

**Stronger Together:
Resilient. Productive. United**

**2026
National
General
Assembly
Discussion Paper**

National Convention Centre Canberra



ALGA

Australian Local
Government Association

The Australian Local Government Association (ALGA) is pleased to convene the 32nd National General Assembly of Local Government (NGA), to be held in Canberra in June 2026.

As convenor of the NGA, the ALGA Board warmly invites all councils to send representatives to this important national event. The final date for the NGA will be confirmed once the 2026 Federal Government Parliamentary sitting calendar is released.

The NGA is the premier national gathering of local governments. It gives councils a chance to come together, share ideas, debate motions, and strengthen the relationship between local government and the Australian Government.

This discussion paper contains essential information for Australian councils considering submitting motions for debate at the 2026 National General Assembly of Local Government (NGA).

It is recommended that all councils and delegates intending to attend the 2026 NGA familiarise themselves with the guidelines for motions contained in this paper.

KEY DATES

27 October 2025 | Opening of Call for Motions

27 February 2026 | Acceptance of Motions closes

TO SUBMIT YOUR MOTION

VISIT: [ALGA.COM.AU](https://alga.com.au)

ALGA AND THE NGA – WORKING FOR YOU

Established 1947, ALGA is a federation of member state and territory associations. Its mission is to achieve outcomes for local government through advocacy with impact, and maximise the economic, environmental and social wellbeing of councils and our communities.

Since 1994, the NGA has raised the profile of local government on the national stage, showcasing the value of councils and demonstrating – particularly to the Australian Government – the strength and value of working with local government to deliver on national priorities.

Debate on motions was introduced to the NGA as a vehicle for councils from across the nation to canvas ideas. Outcomes of these debates (NGA Resolutions) can be used by councils to inform their own policies and priorities, as well as their advocacy when dealing with federal politicians.

At the same time, they help ALGA and its member state and territory associations gain valuable insight into council priorities, emerging national issues, and the level of need and support for new policy and program initiatives.

Given ALGA's structure, Constitution, and resources, the NGA resolutions do not bind ALGA. However, NGA resolutions are carefully considered by the Board to determine ALGA's policies, priorities and strategies to advance local governments within the national agenda.

This is your NGA, and ALGA is pleased to act as the convenor. ALGA's policies and priorities will continue to be determined by the ALGA Board in the interests of all councils.

We encourage councils to consider the topics and guidance in this paper as you develop your motions.

The ALGA Board thanks all councils for attending the NGA 2026 and those who submit motions for debate.

SUBMITTING MOTIONS

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

The Australian Local Government Association (ALGA) Secretariat has prepared this short discussion paper to help you identify motions that address the NGA 2026 theme of “Stronger Together: Resilient. Productive. United.” This theme encourages debate on how councils across Australia can become more resilient, contribute to the nation’s productivity agenda, and present a united voice to the federal government on key issues in the national sphere.

We encourage you to read all the sections of the paper. We have included guiding questions to assist in developing your motion, but you do not have to respond to every question. You can address one or more of the issues identified in the discussion paper with your motion.

Your NGA motion should focus on how local governments can work in partnership with the Australian Government to address the challenges our communities face or seize the opportunities that are national priorities.

Each year the Secretariat receives a high volume of motions. Councils are encouraged to submit only their highest-priority motions and ensure it meets the criteria below. Multiple motions on a similar topic may be re-written into a single strategic motion, and councils will be invited by the Secretariat to put their council name to the proposal.

HOW TO SUBMIT

- Each motion requires a contact officer, a clear national objective, a summary of the key arguments in support of the motion, and endorsement of your council.
- You can lodge motions electronically using the online portal available at www.alga.asn.au
- **Motions should be received no later than 11:59 pm AEST on Friday 27 February 2026.**

WHO CAN SUBMIT A MOTION

- Any council that is a financial member of their state or territory local government association can submit a motion.
- We will not accept motions submitted on behalf of external third parties that may seek to use the NGA to apply pressure to Board members or gain national political exposure for positions that are not directly relevant to the work of, or in the national interests of, local government.

CRITERIA FOR MOTIONS

To be eligible for inclusion in the NGA Business Papers, and debate it on the floor of the NGA, you must meet the following criteria:

- > Submit a new motion that has not been debated at an NGA in the preceding two years as found in previous business papers on the ALGA website.
- > Ensure your motion is relevant to the work of local government across the nation, not focused on a specific location or region, unless the project has national implications.
- > Align your motion with the policy objectives of your state and territory local government association.
- > Propose a clear action and outcome on a single issue, calling on the Australian Government to take action. Motions covering more than one issue will not be accepted.
- > Ensure the motion does not seek to advantage one or a few councils at the expense of others.
- > Avoid being prescriptive in directing how the matter should be pursued.

