

12.11	Federal Level Advocacy Initiatives
Directorate	People, Partnerships and Performance
Director	Georgie Hill
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Attachment(s)	2025 Federal Election and Budget Brochure [12.11.1 - 8 pages] - Delegates Report 2024 ALGA NGA [12.11.2 - 2 pages]

Purpose

To highlight Council's recent and upcoming advocacy initiatives that seek partnership at the Federal level.

Officer Recommendation

That Council:

- Endorses the attached 'Brimbank Advocacy Priorities – 2025 Federal Election and Budget' brochure, shown at Attachment 1.**
- Notes the attached Delegate's Report from the recent ALGA National General Assembly, shown at Attachment 2.**

Background

2025 Federal Election and Budget Brochure

Since the development of the 2023-2025 Advocacy Plan in September 2023, Council has continued to advocate for our community's key priorities which are listed in the table below.

Level of Priority	Topic of Priority
Gold	Transforming Brimbank
Gold	Mental Health
Silver	Road Infrastructure
Silver	Climate Emergency
Bronze	Addressing Unemployment
Bronze	Housing and Homelessness
Maintain Influence	Melbourne Airport Third Runway
Maintain Influence	Gambling Harm
Maintain Influence	Major Parks
Maintain Influence	Libraries
Maintain Influence	Government Burden on Council

The next Federal Election is required to be held by May 2025. While this could take place as early as November 2024, all reports suggest that it will be in 2025. In anticipation of the election, and in preparation for the ensuing 2025-2026 Federal Budget, there is an opportunity for Council to elicit election commitments which align with our advocacy priorities.

2024 ALGA National General Assembly

The ALGA National General Assembly was held in Canberra's National Convention Centre from 2 - 4 July 2024. Brimbank City Council was represented by three Councillors, including the Mayor Cr Ranka Rasic.

Brimbank's participation at this Assembly provided the opportunity to advocate for our priorities at a national level. The Mayor and Councillors also met with Federal Parliamentarians in Canberra's Parliament House to advocate directly for Council's priorities.

Matters for Consideration

2025 Federal Election and Budget Brochure

Ahead of the 2025 Federal Election and the ensuing 2025-2026 Federal Budget, Council has produced the new advocacy brochure at **Attachment 1** to outline our priorities at the Federal level. These are summarised below.

1. Transform Sunshine into a Superhub

Earlier this year, the Australian Government appointed an independent mediator to resolve the disagreement between the Victorian Government and the Melbourne Airport operator over the Melbourne Airport Rail project. The airport operator had been calling for an underground station, despite the Victorian Government's preference to build it above-ground. As a result, the Victorian Government has delayed the project by four years. While the findings of the mediation supported the above-ground option, the report also recommended that the Federal and State Governments move quickly to upgrade the Sunshine Superhub, expressing that "*work continues at Sunshine Station to transform this into the major transport hub it was planned to be*", and that this would be a "no regrets" strategy. Since the release of the mediator's report, Melbourne Airport have agreed to an above-ground station. Council is now advocating for the Victorian Government to reconsider the four-year delay to its timeline and for the Australian Government to invest in the development of the Sunshine Precinct as the first stage of the Melbourne Airport Rail project.

2. Build the Calder Park Drive Interchange

As a result of the Federal Infrastructure Investment Program Strategic Review in 2023, the previously committed \$50m for Calder Freeway upgrades between the Western Ring Road and Gap Road in Sunbury was withdrawn. Council is now calling for the \$50m to be reprioritised towards the construction of a full diamond interchange at Calder Park Drive.

3. A More Sustainable Brimbank

Earlier this year, the City of Brimbank was reported to be in the worst position in metropolitan Melbourne when considering both poverty and heat, as we are the hottest municipality in Melbourne and the second most disadvantaged. Our challenges in addressing the climate emergency are therefore more prominent than in other parts of the nation. That's why Council is advocating for increased canopy cover in urban areas of Australia with low canopy coverage, a national pilot program to fund energy upgrades in low-income households, and funding support to establish a Sustainability and Circular Economy Community Hub at Sunshine Energy Park in Albion.

