

**SUBJECT: CCL 22/03/16 - MOTIONS AND ATTENDANCE AT THE NATIONAL GENERAL ASSEMBLY**

**REPORT BY: CORPORATE SERVICES**  
**CONTACT: DIRECTOR CORPORATE SERVICES / MANAGER LEGAL AND GOVERNANCE**

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## **PURPOSE**

To nominate attendees and a voting delegate for the 2016 Australian Local Government Association's National General Assembly (NGA) of Local Government being held in Canberra, from Sunday 19 to Wednesday 22 June 2016 (refer to **Attachment A** for further details).

## **RECOMMENDATION**

- 1 Council determines the Councillors to attend the 2016 Australian Local Government Association's National General Assembly of Local Government.
- 2 Council nominates Councillor/s [insert name/s] to attend.
- 3 If Council determines that more than one Councillor will attend, Council determines which Councillor will be the voting delegate.
- 4 Council nominates Councillor [insert name/s] as Council's voting delegate.

## **KEY ISSUES**

- 5 The theme of this year's NGA is 'Partners in an innovative and prosperous Australia'.
- 6 Council is entitled to one voting delegate in the debating session. If more than one Councillor attends, Council will need to determine who the voting delegate will be.
- 7 Councillors were invited to submit motions to Council Services by Monday 14 March 2016 for inclusion in this report for Council endorsement.
- 8 No motions were received.

## **FINANCIAL IMPACT**

- 9 Councillor(s) attendance at the NGA will be funded from each Councillor's Professional Development Budget.
- 10 Approximations of costs involved per delegate are detailed below:

<b>Description</b>	<b>Amount \$</b>
Registration (Monday 20 June to Wednesday 22 June)	
Early bird (payment received on or before 6 May 2016)	929.00

Registration Regional Development Forum (Sunday 19 June)	225.00
Social functions (optional)	
Buffet dinner (Monday 20 June)	100.00
NGA Dinner Parliament House (Tuesday 21 June)	130.00
Accommodation (4 nights approx. between \$210- \$345 per night)	1380.00 (max)
Sustenance: 3 x breakfast, 3 x lunch, 2 x dinner (approx.)	200.00
Travel	
<i>Option 1</i>	
Flights from Newcastle to Canberra (return)	500.00
<i>Option 2</i>	
Train from Newcastle to Canberra via Sydney – return	130.00
<i>Option 3</i>	
Bus from Newcastle to Canberra via Sydney - return	150.00
<i>Option 4</i>	
Private vehicle (estimated reimbursement at \$0.64/ km)	570.00
<b>Approximate cost per delegate</b>	<b>up to \$4,314.00*</b>

\* Calculation is an estimate based on early bird registration and maximum cost of travel and accommodation.

## COMMUNITY STRATEGIC PLAN ALIGNMENT

11 Nil.

## IMPLEMENTATION PLAN/IMPLICATIONS

12 The Payment of Expenses and Provision of Facilities to Councillors Policy provides sufficient overall budget for attendance.

13 Councillors were advised to check with Council Services as to whether their individual Professional Development budget would cover the cost.

## RISK ASSESSMENT AND MITIGATION

14 This is an opportunity to contribute to the development of national government policy.

## RELATED PREVIOUS DECISIONS

15 In 2015, a memo was distributed to Councillors requesting submission of motions. No submissions were received.

16 On 25 March 2014, Council resolved to not send a delegate to the National General Assembly or submit any motions.

## CONSULTATION

17 Nil.

### **OPTIONS**

#### **Option 1**

18 Council adopts the recommendation as shown at Paragraphs 1 and 4.

#### **Option 2**

19 Council does not send a delegate to the NGA or submit any motions.

### **BACKGROUND**

20 Nil.

### **REFERENCES**

### **ATTACHMENTS**

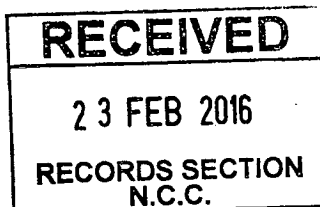
**Attachment A:** Letter from the President of the Australian Local Government Association



AUSTRALIAN LOCAL GOVERNMENT ASSOCIATION

18 February 2016

Newcastle City Council  
PO Box 489  
NEWCASTLE NSW 2300



To the Mayor, Councillors and CEO

**2016 National General Assembly of Local Government – Call for Motions**

The 2016 National General Assembly of Local Government (NGA), to be held at the National Convention Centre in Canberra between 19<sup>th</sup> and 22<sup>nd</sup> June, is an opportunity for councils to identify and discuss national issues of priority for the sector and to agree on possible steps which could be taken to address these issues. Every council has the opportunity to raise relevant issues for debate at the NGA and I invite your council to participate in the 2016 NGA by submitting a motion for consideration.

