

National General Assembly of Local Government Call for Motions Discussion Paper

Australia's Future, Make it Local

The purpose of this discussion paper is to provide guidance to councils for the development of Motions for debate at the 2018 National General Assembly. The paper provides an overview of policy areas in which the NGA has well-established positions and identifies potential new and emerging policy areas which are being developed by ALGA and require detailed consideration. Councils are particularly encouraged to submit Motions on these policy areas.

Highlighting the issues below contributes to implementing ALGA's Strategic Plan 2017-2020 and its objectives to:

- strengthen Local Government in the areas of financial sustainability; delivering services in regional cities; infrastructure; and innovation and digital transformation, as well as,
- facilitating collaboration between state and territory associations in Local Government's role in Indigenous policy issues, scale and capacity; women in Local Government; and diversity in representation.

Criteria for Motions

Motions must meet the following criteria:

- ✓ be **relevant** to the work of local government **nationally**
- ✓ be **consistent with the theme** of the NGA
- ✓ **complement or build** on the policy objectives of your state and territory local government association
- ✓ be submitted by a council which is a **financial member** of their state or territory local government association
- ✓ propose a **clear action and outcome**
- ✓ **not be advanced** on behalf of external third parties that may seek to use the NGA to apply pressure to Board members or to gain national political exposure for positions that are not directly relevant to the work of, or in the national interests of, local government.

Your Opportunity

The primary focus of all Motions should be to strengthen the capacity of local government to provide services and infrastructure in Australia. Providing clear actions within areas that are still emerging provides councils with an opportunity to influence the development of ALGA policy and advocacy by ALGA on federal election commitments.

Emerging Issues

Councils across Australia are constantly being asked to do more with less. Changing community needs, including ageing populations, technological advancements and changing economic circumstances, are a challenge for all communities.

Analysis suggests that a Commonwealth election may well be called between August 2018 and May 2019. The 2018 NGA therefore provides an important opportunity to progress Local Government issues in the Federal agenda. Below are some critical areas in which Local Government needs to consider the role it can in local communities on the national stage. In particular, the 2018 NGA is calling for Motions that provide clear policy advice and/or policy initiatives that will help Local Government to address the following policy challenges:

Housing Affordability

Housing affordability is a major challenge in many communities. The Commonwealth frequently asserts that housing affordability is a problem because of the supply of housing. As such there has been a focus on planning reform.

Motions are called for on ways to improve housing supply and improve land use planning and associated local government infrastructure to support increased housing supply.

Financial Sustainability – Oppose Cost Shifting

In 2005 The House of Representatives Inquiry into Cost Shifting from States onto Local Government estimated that cost shifting amounted to between \$500m - 1.4b annually. This includes regulatory and other services that Local Government provided on behalf of states without adequate compensation.

Motions are called for on ways to reduce cost shifting from states and the Commonwealth on to Local Government and on areas of regulatory reform and services that Local Government could provide efficiently and effectively on behalf of states or the Commonwealth if appropriately funded.

Innovation and Digital Transformation – Smart Communities

Technological advancements are changing the way councils communicate with citizens and deliver services and infrastructure.

Motions are called for on ways to improve the ability of councils to support their community to understand and benefit from digital transformation, ways to improve data, protect privacy and increase security of council-held data.

Harmonising Local Government Data

National Local Government data is held in a variety of places and is often of variable quality. National advocacy on behalf of Local Government needs a strong evidence base. ALGA has been working with JRA on the State of the Assets project which collects data on the quality and condition of all local government assets. Increasingly, councils are being required to provide data to third parties.

Motions are called for on ways to improve the collection of local government data, how data could be better linked across the sector, and ways to improve the quality of data.

Cyber Security

Recent malware attacks have highlighted the vulnerability of business and government computer systems. Strong measures are required to ensure that all Australians and Australian businesses and governments are aware of the risks and take appropriate measures to ensure cyber security.

Motions are called for on ways to improve local government cyber security.

Environment

Local Government plays a critical role in environmental management, with actions often embedded into other day to day operations as well as included in economic management considerations

Motions are called for on what should be national priorities and on ways to improve environmental management systems, waste management, product stewardship and biodiversity.

Regional Development

Local Government plays a critical role in regional development, with an active role working with neighbouring councils, industry, state government agencies, community and other key stakeholders to set and achieve regional goals.

Motions are called for on ways to improve regional policy approaches, funding ideas on regional sustainability and equity.

Motions should be lodged electronically using the online form available on the NGA webpage at: alga.asn.au. All Motions require, among other things, a contact officer, a clear national objective, a summary of the key arguments in support of the motion, and the endorsement of your Council.

Motions should be received by ALGA no later than **11:59pm on Friday 30 March 2018**.

Established ALGA Policy Areas

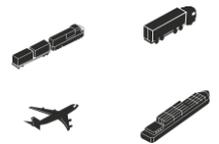
Financial Assistance Grants

Adequate and appropriate Local Government services and infrastructure are critical to all communities. The Commonwealth Financial Assistance Grants are important to all councils. Success has been achieved in the last 12 months by restoration of the indexation of the Financial Assistance Grants (FAGs). ALGA's priority in this area is to continue advocating for FAGs funding to be increased to a level equal to at least one per cent of commonwealth taxation revenue.



Freight Strategy

Local government manages around 75 per cent of Australia's local roads network. These roads were generally built decades ago and today are required to carry increasing amounts of freight, including higher productivity vehicles. Poor and unsafe roads are a barrier to increased productivity. ALGA's priority is the promotion and development of a freight strategy with funding of \$200m per year for five years to address first and last mile access issues, leading to an increase in local, regional and national productivity.



Roads to Recovery

The Roads to Recovery Program provides councils with essential additional funding to help address the backlog of maintenance and renewal of local roads. Success was achieved with Roads to Recovery by having the expiration date removed and essentially creating an ongoing program. Further work in this area is being undertaken to ensure Roads to Recovery funding is permanently doubled.



Additional Local Roads Funding for South Australia

Additional funding for South Australian local roads to address an anomaly in FAGs ceased in 2014. It was reinstated in 2017–18 but only for two years. The focus is now on securing ongoing additional funding for South Australian local roads, indexed annually in line with FAGs.



Climate Change Plans

Many councils are addressing or wish to address climate change. With the important role Local Government can play helping the Australian Government to achieve internationally agreed climate change targets, a priority has been placed on supporting councils to work with local businesses and communities to implement local and regional Climate Change Adaptation Plans.



Indigenous

Addressing Indigenous disadvantage across Australia is a priority for all Australian governments. Advocacy is about closing the gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians in the areas of housing, health, early childhood development, education, economic participation and remote service delivery.



Community Infrastructure

Funding support for community infrastructure will enable all local councils to plan and deliver adequate and appropriate community infrastructure. ALGA is urging political parties to commit to specific local government community infrastructure funding at the level of \$300 million per annum over the next four years.