4. Reducing Unemployment in Brimbank

As of March 2024, Brimbank's unemployment rate of 6.1% was significantly higher than the national average of 4.0% at the same time. Council is advocating for increased funding for the Brimbank Learning Futures facility. This will provide tailored support for

training, education and pathways to employment, transforming the facility into a suburban study hub.

5. Improving Brimbank's Community Facilities

Brimbank's number of sports facilities per capita is well below the state average. In addition, many existing sports facilities and amenities across the municipality require an uplift to accommodate for the increasing participation in sports, especially amongst women and girls. Our libraries are also in great need of expansion and refurbishment. Australian Government investment is therefore needed to supplement Council's funding for our local community facilities.

2024 ALGA National General Assembly

At the recent ALGA National General Assembly, Brimbank submitted two motions relevant to our advocacy priorities for ALGA to advocate on our behalf to the Australian Government. The motions called on the Australian Government to increase its level of funding for major highways and to provide greater support for the unemployed. Both motions were endorsed at the Assembly. Further details about these motions are presented in the Delegate's Report in **Attachment 2**. The report also provides information on the Brimbank delegation's meetings with Federal Parliamentarians.

Community Engagement

This report is consistent with the policy, evidence and current positions of Council, widely informed by community engagement and insight. The priorities in the 'Brimbank Advocacy Priorities – 2025 Federal Election and Budget' brochure are informed by the Brimbank Advocacy Plan 2023-2025.

Resource And Risk Implications

Resource requirements can be met within the Annual Budget 2023/2024.

There are no Community, Environmental, Financial, Regulatory or Safety risks are identified.

Legislation/Council Plan/Policy Context

This report supports the Council Plan 2021-2025 strategic direction and objective of:

1. People and Community - A welcoming, safe and supported community - An inclusive place for all

- Wellbeing and Belonging - Responsive services that support mental and physical wellbeing

2. Places and Spaces - Liveable and connected neighbourhoods that support healthy and sustainable futures - A green place for all

- Liveable and Connected - Inviting and liveable spaces and facilities, connected so people can get around
- Sustainable and Green - Protect natural environments for current and future generations

3. Opportunity and Prosperity - A future focused, transforming city where all have opportunities to learn and earn - A prosperous place for all

- Growing and Transforming - Optimise community opportunities through infrastructure innovation and investment
- Earning and Learning - Everyone has access to education, training and lifelong learning to support their aspirations.

This report complies with the priorities identified in the Brimbank Advocacy Plan 2023-2025.

Council officers contributing to the preparation and approval of this report, have no conflicts of interests to declare.

City of Brimbank

A vibrant and diverse community

Brimbank Advocacy Priorities – 2025 Federal Election and Budget



Who and where we are

The City of Brimbank is a vibrant and culturally diverse community. Nearly half of our almost 200,000 residents are born outside Australia, with a majority speaking a language other than English at home. Over 160 languages are spoken by our residents. We are a community that is proud, welcoming and one that is striving towards a prosperous future.

Brimbank key facts

196,046

Population

15.4%

Population change
2023–2041

19.8%

with a Bachelor's
degree or higher
compared with
29.2% for Victoria

6.1%

unemployment
rate compared
with 4.0% across
Australia

913

for the Index
of Relative
Socio-Economic
Disadvantage score
compared with
1,018 for Greater
Melbourne



Why investment is needed

Brimbank's full potential can only be realised when we are supported by the Australian Government and are working together to ensure that the municipality is receiving the necessary levels of investment to sustain the rapid population growth of Melbourne's west. Such investments will also go a long way towards addressing the various challenges our residents face, including inadequate access to public transport, unsafe road connections, a relatively high unemployment rate, as well as the impacts of climate change and insufficient community infrastructure and amenities. Brimbank City Council is strongly committed to advocating on behalf of our residents to address these challenges.

