

Management report to Council

Agenda item 6.6

Participation in Australian Local Government Association National General Assembly, Canberra, June 2021

Council

Presenter: Jack Hanna, Executive Officer Councillor Liaison

30 March 2021

Purpose and background

1. The purpose of this report is to provide for City of Melbourne participation in the Australian Local Government Association's (ALGA) National General Assembly (NGA) to be held in Canberra in June 2021.
2. The ALGA NGA provides a forum for local government to discuss and advance issues of national significance to local government. Member councils have the opportunity of submitting motions of national significance.

Key issues

3. The 2021 NGA theme is *Working Together for Our Communities*.
4. Following discussion and a consensus reached by Councillors, motions on two issues for submission on behalf of the City of Melbourne were devised, namely
 - 4.1. Economic stimulus in most impacted sectors
 - 4.2. Partnerships to reduce carbon emissions
5. Attachment 2 includes details of each motion, the national significance and key supporting arguments. These were lodged on 26 March to meet the ALGA deadline and are now submitted to Council for formal ratification.
6. Council is also requested to determine the level of Councillor representation at the NGA. The cost associated with participation is estimated at \$3677 per Councillor and includes airfare, accommodation for up to three nights, registration and incidental costs.

Recommendation from management

7. That Council:
 - 7.1. Ratifies the submission on 26 March 2021 of the motions outlined in Attachment 2 for consideration at the Australian Local Government Association's (ALGA) National General Assembly
 - 7.2. Nominates Councillors to represent Council at the ALGA National General Assembly in Canberra in June 2021 at an estimated cost of \$3677 per Councillor.

Attachments:

1. Supporting Attachment (Page 2 of 5)
2. Proposed motions for the ALGA NGA (Page 3 of 5)

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 the National General Assembly in Canberra is estimated at \$3677 per Councillor. This includes conference registration and associated activities fees (\$1364), accommodation for three nights (\$975), airfare (\$929) and incidental costs (\$409).

Conflict of interest

3. No member of Council staff, or other person engaged under a contract, involved in advising on or preparing this report has declared a general or material conflict of interest in relation to the matter of the report.

Health and Safety

4. Councillors travelling to Canberra will undertake standard personal safety and awareness precautionary steps which apply to interstate travel including any COVID-19 restrictions current at the time of travel.

Stakeholder consultation

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

Relation to Council policy

6. The National General Assembly will provide Council with the opportunity of demonstrating local government leadership by advancing issues key to the recovery and future of Melbourne.

Environmental sustainability

7. The carbon emission resulting from air travel to attend the National General Assembly will be offset with the purchase of credits.
8. One of the motions proposed for consideration seeks to generate collaboration and partnerships on programs aimed at reducing carbon emissions.

MOTIONS PROPOSED BY THE CITY OF MELBOURNE**AUSTRALIAN LOCAL GOVERNMENT ASSOCIATION (ALGA)
NATIONAL GENERAL ASSEMBLY,
JUNE 2021****TOPIC 1: ECONOMIC STIMULUS IN MOST IMPACTED SECTORS:****Motion**

That the National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to implement a funding program directed through local government to support the needs of those in the sectors most impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. In seeking support for this proposal, the National General Assembly advises that the new funding program:

1. Must be separate to, and provide funding above and beyond that offered by, Financial Assistance Grants.
2. Should require local government to directly employ local people in the arts, entertainment and events industries, noting that these are heavily impacted industries that have tended to be the least supported by the JobKeeper program due to a high instance of casual and contract labour, and which have generally been overlooked by significant stimulus funding from the Commonwealth Government to date.
3. Should recognise the ability of local government to expend stimulus funding efficiently, quickly and fairly.
4. Should place a focus on the importance of creative practitioners in developing solutions in local communities as part of economic recovery and community development.

National Objective

The creative economy around Australia has been one of the hardest hit sectors during the COVID-19 pandemic. The Australian creative and cultural industries sector contributes over \$111 billion to the national economy and employs more than 600,000 people, more than mining and aviation combined.

Thriving creative sectors are crucial to the viability of local communities and attention at a national level is needed to provide a boost to what was an under-funded sector during pre-COVID times.