WRITING TIPS

Motions should seek 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.

- > Start with: "This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to...".
Be concise, clearly worded, and unambiguous.
- > Use the background section of the form to help delegates understand your issue.
- > Keep your motion to 100 words, the national objective to 100 words, and the key arguments to 150 words.

PROCESS OF SELECTION

The ALGA Secretariat will review motions for quality control and consistency with the criteria.

- > With the agreement of the relevant council, we may edit motions to ensure consistency.
- > If we have any questions about the substance or intent of a motion, we will raise these with the nominated contact officer.
- > Where there are multiple motions on a similar issue, the Secretariat may combine them into a single overarching strategic motion and invite the council to attach their name to the strategic motion.
- > Motions that reflect existing ALGA policy will be noted in the Business papers—but will not be included for debate, as they have already been covered in existing ALGA advocacy and policy positions.

The ALGA Board provides final decision on which motions are included in the Business paper.

- > The ALGA Board and state and territory local government associations will review all submitted motions to determine their eligibility.
- > The ALGA Board will consider the importance and relevance of the issue to local government and whether the motions meet all the criteria.
- > The ALGA Board will refer any motion primarily concerned with local or state issues to the relevant state or territory local government association and it will not include it in the NGA Business Papers.

WHO WILL SPEAK TO THE MOTION AT NGA?

We expect any council that submits a motion to be present at the National General Assembly to move and speak to the motion. The decision on the speaker is at the discretion of the council.

AFTER THE NGA

The resolutions of the NGA will be referred to the relevant federal Minister as an outcome of the NGA. Resolutions passed at the NGA do not become binding policy on ALGA, with policy positions to remain at the discretion of the ALGA Board.

All NGA resolutions will be published on www.alga.com.au.

As the host of the NGA, ALGA will communicate resolutions to the relevant Australian Government Minister and publish Ministerial responses as they are received on the ALGA website.

OTHER THINGS TO CONSIDER

- > It is important to complete the background section of the submission form. Do not assume NGA delegates will know the background of the proposal. This section helps all delegates to understand your motion and informs decision making. Please note, motions should not be prescriptive in directing how the matter should be pursued.
- > Keep motions practical, focussed and can be implemented. This ensures that relevant Australian Government Ministers can respond thoughtfully and promptly. Avoid complex motions with multiple points that require cross-portfolio implementation.
- > If there are any questions about a motion, ALGA will contact the nominated officer. With the council's agreement, these motions may be edited before being included in the NGA Business Papers.
- > Debate will follow the rules published in the Business Papers and will focus on the strategic motions.

SETTING THE SCENE

In the face of evolving challenges and opportunities, local governments around Australia stand at the forefront of driving resilience and productivity. Local governments know we are stronger together and the importance of unity across all levels of government. The theme for this year's NGA, **Stronger Together: Resilient. Productive. United**, underscores the pivotal role councils play in shaping the nation's future and delivering national priorities.

As the backbone of local communities, councils are uniquely positioned to implement place-based solutions that address both local needs and national priorities. This year's NGA encourages debate on how councils can enhance their resilience, contribute meaningfully to the nation's productivity agenda, and present a cohesive voice to the federal government on critical issues.

By fostering collaboration and innovation, local governments can lead the way in creating sustainable and thriving communities.

The 2026 NGA provides you - the elected representatives of Australia's local councils and communities - with the opportunity to engage with the Federal Government and key Ministers, ensuring that the voices of local communities are heard at the national level.

In this context, this year's call for motion focusses on ten priority areas:

- Financial sustainability
- Emergency management
- Housing and planning
- Roads and infrastructure
- Closing the Gap
- Jobs and skills
- Environment
- Cyber security
- Climate change
- Intergovernmental relations.

1. FINANCIAL SUSTAINABILITY

Financial sustainability is the biggest challenge facing Australia's local governments which is why it remains one of ALGA's top priorities. Sustainably funded, councils can play a key role delivering local solutions to national priorities.

The 2025 Parliamentary inquiry interim report into local government sustainability confirmed that the role of councils has evolved and expanded over time, putting significant pressure on local government budgets. It is critical the Federal Government reinstates and finalises the Parliamentary inquiry into local government sustainability.

For almost one in four councils, federal Financial Assistance Grants make up at least 20 per cent of their annual operating revenue. This funding is untied, meaning it can be used to address local priorities.

