



Local Government Financial Assistance Grants are paid to local councils to help them deliver services to their communities. The funds are paid annually by the Australian Government. Councils are free to use these funds at their discretion and are accountable to their ratepayers. The allocation is paid in quarterly instalments.

Who decides how much each council will receive?

Grants commissions in each state are responsible for allocating their share of the funds. The NSW Local Government Grants Commission is responsible for making the grant allocation recommendation to the NSW Minister for Local Government.

Who is on the Grants Commission?

The members of the NSW Local Government Grants Commission are nominated for terms of up to five years.

The Hon. Jenny Gardiner Chairperson	Former member of the Legislative Council.
Grant Gleeson Deputy Chairperson	Director Legal, NSW Office of Local Government.
Alan McCormack Commissioner	Former General Manager, Parkes Shire Council.
Graeme Fleming Commissioner	Former General Manager, Cabonne Council.

grant (all in the Sydney metropolitan area) are largely being supported by other councils.

While the Commission has continued to deliver improved grant outcomes to smaller rural communities, the Government is committed to making the process more transparent and equitable.

As a result, the Commission is reviewing the allocation model (further information on Page 2).

In 2018-19 NSW councils will receive:

- \$544 million in general purpose grants.
- \$219 million in the local roads component.

In 2017-18 NSW councils received:

- \$525 million in general purpose grants.
- \$211 million in the local roads component.

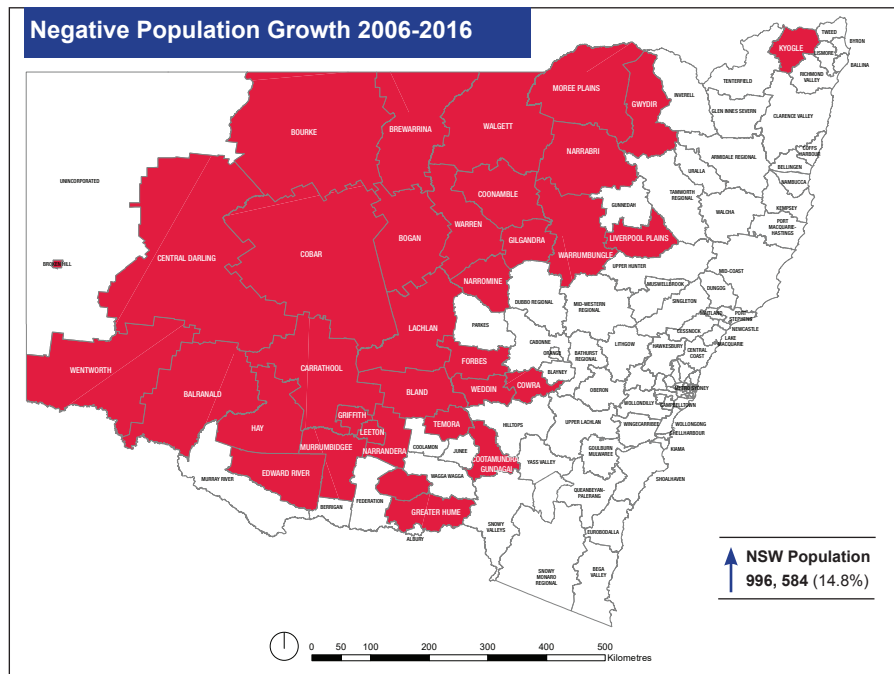
This represents a 3.7 per cent increase due to indexation of state population shares.

How is the grant money allocated?

Funds are allocated on the basis of the National Principles laid out in the Federal legislation - *Local Government (Financial Assistance) Act 1995*. The NSW Government policy is to allocate grants, as far as possible, to the councils with the greatest relative need. Councils with relative advantage (typically metropolitan councils) are generally increasing their populations whereas councils with relative disadvantage (typically rural and remote councils) are generally depopulating (as shown in the map on the right).

Due to the per capita minimum grant allocation being mandated, the 19 councils on that

Negative Population Growth 2006-2016



Councils with the greatest relative need (shaded red) are largely rural and remote with small and declining populations.

Review of the allocation methodology

The Commission has been reviewing the grant methodology in line with NSW policy to direct the general purpose component of the grant to councils with greatest relative need. These are largely rural and remote and with small and declining populations.

In October 2013 the final report of the Local Government Review Panel recommended that the Commission review the allocation methodology for the expenditure allowance of the general purpose component to make it less process driven and more transparent.

The challenge confronting the Commission is how to achieve this outcome when 30 per cent of the funding must be allocated based on population.

The aim of the review is to deliver a model that:

- Allocates a higher proportion of grant funding to councils with the greatest relative need.
- Is consistent with the National Principles.
- Is consistent with NSW policy of grant allocation.
- Is transparent and publishable.
- Is robust, statistically verifiable and auditable.
- Uses best practice financial and modelling principles.
- Is modern, simplified and more flexible.

What does this mean for the 2018-19 grant allocations?

It's important to stress that the Commission is not implementing a new model.

The Commission has taken advice, tested the competing propositions and decided to implement refinements and improvements to the existing model.

The expenditure previously included is still being taken into account after being tested for significance.

Over time the model has become very complex, involving multiple factors. There are 20 expenditure categories and more than 47 disability factors spread across 128 councils.

The Commission is looking to consolidate the expenditure categories reported in special schedule 1 of council annual financial data returns.