Summary of Key Arguments

The economic, social and cultural benefits of a thriving creative sector are important for all Australian communities, both large and small.

The sector coming to a halt and impact on its Australian workforce has been severe. The June 2020 PAC Australia Update on the impact of COVID-19 on performing arts centres, showed dismissals occurred for 74.5 per cent of the casual workforce. Furthermore, the study showed 55.3 per cent of full-time/part-time staff were working at significantly reduced hours.

The Australian Festivals Association and the Australian Music Industry Network initiative 'I Lost My Gig Australia' reported in April 2020; the total lost income of 12,600 respondents was \$340 million, with the loss of almost 300,000 work opportunities.

The arts sector has long suffered from a lack of funding support from the Australian Government. The pandemic and subsequent shortcoming in the response by the Australian Government has delivered a significant blow to a sector already in need of greater attention and support.

Action is now required to address the shortcoming in response to date. A funding boost is needed on top of existing grant programs to further stimulate the sector and this should be channelled through local government, which has a proven track record, to reach and employ local artists.

The recently announced \$125 million increase to the Restart Investment to Invest and Sustain fund in Victoria will not be a locally administered, or even Australia Council administered program, and therefore unable to locally employ those in the arts and entertainment sectors most in need of employment.

ALGA's 2021-2022 Pre-Budget Submission recommended Australian Government funding for Local Government Arts and Culture for COVID-19 economic and creative recovery. The proposal sought \$120m per annum over four years which was estimated to create 1,198 jobs and a contribution of \$153m to the annual GDP.

TOPIC 2: PARTNERSHIPS TO REDUCE CARBON EMISSIONS

Motion

That the National General Assembly seeks the express support of the Minister for Energy and Emissions Reduction and Treasurer for new resources direct to regional groupings of Councils to implement programs that accelerate renewable energy procurement and energy efficiency upgrade projects, especially those that bring Councils, businesses and other organisations together to collectively work towards achieving zero carbon emissions.

National Objective

Local governments, nationally and internationally, have led the call for action to tackle climate change. Climate change partnerships across levels of government, between local governments and throughout the local government sector is central to this dialogue for the following reasons:

1. Local governments across Australia have been leading the energy transition by investing in renewable energy and delivering programs to support the community transition to a low carbon economy. Actions taken by local government have driven investment in renewable energy, supported job creation, and accelerated decarbonisation of the energy system; thereby supporting the delivery of Australia's commitments under the Paris Climate Change Agreement.
2. Local government-led renewable energy purchasing is among the most effective ways to reduce emissions in local government emissions profiles and deliver financial benefits to businesses and local communities.
3. Investment in energy efficiency and renewable energy drives job creation at the local level.
4. Energy efficiency improves productivity of the economy as a whole.
5. Local governments are best placed to support businesses and communities and bring groups together to drive climate action.

Summary of Key Arguments

The advocacy, leadership and delivery track record of local government provides a foundation for exploring the next steps in accelerating and creating opportunities for efficient and renewable energy.

Local governments have demonstrated that collective renewable energy procurement models are replicable and scalable. Exemplar projects include the two successful Melbourne Renewable Energy Projects, the Victorian Local Government Power Purchase Agreement and the SSROC Power Purchase Agreement.

These agreements are creating new jobs in rural and regional Australia.

Councils recognise that many of the mid-sized energy users in their municipalities want renewable power purchase agreements to power their operations and meet sustainability targets; however they lack the scale, expertise and capability to contract on their own. Councils are well placed to identify businesses and connect them into renewable energy buying groups, and provide support through the transaction process. Group procurements models enable scale which supports renewable energy investment, job creation, and grid decarbonisation.

Energy efficiency upgrades of buildings are the biggest jobs multiplier of any form of clean energy stimulus. Local governments have experience in delivering energy efficiency programs in the commercial and residential sector and are well connected with the community through existing community and economic development teams.

As custodians of the public realm and administrators of the planning system, local governments have a role to play in facilitating the roll-out of domestic, commercial and community-scale batteries. Battery storage technologies deliver benefits to consumers, communities and the electricity system as a whole; and are essential to support the transition to a 100 per cent renewable electricity grid.