2022 FEDERAL ELECTION PLATFORM

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SMART COMMUNITIES
ASSOCIATION

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PRESIDENT'S FOREWORD

We are delighted to share The Australian Smart Communities Association's (ASCA) 2022 Federal Election Platform. This was developed in consultation with our community and Board members to ensure that the issues captured align with the greatest needs of our communities.

Fostering smart communities are more important than ever, and it is imperative to continue the discussion at a national level. Our focus is to advocate for the advancement of emerging technology, data, and innovation across Australia which requires a coordinated approach from the Federal Government.

Since starting in 2010 as an independent member-based organisation, the Australian Smart Communities Association, has supported over 150 Local Governments who are responsible for 12.6 million Australians to unlock the benefits of smart technology and infrastructure.

By harnessing Australia's dynamic and diverse regions at a national level, we will see increases in economic development, sustainability, digital inclusion, as well as establishing Australia as a global leader in the smart community movement.

We hope this will continue to drive momentum and action to the smart community space and create opportunities for all levels of Government and industry to partner together.

Laura Baker

2022 President

INTRODUCTION

The global smart community agenda continues to accelerate, with the global market value anticipated to reach $USD2.5 trillion by 2026, presenting a 22.5% compound annual growth rate.[1] Cities around the world are already capitalising on the economic benefits of smart technology and infrastructure.

According to the Global Smart City Index 2021[2], Singapore, Zurich, and Oslo are the leading smart cities. Three Australian cities made it into the top 20, with Brisbane (16th) Sydney (18th) and Melbourne (19th) respectively. This presents an opportunity to capitalise on the smart city foundations in capital cities and develop a network of smart communities, that will increase economic, social, and environmental outcomes.

Locally, there are an estimated 100 Local Governments in Australia with an active smart community/city program. The smart community agenda is more important than ever, with COVID-19 pandemic accelerating the adoption of digital channels, and a range of emerging technologies including sensors, big data, and Artificial Intelligence. It is anticipated that a further 100 Local Governments will be developing smart community agendas in the next 2 years. The Federal Government must play a significant role in coordinating and catalysing all layers of Government along with industry to scale emerging technology for the betterment of Australia.

Currently, Local Governments across Australia have limited funding to deliver their ambitious plans. The national policy landscape does not support collaboration and consistency of approaches, leading to limited scale and inefficient spending. It is evident there is a groundswell of activity from ASCA partners and the Local and State Government industry in general. However, to truly capitalise on a Smart Australia, the Federal Government needs to provide funding, policy alignment and a national strategic agenda.

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1. 2022 Global Smart Cities Industry Report
2. 2021 Global Smart City Index

ASCA proposes a Federal Government led package to accelerate the adoption of technology, data, and innovation to achieve outcomes for communities across Australia. This will enable the Australian Government to establish Australia as a global leader in the smart community movement. This proposed package will build on existing initiatives including the Digital Economy Strategy, An Action Plan for Critical Technologies, the AI (Artificial Intelligence) Action Plan, and act as a mechanism to determine National Standards and address policy gaps.

A Smart Australia will see the connected and interoperable use of data, technology, and innovative practices across all layers of Government to enable stronger social, economic, and environmental outcomes for communities across Australia.

It will enable more efficient delivery of services, greater distribution of digital connectivity across regions, and increase the local productivity of industries so they can compete on a global scale.

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Creating a national 'Smart Australia' roadmap will direct investment, collaboration, and infrastructure to ensure that Australia has the foundations to become a global leader in the adoption of technology, data, and innovation across all regions of Australia.

National Smart Australia Taskforce and Roadmap

- Creation of a Smart Australia portfolio and appointed Minister with a defined vision, mission and roadmap to enable scalable, nationwide use of technology, data and innovation. There will be a focus on developing targets and outcomes that align emerging technology deployment between industry and State and Local Government bodies. Underpinning this will be a focus on the development of National Standards and policy developments with emphasis on cybersecurity and data sharing.

Round 3 & 4 of the Smart Cities and Suburbs Program

- Commit at least a $75m fund per year for three years to enable Local and State Governments to deploy secure, scalable smart city infrastructure and capabilities with a focus on enabling more regional participation and partnerships. This will build nationwide foundational smart infrastructure that connects cities and regions with data to deliver improved community resilience and industry productivity outcomes.