Grounds for the review

The Local Government Review Panel recommendation was supported by a number of other reviews and reports including:

• 2008 Assessing Local Government Revenue Raising Capacity, Productivity Commission Research Report:

"A number of councils, particularly in capital city and urban developed areas, have the means to recover additional revenue from their communities sufficient to cover their expenditures without relying on grants. However, a significant number of councils, particularly in rural (87 per cent) and remote (95 per cent) areas would remain dependent on grants from other spheres of government to meet their current expenditure. Given the differences in the scope to raise additional revenue across different classes of councils, there is a case to review the provision of Australian Government general purpose grants to local governments."

• 2010 Australia's Future Taxation System Report (Henry Review):

"The current requirement that each council receives 30 per cent of its per capita share of untied financial assistance grants may prevent state grants commissions from redistributing to councils that require greater assistance."

• 2013 The NSW Local Government Grants Commission submission to the Commonwealth Grants Commission 2013 Review:

... "we have seen an increase in concerns being raised about:

- the widening gap in revenue raising capacity for larger metropolitan councils versus smaller rural councils.
- increasing infrastructure needs.
- declining population."

• 2014 The NSW Local Government's Response to the Local Government Review Panel:

"The Government supports targeting Financial Assistance Grants to communities with the greatest need. It will ask the NSW Grants Commission to continue to identify opportunities to achieve this over time, within the constraints imposed by the national funding principles. It will also ask the Commission to ensure transitional protection for those councils with lower levels of need, to minimise the impact of any redistribution."

• 2017 Shifting the Dial: 5 year Productivity Commission Review:

"The Commission's study into transitioning regional economies noted that where populations have declined in Local Government areas, related declines in revenue are hampering efforts to maintain infrastructure designed to service (and be funded) by larger populations."

General purpose grants

No council's general purpose component will be less than that allocated in 2017.

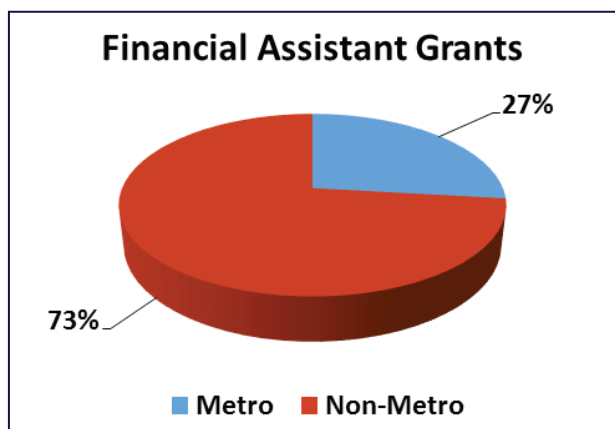
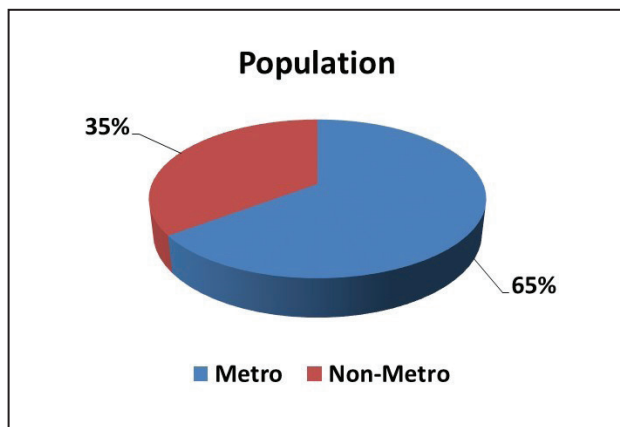
This will allow for further testing of the model during the transition period.

Population increases and decreases must be taken into account as required under the Federal Act.

To compensate councils that have lost funding due to population decline, isolation and length of non-urban roads, the Commission will deliver these councils \$5 million of the \$19 million CPI increase (0.9 per cent of the total component). The remaining \$14 million was spread across all councils on the basis of relative need. The revenue allowance and pensioner allowance are not affected.

The graphs below illustrate:

1. The breakdown of the NSW population - metropolitan (5,131,456) and non-metropolitan (2,729,090) and;
2. The grant allocation breakdown - Metropolitan (\$202,588,554) and non-metropolitan (\$560,602,268).



Local roads component

This component of the grant is assessed on the basis of council area, population and proportions of local roads and bridges. It is calculated based on an historical Roads and Maritime Services formula.

The local roads component will continue to be calculated according to that formula.

The state allocation for the local roads component for 2018-19 is \$291 million. This is split between:

- Urban councils located in the areas of Sydney, Newcastle and Wollongong receiving 27.5 per cent; and
- Rural councils (or all councils outside Sydney, Newcastle and Wollongong) receiving 72.5 per cent.

Funds are then distributed based on the individual council's population, road length and bridge length:

- Urban councils - 95 per cent of the allocation is based on the length of local roads (60 per cent) and population (40 per cent), while 5 per cent is distributed on the basis of bridge length: and
- Rural councils - 93 per cent of the allocation is based on the length of local roads (80 per cent) and population (20 per cent), while 7 per cent is distributed on the basis of bridge length.

Submissions

As always, special submissions from councils will be considered by the Commission.

The purpose of a submission is to give council the opportunity to present information on the financial impact of inherent expenditure disabilities beyond its control that are not generally recognised in the current methodology.

This allows the Commission to adequately consider all legitimate factors that affect council capacity to deliver services.

Or contact the NSW Local Government Grants Commission

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