

10.4. 2024 Australian Local Government Association Annual Conference (National General Assembly)

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ATTACHMENTS	1. 2024 NGA Discussion Paper [10.4.1 - 24 pages]
CSP LINK	5. Our Civic Leadership 5.1 Lead North Sydney's strategic direction

PURPOSE:

The purpose of this report is to consider the appointment of delegates to attend the 2024 National General Assembly and any proposed Motions.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

- The 2024 Australian Local Government Association (ALGA) National General Assembly (NGA) will be held in Canberra, from 2 to 4 July 2024.
- The theme for this year's NGA will be "Building Community Trust." ALGA is seeking motions that align with this theme and identify opportunities for new federal programs and policies that will support councils to build stronger communities. Motions are due by 30 April 2024.
- In addition, Council may resolve the appointment of delegates to attend the 2024 NGA. The early bird deadline for registrations is 7 June 2024.

RECOMMENDATION:

1.THAT Council considers any proposed Motions for submission to the Conference, noting the deadline of 30 April 2024.

2.THAT any Councillor wishing to attend the Conference advise the General Manager before 7 June 2024.

Background

Council's Mayor and Councillors Expenses and Facilities Policy states:

7.32: Approval to attend a conference or seminar is subject to a written request to the General Manager. In assessing a councillor request, the General Manager must consider factors including the:

- a) relevance of the topics and presenters to current Council priorities and business and the exercise of the councillor's civic duties;*
- b) cost of the conference or seminar in relation to the total remaining budget.*

Report

This year's NGA will be held in Canberra from 2-4 July 2024 and will be an opportunity for Local Government to clearly set and articulate an agenda to the Federal Government.

The theme for this year's NGA will be "Building Community Trust". ALGA is seeking motions that align with this theme and identify opportunities for new federal programs and policies that will support councils to build stronger communities. Motions are due by 30 April 2024.

Motions

The motions passed at the NGA inform ALGA's strategic direction and national advocacy objectives. ALGA takes the resolutions to Ministers, MPs and decision-makers in Canberra and around the country through Ministerial meetings, forums, budget submissions, and advocacy campaigns.

A notice of motion to this year's NGA should either focus on:

- practical and deliverable programs and policies that the Australian Government can support and work directly with the local government sector to build our communities; or
- new program ideas that would help the local government sector to deliver national objectives.

To be eligible for inclusion in the NGA Business Papers, and subsequent debate on the floor of the NGA, motions must:

1. Be relevant to the work of local government nationally.
2. Not be focused on a specific jurisdiction, location or region – unless the project or issue has national implications.
3. Be consistent with the themes of the NGA.
4. Complement or build on the policy objectives of ALGA and your state or territory local government association.
5. Be submitted by a council which is a financial member of their state or territory local government association.
6. Propose a clear action and outcome, i.e. call on the Australian Government to act on something.

7. 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.
8. Address issues that will directly improve the capacity of local government to deliver services and infrastructure for the benefit of all Australian communities.
9. Not seek to advance an outcome that would result in a benefit to one group of councils to the detriment of another.
10. Be supported by sufficient evidence to support the outcome being sought and demonstrate the relevance and significance of the matter to local government nationally.

Motions must commence with the following wording: *This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to ...*

All Motions must be lodged online by Tuesday 30 April 2024 and all Motions must be supported by way of a Council resolution.

Delegates

The standard registration cost for each delegate is \$945 to attend. The Mayor and Councillor Shannon Welch have advised that they would like to attend the NGA.

Consultation requirements

Community engagement is not required.

Financial/Resource Implications

Early bird registration closes 7 June 2024 and it is intended that Council take advantage of this discounted price. Accommodation has been pre-booked in anticipation of councillor attendance.

Legislation

ALGA was founded in 1947 and, in 1976, established a secretariat in Canberra reflecting growing links with the Australian Government and an awareness of local government's emerging national role.