Acknowledgement of Country

Brimbank City Council respectfully acknowledges and recognises the Wurundjeri and Bunurong Peoples as the Traditional Custodians of this land and pays respect to their Elders, past, present and future.

Transform Sunshine into a Superhub

Government investment in transport infrastructure projects in Melbourne's west is necessary to break the cycle of inter-generational disadvantage and challenges such as high unemployment, traffic congestion and a lack of transport options, including active transport such as pedestrian and cycling links.

Perhaps there is no greater potential than the Sunshine Central Business District (CBD). Sunshine Station and the surrounding precinct has been added to Infrastructure Australia's priority list of projects. It is also the only location in Melbourne that the Victorian Government has declared a Metropolitan Activity Centre, a National Employment and Innovation Centre, a Priority Precinct and a Transport Super Hub.

The Sunshine CBD is therefore well placed to be the centre of Melbourne's booming west and a key economic hub, with the capacity for an additional 29,000 jobs and 43,000 new residents by 2051.

A key part of unlocking the job and housing growth in the Sunshine CBD is the full delivery of the Sunshine Station Masterplan, particularly investment to deliver the three Victorian Government-owned development sites; Station Place, Sun Crescent and Southern Village, each offering diverse spaces for new businesses and affordable housing to address the current housing crisis.

Council has facilitated the development of the Sunshine Station Precinct through the sale of Council land, directly opposite the station, to the Vietnamese Museum Australia (VMA). This project is partly funded by the Australian Government. Council is currently seeking funding for a new 'Welcome Plaza' adjacent to the VMA Museum, to both acknowledge the Traditional Owners and to welcome all refugee and migrant communities that make Melbourne's west so diverse.

Economic activity and housing opportunities can also be amplified by the rebuild of the nearby Albion Station, particularly if it is relocated north to straddle Ballarat Road and is better integrated with the surrounding Albion Quarter. The Albion Quarter is a 44-hectare urban renewal precinct in the north of Sunshine CBD with the potential to unlock \$2.8 billion of development activity, 6,000 new homes and 8,000 new jobs. Council has recently contributed to the evolution of the Albion Quarter through the adoption of the Sunshine Energy Park Vision Plan, which through future funding will create a new 74-hectare central park to service the Sunshine CBD.

Coupled with the construction of the long overdue Melbourne Airport Rail, set to pass through Sunshine Station, investment in the Sunshine Precinct will unlock one of Melbourne's largest urban renewal opportunities and up to \$8 billion in private economic development opportunities, attracting businesses, creative industries, and tourists to Melbourne's west. In a recent report commissioned by the Australian Government and titled 'Melbourne Airport Rail Link – Potential Pathways to Delivery', the independent evaluation recommended that "work continues at Sunshine Station to transform this into the major transport hub it was planned to be." The evaluation also found that this would be a "no regrets" strategy due to both the benefits and the work already completed. These findings pave the way for the development of the Sunshine Precinct to be undertaken as the first stage of Melbourne Airport Rail project.

Council seeks Australian Government funding for:

- The full delivery of the Sunshine Station Masterplan as the first stage of the Melbourne Airport Rail project, with works to progress without further delay.
- The rebuild of Albion Station coupled with its relocation to straddle Ballarat Road.
- A new 'Welcome Plaza' adjacent to the site of the future Vietnamese Museum Australia .



Attachment 12.11.1

Build the Calder Park Drive Interchange

The Calder Freeway is dangerous and heavily congested. Upgrades are urgently required to improve its safety and traffic flow. Its unsafe state featured in RACV's 2023 My Melbourne Road Survey. Based on Victorian Department of Transport data, it was reported in 2021 that the Calder Freeway was among the top 10 most dangerous roads in Victoria. Between 2015 to mid-2023, there were 198 crashes along the section between the Western Ring Road and Gap Road in Sunbury, of which 82 were classed as serious. This resulted in over 100 injuries and five lives being lost.