The Australian Local Government Association (ALGA) Board is calling for motions for the 2016 NGA under the theme of '*Partners in an Innovative and Prosperous Australia*'. This theme reflects the renewed focus across all levels of government on the roles and responsibilities of the public sector and the challenge of meeting our communities' needs.

To be eligible for inclusion in the NGA Business Papers, motions must follow the principles set out by the ALGA Board, namely:

1. Be relevant to the work of local government nationally;
2. Be consistent with the theme of the NGA;
3. Complement or build on the policy objectives of your state and territory local government association;
4. Propose a clear action and outcome; and
5. Not be advanced on behalf of external third parties which may seek to use the NGA to apply pressure to Board members, to gain national political exposure for positions that are not directly relevant to the work of, or in the national interests of, the local government sector.

Please be aware that ALGA reserves the right to reject motions which do not meet these conditions. To assist councils in preparing motions, a Discussion Paper has been prepared and is enclosed with this letter. It is also available on the ALGA website at [www.alga.asn.au](http://www.alga.asn.au).

Motions should be submitted via the online form on the website at [www.alga.asn.au](http://www.alga.asn.au) and should be received by ALGA no later than 22 April 2016. Any administrative inquiries can be directed to ALGA by calling 02 6122 9400.

I encourage you to ensure the views of your Council and your community are represented at the 2016 NGA and accordingly look forward to receiving your Council's motion.

Yours sincerely

  
Mayor Troy Pickard  
President

## Call for Motions Guidelines and Background Information

The theme for this year's National General Assembly of Local Government (NGA) is *'Partners in an Innovative and Prosperous Australia'*. The NGA theme reflects current issues being debated nationally and priority issues facing local government and is your opportunity to contribute to the development of national local government policy.

The ALGA Board is now calling for motions for the 2016 NGA.

To assist councils in preparing motions, a Discussion Paper has been prepared and is available at [www.alga.asn.au](http://www.alga.asn.au).

To be eligible for inclusion in the NGA Business Papers, motions must meet the following conditions:

1. be relevant to the work of local government nationally
2. be consistent with the themes of the Assembly
3. complement or build on the policy objectives of your state or territory local government association
4. propose a clear action and outcome, and
5. 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.

Once submitted, motions will be reviewed by the ALGA Board's NGA Sub-Committee as well as by 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 importance and relevance of the issue to local government. Please note that motions should not be prescriptive in directing how the matter should be pursued. 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 Business Papers. The sub-committee reserves the right to reject any motions which are not consistent with the conditions set out above, or to allocate these motions to the reserve section of the debate business papers to be dealt with only if time permits.

Through the review process, minor edits may be made to motions to ensure they can be included in the Business Papers. These edits will change the motion to call for action (for example to 'call on the Australian Government' to do something) to ensure relevance to local government nationally by removing state-specific references, or to ensure the wording is consistent with current conventions such as referring to the Australian Government instead of the Federal Government.

To assist in facilitating an efficient and effective debate, motions that cover similar matters will appear grouped together in the Business Papers and the matter will be debated only once with the lead or strategic motion being the one debated.

Motions that are agreed to at the NGA become Resolutions of the NGA. These Resolutions are then considered by the ALGA Board when setting national local government policy,

when the Board is making representations to the Federal Government at Ministerial Councils, during meetings and in ALGA publications. The ALGA Board is not bound by any Resolution passed at the NGA.

Motions are to be submitted online at [www.alga.asn.au](http://www.alga.asn.au) and should be received by **ALGA no later than 11.59pm Friday 22 April 2016.**

The following information will be required when you submit a motion using the online form.

*Motion*

- Text of the Motion

*National Objective*

- Why is this a national issue and why should this be debated at the NGA?
- Maximum 100 words

*Summary of Key Arguments*

- Background information
- Supporting arguments
- Maximum of 300 words (additional information should be provided as speaking notes to the council representative who will move the motion at the NGA)

*Declaration*

You will need to declare that the motion has been endorsed by your council.



**AUSTRALIAN LOCAL  
GOVERNMENT ASSOCIATION**

**National General Assembly of Local  
Government**

**19 - 22 June 2016**

**Call for Motions Discussion Paper**

**'Partners in an Innovative and  
Prosperous Future'**

*Motions should be lodged electronically at [www.alga.asn.au](http://www.alga.asn.au) no later than*

*11:59pm on Friday 22 April 2016.*

## ***Submitting Motions***

The National General Assembly of Local Government is an important opportunity for you and your council to influence the national policy agenda.

