

Report to the Future Melbourne Committee

Agenda item 6.7

Participation in Australian Local Government Association National General Assembly and Australian Council of Local Government, Canberra, July 2024

23 April 2024

Presenter: Jack Hanna, Executive Officer Councillor Liaison

Purpose and background

1. The purpose of this report is to provide for City of Melbourne (CoM) participation in the Australian Local Government Association (ALGA) National General Assembly and the Australian Council of Local Government (ACLG) to be held in Canberra between 2 and 5 July 2024.
2. The ALGA National General Assembly provides an annual forum for local government to discuss and advance issues of national significance to local government. Member councils have the opportunity of submitting motions for consideration in a forum involving local government representatives from across Australia.
3. At the conclusion of the National General Assembly, the Australian Government will host the sixth ACLG forum which aims to showcase the important partnership the Australian Government has with local government across the country.

Key issues

4. The 2024 National General Assembly theme is *Building Community Trust* and seeks to explore the importance of trust in governments, between governments, its institutions and its citizens. A Discussion Paper supporting the theme can be found on the ALGA's website www.alga.com.au.
5. Following discussion by Councillors, it is proposed that a motion on behalf of the CoM be submitted on the topic of revitalisation of urban waterways. The proposed motion included as Attachment 2 seeks to build on funding sources available to local government through the Urban Rivers and Catchments Program and to remove barriers experienced by councils in attempts to achieve desired and co-ordinated outcomes of environmental, recreational and community value.
6. The ACLG program will cover a range of themes including climate change and renewable energy, disaster recovery and resilience, service delivery, housing, skills and capacity.
7. It is proposed that the CoM be represented at the National General Assembly and the ACLG forum by Deputy Lord Mayor Nicholas Reece, Councillor Dr Olivia Ball and Councillor Rohan Leppert. Participation per Councillor is estimated at \$3800 and includes airfare, accommodation, registration fees and incidentals.

Recommendation from management

8. That the Future Melbourne Committee approves:
 - 8.1. The proposed motion outlined in Attachment 2 for consideration at the Australian Local Government Association (ALGA) National General Assembly.
 - 8.2. Participation in the ALGA National General Assembly and Australian Council of Local Government forum through the Deputy Lord Mayor Nicholas Reece, Councillor Dr Olivia Ball and Councillor Rohan Leppert at an estimated cost of \$3800 per participant.

Attachments:

1. Supporting Attachment (Page 2 of 4)
2. Proposed motion for ALGA NGA, July 2024 (Pages 3 and 4)

Supporting Attachment

Legal

1. There are no direct legal implications arising from the recommendation contained in this report.

Finance

2. The cost associated with representation at meetings in Canberra is estimated at \$3800 per participant. This includes airfare (\$960), accommodation (\$980), registration fees for conference and associated activities (\$1120) and incidental costs (\$740).

Conflict of interest

3. The opportunity to participate at Council expense has the potential to benefit Deputy Lord Mayor Nicholas Reece, Councillor Dr Olivia Ball and Councillor Rohan Leppert. Consequently, a material conflict of interest may exist. The outcome of the matter therefore has the potential to benefit Councillors in a pecuniary form. As such, section 128(1) of the *Local Government Act 2020* would appear to be engaged.

Health and Safety

4. Councillors travelling to Canberra will undertake personal safety and awareness precautionary steps which apply to interstate travel.

Stakeholder Consultation

5. No external stakeholder consultation was required in the development of this report.

Relation to Council policy

6. Forums such as the ALGA National General Assembly and ACLG provide Council with the opportunity of demonstrating leadership by advancing issues of national interest to local government.
7. The topic proposed for the National General Assembly is relevant to the CoM and other local councils. The current complexities and challenges for local councils in achieving strategic outcomes and benefits for the community is something the CoM has experienced in its attempts to deliver a vision for the Moonee Ponds Creek (MPC) corridor. The MPC corridor is a north–south spine linking several central city urban renewal precincts.

Environmental sustainability

8. The carbon emissions resulting from air travel to Canberra will be offset with the purchase of credits.

MOTION PROPOSED BY THE CITY OF MELBOURNE
AUSTRALIAN LOCAL GOVERNMENT ASSOCIATION
NATIONAL GENERAL ASSEMBLY
JULY 2024

Subject: Revitalising Urban Waterways

Motion

That the National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to build on the success of the Urban Rivers and Catchments Program (URCP) by:

1. Expanding and continuing grants funding;
2. Expanding the range of projects eligible to be funded; and
3. Working with State and Territory Governments to remove barriers to funding support to councils where land ownership and management along urban waterways is complex and projects would require consent from multiple parties.

National Objective

This is a national issue because:

- Urban waterways are interconnected natural assets that provide significant environmental, social and economic benefits to communities across Australia. The health and management of urban waterways in one region can have flow-on effects of national significance.
- Many councils need more financial resources and capacity to undertake the comprehensive revitalisation projects required to unlock the full potential of urban waterways, especially given the challenges around project finance, land ownership and assembly.
- A national funding program would enable a more coordinated and strategic approach to urban waterway management, leading to better outcomes for the environment and local communities.

It therefore should be negotiated at the ALGA National General Assembly because:

- Urban waterways are a critical natural resource in our cities and their improvement can have multiple environmental, social and economic benefits.
- Protecting and enhancing our urban waterways is a complex challenge. A dedicated funding program will provide the catalyst and certainty to plan, design and implement holistic solutions.

Summary of Key Arguments

The motion seeks to further build and expand on funding currently available through the URCP and remove barriers that hinder local councils in being able to revitalise urban waterways. This revised approach and broadened program should provide a consistent and reliable source of financial assistance to realise holistic environmental, social and economic outcomes. A collaborative approach between federal, state/territories and local government is required to develop eligibility criteria that address different regions' unique challenges and opportunities facing our urban waterways. Comprehensive revitalisation projects require coordinated support to unlock the full potential of urban waterways, particularly in solving challenges around project finance, land ownership and assembly.

The current complexities and challenges for local councils in achieving strategic outcomes and benefits for the community is something the City of Melbourne has experienced in its attempts to deliver a vision for the Moonee Ponds Creek (MPC) corridor. The MPC corridor is a north–south spine linking several central city urban renewal precincts. Various state government agencies and some private landowners own and manage parcels of the Creek, which creates challenges around accountability, prioritisation and alignment of funding. A broader federal funding stream can offer an opportunity for stakeholders to come together and take shared ownership of outcomes.