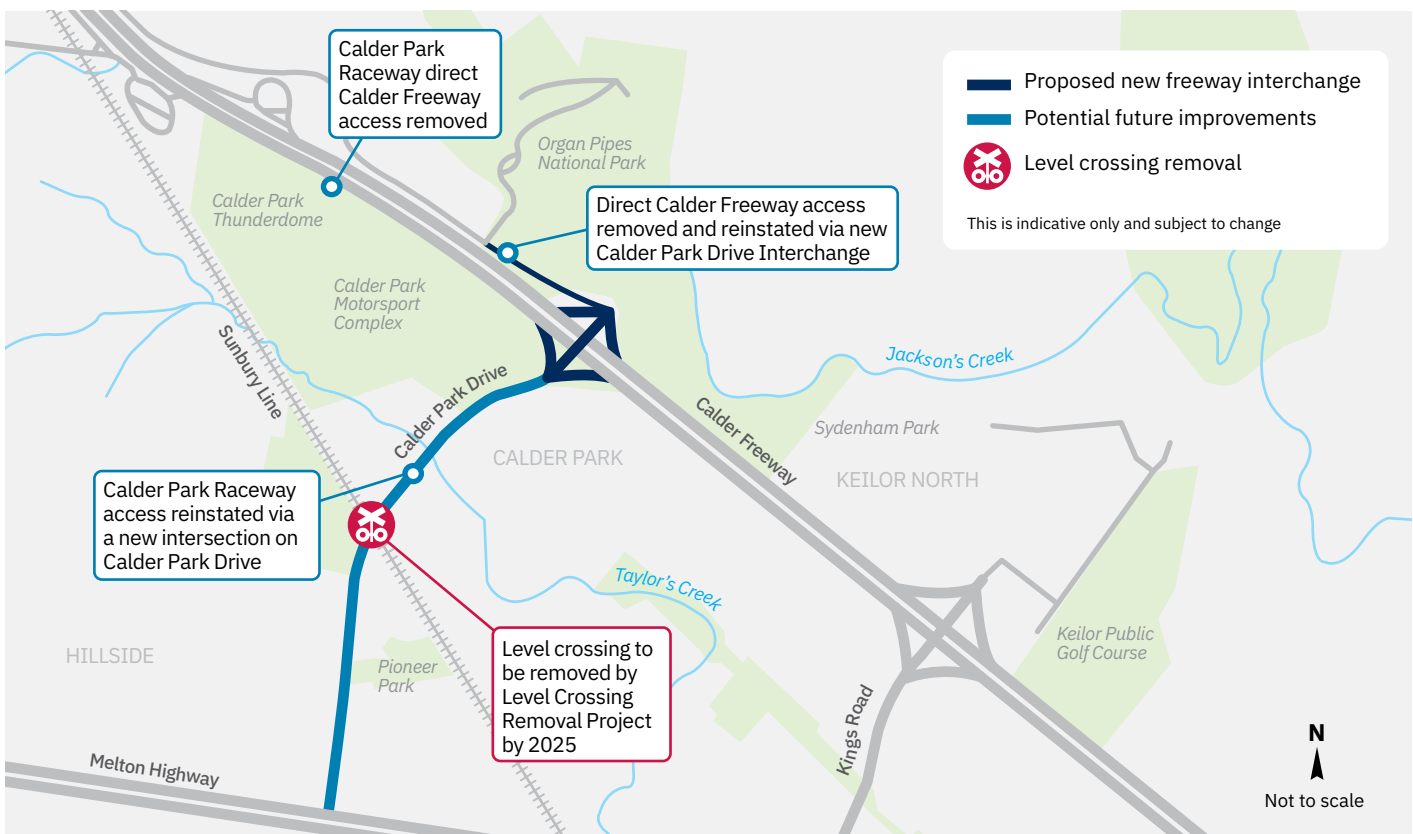
In addition, Infrastructure Australia's 2019 Report found the Calder Freeway to be the seventh most congested road in Australia during the morning peak, and the ninth most congested in the afternoon peak, costing the economy over \$100 million per annum.

