5 June 2026

The Hon. Chris Bowen MP
Minister for Climate Change and Energy
Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water
GPO Box 3090
Canberra ACT 2601

Cc The Hon. Josh Wilson MP, AssistantMinister.Wilson@dcceew.gov.au
Municipal Association of Victoria (contact tbc)
DCCEEW aevc@dcceew.gov.au

Dear Minister Bowen,

Re: Accelerating EV Charging Program — Local Government Partnership in Program Design and Delivery

The Victorian Greenhouse Alliances (VGAs) write to the Australian Government in respect of the $40 million Accelerating EV Charging Program, announced in September 2025 under the Driving the Nation Fund.The VGAs represent a network of over 50 Victorian councils committed to ambitious local climate action, and we write to formally advocate that local government be embedded as a central partner in this program's design and delivery from the outset.

Community interest in EV transition has accelerated markedly, with residents increasingly motivated by fuel costs and energy security concerns. Councils are hearing this directly. The Accelerating EV Charging Program arrives at a moment when the gap between community aspiration and available infrastructure is both visible and urgent.

We congratulate the Government on its recent initiation of local government workshops through DCCEEW, and welcome the program's objective to leverage distribution network service provider (DNSP) infrastructure, which includes electricity poles, depots, and substations, to accelerate the deployment of kerbside and fast-charging facilities. We also strongly support the program's focus on under-served urban and regional locations. It is in these communities, where our member councils operate, that the need for accessible public charging infrastructure is most acute.

Notwithstanding our support for the program's objectives and the recent decision to convene workshops, the VGAs have identified a material gap in the current program architecture that warrants urgent attention: the absence of a formal and structured role for local government in the program's site identification, planning, and delivery phases. It is the VGA's contention that this gap, if not addressed, will significantly impede the program's effectiveness and may result in unnecessary cost, delay, and community disruption.

1. The Role of Local Government

Local government occupies a unique and indispensable position in the delivery of public EV charging infrastructure. Councils are the statutory managers of local roads, public parking, and much of the public land on which kerbside charging will be deployed. Where pole-mounted chargers are proposed on existing electricity infrastructure, the adjacent parking spaces and the conditions governing their use fall squarely within council jurisdiction.

This has direct consequences for program delivery. Access to kerbside parking spaces for the purposes of EV charging, including the modification of parking conditions, signage, line marking, and enforcement arrangements, requires formal engagement with, and in many cases resolution by, the relevant council. Many councils also have in place a policy and pricing for the leasing of carparks for EV charging. A program that directs funding to DNSPs without establishing clear protocols for council engagement or resourcing of council's risks creating a fragmented and inefficient implementation environment in which DNSPs and program administrators must navigate complex council processes without adequate preparation or support.

The VGAs further note that council decision-making on matters of this nature is inherently multi-departmental, typically requiring coordinated input from Planning, Engineering, Property Services, Parking Management, Heritage, Sustainability, Legal, and Communications functions. In the absence of structured coordination, ad hoc and reactive requests to councils, particularly those in regional and rural areas with limited administrative capacity, are likely to result in significant delays and inefficiencies that undermine the program's delivery timelines and objectives. We note the DCCEEW rule change proposal submitted to the AEMC makes only a passing reference to consulting with councils in a footnote, without careful consideration of how these spaces will be managed and maintained once in operation. Whilst many councils are already working with DNSP's, not all are and this omission could have significant outcomes for the successful roll out of this program.

2. Resourcing, Capacity and Equitable Considerations

The VGAs wish to draw the Department's attention to the resourcing implications of this program for local government, particularly in regional Victoria. Many VGA member councils are operating with constrained administrative and technical capacity, and the prospect of responding to multiple, uncoordinated requests from DNSPs — regarding site access, parking modifications, and planning approvals — without a structured engagement framework represents a significant and unfunded burden. Experience from comparable infrastructure programs shows that poorly coordinated engagement with local government produces a predictable pattern: fragmented requests, protracted inter-agency negotiations, inconsistent outcomes across jurisdictions, and ultimately, delayed delivery. The VGAs submit that the Australian Government has an opportunity to avoid this outcome by investing in a clear and well-resourced local government engagement framework from the program's inception.

These resourcing pressures are compounded by the distinct needs of different council contexts. In dense inner-urban areas, a significant proportion of residents live in multi-unit dwellings or without access to off-street parking. These residents have a genuine appetite for EV transition but cannot make that shift without reliable public kerbside charging infrastructure, making accelerated delivery in these areas both equitable and consistent with the program's stated objectives.