To assist you and your council to identify motions that address the theme of the NGA, the ALGA Secretariat has prepared this short discussion paper. You are encouraged to read all of the sections of the Paper, but are not expected to respond to every question in each section. Your motion/s can address one or all of the issues identified in the discussion paper.

To be eligible for inclusion in the NGA Business Papers, and then debate on the floor of the NGA, motions must be consistent with the following principles:

1. be relevant to the work of local government nationally
2. be consistent with the themes of the Assembly
3. complement or build on the policy objectives of your state and territory local government association
4. propose a clear action and outcome, and
5. 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. For example: *That this National General Assembly call on the Federal Government to restore indexation to local government financial assistance grants.*

Motions should be lodged electronically using the online form available on the NGA Website at: [www.alga.asn.au](http://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 by ALGA no later than 11:59pm on Friday 22 April 2016, electronically in the prescribed format.

Please note that for every motion it is important to complete the background section on the form. Submitters of motions should not assume knowledge. The background section helps all delegates, including those with no previous knowledge of the issue, in their consideration of the motion.

All motions submitted will be reviewed by the ALGA Board's NGA Sub-Committee as well as by 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 importance and relevance of the issue to local government. Please note that motions should not be prescriptive in directing how the matter should be pursued. Motions may be edited before inclusion in the Business Papers to ensure consistency. If there are any questions about the substance or intent of a motion, ALGA will raise these with the nominated contact officer. 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 Business Papers.

For more information, please contact Clare Hogan at ALGA on (02) 6122 9400.



## *Preamble*

The 2016 National General Assembly (NGA) is most likely to be held in the lead up to the next Federal election. During this time, all national political parties focus on leadership, key messages, marginal seats and political campaigning. National policy initiatives enter the public domain and all Australians are asked to engage in the political process and choose between competing ideas, election promises and the numerous candidates across the nation.

Last year's NGA theme was '*Closest to the People - Local government in the Federation*'. The theme reinforced the vital role of local government in Australia's system of government. It built on the Government's Federation White Paper process, which sought to clarify roles and responsibilities of the levels of government and potentially better align funding with respective responsibilities. It also acknowledged the development of a Green Paper on Taxation. The NGA greatly assisted ALGA in its advocacy and participation in the reform process.

Since then there has been much debate on taxation reform, which will culminate at the 2016 Federal election.

In December 2015 the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) reset the national political dialogue. COAG committed to:

'... close collaboration in areas of shared responsibility, including competition, tax, innovation, infrastructure, cities and regulation, as well as in health and education.'

COAG leaders agreed the principles for a new national economic reform agenda should be:

'...to deliver for all Australians no matter where they live:

- a stronger, more productive and more innovative Australian economy, with more jobs, more opportunities and higher living standards
- fairness and equity, with protection for disadvantaged and lower income Australians, and
- more efficient and high quality services.'

The theme of the 2016 NGA – '*Partners in an Innovative and Prosperous Future*' – invites councils from across Australia to consider the role of local government in this agenda, and how councils can play their role in the delivery of these objectives.

Many of the services and infrastructure provided by councils are not only critical to the social, cultural and environmental well-being of their communities, but also to the economic prosperity of their regions and the nation more broadly.

The NGA debate on motions and associated discussions will seek to highlight how local government can be more agile in delivering those services to communities, as well as send a strong and unified message to the Commonwealth.

## ***Introduction***

The 2016 NGA theme is '*Partners in an Innovative and Prosperous Future*'.

This year, the NGA debate on motions and associated discussions will seek to highlight how local government can be more efficient and effective. The discussions will look at how local government, working in partnership with other levels of government, the private sector and the not-for-profit sector, can innovate and create a prosperous future for the community it serves.

This year's theme builds on the work of the 2015 NGA which focused on local government's role in the Federation. The Commonwealth Federation Discussion Paper 2015 sets a context in which motions for this year's NGA should be developed.

The theme '*Partners in an Innovative and Prosperous Future*' seeks to focus attention on the role that local government can play in creating a prosperous Australia. The Federation Discussion Paper notes that Australia today is very different from the country it was at the time of Federation and poses the fundamental question: '... does [the Federation] provide the system of national governance that Australians need right now, and will it help or hinder efforts to adapt and thrive in the vastly different economic, political and social realities of the 21<sup>st</sup> century?'

To put this question in a local government context:

Are the government systems (including our own), processes and priorities, in many cases set up decades ago, still appropriate today?

Are they delivering accessible and fair systems and are they a help or hindrance? Do they facilitate business activity and contribute to higher living standards, or are they a drag on the local economy? Are they necessary or do they duplicate effort?