2024 NGA

Building
Community
Trust

National Convention Centre
Canberra



AUSTRALIAN
LOCAL GOVERNMENT
ASSOCIATION



2 - 4
JULY
2024

DISCUSSION
PAPER



KEY DATES

30 April 2024 | Acceptance of Motions

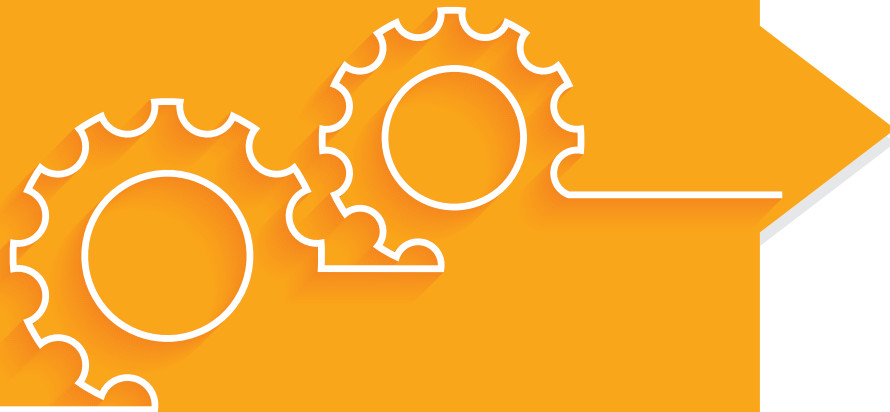
2 July 2024 | Regional Cooperation & Development Forum

3 - 4 July 2024 | National General Assembly

5 July 2024 | Australian Council of Local Government

TO SUBMIT YOUR MOTION

VISIT: **ALGA.COM.AU**



The Australian Local Government Association (ALGA) is pleased to convene the 30th National General Assembly of Local Government (NGA), to be held in Canberra from 2-4 July 2024.

As convener of the NGA, the ALGA Board cordially invites all councils to send representatives to this important national event.

The NGA is the premier national gathering of local governments, and provides councils with the opportunity to come together, share ideas, debate motions, and most importantly unite and further build on the relationship between local government and the Australian Government.

This discussion paper contains essential information for Australian councils considering submitting motions for debate at the 2024 National General Assembly of Local Government (NGA).

It is recommended that all councils and delegates intending to attend the 2024 NGA familiarise themselves with the guidelines for motions contained in this paper on page 6.

BACKGROUND TO ALGA AND THE NGA

ALGA was established 1947. In structure, ALGA is a federation of member state and territory associations. Its mission is to achieve outcomes for local government through advocacy with impact, and maximise the economic, environmental and social wellbeing of councils and our communities.

Since 1994, the NGA has built the profile of local government on the national stage, showcased the value of councils, and most importantly demonstrated - particularly to the Australian Government - the strength and value of working with local government to help deliver on national priorities.

Debate on motions was introduced to the NGA as a vehicle for councils from across the nation to canvas ideas. Outcomes of debate on motions (NGA Resolutions) could be used by participating councils to inform their own policies and priorities, as well as their advocacy when dealing with federal politicians.

At the same time, they help ALGA and its member state and territory associations gain valuable insight into council priorities, emerging national issues, and the level of need and support for new policy and program initiatives.

Given the structure of ALGA, its Constitution, and level of resources, the NGA does not bind the ALGA Board. However, the Board carefully considers NGA resolutions as it determines ALGA's policies, priorities and strategies to advance local governments within the national agenda.

This is your NGA and ALGA is pleased to act as the convener. ALGA's policies and priorities will continue to be determined by the ALGA Board in the interests of all councils.

The ALGA Board thanks all councils for attending the NGA and those that will take the time to reflect on the purpose of debate on motions outlined in this paper, and to submit motions for debate at the 2024 NGA.

SUBMITTING MOTIONS

Australia is one of the world's great democracies. It is held in high regard across the world but should never be taken for granted.

The theme of the 2024 NGA is – Building Community Trust.

This theme aims to explore the critical importance of trust in governments, between governments, its institutions, and its citizens. This trust is a fundamental building block of our nation's democracy.

While relatively low key, over the past decade there has been increasing public debate by scholars and policy makers about the level of trust in government, its institutions and indeed the operation of our democracy more broadly.