In regional Victoria, the challenges are different but equally pressing. Commercial viability gaps make charging black spots inevitable without targeted government intervention — councils in smaller towns have already been asked to contribute $60,000–$100,000 to enable fast charger installation, a cost well beyond the means of most rural and regional councils. The Program must provide sufficient additional funding to bridge this gap. Regional planning must also account for redundancy: when a charger is unavailable, the nearest alternative may be 100 kilometres away. Without adequate infrastructure, communities that depend on visitation and

tourism risk being left behind as EV uptake grows. These realities must be explicitly reflected in Program design to ensure equitable EV travel across regional Victoria.

Victoria's five electricity distributors do not appear to have publicly accessible, dedicated contact points for EV charging enquiries. Councils and other stakeholders seeking to progress public EV charging infrastructure are instead directed through generic customer service channels designed for standard connection requests — channels ill-suited to the complex, multi-party coordination that EV charging projects require.

3. Building on Existing Local Government Work

A significant body of EV charging planning work has already been undertaken by Victorian councils and climate alliances. Many VGA members have developed, or are in the process of developing, municipal and regional EV charging strategies, infrastructure frameworks, and priority site assessments. This work reflects detailed local knowledge of parking restrictions, planned bicycle lanes, community need, land tenure, heritage considerations, commercial viability, tourism and freight corridors, and equity of access, factors that are not readily available to DNSPs or program administrators without direct council engagement.

The Accelerating EV Charging Program should be explicitly designed to draw upon and complement this existing body of work, rather than proceeding in parallel or in contradiction to it. The VGAs submit that incorporating council-identified priority sites into the program's site assessment and selection processes would materially improve both the efficiency of program delivery and the community benefit of the infrastructure ultimately installed.

4. Recommendations

The VGAs respectfully urge the Department to give effect to the following recommendations in finalising the Accelerating EV Charging Program's design:

- Formalise local government as a key program partner by embedding council engagement requirements in the program's governance framework, funding agreements with DNSPs, and delivery milestones, with structured engagement to occur prior to site assessment and selection.
- Establish clear, consistent, and publicly available protocols governing the process by which DNSPs engage with councils regarding site identification, parking access, planning approvals, site agreements, line markings and formalising ongoing operational arrangements, with appropriate escalation mechanisms and minimum timeframes.
- Conduct a systematic stocktake of existing municipal and regional EV charging strategies and plans, and incorporate council-identified priority sites into program planning processes, including resident led requests.
- Consider providing dedicated resourcing or coordination support to assist regional and rural councils, which lack the administrative capacity of metropolitan counterparts, in participating effectively in the program.
- Engage peak bodies representing local government, including the Municipal Association of Victoria and relevant alliances, as formal intermediaries to streamline council engagement and reduce duplication of effort across jurisdictions.

If further discussions are required please don’t hesitate to contact us via the addressor’s email.

Greenhouse Alliances and contacts

Barwon South-West Climate Alliance (BSWCA), Pete Mercouriou, Executive Officer, peter.mercouriou@geelongcity.vic.gov.au

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- City of Greater Geelong
- Surf Coast Shire
- Warrnambool City Council

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- Ararat Rural City Council
- Ballarat City Council
- Buloke Shire Council
- Central Goldfields Shire Council
- Gannawarra Shire Council
- Greater Bendigo City Council
- Hepburn Shire Council
- Loddon Shire Council
- Macedon Ranges Shire Council
- Mildura Rural City Council
- Mount Alexander Shire Council
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- Maroondah City Council
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- Indigo Shire Council
- Mansfield Shire Council
- Mitchell Shire Council
- Moira Shire Council
- Murrindindi Shire Council
- Towong Shire Council
- Strathbogie Shire Council
- Wangaratta Rural City Council
- Wodonga City Council
- Alpine Resorts Victoria
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- Banyule City Council
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- Manningham City Council
- City of Melbourne
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- Bass Coast Shire Council
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- City of Casey
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- Brimbank City Council
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- Hobsons Bay City Council
- Melton City Council
- Moonee Valley City Council
- Moorabool Shire Council
- Wyndham City Council

This submission has been approved through the Greenhouse Alliances' governance structures but may not have been formally considered by individual members. The submission does not necessarily represent the views of all members.