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Senate Standing Committees on Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport  
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29 May 2023

To whom it may concern,

### **Re. Australia's preparedness to host Commonwealth, Olympic and Paralympic Games**

On behalf our members, the Barwon South-West Climate Alliance (BSWCA), Central Victorian Greenhouse Alliance (CVGA), Gippsland Alliance for Climate Action (GACA), Goulburn Murray Climate Alliance (GMCA), Northern Alliance for Greenhouse Action (NAGA), and South East Councils Climate Alliance (SECCCA) welcome the opportunity to make a submission to the Senate Inquiry on the adequacy of Australia's preparedness to host the Commonwealth, Olympic and Paralympic Games.

The Victorian Greenhouse Alliances are formal partnerships of local governments and statutory agencies working collaboratively on emissions reduction and climate change adaptation projects to enhance the resilience of Victorian communities. Our project work is complemented by targeted advocacy, capacity building activities, and regional partnerships.

With the remit of the Alliances in mind, our submission will focus on preparedness for the 2026 Commonwealth Games, and the legacy opportunities for Victorian communities and for a climate positive Games, specifically:

- the potential for regions to benefit in the short and long term from Games investments;
- the costs and benefits to the Australian community of investments in infrastructure to support the Games, including any impacts on local government, communities and business in host locations;
- investments into the provision of transport infrastructure to facilitate the involvement of more Australians in the Games;
- the adequacy and accessibility of, and planning for, accommodation to host athletes, organisers, support staff and Games attendees and future use;
- consideration of solutions; and
- other related matters.

Some of the issues and opportunities outlined in this submission may also be relevant considerations for the Olympic and Paralympic Games in Brisbane 2023.



## **The potential for regions to benefit in the short and long term from Games investments**

The Alliances and our members welcome investment in affordable and sustainable housing and transport infrastructure in regional Victoria in the lead up to the 2026 Games.

With increased migration flows from capital cities, a severe shortage of affordable housing and rental accommodation, and rising fuel and energy costs, communities across regional Victoria are experiencing a housing and cost of living crisis. Regional investment in affordable housing and low-emissions transport infrastructure is much needed, and the investment in infrastructure in the lead up to the 2026 Games should be optimised to ensure legacy outcomes and longer-term community benefits.

In the short-term, targeted investment in affordable and energy efficient housing, active and low-emissions transport, and sporting infrastructure powered by renewable energy, will contribute to the delivery of a sustainable 2026 Games and showcase Victoria and Australia's climate credentials on an international stage.

In the long-term, this investment is critical to support the transition to a zero emissions economy in regional Victoria, to ensure that this transition is equitable and inclusive, and to meet Victoria's strengthened emissions reduction targets.

## **The costs and benefits to the Australian community of investments in infrastructure to support the Games, including any impacts on local government, communities and business in host locations**

Delivering the infrastructure requirements of the 2026 Games constitutes a significant investment in regional Victoria. In the current financial climate, with pressure on budgets at federal, state and local level, it is essential that this investment is strategic, environmentally sustainable, and focused on the long-term needs of communities.

The Victorian Government is yet to consult on or release a legacy plan for the 2026 Games. Major investment decisions are already being made in relation to Athletes' Villages, sporting infrastructure, transport, and accommodation plans. Greater clarity, transparency, and upfront community engagement on legacy outcomes, emissions reduction strategies, and sustainability goals is urgently needed to ensure that the 2026 Games delivers long-term benefits to the regions, and minimises the social, economic, and environmental costs of hosting this major event.

## **Investments into the provision of transport infrastructure to facilitate the involvement of more Australians in the Games**

Host cities and communities across regional Victoria are excited to welcome visitors to the 2026 Games. A range of opportunities have been identified by local governments, businesses and community groups to facilitate the involvement of more Australians in the Games while also delivering a climate positive legacy of low-emissions transport in the regions. These opportunities include:

- Encouraging tourism throughout regional Victoria through further strategic investment in electric vehicle charging facilities located between major regional cities and tourism destinations.



