

QUEENSLAND INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS COMMISSION

Industrial Relations Act 2016 (Qld) s.458

Matters No. B/2025/49-50

Together Queensland, Industrial Union of Employees, Applicant B/2025/49

Queensland Council of Unions, Applicant B/2025/50

APPLICATION FOR A DECLARATION OF GENERAL RULING

STATE WAGE CASE 2025

Submission of the

LOCAL GOVERNMENT ASSOCIATION OF QUEENSLAND (LGAQ)

1 AUGUST 2025

Introduction

1. As the peak body for local government in Queensland, the Local Government Association of Queensland (LGAQ) represents the state's 77 councils, with a combined workforce of approximately 44,849.

Local government context

2. The Queensland local government sector represents a workforce of approximately 44,849 in the State industrial relations jurisdiction, and of that number approximately 2,732 are award-reliant employed predominately within First Nations and smaller sized councils.
3. Following significant consultation across the sector, the Queensland Local Government Workforce Strategy 2024-2028 (workforce strategy) identified that Queensland councils must continue to compete for talent across both government and private sectors to attract and grow a pool of skilled and qualified workers. The competition for talent is particularly relevant for First Nations and smaller sized councils that are reliant on the annual State Wage Case (SWC).
4. The LGAQ and its member councils appreciate the benefits that the annual SWC Decision affords to councils, particularly and most relevantly the ability to continue to attract and retain a talented workforce.
5. First Nations councils and those with smaller-sized workforces that are award-reliant are dependent on the outcome of the SWC decision. These councils are particularly committed to ensuring their communities are liveable ones, and this means continuing to provide local employment opportunities to improve the economic prospects of the residents they represent.

6. It is important for Queensland councils to cost-effectively and safely deliver the essential services and infrastructure needed for liveable communities, and the LGAQ is committed to supporting councils via its workforce strategy towards a productive, skilled, and engaged workforce.
7. The Queensland local government sector is a vital segment of government that contributes to the everyday liveability of Queenslanders and its economy. By population and area alone, Queensland is home to some of the largest councils in Australia. Queensland councils deliver a considerable number of projects to the community each year, relying on their workforce which includes those from First Nations and smaller sized councils that are typically award-reliant.

The LGAQ Position

8. The consultation that the LGAQ has conducted across its member base has made it clear that local governments have traditionally relied upon the QIRC to deliver an annual SWC General Ruling, which is consistent with the Federal Jurisdiction.
9. The Fair Work Commission's Annual Wage Review Decision from 3 June 2025, which provided a 3.5 per cent increase across federal modern awards including the Minimum Wage has been factored by local governments in the 2025-2026 financial year budgeting.
10. This is particularly relevant to Local Governments as the Federal Decision is traditionally handed down in June and has been a key reference point for forecasting the likely QIRC decision. Many Local Governments (especially First Nations councils and smaller councils without certified agreements) rely on the SWC to determine annual wage increases for their employees. The

LGAQ, therefore, notes that planning for the financial budget 2025-2026 has been undertaken cognisant of the Federal Decision.

11. A SWC General Ruling nominating an increase that would be greater than the 3.5 per cent identified would particularly impact those councils that are Award reliant and would be a further financial impact to those Queensland councils who are rated as being at moderate to high risk of being financially unsustainable.

Conclusion

12. The majority of First Nations councils together with those smaller councils, through cost shifting, are being asked to do more with less, while a fair and reasonable wage adjustment is necessary to continue to attract talent and retain the existing workforce, a decision greater than the federal decision would add further pressure on those councils' workforce budgets.

13. The LGAQ seeks a fair and reasonable wage adjustment, specifically:

- A fair and reasonable increase to the Queensland Minimum Wage of 3.5 per cent, but not greater than;
- An increase to award wage rates of 3.5 per cent;
- An increase of 3.5 per cent to existing and applicable allowances across the local government awards which relate to work or conditions that have not changed or that do not have mechanisms within the awards for varying the allowances; and
- The continuation of the existing custom and practice of the timing of the QIRC General Ruling being 1 September of the relevant year, which is relied upon by the local governments, supporting an operative date of 1 September 2025.