Mark Evans et al (2019) published research in 'The Conversation' indicating that Australians' trust in politicians (our political representatives) and democracy has hit an all-time low. This report indicates 'fewer than 41% of Australian citizens are satisfied with the way democracy works in Australia, down from 86% in 2007.

Public satisfaction has fallen particularly sharply since 2013, when 72% of Australian citizens were satisfied. Generation X is least satisfied (31%) and Baby Boomers most satisfied (50%). Some political authors suggest that these trends in part explain the rise in popularity and the relative success of independents and micro or single-issue parties.

These statistics should be of concern to every level of government and those interested in the future of our communities and Australia's democratic system.

It is said that 'trust is hard-earned, easily lost, and difficult to re-establish – and a key to absolutely everything.' While media and public attention frequently focuses on levels of trust in the national and state governments, local governments have an equally important role in building, maintaining and indeed, often repairing government-community relationships.

At its most fundamental level, the 2024 NGA focusses on the role of local government and how all levels of government can help each other build, maintain and strengthen government-community relationships.

This discussion paper is a call for councils to submit motions for debate at the 2024 NGA to be held in Canberra from 2-4 July 2024.

Motions for this year's NGA should consider:

- how all levels of government in Australia can build trust in each other and earn greater trust from the community;
- practical opportunities for the Australian Government to leverage the trust that local communities have in their local council;
- focus on practical programs that can strengthen the system of local government nationally to provide the services and infrastructure required to support and strengthen our communities; and
- new program ideas that that would help the local government sector to deliver the Australian Government's objectives.

Motions should be concise, practical and implementable and meet the guidelines for motions set out in the paper.

You are encouraged to read all the sections of the paper but are not expected to respond to every issue or question. Your council's motion/s must address one or more of the issues identified in the discussion paper.

Motions must be lodged electronically using the online form available on the NGA website at: www.alga.com.au and received no later than 11:59pm AEST on Tuesday 30 April 2024.

All notices of motions will be reviewed by the ALGA Board's NGA Sub-committee prior to publishing the NGA Business Paper to ensure that they meet these guidelines. This sub-committee reserves the right to select, edit or amend notices of motions to facilitate the efficient and effective management of debate on motions at the NGA.

All NGA resolutions will be published on www.nationalgeneralassembly.com.au.

As the host of the NGA, ALGA will communicate resolutions to the relevant Australian Government Minister and publish Ministerial responses as they are received on this website.

Please note that if your council does submit a motion, there is an expectation that a council representative will be present at the NGA to move and speak to that motion if required.

We look forward to hearing from you and seeing you at the 2024 NGA.

CRITERIA FOR MOTIONS

To be eligible for inclusion in the NGA Business Papers, and subsequent debate on the floor of the NGA, motions must meet the following criteria:

1. Be relevant to the work of local government nationally.
2. Not be focused on a specific jurisdiction, location or region – unless the project or issue has national implications.
3. Be consistent with the themes of the NGA.
4. Complement or build on the policy objectives of ALGA and your state or territory local government association.
5. Be submitted by a council which is a financial member of their state or territory local government association.
6. Propose a clear action and outcome ie call on the Australian Government to act on something.
7. 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.
8. Address issues that will directly improve the capacity of local government to deliver services and infrastructure for the benefit of all Australian communities.
9. Not seek to advance an outcome that would result in a benefit to one group of councils to the detriment of another.
10. Be supported by sufficient evidence to support the outcome being sought and demonstrate the relevance and significance of the matter to local government nationally.

Motions must commence with the following wording:

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to ...

Please note that resolutions of the NGA do not automatically become ALGA's national policy positions.

OTHER THINGS TO CONSIDER

It is important to complete the background section of the submission form. Submitters of motions should not assume that NGA delegates will have background knowledge of the proposal. The background section helps all delegates, including those with no previous knowledge of the issue, in their consideration of the motion. Please note, motions should NOT be prescriptive in directing how the matter should be pursued.

Try to keep motions practical, focussed and capable of implementation to ensure that relevant Australian Government Ministers provide considered, thoughtful and timely responses.