Although the 2023 Australian Government review of infrastructure projects did not support funding for Calder Freeway upgrades between the Western Ring Road and Gap Road in Sunbury, this provides an opportunity for the previously committed \$50 million funding to be re-prioritised towards the construction of a full diamond interchange at Calder Park Drive.

The current intersection of the Calder Freeway with Calder Park Drive is dangerous and leads to heavy traffic congestion. A business case for this interchange was completed by the Victorian Government in 2022, while a similar diamond interchange was built in 2012 at the Calder's intersection with Kings Road.

Council seeks that the previously committed \$50 million of Australian Government funding for Calder Freeway upgrades be reprioritised towards the construction of a full diamond interchange at the intersection of the Calder Freeway and Calder Park Drive.

Map of the proposed Calder Park Drive Interchange



A more sustainable Brimbank

Melbourne's western suburbs experience the most intense urban heat island effect across the metropolitan area. Brimbank was reported to be the Victorian municipality that faced the greatest challenges when considering both poverty and heat, making it the hottest municipality in Melbourne and the second most disadvantaged.

A more sustainable Brimbank will require a much higher canopy cover. Currently, Brimbank's canopy cover stands at just over 10%, with a goal to increase this to 30% by 2050.

A more sustainable future can also be achieved by government investment in the retrofitting of low-income households to reduce their carbon emissions. Other public benefits of such an investment include job creation and more affordable home heating and cooling, thereby alleviating the current cost-of-living crisis.

Additionally, there is an opportunity to evaluate the need for infrastructure upgrades and establish a Sustainability and Circular Economy Community Hub at Sunshine Energy Park in Albion. This hub could potentially accommodate a mix of Council-led, non-for-profit and commercial initiatives that would convert the site to a regional drawcard.

Council seeks funding:

- To enhance canopy cover in urban areas of Australia with low canopy coverage and significant urban heat island effects.
- For a national pilot program to fund energy upgrades in vulnerable and low-income households.
- To support the feasibility, design and delivery of a Sustainability and Circular Economy Community Hub at Sunshine Energy Park in Albion.



Reducing unemployment in Brimbank

The Brimbank community faces unique barriers to employment and education attainment, particularly among residents from culturally and linguistically diverse and refugee backgrounds. These barriers include limited formal education, limited knowledge of Australian workplace or education institution culture, challenges navigating existing systems, and insufficient awareness of available support services.

In addition, Brimbank has high youth disengagement and unemployment, which affects opportunities later in life and contributes to a low-skilled municipality.

As of March 2024, Brimbank's unemployment rate of 6.1% is significantly higher than the national average of 4.0% at the same time. This is among the highest in Metropolitan Melbourne. Brimbank also has a lower-skilled workforce, with 48.3% of residents lacking formal qualifications compared with 35.2% across Greater Melbourne.

An important facility within Brimbank that helps address unemployment challenges, especially faced by youth, is the Brimbank Learning Futures (BLF) in Sunshine. BLF serves as a safe place where programs are run to help young people and others in the community to receive tailored support with training, education, and pathways to employment. BLF has partnerships with Victoria University, Jobs Victoria Employment Service providers, Trades Women Australia, and local Registered Training Organisations.

BLF offers a unique opportunity to be a flagship Suburban Study Hub that has the capacity to service the growth suburbs of Melbourne's west with an accessible location to support vulnerable groups to attain recognised qualifications and enhance future employment prospects. This will allow for greater collaboration and partnerships to assist with addressing the labour force shortages and skills gaps while leveraging the knowledge and building on the model of the regional study hubs. Furthermore, the hub will respond to the changing jobs market in Brimbank that has seen declines in the manufacturing industry, but with strong employment growth being projected over the next few years in health care and social assistance, retail trade, logistics and construction. However, BLF is limited with what can be achieved with the current resources allocated to the space.

Council seeks \$1 million to fund the transformation of the Brimbank Learning Futures facility into a Suburban Study Hub.



Attachment 12.11.1

Improving Brimbank's community facilities

Despite Brimbank's location within Australia's fastest growing region, the municipality is not receiving adequate government investment in community infrastructure to meet the needs of our residents.

