WORKING TOGETHER FOR OUR COMMUNITIES NGA20

Call for Motions
Discussion Paper 2020

14-17 June 2020
National Convention Centre Caberra

nga20.com.au

AUSTRALIAN
LOCAL GOVERNMENT
ASSOCIATION

KEY DATES

18 November 2019
Opening of Call for Motions

27 March 2020
Acceptance of motions close

14 - 17 June 2020
National General Assembly

To submit your motion go to:
alga.asn.au/nga20-motions/

SUBMITTING MOTIONS

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

To assist you to identify motions that address the theme of the 2020 NGA – Working Together for Our Communities, the Australian Local Government Association (ALGA) Secretariat has prepared this short discussion paper. You are encouraged to read all the sections of the paper but are not expected to respond to every question. Your motion/s can address one or more of the issues identified in the discussion paper.

Remember that the focus of the NGA is on partnerships and working together so your questions could focus on how Local Governments can work in partnership with the Australian Government to address the challenges our communities face, or the opportunities that are arising as we approach the crossroads before us.

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

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.

OTHER THINGS TO CONSIDER

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 ....

e.g. This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to restore funding for local government Financial Assistance Grants to a level equal to at least 1% of Commonwealth taxation revenue.

In order to ensure 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.

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 27 March 2020.**

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. With the agreement of the relevant council, motions may be edited before inclusion in the NGA 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 NGA Business Papers.

There is an expectation that any Council that submits a motion will be present at the National General Assembly to move and speak to the motion.

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this discussion paper is to provide guidance to councils developing Motions for Debate at the 2020 National General Assembly (NGA). This NGA will focus on working together for our communities and how local governments can achieve success through partnerships. It will consider how strategic partnerships can assist councils to address the challenges and opportunities we are facing today and tomorrow.

Some of the challenges and opportunities facing Australia were outlined in the CSIRO's Australian National Outlook 2019. Many of the challenges have direct implications for local governments and the communities they represent and provide services for. These challenges can also be opportunities that, if seized and managed appropriately, can ensure that our councils and communities thrive. This will require long-term planning, significant effort, and a cultural shift that will rebuild trust in institutions and all tiers of government, encourage healthy risk taking, and incorporate environmental and social outcomes in decision-making.

Collaboration and partnerships across sectors and with a diverse range of organisations will be vital to develop and implement solutions to the challenges ahead and to seizing the opportunities that emerge.

The National Outlook

The Australia National Outlook 2019 released by the CSIRO[1] revealed that Australia is at a crossroads. The research highlighted that we need to think and act differently if we are to ensure a bright future where GDP per capita could be as much as 36% higher in 2060 and growth is environmentally sustainable and inclusive. Failure to adequately address the significant economic, environmental and social challenges identified would result in a slow decline.

The CSIRO identified six important challenges that are already taking hold or on the horizon:

- **The rise of Asia** – The development boom in China that fuelled strong demand for Australian commodities (particularly resource and energy exports) is tapering off as China transitions to a new phase of growth fuelled by domestic consumption and services. However, growth in Asia could also create significant opportunities for Australia. By 2030, the Asia-Pacific region is set to consume more that half of the world's food, 40% of its energy, and be home to an estimated 65% of the world's middle class, resulting in increased demand for Australia's quality produce and service exports including tourism, education, health and aged care services, entertainment and financial and professional services.

How can local government position its communities to reap the benefits of the rise of the Asian middle class and manage any impacts? What partnerships are important?

- **Technological change** – New disruptive technologies are transforming industries and the way people live, work, and interact with each other. They are also changing the skills that will be needed in the workforce of the future. In the face of declining academic results Australia faces difficulties in ensuring that the workforce is prepared for the jobs of the future. With adaptation strategies in place embracing technology can have a net positive outlook for jobs.

What are the pre-requisites for commitments to take advantage of technological change?

What adaptation strategies are required at a local level to ensure councils and local communities are ready for the jobs of the future? What partnerships may be required?

- **Climate change and environment** – a broad range of impacts will be experienced in Australia as a result of global climate change, the severity of which will depend on the effectiveness of global emission reductions and local adaptation. The impacts include more extremely high temperatures and few extremely low temperatures, less rainfall and more droughts in southern Australia, less snow, more intense rainfall and fire weather, and fewer but stronger cyclones, and sea level rise. These changes will increase stress on Australia's ecosystems that are already threatened, and significantly affect agriculture, forestry, fisheries, transport, health, tourism, finance and disaster risk management. It is possible to strive towards zero emissions through a range of actions that target key sectors including energy, land use, urban infrastructure and industrial systems.