Try to avoid motions that are complex, contain multi-dot points and require complex cross-portfolio implementation.

All motions submitted will be reviewed by the ALGA Board's NGA Sub-committee, in consultation with state and territory local government associations, to determine their eligibility for inclusion in the NGA Business Papers.

When reviewing motions, the Sub-committee considers the criteria, clarity of the motion and the importance and relevance of the issue to local government.

If there are any questions about the substance or intent of a motion, ALGA will raise these with the nominated contact officer. With the agreement of the submitting council, these motions may be edited before inclusion in the NGA Business Papers.

To ensure an efficient and effective debate, where there are numerous motions on a similar issue, the NGA Sub-committee will group these motions together under an overarching strategic motion. The strategic motions will have either been drafted by ALGA or will be based on a motion submitted by a council which best summarises the subject matter.

Debate will occur in accordance with the rules for debate published in the Business Papers and will focus on the strategic motions. Associated sub-motions will be debated by exception only or in accordance with the debating rules.

Any motion deemed to be primarily concerned with local or state issues will be referred to the relevant state or territory local government association and will not be included in the NGA Business Papers.

All motions require:

- a contact officer;
- a clear national objective;
- a summary of the key arguments in support of the motion; and
- endorsement of your council.

**Motions should be lodged electronically using the online form available at www.alga.asn.au.
Motions should be received no later than 11:59pm AEST on Tuesday 30 April 2024.**

SETTING THE SCENE

The theme for NGA24 'Building Community Trust' aims to focus on the role of local government in the Australian system of government and explore the critical importance of trust in governments, between governments, its institutions, and our citizens.

In a recent essay on Capitalism after the Crisis (2023) the Treasurer the Hon Dr Jim Chalmers MP wrote:

'Our mission is to redefine and reform our economy and institutions in ways that make our people and communities more resilient, and our society and democracy stronger as well.'

The need to strengthen our democracy was also emphasised the Prime Minister the Hon Anthony Albanese MP in a speech at Queensland's Woodford Folk Festival toward the end of 2022:

'I urge anyone who thinks our democracy is unassailable to have a look around the world. Even some of the oldest, most stable democracies have come under attack from a whole range of corrosive, insidious forces. No one is immune. Our democracy is precious, something we have carefully grown and nurtured from one generation to the next. One of our core responsibilities is to make it stronger, and the key to that strength is transparency and accountability.'

In early 2023 the Australian Government established a taskforce to advise government on 'what can be done – practically – to strengthen Australian democracy'.

The 2024 NGA provides you - the elected representatives of Australia's local councils and communities - with the opportunity to engage with the Federal Government and key Ministers.

Further, it is your opportunity to advocate for new or expanded programs and key policy initiatives that could strengthen local governments, its capacity to deliver services and infrastructure to local communities across the nation. This service delivery is critical to build, maintain and strengthen the trust of our citizens.

This year's call for motion focusses on twelve priority areas:

- Intergovernmental relations;
- Financial sustainability;
- Roads and infrastructure;
- Emergency management;
- Housing and homelessness;
- Jobs and skills;
- Community services;
- Closing the Gap and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Reconciliation;
- Data, digital technology and cyber security;
- Climate change and renewable energy;
- Environment; and
- Circular economy.



1. INTERGOVERNMENTAL RELATIONS

'Australia's federal structure, built upon reciprocal financial, legislative and policy responsibilities, requires intelligent cooperation on issues of strategic national significance.'

National Cabinet is a forum for the Prime Minister, Premiers and Chief Ministers to meet and work collaboratively. National Cabinet was established on 13 March 2020 and is chaired by the Prime Minister. The National Cabinet is a key mechanism in Australia's current intergovernmental architecture.

A representative of local government, the President of ALGA, is invited to meet with National Cabinet once each year. The President of ALGA also attends one meeting per year of the Council on Federal Financial Relations comprising the Commonwealth Treasurer as Chair and all state and territory treasurers.

A substantial body of research, from Australia and internationally, has highlighted that governments that work together are generally more successful in achieving shared national objectives, including economic recovery from events like the COVID-19 pandemic as well as in service and infrastructure delivery.