Brimbank's number of sports facilities per capita is well below the state average. With the increasing participation of women in sports, government funding is essential to ensure inclusive leisure opportunities for the entire community and to equip our facilities with suitable amenities.

Other community facilities that require greater government investment are our libraries, as they are in desperate need of expansion and refurbishment. Libraries play a crucial role in fostering social inclusion, particularly in disadvantaged and vulnerable communities like Brimbank.

Council seeks to:

- Construct a new football/cricket pavilion (\$6.5 million) and a new tennis pavilion (\$4.9 million) at JR Parsons Reserve in Sunshine, with both to include changing rooms, a social room, a kitchen, umpire rooms, first aid and storage.
- Upgrade the facilities at Ralph Reserve in Sunshine West, including the changing rooms and toilets (\$1 million).
- Install LED lighting for six tennis courts at Selwyn Park and provide multi-purpose use on two courts (e.g. futsal, pickleball) (\$2.7 million).
- Upgrade the lighting at Lionheart Oval in Taylors Lakes and Keilor Recreation Reserve Oval to both LED and competition standard (\$600,000).
- Redevelop the St Albans Library (\$10 million).



Brimbank City Council

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- Speak and listen **1300 555 727**
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Delegates Report – 2024 ALGA NGA

Report Details

Council Delegates: Cr Ranka Rasic (Mayor); Cr Thuy Dang; Cr Sam David JP

Committee/Event: 30th National General Assembly of the Australian Local Government Association

Meeting Date: 2-4 July 2024

Report Author: Elie Khalil

The 30th Australian Local Government Association (ALGA) National General Assembly (NGA) was held at the National Convention Centre in Canberra from 2-4 July 2024. It was attended by over 1000 Councillors from all parts of Australia. This year's theme was "Building Community Trust".

Brimbank City Council was represented at the NGA by the Mayor Cr Ranka Rasic, Cr Thuy Dang and Cr Sam David.

At the NGA, delegates attended a range of workshops and presentations by experts in various fields. These covered topics such as politics and civic engagement, intergenerational equity and fairness, and community trust in the built environment.

Delegates also listened to a number of Federal Government representatives and Federal MPs. These included:

- The Governor-General, His Excellency General the Honourable David Hurley
- Hon Catherine King MP – Minister for Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Local Government
- Hon Peter Dutton MP – Leader of the Opposition

In response to ALGA seeking motions earlier this year to be considered at the 2024 NGA, Councillors were able to advocate for Brimbank's priorities through a formal process of motions and resolutions. The two motions that Brimbank proposed at the NGA, following their endorsement at the Council Meeting on 19 March 2024, are listed below:

1. **Upgrades to Major Highways** – This National General Assembly calls on the Federal Government to significantly increase the level of funding to upgrade major highways across Australia and to work closer with Councils across the nation to better understand the deficiencies in their road networks.
2. **Unemployment Support** – This National General Assembly calls on the Federal Government to:
 - a. Increase the JobSeeker and Youth Allowance payments
 - b. Create an Economic Inclusion fund to create local job opportunities for local people.

Both motions were endorsed at the NGA and responses to these resolutions from Federal Ministers will be made available on the ALGA website in due course.

Led by Mayor Rasic, Brimbank Councillors also took the opportunity to meet with a range of Federal MPs at Parliament House while in Canberra, including:

- Hon Catherine King MP – Minister for Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Local Government (ALP)
- Senator the Hon. Sarah Henderson –Shadow Minister for Education (Liberal)
- Senator James Paterson – Shadow Minister for Home Affairs and Shadow Minister for Cyber Security (Liberal)
- Dr Daniel Mulino MP – Member for Fraser (ALP)
- Offices of Hon. Brendan O'Connor MP and Ms Maria Vamvakinou MP

At these meetings, Brimbank Councillors advocated on important local issues, with a particular focus on the construction of the Melbourne Airport Rail, the development of the Sunshine Priority Precinct, upgrading the Calder Freeway and Council's concerns with Melbourne Airport's proposed third runway.