



AUSTRALIAN
LOCAL GOVERNMENT
ASSOCIATION

PARTNERS IN PROGRESS

2022

NATIONAL GENERAL ASSEMBLY

19 - 22 JUNE 2022

CALL FOR MOTIONS

DISCUSSION PAPER



NGA22.COM.AU

SUBMITTING MOTIONS

This discussion paper is a call for councils to submit motions for debate at the 2022 National General Assembly (NGA) to be held in Canberra 19 – 22 June 2022.

It has been prepared to assist you and your council in developing your motions. 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 can address one or more of the issues identified in the discussion paper.

Motions should be lodged electronically using the online form available on the NGA website at: www.alga.asn.au and received no later than 11:59pm AEST on Friday 25 March 2022.

The theme of the 2022 NGA is – Partners in Progress.

The NGA aims to focus on how partnerships, particularly between the Australian Government and Local Governments, can tackle immediate challenges facing communities as well as confidently facing the future.

In submitting your council's motion/s you are encouraged to focus on how partnership can address national issues at the local level, and new ways the Australia Government could partner to strengthen the local government sector to advance community well-being, local economic development, create jobs, address environmental challenges, climate change and complex social issues such as housing affordability.

The National General Assembly of Local Government (NGA) is an important opportunity for you and your council to influence the national policy agenda and promote new ways of strengthening the local government sector and our communities.

Note: If your council does submit a motion there is an expectation that a council representative will be present at the National General Assembly to move and speak to that motion if required.

We look forward to hearing from you and seeing you at the 2022 NGA.



To submit your motion go to:
alga.asn.au/



KEY DATES

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 focussed on a specific location or region – unless the project has national implications. You will be asked to justify why your motion has strategic importance and should be discussed at a national conference
3. be consistent with the themes of the NGA
4. complement or build on the policy objectives of your state and 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 do something; and
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.

Motions should generally be in a form that seeks the NGA's support for a particular action or policy change at the Federal level which will assist local governments to meet local community needs.

Motions should commence as follows - *This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to*

Example

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to restore Local Government Financial Assistance Grants to a level equal to at least 1% of Commonwealth taxation revenue.

OTHER THINGS TO CONSIDER

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

Try to keep motions practical, focussed and relatively simple. Complex motions with multiple dot point can be difficult to implement and to advance.

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 ALGA Board NGA Subcommittee will group the motions together under an overarching strategic motion. The strategic motions have either been drafted by ALGA or are based on a motion submitted by a council which best summarises the subject matter. Debate 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.

Motions should be lodged electronically using the online form available on the NGA website at: www.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 endorsement of your council. Motions should be received no later than 11:59pm AEST on Friday 25 March 2022.



Introduction

As Australia emerges from the crisis management phase of the COVID-19 global pandemic, attention now turns to rebuilding and to the future.

By the time of the NGA in June 2022, the next federal government and 47th Parliament of Australia, will almost certainly have been elected.

Prior to the election the major political parties will have campaigned on priorities and made numerous policy and programs commitments that will help shape our nation's future.

Invariably, in government, these policies and programs will need to be refined, developed and implemented. Almost certainly they will need to be adapted to meet changing circumstances, emerging issues and local and regional needs.

We know from previous elections that governments will not be able to achieve their policy agenda alone. They need reliable partners committed to playing their part in taking the nation forward, working together on mutual goals and advancing national prosperity for all.

During the election campaign, ALGA will be working extensively with state and territory local government association members, and many of you, to advance the national priorities highlighted in the Federal Election manifesto 'Don't' Leave Local Communities Behind'.

These priorities were significantly influenced by many of the resolutions of past NGAs.

Whether the Coalition Government is returned or a new Government formed, the 2022 NGA provides the first major opportunity to engage with relevant portfolio Ministers and key members of the new Government.

Most importantly, it provides you - the elected representatives of Australia's local councils and communities - with the opportunity to reaffirm our national priorities and to place new ideas on the national policy agenda.



The Immediate Recovery Challenges

Government at all levels have collaborated to avert the worst possible health and economic outcomes of the COVID-19 pandemic across Australia.

By November 2021 most states had reached or made significant progress in reaching the 80% or more vaccination threshold.

Every community was affected, some more than others, and local government has been at the forefront of developing local solutions to local challenges.

Given the economic and social impacts of the COVID pandemic on communities over the past 2 years, are there issues that need to be addressed by a new partnership between the Commonwealth Government and local governments?

Given the impacts of the COVID pandemic on your council and other councils around the country, are their issues that a partnership between the Commonwealth Government and local government should address?

Jobs

In September 2021 the national, seasonally adjusted unemployment rate, was 5.2% (ABS). The underemployment rate was 9.5% with monthly hours worked decreasing by 1 million hours. Roy Morgan's survey work suggests Australian unemployment (unadjusted) was 9.2% in October with underemployment at 8.6%.