This research reinforces the need for local government to be included in relevant ministerial forums that support national priorities – from housing affordability to reaching net-zero emissions. ALGA currently participates in National Cabinet (1/year), Council on Federal Financial Relations (1/year), Infrastructure Transport Ministers Meeting, National Emergency Managers Meeting, Local Government Ministers Forum, Joint Council on Closing the Gap, Planning Ministers Meeting, Meeting of Environment Ministers, Energy and Climate Change Ministers and the Road Safety Ministers Meeting, to represent local government views.

Local government input can provide a community voice, enabling our intergovernmental forums to make decisions with greater legitimacy and authority.

Given the importance of trust in governments, between governments and its citizens, how can intergovernmental arrangements be further improved in Australia?

Are there ways of maintaining and enhancing the community's trust in local government?

Are there new initiatives and programs that could be adopted to improve the level of cooperation and collaboration between the Australian Government and local government?

2. FINANCIAL SUSTAINABILITY

Trust in governments is highly correlated with their ability to fulfill the implicit social contract between government and its citizens by keeping promises.

Local government is the third sphere of government in Australia's system of government. Councils are comprised of locally elected representatives who understand local needs and engage locally on strategies to meet those needs.

Councils are responsible for providing a wide range of critical local area services including planning, libraries, waste management systems, transport and infrastructure (eg roads and footpaths, parks, sporting grounds and swimming pools) and social services.

These services are critical to the wellbeing, liveability and productivity of all local communities, and therefore the nation. Equally important is the sustaining of democratic processes at the local and regional level.

Local government's total annual expenditure in 2021 -22 was approximately \$43.6 billion. Non-financial assets including roads, community infrastructure such as buildings, facilities, airports, water, and sewerage (in some states) including land, are valued at \$539 billion [ABS Government Finance Statistics, Australia, 2021-22].

In 2021-22, the Australian Government provided \$2.6 billion in Financial Assistance Grants funding to councils. This included \$1.3b which was brought forward from the 2021-22 estimate and paid through state and territory governments in 2020-21.

Nationally, local government derives nearly 90% of its revenue from its own sources (including rates and services charges), compared to around 50% for state governments. Grants from other levels of government make up just over 10% of local government's total revenue, however these grants are particularly important in areas with a low-rate base, and/or high growth rates, and rapidly expanding service and infrastructure needs.

In 2021-22 Financial Assistance Grants to local governments was less than 0.6% of Commonwealth taxation revenue (CTR), a significant drop from 1996 when these grants were at 1% of CTR. In 2023-24 Financial Assistance Grants have fallen to 0.5% of Commonwealth taxation.

What improvements are needed to the intergovernmental financial transfer system, particularly the Commonwealth transfers to local government, to enhance the community's trust in local government and by extension all governments?

Noting that Commonwealth tied funding is provided with detailed requirements how can this system be improved to provide flexibility and maximize the benefit to local communities?

3. ROADS AND INFRASTRUCTURE

ALGA's 2021 National State of the Assets Report (NSoA) is currently being updated and expected to be launched in 2024. The most recent NSoA shows that while most local government assets such as roads, bridges, buildings, parks and recreation, stormwater, water and wastewater, and airports and aerodromes are generally in good to very good condition, around 10% are not fit for purpose, and around 20–25% are only fair and over time will need attention.

The last NSoA found that in 2019–20 non-financial infrastructure assets were valued at \$342 billion and were depreciating at \$7.7 billion per year. Replacement costs of these infrastructure assets were in the order of \$533 billion.

Local government assets make up a significant proportion of the physical structure of local communities and often provide critical access to and support for citizens to engage in state and national assets and opportunities.

For example, local roads provide important “first and last-mile access” for communities and industry to road networks, integral to economic development and community connection. Local sporting grounds can provide access for community groups to build community participation that has social, health and economic benefits.

Are there programs or initiatives that the Australian Government could adopt to improve the long-term sustainability of local government infrastructure?