Digital Earth Australia (DEA)

- Provide $20 million to fund an On-Demand satellite imagery program to better enable Local Government to respond to time critical events (flooding, fires, event management).

Black spot funding allocation for smart technology

- Road crashes are a major cost to Australians every year. Since 1990 the program has been successful in fixing dangerous roads by treating road locations with infrastructure interventions. ASCA proposes an allocation of minimum 10% of Black Spot Program funding to implement smart technology solutions to reduce road toll.

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Investing in STEM and digital skills through economic development and inclusion activities will provide more Australians with more opportunities to participate in the digital economy.

National Digital Inclusion Roadmap:

- Deliver a National Digital Inclusion Roadmap that outlines activities across all layers of Government and provides specific funding for reporting on the state of Digital Inclusion in Australia. The Australian Digital Inclusion Index[3] provides a strong foundation for measuring the digital divide.

- It is recommended that funding is allocated to support the adoption and measurement of digital inclusion in Local Governments along with funding for programs to increase for digital access, affordability, and digital ability with local partners.

Digital Skills and STEM Pathways:

- Provide funding for TAFEs, Universities and Community Groups to collaborate with Local Governments to deliver:

  - Digital economy ready workshops for small businesses, Not-For-Profits and industry bodies with a focus on cybersecurity

  - Digital literacy classes for digitally excluded communities

  - Local Government based research on Smart Technology returns on investment

- Develop a local STEM jobs pathways package for Local Governments to attract and retain talent in smart community domains including Cybersecurity, Digital Transformation, Technology, Data, and Smart City roles with a focus on regional Councils.

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Developing funding sources that align technology with solving real climate challenges through place-based initiatives will support the adoption of climate innovation solutions.

Smart and Clean Innovation Fund:

- Establish a Smart and Clean Innovation Fund to enable projects at a Local and State Government level to ensure:

  o All Government and Community facilities use renewable energy sources including solar power with batteries for their energy consumption.

  o Smart technology can be applied across communities to enable better management of waste, energy, and emissions.

  o Electric Vehicles become the majority in Government fleets and incentives are provided for regions across Australia to invest in Electric Vehicle Charging infrastructure.

Climate Innovation Acceleration Program

- Create an acceleration program that builds partnerships between researchers, businesses, start-ups and Local and State Government bodies to test and scale up new climate adaptive technologies in the domains of smart renewable energy transition, carbon capture, Electric Vehicle adoption, and climate disaster management.

- Develop a partnership and engagement framework that can be used across all layers of Government to enable knowledge and data sharing practices.

- Partner with DFAT to provide pathways for local environmental businesses to achieve global adoption and build incentives for international start-ups that solve local climate challenges to access local markets.

- Create scalable and standardised data sharing practices that enable more transparency on energy and waste consumption in Australia for use in developing National and Local targets.

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Unlocking the value of infrastructure through partnerships and an innovation program will accelerate the delivery of better outcomes in both Regional and Metro environments.

5G Connectivity and Regional Connectivity

- Increase funding of 5G Innovation Initiative to $20 million per year for 3 years to support the adoption of 5G in public spaces with a focus on visual amenity and support strategic rollouts of 5G neutral hosted infrastructure.

- Build a repository of 5G use cases and skills pathways for businesses to adapt their practices to capture the benefits of 5G.

- Work with Local Governments to establish visual amenity and design protocols to support the deployment of neutral hosting infrastructure.

- Focus the delivery of the mobile blackspot funding in regional Australia including natural disaster zone regions.

Living Lab Network Program

- Develop a network of regional innovation hubs with funding to link Local Governments to partner on sharing infrastructure, data, and smart technology on projects that solve common challenges in partnership with community. Commit funding for trials and work with State Government to become a facilitator of partnerships at a Local Government level.

- Establish 'Showcase' Living Labs in these regions to build local economic development by incentivising Local Governments to provide physical spaces for local and global start-ups to deploy their technology whilst highlighting the community benefits. Establish a framework and funding for the scaling up of successful trials from Living Labs into other regions that are aligned to the digital economy.

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CONCLUSION

The Australian Smart Communities Association welcomes discussions and further engagement to design funding and policy developments that will accelerate the Smart Community opportunity in Australia.

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