Technological change has created opportunities, making many traditional models of business and government obsolete. Have these opportunities been taken up?

Participatory democracy is being enhanced through empowering individuals and local communities with new knowledge and new ways of engaging with each other and with governments. Are these opportunities being captured?

Australian productivity and living standards are comparatively high by world standards. However, the current national productivity and reform debate recognises that without reform, Australia risks being left behind on the world stage—meaning fewer jobs, lower economic growth, and reduced living standards.

COAG has responded positively to this challenge. All governments have committed to collaborate particularly in areas of shared responsibility, including competition, tax, innovation, infrastructure, cities and regulation, as well as health and education.

The 2016 NGA seeks motions that suggest reform, innovation in government operations and opportunities to partner with local government that will support Australia's prosperity.

### ***Local government role in national productivity***

Over several decades, the NGA has called on the Australian Government to recognise the importance of greater levels of investment in local and regional infrastructure. This advocacy has been, in part, built on equity considerations as well as productivity considerations.

The NGA has called on the Australian Government to increase Financial Assistance Grants and Roads to Recovery (R2R) funding. These calls have been predominantly based on the need for the Commonwealth to help achieve horizontal equity (i.e. an equitable level of municipal services across the country) and the need to assist local councils to rebuild and maintain local infrastructure, particularly roads.

The rationale for permanent R2R funding and additional freight investment is that essentially the purpose of R2R is to restore the capacity of local roads to a standard able to sustain social and economic services, whereas additional funding through freight investment would be required to improve the standard of roads to meet the higher service levels required to handle higher productivity vehicles and significantly higher volumes of freight traffic.

The NGA's calls to the Australian Government have also sought recognition that local infrastructure provides important economic services. Local roads, for example, are an essential component of the national road network and therefore add to local and regional productivity and, in aggregate, make a significant contribution to state and national productivity.

Community infrastructure also plays an important role in local and regional economic development by enhancing the quality of life for residents as well as helping to attract and retain population, skilled workers and a local and regional workforce. The State of the Regions Report in 2015, commissioned by ALGA and written by National Economics, showed that there is a strong economic rationale for ensuring that all regions in Australia prosper. The report confirmed OECD findings that regional inequality reduces national productivity.

Local government's objectives in local economic development are diverse. They recognise local circumstances, availability of resources and the impact of external factors such as privatisation, technological change, globalisation and structural industry changes. For some councils, particularly in rural and regional areas, the focus is on stemming the decline in population, loss of businesses and local employment. For others, it is a focus on working with local businesses and the local community to optimise economic development and opportunities for the area.

Local government can facilitate and support economic development but it is frequently criticised for impeding economic development by imposing additional costs on business including through regulation, creating red-tape, providing unsuitable infrastructure etc.

Australian councils contribute significantly to the productivity and economy of their regions by focusing their efforts in three key strategic areas:

- creating and maintaining the investment environment – ensuring the availability of appropriate physical and social infrastructure, striving to deliver a quality public domain, and ensuring sufficient housing diversity and lobbying on behalf of local and regional communities for sufficient community services such as education and training, health and well-being, community safety and emergency services
- facilitating new local investment – actively promoting business development through facilitating local economic development, strategic planning, working with business

associations/main street organisations, and active involvement with tourism or other business activities, and

- attracting external investment through the creation of new business and capital – working with regional bodies such as RDA, Austrade and developers to attract and create new businesses and investment.

Local government has a key role to play in the provision of support services and infrastructure that underpins local and regional economic development, and therefore local government plays an essential part in achieving higher productivity. In broad terms, actions geared to creating and maintaining the investment environment in local and regional communities are considered to be of prime importance to a majority of local councils and it is this area that ALGA has focused its greatest attention.

Local government is a natural leader in local economic development because councils know their local business communities, workforce and comparative advantages better than anyone else. Local people and businesses are the key to economic growth and development and councils are perfectly positioned to work with local stakeholders to drive a bottom-up, place-based approach to achieve prosperity. Every council's economic development activity will be different according to the unique structures and needs of their local economies, as well as the capacity of the council and community.

### **Questions**

Given the importance of local and regional infrastructure are there any national initiatives that could further assist local government to support local and regional productivity?

Are there areas of reform that local government can explore to enhance economic development and productivity?

## ***Partnering***

The term *partner* as a noun is defined as '... a person who takes part in an undertaking with another or others, especially in a business or firm with shared risks and profits.' In the context of the 2016 NGA, it can be interpreted as '... how councils can take part in an undertaking with others, including sharing the risk, for the benefit of the community'.