Are there programs or initiatives that the Australian Government could provide to improve the sector's capacity to manage local government infrastructure and to integrate these plans into long-term financial plans?

Are there programs or initiatives that the Australian Government could develop to maintain, strengthen and enhance the reputation of Australia's infrastructure providers, including local government?

4. EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT

In 2022 alone, 46 disasters were declared across Australia, covering more than 300 different council areas. In recent years, almost every Australian council has been impacted in some way by fires, floods, or cyclones.

Last year's flooding caused a damage bill of approximately \$3.8 billion to local roads across Queensland, New South Wales, Victoria and South Australia. This was just a fraction of the total disaster costs incurred by governments across the country.

There have been numerous NGA motions in recent years regarding natural disasters and this has been a significant priority in ALGA's advocacy program.

In 2022 ALGA successfully advocated for a new \$200 million per year Disaster Ready Fund, with the first round of funding allocated in June 2023. This fund will support councils and communities to mitigate against the risk of future disasters and help address the significant imbalance between mitigation and recovery spending.

Councils are encouraged to draw on their practical experience of the improvements that could be made to managing emergencies.

Please note that many aspects of emergency management are state or territory responsibilities, and your motions should focus on how the Australian Government could assist.

What new programs, or improvements to existing programs, could the Australian Government develop to partner with local government to improve the current natural disaster management systems to further assist in recovery and build resilience?

5. HOUSING AND HOMELESSNESS

Almost every Australian council and community is facing challenges around a lack of affordable housing.

Alarming research by the UNSW City Futures Research Centre shows 640,000 Australian households – or one in 15 households – are under housing stress.

All levels of government, including councils, have a fundamental role to play in addressing this crisis, which is being compounded by high interest rates, rising construction costs and skills shortages.

At a national level, ALGA is a signatory to the National Housing Accord, and in 2023 successfully advocated for a new \$500 million Housing Support Program for state and local governments to deliver supporting infrastructure for new housing developments.

While the provision of affordable housing is not a local government responsibility, councils have a role to play in ensuring there is enough suitably located land available for housing and that a diversity of housing stock is supported. Councils also want to ensure that new housing developments are supported with the necessary services and infrastructure to create liveable and sustainable communities.

Many councils are also addressing thin markets and developing land and housing themselves, delivering local solutions to meet the needs of their communities.

Councils also want to ensure that they engaged with planning decisions that affect local communities. Taking planning powers away from councils does not always support the best local outcomes.

Councils also play an important role addressing some of the causes of homelessness, including social inclusion programs that can assist mental health and family violence issues, as well as providing support for people currently experiencing homelessness.

What new programs and policies could the Australian Government develop to partner with local government to support the provision of more affordable housing?

How can the Australian Government work with councils to address the causes and impacts of homelessness?

6. JOBS AND SKILLS

Local government is a major employer in Australia providing employment, career advancement and training opportunities for more than 190,800 Australians, across an estimated 400 occupations.

However, councils are facing significant jobs and skills shortages that are constraining their capacity to deliver services and build and maintain local infrastructure.

ALGA's 2022 National Local Government Workforce Skills and Capability Survey indicated that more than 90 percent of Australia's 537 councils were experiencing skills shortages.

The survey also showed that for approximately two-thirds of these councils, these shortages were impacting on project delivery.

In particular, councils are facing a shortage of planners, engineers, building surveyors, environmental officers and human resources professionals.

Skills shortages occur for a variety of reasons including an inability to compete against the private sector, worker accommodation, support services for families, ageing of the workforce and geographic isolation.

Are there programs or initiatives that the Australian Government could implement that would enhance local government's capacity to attract and retain appropriately skilled staff now and into the future?

Are there programs or changes to existing programs that would increase local government's ability to employ apprentices and trainees?

Are there other initiatives that the Australian Government could provide to improve the sector's ability to plan and develop skills fit for the future?

7. COMMUNITY SERVICES

Councils provide a wide range of services based on local characteristics, needs, priorities, and the resources of their community. Indeed, it is this level of responsiveness and accountability to the local community that is an essential feature of democratic local governments worldwide.