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

- **Demographics** – Australia's population is estimated to reach 41 million by 2060. This increase will be accompanied by an ageing of the population resulting in a reduction in the proportion of working age people from 66% in 2018 to an estimated 60% in 2060. This will impact economic output and infrastructure requirements and place pressure on government budgets. The impacts of population growth are likely to be felt most strongly in urban environments, with Sydney and Melbourne projected to be home to 8-9 million people and Brisbane and Perth increasing to 4-5 million people. If density does not increase, more and more people will be distanced from jobs, higher education, health services and transport.

What partnerships and forward planning are required to manage the impact of population growth in urban areas? How do regional and rural areas work in partnership to realise the benefit of population growth?

- **Trust** – Trust in institutions including governments, businesses, non-government organisations and the media has declined significantly since 1993 when 42% trusted government compared with just 26% in 2016. The loss of trust threatens the social licence to operate for Australia's institutions, restricting their ability to enact long term strategies.

How can local governments utilise partnerships to strengthen our social licence to operate?

- **Social cohesion** – like trust, social cohesion has declined falling from a baseline of 100 in 2007 to 88.5 in 2017, according to the Scanlon Foundation Index. This index considers survey respondents' sense of belonging and worth, social justice and equity, political participation and attitudes towards minorities and newcomers. The drivers of social cohesion are not fully understood but the following factors may all play a role: issues related to trust; financial stress, slow wage growth; poor housing affordability and its disproportionate affect on low income earners; and the rise of inequity.

How can local governments work in partnership with their communities and others to build and maintain social cohesion?

If Australia tackles these six challenges head on using a collaborative approach, we can achieve a bright future as a nation. However, there are five major shifts or changes that must occur. Each of these shifts have several "levers" that support their attainment. Local government has a role in some of the levers.

- An industry shift to enable a productive, inclusive and resilient economy with new strengths in both the domestic and export sectors
  - o Increase the adoption of technology to boost productivity in existing industries that have historically supported Australia's growth, as well as new industries.
  - o Invest in skills to ensure a globally competitive workforce that is prepared for technology-enabled jobs of the future.
  - o Develop export-facing growth industries that draw on Australia's strengths and build competitive advantage in global markets and value chains.

What can be achieved through partnerships that can address the gap between regions that are struggling and those that are well-off?

- An urban shift to enable well-connected, affordable cities that offer more equal access to quality jobs, lifestyle amenities, education and other services.
  - o Plan for higher-density, multicentre and well-connected capital cities to reduce urban sprawl and congestion.
  - o Create mixed land use zones with diverse high-quality housing options to bring people closer to jobs, services and amenities.
  - o Invest in transportation infrastructure, including mass-transit, autonomous vehicles and active transit, such as walking and cycling.

Rural communities are essential to Australia's wellbeing. What is required to ensure equitable access to quality jobs, lifestyle amenities, education and other services? What role do partnerships have to play in this?

Local governments are vital partners in achieving the urban shift? What needs to be brought to the partnerships by other parties? What policies need to be developed or changed?

- An ENERGY shift to manage Australia's transition to a reliable, affordable, low-emissions energy economy that builds on Australia's existing sources of comparative advantage.
  - o Manage the transition to renewable sources of electricity, which will be driven by declining technology costs for generation, storage and grid support.
  - o Improve energy productivity using available technologies to reduce household and industrial energy use.
  - o Develop new low-emissions energy exports, such as hydrogen and high-voltage direct current power.

What role do local governments play in the energy shift? How will local governments and communities benefit?

- A LAND shift to create a profitable and sustainable mosaic of food, fibre and fuel production, carbon sequestration and biodiversity.
  - o Invest in food and fibre productivity by harnessing digital and genomic technology, as well as using natural assets more efficiently.
  - o Participate in new agricultural and environmental markets, such as carbon forestry, to capitalise on Australia's unique opportunities in global carbon markets.
  - o Maintain, restore and invest in biodiversity and ecosystem health, which will be necessary to achieve increased productivity.

How can rural and regional communities' benefit from the land shift? What partnerships are required to achieve this shift?

- A CULTURE shift to encourage more engagement, curiosity, collaboration and solutions, and should be supported by inclusive civic and political institutions.
  - o Rebuild trust and respect in Australia's political, business and social institutions.
  - o Encourage a healthy culture of risk taking, curiosity and an acceptance of fear of failure to support entrepreneurship and innovation.
  - o Recognise and include social and environmental outcomes in decision-making processes.

How can local governments build partnerships with their local communities that also benefit the nation as a whole?

How can local governments work in partnership with the Australian Government and other key stakeholders to achieve these shifts and other significant policy challenges?

Can a partnership approach address the current infrastructure backlog and ensure that infrastructure (including transport infrastructure) is available and fit for the future?

Trust

To effectively implement the scale of change and reform that will be required for the growing Australian population, government needs to focus on rebuilding trust. According to the *Edelman Trust Barometer* [2], trust in government around the world fell to record lows in 2018. While modest increases were reported in the 2019 study including in Australia, citizens around the world are struggling to trust that their governments are working in their best interest.