Local government provides a vast array of services and local infrastructure, often in partnership with others including other governments, the private sector, the community and not-for-profit sector.

Example of partnerships include:

- the provision of a local swimming pool in partnership with the private sector, or a not-for-profit organisation, that provides the management service of that facility
- the provision of Meals on Wheels in partnership with the community not-for-profit sector delivering meals to residents at their homes, and
- the provision of Home and Community Care (HACC) to targeted groups of clients in the municipality, in partnership with the federal and state governments which provide funding.

Other examples include:

- councils partnering with a university to provide locally-relevant research to inform decisions on issues such as development applications in areas that could be effected by sea level change
- partnering with other councils to share resources and skills, and
- partnering with the private sector to develop new and innovative ways of delivering services, such as electronic planning or apps to report pot holes.

A key feature of each of these examples is that each party brings different expertise, skills, resources and experiences to the specific undertaking. The combination of these skills, expertise and resources frequently results in innovation and the provision of a service in a way that would not be possible by either party separately.

An alliance between local government and other partners creates new opportunities for business as well as innovative services, increased efficiency, cost savings and more accessible service to the benefit of the community.

## **Questions**

Please note, where local government is mentioned in the following questions it refers to local government as a whole, not specific proposals for partnerships at a single council level. Questions are designed to draw out new ideas that could transform the delivery of services and infrastructure at a systemic level.

Are there new opportunities for the Australian Government to partner with local government to deliver Commonwealth services at the local level? What would be the role of the Commonwealth in such a partnership? How would this benefit the community?

Are there partnerships that could be developed to maximise the opportunities to innovate and provide simpler, smarter and more reliable services and infrastructure at the local level? If so, what are these opportunities and what would be the role of the Commonwealth in supporting these partnerships?

Are there opportunities for the private sector to partner with local government to speed up and improve a local government service or function? What role could the Commonwealth play in facilitating these opportunities?

### ***Innovation***

The Australian Government has declared its strong support for innovation. The Government's National Innovation and Science Agenda says innovation is:

'... at the heart of a strong economy—from IT to healthcare, defence and transport—it keeps us competitive, at the cutting edge, creates jobs and maintains our high standard of living. It's not just about new ideas, products and business models; innovation is also about creating a culture where we embrace risk, move quickly to back good ideas and learn from mistakes.'

The statement has a focus on a range of objectives including:

- entrepreneurship and leveraging our public research
- increasing collaboration between industry and researchers to find solutions to real world problems and to create jobs and growth
- developing and attracting world-class talent for the jobs of the future, and
- government leading by example by embracing innovation and agility in the way we do business.

### **Questions**

What is the role of local government in this innovation agenda?

Are these objectives relevant to local government itself? For example, is its role in increasing collaboration between industry and researchers to find solutions to real-world problems and to create jobs and growth? If so, how can these solutions be shared to the benefit of all councils and their communities. How could the Australian Government help this to occur?

What can local government bring to the table as a partner? For example, does local government hold data that, having regard to privacy issues, could be shared with the private sector which could put it to innovative uses? How could the Australian Government support this?

Are there digital innovations that could be introduced to local government that would increase the efficiency of businesses working with local government and vice-versa. How could the Australian Government support this?

Is there a role for local government to help innovative start-ups to rapidly transform their ideas into globally competitive businesses by giving them mentorship, funding, resources, knowledge and access to business networks? If so, how could the Australian Government support this?

### ***Resourcing***

In the 2014-15 Federal Budget, the Government committed to provide \$2.2867 billion in Local Government Financial Assistance Grants (FAGs). However, the Government also announced it would pause the indexation of FAGs for the three years following that budget.

FAGs are a Commonwealth Specific Purpose Payment to local government paid through the State and Territory Governments. Payments are made to councils by jurisdictional Treasurers on the advice of state and territory Local Government Grants Commissions under the provisions of *the Local Government (Financial Assistance) Act 1995*.

The objects of the *Local Government (Financial Assistance) Act 1995* enable the Commonwealth Parliament to provide assistance to the states for the purposes of improving:

- (a) the financial capacity of local governing bodies
- (b) the capacity of local governing bodies to provide their residents with an equitable level of services
- (c) the certainty of funding for local governing bodies
- (d) the efficiency and effectiveness of local governing bodies, and
- (e) the provision by local governing bodies of services to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

Freezing the indexation of FAG's will reduce Commonwealth expenditures (and grants to councils) by more than \$925 million over the forward estimates. The freeze also means that the aggregate level of FAGs will be permanently reduced by almost 13 per cent, unless there is a future government decision to restore this base with a catch-up payment.

Councils are invited to submit motions to address this issue.