Some of these services are provided to address market failure, and many of them are provided by councils on behalf of other levels of government.

It is important to note that nationally local government is more than 83% self-sufficient ie funded at the local level either through rates, fees and charges, sale of goods and services, or interest. The Australian Bureau of Statistics data shows that total local government annual expenditure in 2021-22 was \$43.6 billion.

Only 17% comes from grants and subsidies from other levels of government. Unfortunately, many of these grants and subsidies are tied, or require matching funding which restricts the ability to address local priorities in the way the council and community might need.

Arguably there is no greater obligation upon government than to maintain the trust that citizens have in meeting their community services obligations and promises, particularly to society's most vulnerable.

Local government community services are broadly defined, and may include but are not limited to:

- environmental health including food safety;
- childcare, early childhood education, municipal health;
- aged care, senior citizens;
- services to people living with disability;
- programs to address disadvantage, to reduce poverty and homelessness;
- sporting and recreational programs;
- arts and cultural activities, programs and festivals;
- tourism and economic development activities; and
- library services.

Noting the funding arrangements for the provision of local government community services are there programs and initiatives that the Australian Government could implement to improve the delivery of these services?

Are there reforms or improvements in national community services program that would help local governments support the Australian Government to deliver on its national objectives?

8. CLOSING THE GAP AND ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER RECONCILIATION

In 2021, ALGA co-signed a landmark national agreement to close the gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians. At the heart of the National Agreement on Closing the Gap Partnership are four agreed priority reform targets and 19 socio-economic targets in areas including education, employment, health and wellbeing, justice, safety, housing, land and waters, and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages.

The Indigenous Voice Co-design Final Report to the Australian Government was released in December 2021. The Local & Regional Voice will contribute to achieving the Closing the Gap outcomes by providing avenues for Indigenous voices to be heard, including to provide feedback to government on Closing the Gap.

As the level of government closest to the people, councils have an essential role supporting and helping to steer the development of policies and programs in partnership with local Indigenous peoples that address closing the gap priorities at the local and regional level.

Local government plays a positive role in reconciliation and celebrating Indigenous culture and identity, and sustainably funded could work effectively to reduce Indigenous disadvantage in all its forms.

On 14 October 2023, Australians voted in a referendum about whether to change the Constitution to recognise the First Peoples of Australia by establishing a body called the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Voice. The referendum did not pass.

Are there programs or initiatives that the Australian Government could adopt to assist local government to advance reconciliation and close the gap?

Are there practical programs or initiatives that local government and the Australian Government could introduce to maintain, build and strengthen the level of trust between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders and governments?

9. DATA, DIGITAL TECHNOLOGY AND CYBER SECURITY

Provision of information technology to all Australians is vital to innovation, economic growth, and social equity. However, it is potentially even more important to regional Australia where the tyranny of distance increases the inequity of services available – including education, health, economic and social. Innovative technology is becoming more broadly available and could boost productivity and economic growth.

Councils around Australia continue to embrace new technologies to improve their service delivery standards and broaden consultation and engagement with their local communities. However, implementation can be hindered without access to basic technological infrastructure and the necessary IT skills and resources.

In recent times, cyber-attacks on major corporations and other businesses have resulted in significant data breaches. It is a timely reminder as digital information, services and products become an increasing feature of modern business operation including in local government.

Like all risks, local government must manage the risk of cyber-attacks and address cyber security. At a national level, there is limited understanding of local governments' vulnerability to cyber-attacks, preparedness and adequacy of risk management strategies or business continuity planning.

While this is primarily a responsibility of the sector itself, governments at all levels must work together to ensure that the public have confidence in government information management systems and its security.

Drawing upon your council's experience, and your knowledge of other councils within your state or territory, are there programs and initiatives that the Australian Government could implement to help local government develop its digital technology services and infrastructure?

Are there actions the Australian Government could take to improve cyber security within the local government sector?

10. CLIMATE CHANGE AND RENEWABLE ENERGY

Australia's changing climate presents a significant challenge to governments, individuals, communities, businesses, industry, and the environment.