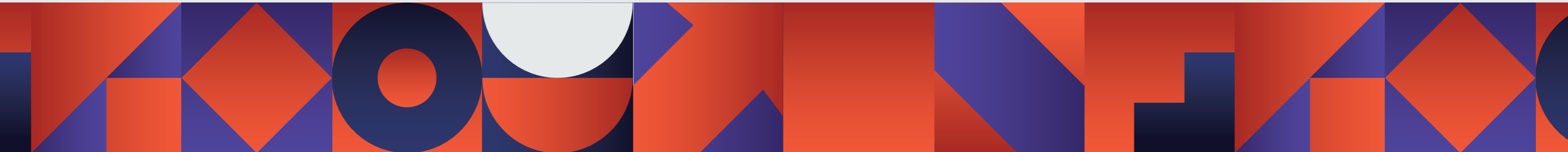
National statistics however mask variations at the state, regional and local level. State and Territory unemployment ranged from 3.9% in Western Australia and the Northern Territory, 5.1% in Queensland and Tasmania, 5.3% in South Australia, NSW 5.4%, Victoria 5.6% and the Australian Capital Territory 6.6%. Similarly, regional and local community unemployment vary from the national average reflecting local circumstances and the different impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, lockdowns and their flow-on effects have on the local economy. Youth unemployment and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander unemployment is also consistently higher.

As an employer of staff and of contractors, as well as a facilitator of local economic development, local government can play a key role in addressing unemployment and underemployment.

In keeping with the ALGA Federal election manifesto, 'Don't' Leave Local Communities Behind' local solutions are required for local circumstances.

What new partnership program could the Australian Government develop to take advantage of local government's knowledge of the local economy, geographic spread across the country and its ability to create jobs?

As an employer, what are the pre-requisites for councils to create more good quality, secure local jobs that build community capacity and address local workforce skills shortages?



Building Back Better Businesses

The economic shock of the past 2 years has caused unprecedented disruption to local businesses and communities. While many businesses have adapted to difficult circumstances, some have not survived. The current vacant shops fronts and offices of the streetscapes in our cities and towns is evidence of the challenges that our local businesses, local industry and communities have faced.

The capacity of the private sector, and small business in particular, to bounce back is untested.

What new partnership programs could the Australian Government introduce to take advantage of local government's role in economic development, including to support local businesses?

Opening Australia's Borders

As previously mentioned, by November 2021 most states had reached or made significant progress in reaching the 80% or more vaccination threshold. At this point, under the National Plan to Transition Australian National COVID-19 Response, governments were committed to introducing new measures such as opening international borders, minimising cases in the community without ongoing restrictions or lockdowns, Covid vaccination boosters encouraged and provided as necessary, and allowing uncapped inbound arrivals for all vaccinated persons, without quarantine.

As Australia opens-up its international borders economic recovery is expected to accelerate. The return of expats, international students, overseas migration and international tourism will increase population, supply of labour and demand for goods and services including for accommodation.

In the first instance, economic activity can be expected to return to pre-Covid levels. Over time, with appropriate support, it will grow.

The closure of borders and particularly international borders affected many parts of the tourism industry and the economies of many local communities. While domestic visitors helped fill a gap, recovery of many parts of the industry and the economy of communities that depend heavily on tourism will depend on the return of international travel.

To do this Australia must position itself to compete in international markets. This comes through offering high quality destinations, services and experiences that highlight the quality and value available in Australia. In addition to delivering a better visitor experience, this should also increase productivity, efficiency and innovation.

In the short term, what new partnership programs could the Australian Government introduce to assist local government meet the return of international students and stronger migration now and into the future?

What new programs could the Australian Government develop to partner with local government to facilitate tourism and the traveller economy?

Workforce Shortages and Re-engineering Work

In November 2021 business representatives report significant labour shortages particularly in the agriculture and hospitality sectors. The lack of backpackers, overseas students and migrant workers, combined with people not wanting to return to the workforce, are just some of the reasons attributed to these shortages.

While opening borders may increase the supply of labour, some argue that there is a more fundamental change in Australia's workforce and workplaces.

Although not reported in Australia yet, in the United States the post Covid workforce has been associated with what some have called the 'Great Resignation' as employees have adjusted their expectations, work life balance and priorities and simply not returned to their old jobs.

Many workers have been required to work from home for extended periods during the pandemic, including working remotely and now look for greater flexibility in their work. Technology and automation are transforming work and the workplace.

Many are prepared to change jobs to maximise this flexibility and the benefits derived from it. Traditionally this has led to wage pressure but coupled with demand for greater workplace flexibility employers need to be innovative to attract and retain employees. As an employer, councils are not immune and will also need to develop these strategies.

What new programs could the Australian Government develop to partner with local government to help support an influx of skilled migrants?

What new programs could the Australian Government develop to partner with local government to help councils attract and retain appropriately trained workers and employees?



