Community programs
- Aged care and childcare facilities
- Local swimming pools, sport and recreation facilities
- Local public community health and wellbeing services
- Local parks, nature reserves and playground facilities
- Planning, building, signage and advertising
- Roads, paths and transport in the locality
- Local environment protection and sustainability initiatives
- Local youth events and programs



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- Tourism and visitor attractions
- Emergency management support
- Local laws, permits and licences

Councils also regularly talk to other local government and state government bodies. They discuss issues which might have an impact on multiple council areas. These issues include topics like public transport and roads, housing, the environment and community health issues.

Councils do have some limits in what they can do. Money and staff resources can greatly affect a council's ability to initiate new programs. The income of a council comes from several different places, including:

- collecting council rates from their community members. This is an amount of money that is collected from households and businesses in the council area. Rates are the main source of council income.
- collecting money from fees and charges, such as hire costs or fines.
- receiving funding from state and federal government for specific projects or services.

Councils put this money back into the community by:

- paying their staff to provide the services and facilities for the community
- developing new buildings or delivering new community programs
- buying necessary goods like machinery to maintain local areas
- paying for local maintenance.

Larger councils typically have more monetary and staff resources and may find it easier to put into place new projects or services.

## References:

'Local Government', Legal Services Commission SA, Jan 2024,  
<https://lawhandbook.sa.gov.au/print/ch28s01.php#:~:text=Council%20activities%20include%20waste%20management,District%2C%20Town%20or%20City%20Councils.>



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## References:

'The Roles and Responsibilities of Federal, State and Local Government', Parliament of NSW, Jan 2024, <https://www.parliament.nsw.gov.au/about/Pages/The-Roles-and-Responsibilities-of-Federal-State-a.aspx#:~:text=Local%20Councils%20are%20concerned%20with,disposal%2C%20and%20many%20community%20services.>