The Australian Government has committed to address climate change and in June 2022 submitted its revised National Determined Contribution (NDC) to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. The revised NDC included reaffirming a target of net zero emissions by 2050 and committing to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 43% from 2005 levels.

Local governments have played an important leadership role in addressing climate change, and councils have supported a wide range of community-based programs and initiatives to lower the carbon footprint of their own business operations and of their local communities.

As a sector, local government has been an advocate and active participant in the debate for lowering carbon emissions, is sourcing renewable energy, has responded creatively to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from landfills, and facilitated the construction of green buildings and water sensitive design of cities and towns.

Local government has been at the forefront in addressing the impacts of climate change and adaptation to climate change. In particular, councils have a practical understanding of the risk and impact of climate change on Australia's infrastructure and physical assets, natural ecosystems, local economies and their community.

Noting the Australian Government's approach to reducing emissions, are there partnerships, programs, and initiatives that local government and the Australian Government can form to achieve Australia's 2050 net zero emissions target?

Are there initiatives that could assist local governments to build trust in the community for implementation of key climate change and emissions reduction initiatives?

11. ENVIRONMENT

Australia's 537 local councils play an essential role in providing, regulating and managing Australia's environmental services and infrastructure.

Whether it's biodiversity, biosecurity, natural resource management (NRM), contaminated lands, waste management, water resources, sustainability or roadside environments, councils are responsible for educating households and businesses on environment policy, as well as driving environmental programs and initiatives in their local communities.

In recent years the National General Assembly has considered a range of environmental issues, and passed resolutions on biodiversity, biosecurity, conservation, climate change and water security.

How could the Australian Government partner with local government to strengthen Australia's environmental services and infrastructure?

What new programs could the Australian Government partner with local government in to progress local regional and national objectives?



12. CIRCULAR ECONOMY

Local government is responsible for the management of household and domestic waste and has a critical role to play in further developing the circular economy.

Australia's 537 councils manage approximately 26 percent of Australian waste, either directly or through contractual arrangements. Each year, local governments collect around 9.7 million tonnes of waste from kerbside bin services, sort it at material recovery facilities (MRFs), and dispatch what can be recycled to reprocessing facilities in Australia and overseas.

Where waste cannot be recovered it is landfilled, and local governments in most jurisdictions must pay a significant levy per tonne for landfilled waste, as well as incur the operational costs of maintaining and managing a landfill.

Collecting, treating, and disposing of Australian domestic waste costs local government an estimated \$3.5 billion annually. Local government also dedicates resources to administering community waste-education programs, collecting litter, addressing illegal rubbish dumping, and ensuring compliance with waste bylaws.

In November 2023, Australia's Environment Ministers agreed that the Federal Government would establish new regulations for packaging as well as mandate how packaging is designed, develop minimum recycled content requirements and prohibit harmful chemicals being used. These changes are expected to have a positive impact on the amount of waste sent to landfill, and the costs borne by councils and their communities.

How could the Australian Government further strengthen product stewardship arrangements to support local governments in their endeavours to increase recycling and reduce the volume of waste?

How could the Australian Government partner with local government to advance the circular economy?

CONCLUSION

Thank you for taking the time to read this discussion paper and your support for the 2024 National General Assembly of Local Government.

A FINAL REMINDER:

- » Motions should be lodged electronically at www.alga.com.au and received no later than 11.59pm on Tuesday 30 April 2024.
- » Motions must meet the criteria published in this paper.
- » Motions should commence with the following wording: 'This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to...'
- » Motions should not be prescriptive in directing how the matter should be pursued.
- » Motions should be practical, focussed and relatively simple.
- » It is important to complete the background section on the form.
- » Motions must not seek to advance an outcome that would result in a benefit to one group of councils to the detriment of another.
- » When your council submits a motion there is an expectation that a council representative will be present at the 2024 National General Assembly to move and speak to that motion if required.
- » Resolutions of the National General Assembly do not automatically become ALGA's national policy positions. The resolutions are used by the ALGA Board to inform policies, priorities and strategies to advance local governments within the national agenda.

We look forward to hearing from you and seeing you at the 2024 National General Assembly in Canberra.





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