

Tara Moriarty

Minister for Agriculture
Minister for Regional New South Wales
Minister for Western New South Wales

**Ron Hoenig**

Minister for Local Government

Media Release

Essential local council workers will now be assisted to make the move to the Bush or a Sea Change

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Local government workers will now be supported through the Minns Labor Government's Welcome Experience program, helping them settle into essential jobs in regional local councils such as road maintenance, town planning, engineering and childcare services for communities.

As a major regional employer, local government plays a vital role in sustaining communities, yet workforce shortages remain an ongoing challenge for councils.

The Welcome Experience is a free service supporting workers and their families make the move if they are considering or have accepted roles in key sectors such as health, aged care, education, veterinary services, policing, emergency services - and now local government.

The program was established by the Minns Labor Government in 2023 as a pilot in 11 local government areas to improve health, education, policing and emergency services in regional NSW by attracting the necessary essential workers.

The success of the Welcome Experience program has led to it being expanded into 88 local government areas across NSW. It has now supported 3,020 frontline workers to make the move to the bush and is now helping councils recruit essential roles for their regional communities.

A Local Government Workforce Skills and Capability Survey found more than 90 percent of councils reported skills shortages, with 66 percent indicating project delivery had been impacted by vacancies, skills gaps or training needs.

Through The Welcome Experience, the essential workers are connected with a dedicated Local Connector who provides practical, on-the-ground support, from finding housing and accessing childcare or schools, to connecting with community and sporting groups, plus identifying employment opportunities for partners.

To find out more about The Welcome Experience and the opportunities awaiting those considering a move to the regions, visit www.nsw.gov.au/regional-nsw/welcome-experience

Minister for Regional NSW, Tara Moriarty said:

"Council workers are vital to the liveability of our communities, from roads and waste services through to planning and community programs.

"The Welcome Experience helps ensure new staff and their families feel supported from day one, which makes a real difference in attracting and keeping workers in our regional areas.

"Since launching in 2023, the Welcome Experience has supported more than 3,000 essential workers such as teachers, nurses and firefighters to relocate to regional NSW, helping to strengthen frontline services and support thriving regional communities."

Minister for Local Government Ron Hoenig said:

“Jobs in local government are a great option for people whose careers are service driven and are proud to contribute to their local community.

“You can really see the impact in the community your work has in a rural and regional council. Local councils provide a range of services from parks to planning, childcare to aged care as well libraries and tourism services.

“Expanding this program will help more workers and families make the move to the regions — helping councils fill those critical skills gaps and make rural and regional towns and cities even better places to live.”

General Secretary United Services Union, Graeme Kelly OAM, said:

This initiative by the Minns Labor Government follows their recent commitment in funding local government apprenticeships and traineeships, both of commitments will revitalise communities delivering the skills & services that regional and rural local government so desperately need.

Chairman of the Country Mayors Association Mayor Rick Firman OAM said:

“The CMA Board and our 89 rural, remote and regional council members warmly welcome Minister Moriarty’s announcement that the Welcome Experience will be expanded to include the critical local government sector.

“In many rural and remote communities, local government is the largest employer, making its inclusion essential.

“We commend and thank the Minister and NSW Government for this initiative and are confident it will strengthen councils’ ability to attract and retain the workforce our communities rely on.”

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