Climate change

The United Nations Conference (COP) of Parties 26 held in Glasgow 2021 focused global attention on climate change and global and national efforts to achieve net zero emissions by 2050 and limit global warming to 1.5 degrees.

For decades local governments have played an important leadership role in addressing climate change. Councils have supported the adoption of a wide range of community-based programs and initiatives to lower the carbon footprint of local communities. As a sector, local government has led the debate for lowering carbon emissions, sourcing renewable energy, responded creatively to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from landfills, facilitated the construction of green buildings and water sensitive design of cities and towns.

Pragmatically, local government has been at the forefront to address the impacts of climate change and adaptation to climate change. These impacts include an increased number of days with high temperatures, less rainfall and more droughts in southern Australia, less snow, more intense rainfall and fire weather, stronger cyclones, and sea level rise. These changes will increase stress on Australia's infrastructure and physical assets and natural ecosystems that are already threatened, and significantly affect agriculture, forestry, fisheries, transport, health, tourism, finance and disaster risk management.

*How do we work together to ensure that there is local adaptation to climate change and climate extremes?
What partnerships are available to achieve climate neutrality?*

Natural Disasters

With the high-risk weather season commencing, many councils will be engaging with their communities about disaster preparedness, resilience and recovery. Not only have we experienced one of Australia's worst bushfire seasons in 2019-20, but some councils also had to deal with multiple disaster events within a 12 month period. Some councils have had to deal with bushfires, followed by storms, flooding, hailstorms, more flooding and COVID-19. These multiple disasters have had a devastating effect on many councils' financial sustainability and their ability to fund mitigation measures for the upcoming high risk weather season. Smaller rural and regional councils are further financially challenged and require help with preparedness and mitigation, as they currently have zero capacity to fund major mitigation projects.

The Royal Commission into National Natural Disaster Arrangements recognised that councils need help. It concluded that without assistance many local governments cannot undertake the roles and responsibilities allocated to them by their State/Territory Governments.

What new programs could the Australian Government develop to partner with local government to help to address natural disasters to assist in recovery and build resilience?



Environment

Local government plays a critical role in environmental management including environment protection.

“Australia’s Strategy for Nature 2019 – 2030” recognises that we all have a role in securing nature as the foundation of our existence. It is an overarching framework for all national, state and territory and local strategies, legislation, policies and actions that target nature. It has 3 goals:

1. Connecting all Australians with nature:
2. Care for nature in all its diversity, and
3. Share and Build knowledge.

To achieve these goals there are a variety of options for joint action to reduce threats and their impacts include ensuring the design and management of the protected area network considers and accommodates future threat scenarios and establishes robust mechanisms to respond effectively to new and emerging threats. The strategy suggests there are opportunities to ‘... improve planning, regulation, environmental impact assessment and approvals processes. In addition, threat abatement activities could include targeted pest management, ecosystem restoration (integrated fire management, revegetation), pollution control, greenhouse gas emissions management and climate change adaptation’.

How could the Australian Government partner with local government to help support the implementation of the Australian Strategy for Nature 2019 – 2030 and take advantage of local knowledge?

What new programs could the Australian Government develop to partner with local government to help to reduce threats and risks to nature and build resilience?

The Circular Economy

The 2019 National Waste Policy Action Plan applies principles of a circular economy to waste management to support better and repeated use of our resources. The circular economy principles for waste are:

1. Avoid waste
2. Improve resource recovery
3. Increase use of recycled material and build demand and markets for recycled products
4. Better manage material flows to benefit human health, the environment and the economy
5. Improve information to support innovation, guide investment and enable informed consumer decisions.

Councils play a major role in the management of household and domestic waste. Therefore, local government has a critical role to play in further developing the circular economy.

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

What new programs could the Australian Government partner with local government to progress these objectives?



Affordable Housing

The shortage and costs of rental properties and affordable home ownership is causing significant social and economic impacts in cities and towns across Australia, including rural and regional communities. This is due to a range of factors such as changes in recent migration patterns, cheap finance and labour and material shortages in the construction sector.

The impacts on local governments and communities includes housing stress for individuals and families, difficulty in attracting and housing key workers and an increase in homelessness.

The House of Representatives Standing Committee on Tax and Revenue 2021 is leading an inquiry into the contribution of tax and regulation on housing affordability and supply in Australia. Whilst the provision of affordable housing is not a local government responsibility, local governments often facilitate affordable housing within their communities, operating within state/territory planning, financial and other legislation requirements. The housing challenge is different in each community and the council response is dependent on its financial resources and priorities.

How could the Australian Government partner with local government address housing affordability?

What new programs could the Australian Government partner with local government to progress this objective?

Conclusion

Thank you for taking the time to read this discussion paper and support for the 2022 National General Assembly of Local Government.

A reminder:

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- Motions must meet the criteria published at the front of this paper.
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