The 2018 report *Trust and Democracy in Australia: Democratic decline and renewal* [3] revealed that Members of the Australian Parliament (MPs) in general are distrusted by nearly half the population (48 per cent) with only one in five (21 per cent) are willing to express that they trust them "a little bit". For State MPs and local councillors, the figure is slightly better with 31 % and 29 % respectively indicating they "trust them a little bit". Table 1 details the level of trust in different generations.

	Generation Z (1995-present)	Millennials (1980-94)	Generation X (1965-79)	Baby Boomers (1946-64)	Builders (1925-45)
State/Territory Government	38.5%	40.0%	26.7%	35.7%	44.1%
Federal Government	39.5%	31.5%	21.5%	30.8%	39.2%
Political parties	26.9%	15.6%	12.2%	16.7%	15.7%
Local Government	66.5%	47.1%	33.6%	47.5%	54.9%
Government ministers	27.5%	24.5%	15.7%	24.3%	31.1%
MPs in general	26.9%	23.2%	16.1%	20.2%	22.3%
Local Councillors	33.8%	31.7%	24.7%	27.2%	33.3%
Public Servants	45.4%	40.4%	34.4%	39.4%	35.9%
Your local MP	29.2%	30.5%	27.5%	31.2%	39.8%

Table 1: Levels of political trust in different generations (source: Stoker et al 2018)

The report revealed that one thing that appears to unite most Australians is complaining about their politicians with the three biggest grievances being:
● politicians are not accountable for broken promises;
● that they don't deal with the issues that really matter; and
● that big business/trade unions have too much power.

Professor Ken Smith, the Dean and CEO of the Australia and New Zealand School of Government (ANZSOG), is intent on understanding the factors that drive distrust in government and developing innovative ways to counter some of these trends. He has highlighted[4] that people look at central government and see bureaucrats far removed from their own local circumstances. In Australia, where people live in very varied conditions, it is crucial for policymaking to be based in local realities. Yet locally-based solutions have not been the method of choice so far in Australian politics. The answer, according to Professor Smith, is devolved government, or subsidiarity where "policies are driven by and tailored to the needs of the local community – to avoid the problem of service provision that completely misses the mark".

Some commentary suggests that declining trust and confidence is driven by a perceived failure of our institutions to uphold promises and deliver outcomes. Research undertaken for *Trust and Democracy in Australia: Democratic decline and renewal*[5] revealed a significant appetite for reform including the co-design of policies with ordinary Australians, citizen juries, to solve complex problems that parliament can't fix, and reforms aimed at creating a stronger community or local focus to decision-making.

The Review into the Australian Public Service (APS) had a focus on delivering local solutions[6] not only in terms of place-based policy making but also by paying attention to communities (often specific communities determined by interest or identity). The review found that there is currently no guiding set of administrative principles or coordinated holistic architecture either within the APS or across the APS and other levels of government to fully support and enable local delivery solutions.

The report[7] went on "evidence suggest the need for increasing localised solutions in genuine partnership with communities to achieve best social, economic and environmental outcomes. Top down policy making is no longer sufficient alone to deal with community expectations or the complexity of challenges faced in community settings. Communities themselves need to be part of the solutions, right from problem conception to design, implementation and evaluation". "There are opportunities for the APS to get closer to the communities it services directly and indirectly (through effective partnerships with other levels of government and civil society".

How can local governments address the trust deficit with their local communities and assist the Australian Government to do the same?

How can the Australian Government and local governments maximise the strengths and abilities of the public service (including council staff) and deliver in partnership for our communities?

How can we draw on the strengths and resourcefulness of local governments and local communities to work in partnership with the Australian Government to tackle issues of national significance and lift key economic and social indicators?

What do local governments bring to the table to tackle issues of national significance?

REFERENCES

PAGE 4
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PAGE 7
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3. Stoker, G; Evans, M and Halupka, M (2018) Trust and Democracy in Australia: Democratic decline and renewal. Report No.1 Democracy 2025 Canberra

PAGE 8
4. Centre for Public Impact (2019) Subsidiarity, leadership and an empowered public service: keys to rebuilding trust in government. https://www.themandarin.com.au/98763-subsidiarity-leadership-and-an-empowered-public-service-keys-to-rebuilding-trust-in-government/

5. Stoker, G; Evans, M and Halupka, M (2018) Trust and Democracy in Australia: Democratic Decline and Renewal. Report No.1 Democracy 2025 Canberra

6. Althaus, C and McGregor C (2019) Ensuring a world-class Australian Public Service: delivering local solutions. An ANZSOG research paper for the Australian Public Service Review Panel Australian & New Zealand School of Government ANZSOG.EDU.AU

7. Ibid.