

## **COMMUNITY SAFETY IN REGIONAL AND RURAL COMMUNITIES**

**Organisation:** Bega Valley Shire Council

**Date Received:** 29 May 2024

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Dear Mr Glynn

**Response to the Legislative Assembly's Committee on Law and Safety inquiry into community safety in regional and rural communities**

Thank you for the opportunity to provide input into the Legislative Assembly's Committee on Law and Safety inquiry into community safety in regional and rural communities.

The Bega Valley Shire has a population of around 36,000 people, dispersed across a large geographic area. A third of our residents live in rural areas and the remaining two thirds are spread amongst 4 towns, 12 villages and multiple adjacent urban settlements. Bega Valley Shire Council has a strong working relationship with the Police Local Area Command in the Bega Valley Shire, however we note there are significant resourcing challenges for regional police in areas where the population is so geographically dispersed. Maintaining police presence across the shire is therefore challenging without adequate resourcing.

Addressing community safety, particularly in regional and rural communities, requires greater investment by the state and federal governments in wrap around, holistic supports and interventions to address mental health, family violence, disadvantage and homelessness, all of which play a critical role in reducing crime and reoffending.

Vandalism of public assets is a recurrent issue in the Bega Valley Shire. Increasing CCTV surveillance may be one way to help address this, however funding and maintaining multiple systems is not realistic for many regional or rural councils and may not be palatable to the community. Increasing police patrols is another option, however is only possible where resourcing levels are allow.

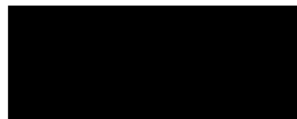
Bega Valley Shire Council is supportive of the Country Mayors Association submission, in particular the following recommendations:

- That, the NSW Government commit to increase spending on the NSW police force to increase front line policing numbers in Regional, Rural and Remote regions most at need.

- That, the continuation of Stronger Country Communities Fund and the introduction of a new community safety project category to incentivise applications that focus on early intervention and diversionary strategies and capital works projects. The review should also consider reducing the mandatory minimum 50% co-contribution obligations for local government, which proves to be a cost prohibitive deterrent for smaller, rural, and regional Councils with a smaller rate base.
- That, the NSW Government reinstate of the NSW Community Safety Fund, with a focus on youth diversionary programs, CCTV, and domestic and family violence initiatives.
- That, the NSW Government fund and commit to open drug and alcohol rehabilitation centres throughout regional NSW within twelve months from endorsement of these recommendations.
  - Bega Valley Shire Council also recommend this includes culturally appropriate facilities for First Nations people in regional and rural area.
- That, the NSW Government invest new funding of \$10 million annually to establish Specialist Workers for Children and Young People in every frontline domestic and family violence service in NSW.
- That, the NSW Government increase evidence-based men's support and behaviour change programs in regional areas to ensure accessibility, this program should be annual reviewed to track the success in reducing DV incidents.
- That, the NSW Government match the Commonwealth Government's contribution of \$610 million for social housing and ensure specific allocation for women and children experiencing DFV. Pending the passing legislation of the Housing Australia Future Fund (HAFF), ensure 20% allocation of properties for women and children experiencing DFV.
- That, the NSW Government ensure safe and affordable transitional housing for women and children exiting crisis refuges by assessing current availability throughout regional NSW and fund additional capacity particularly in regions where new core and cluster refuges will be built.
- Increase the amount of Temporary Accommodation (TA) from seven to 28 days, ensuring that there are a minimum number of dwellings for DFV victim survivors and invest in culturally safe crisis accommodation and accessible housing for First Nations women and their children, including any children under 18.

Thank you again for the opportunity to make a submission. We hope the inquiry will result in increased police resources and investment in regional areas to increase police and community safety.

Yours sincerely



**Anthony McMahon**  
**Chief Executive Officer**