

Media Release

Country Mayors Association Inc of NEW SOUTH WALES



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The Country Mayors Association of NSW Inc (CMA) is pleased to announce the new executive team elected at its AGM held in Sydney on Friday, 18 November.

Cr Jamie Chaffey (Mayor of Gunnedah Shire) was elected as Chairman, and Councillor Rick Firman OAM (Mayor of Temora Shire Council) was elected Deputy Chairman. A new position - Immediate Past Chairman – was also created, with Ken Keith OAM Mayor of Parkes Shire Council the first hold the title.

Eight country mayors were elected to the Executive, including Cr Craig Davies (Narromine Shire Council), Cr Sam Coupland (Armidale Regional Council), Cr Russell Fitzpatrick (Bega Valley Shire Council), Cr John Medcalf OAM (Lachlan Shire Council), Cr Phyllis Miller OAM (Forbes Shire Council), Cr Sue Moore (Singleton Council), Cr Kylie Thomas (Kyogle Council), and Cr Russell Webb (Tamworth Regional Council). Eric Groth, General Manager of Gunnedah Shire Council, was elected Secretary/Public Officer.

The CMA allows local government from regional, rural and remote NSW to come together to discuss issues of specific interest, to areas outside the major metropolitan centres as well as looking at the bigger picture of the whole local government sector within the State.

Cr Chaffey said he was honoured to be unanimously supported for the Chairman role in an organisation that had a long history of lobbying for local government and issues that affected regional communities, and working with all levels of government to achieve the best outcomes.

“The Country Mayors Association of NSW has a proven record of speaking up for our 76 member councils representing more than three million residents – that’s about 37% of the state’s population,” Cr Chaffey said.

“It’s a big task, particularly in a year like 2022 when local government is facing extreme financial pressure from inflation, material shortages and price increases, staff shortages and energy price increases, amongst other challenges.

“Add to this the unrelenting natural disasters impacting on our member councils, and our communities are clearly in need of strong representation at the highest level.

“This is our strength as an organisation.”

A general meeting was held after the AGM and association members agreed in principal on a list of State Election Priorities that will be endorsed in a matter of weeks and then presented to all political parties calling for action in the areas of skills and education, health, roads and transport, water security, housing, law and order, telecommunications blackspot coverage, and disaster preparedness and funding.

“The final endorsed document will suggest a range of solutions, that if implemented, will have a positive effect for change in country NSW and improve the lives of our residents.

“The list includes six new funding programs, a recommitment too many existing funding streams and a review of current programs in different ministries like Health, Skills and Training, Roads and Policing.”

Cr Chaffey said the general meeting also included a presentation from Port of Newcastle CEO Craig Carmody following the conclusion of the debate in NSW Parliament to end the monopoly Port Botany has on international container distribution

“Excitement has been gathering over the past months for many of our members and we were pleased to receive thanks from Mr Carmody for supporting the push for change, and to hear that he is committed to working with all Councils to build on mutual opportunities for growth,” Cr Chaffey said.

The Chair of the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal (IPART), Ms Carmel Donnelly, also presented to the general meeting to explain the process for the IPART review in rate pegging in NSW.

Deputy Chairman Cr Rick Firman OAM said he was very grateful that Ms Donnelly had “so graciously” given her time.

“Financial viability for all CMA members is one of the biggest concerns that keep us awake at night,” Cr Firman said.

“The importance of getting the annual rate peg amount right can not be understated if councils are to continue to provide the service levels that our communities deserve.”

Caption: Country Mayors Association of New South Wales, from left, Immediate Past Chairman Ken Keith (Parkes Shire Council), Cr Kylie Thomas (Kyogle Shire Council), Cr Sue Moore (Singleton Shire Council), Cr Russell Webb (Tamworth Regional Council), Chairman Jamie Chaffey (Gunnedah Shire Council), Deputy Chairman Rick Firman (Temora Shire Council), Cr Russell Fitzpatrick (Bega Valley Shire Council), Cr Craig Davies (Narromine Shire Council), Cr John Medcalf (Lachlan Shire Council) and Cr Sam Coupland (Armidale Regional Council). Absent: Phyllis Miller (Forbes Shire Council).

ENDS

For further information, contact Cr Jamie Chaffey on 0467 402 412.