- Installing electric vehicle charging facilities powered by renewable energy at sporting facilities in host cities and Athletes' Villages to future-proof these precincts.
- Maximising opportunities for active travel during and after the Games by investing in active transport infrastructure, including local governments' active transport plans, and working with local governments to promote the benefits of walking and cycling as part of a healthy and active lifestyle.
- Investing in urban greening projects to cool streets, making it safer and more desirable for people to move around during and after the Games using active transport modes, and for improved air quality, public health and wellbeing.
- Improving the availability, accessibility, and reliability of public bus and rail services within and between host cities and surrounding towns, to ensure that users have a positive public transport experience during the Games, and to encourage and enable ongoing use.
- Working with car hire companies and other stakeholders to invest in electrified vehicle fleets to provide transport for national teams during the Games, and to create a second-hand electric vehicle market in the regions for more equitable future access.
- Trialling zero-emissions vehicles such as hydrogen or electric buses in the lead up to and during the Games, to showcase this technology and pilot its application in regional areas.

**The adequacy and accessibility of, and planning for, accommodation to host athletes, organisers, support staff and Games attendees and future use**

The construction of Athletes' Villages in Ballarat, Bendigo, Geelong and Latrobe can help to address the critical shortage of affordable housing in regional Victoria by delivering energy efficient and climate resilient housing, designed for future use.

Retrofitting infrastructure to meet community needs is more costly than designing for future use. The highest possible standards of environmentally sustainable development (using NatHERS, NABERS, or Green Star ratings) and water sensitive urban design must be applied in the construction of Athletes' Villages. This is also an opportunity to showcase best practice on an international stage.

We are pleased that the Victorian Government has incorporated some environmentally sustainable development (ESD) principles into tender documents for the construction of Athletes' Villages in the regions, aligned with the state government's Recycle First policy and a minimum requirement for 7.5 star energy rating. More upfront consultation with host communities is required, however, to understand local needs and concerns.

Further opportunities to ensure that Athlete's Villages are low emissions and meet local housing needs in the short and long-term include:

- Installing rooftop solar, heat pumps, and electric vehicle chargers to reduce emissions during the Games, and to ensure that accommodation can meet the future needs of communities.
- The use of low embodied carbon and recycled materials in construction.
- Preserving biodiversity and investing in urban greening, using climate-adapted species and indigenous plants where possible, and consulting on culturally appropriate species with Traditional Custodians.



- Investing in active and public transport links to ensure that Athlete's Villages are well connected to local services, and to reduce future dependency on cars.

### **Consideration of solutions and any other related matters**

While we have welcomed the Victorian Government's commitment to a carbon neutral 2026 Games, this should be considered a minimum standard, and must be achieved through minimising emissions rather than an over-reliance on carbon offsets.

To maximise the social, economic, and environmental benefits for Victorian communities, we are urging the state government to adopt an 'emissions reduction first' principle in planning for the 2026 Games, and to pursue opportunities to deliver climate positive legacies in host communities, aligned with the state's ambitious emissions reduction targets and renewable energy goals.

The Queensland Government has committed to a climate positive Olympic Games in Brisbane 2032, which it aims to achieve through sustainability initiatives that minimise the Games' carbon footprint as much as possible and deliver additional benefits to host communities, before purchasing offsets to compensate for more than 100% of residual emissions. These principles are consistent with international best practice in the delivery of major sporting events, and the sustainability values of the International Olympic Committee and Commonwealth Games Federation, and should be adopted across the Olympic, Paralympic and Commonwealth Games events in Australia.

To ensure Victoria plays its part, systems and governance must be in place so that emissions reductions and climate positive legacies are considered at all key decision points throughout the event lifecycle for the 2026 Games. A Sustainability Committee or similar is urgently needed to inform investment decisions and planning, and to support ongoing implementation, monitoring and reporting on sustainability legacy and emissions reduction goals. Sustainability strategies must be developed early on, through meaningful consultation with host communities, to identify the key opportunities and practical plans that will ensure the best climate and legacy outcomes across all aspects of these major events.

We thank you for the opportunity to make this submission.



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On behalf of the Victorian Greenhouse Alliances listed below:

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