Over the past 30 years, the value of Financial Assistance Grants as a percentage of Commonwealth taxation revenue has dropped from 1% in 1996 to just 0.5% today. To address this, ALGA is advocating for **a return to 1% of Commonwealth taxation revenue for local government over the next three years.**

ALGA also proposes five new, untied funding streams to be distributed to all councils on a formula basis, including:

- \$1.1 billion per year for enabling infrastructure to unlock housing supply,
- \$500 million per year for community infrastructure,
- \$600 million per year for safer local roads,
- \$900 million per year for increased local government emergency management capability and capacity, and
- \$400 million per year for climate adaptation.

Additionally ALGA advocates for permanent, full membership of National Cabinet, the Council on Federal Financial Relations and the Local Government Ministers' Forum to ensure local perspectives are considered in national decision making.

What are the opportunities to address financial sustainability across councils, and support their capacity to deliver local solutions to national priorities?

Are there improvements to be made to existing federal funding programs and arrangements that would support improved local government financial sustainability?

2. EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT

The frequency, duration, and severity of natural disasters in Australia are a major concern for local governments.

Between 2019 and 2023, 434 of Australia's 537 councils faced natural disasters. Since 2020, 346 councils have dealt with at least two or more natural disasters. These numbers highlight that Australia will likely face more frequent and severe climate-driven disasters in the future, as noted by the 2025 Australian National Climate Risk Assessment (NCRA). Regional communities, which have the least capacity to plan and respond to natural disasters, are often hit the hardest. However, the NCRA also warns that even areas that have never experienced disasters will face one at some point as the climate continues to warm.

More frequent disasters will further strain emergency services and disaster response and recovery efforts at all levels of government. Natural disasters currently cost Australia \$38 billion per year in direct physical damage, economic disruption, and social impacts, affecting millions of people. This figure is forecast to rise to approximately \$73 billion by 2060.

Councils are crucial in supporting their communities during and after disasters, but do not have enough funding to carry out these functions. They are already stretched thin, with many councils facing financial instability, and the increasing frequency of disasters has a cumulative financial impact.

Investing more in disaster prevention and resilience, as well as boosting local government emergency management response funding, will save money in the long run and better protect lives, homes, and businesses. Every dollar spent on reducing the impact of climate-related disasters saves the government up to \$8 in the long term.

ALGA is asking for \$900 million per year to help councils improve their disaster response and resilience. They also want the Commonwealth to fully implement the recommendations from the Royal Commission into National Natural Disaster Arrangements and other major reviews, including the Independent Review of National Natural Disaster Governance Arrangements (the Glasser Review) and the Independent Review of Commonwealth Disaster Funding (the Colvin Review)

The Independent Reviews by Colvin and Glasser support a strategic shift towards disaster risk reduction and resilience. The Colvin Review recommended a major capacity uplift for local government and an enhanced national training and exercise regime which tests and builds local government capability. However, while ALGA notes the need to invest in risk-reduction and resilience-building initiatives, embedding recovery at all points along the emergency management continuum, should always be at the front of mind for all levels of government. ALGA's response to these Reviews reiterated the need for a sustainable funding model for disasters through a non-competitive pathway, and dedicated funding for local government.

Councils are encouraged to draw on their practical experience of the improvements that could be made to better support them in preparing, responding to, and recovering from, natural disasters.

Please note that many aspects of emergency management are state or territory responsibilities, and your motions should focus on how the Australian Government could assist.

What new programs, or improvements to existing programs, could the Australian Government develop to partner with local government to improve the current natural disaster management systems to further assist in recovery and build resilience?

How can the Government best support Australian councils to prepare for, respond to and recover from natural disasters?



3. HOUSING AND PLANNING

Australia is experiencing an affordable housing crisis, with a lack of housing supply impacting on homeowners and renters.

The crisis is leading to more people experiencing homelessness and struggling with housing insecurity and affordability.

In many jurisdictions, local government performs a key role in zoning and approving housing and delivering enabling infrastructure. However, councils are often unfairly blamed for delays in housing approvals when most applications that meet the requirements are processed quickly and efficiently.

One of the biggest barriers to building more homes is a lack of funding for enabling infrastructure, including the roads, power and water connections necessary for new developments.

The National Housing Accord – which ALGA is a signatory to on behalf of local government - sets an ambitious national target of 1.2 million new, well-located homes over the next five years. According to ALGA's research, it will cost at least \$5.7 billion to build the infrastructure needed to meet the national housing target. This is in addition to the existing funding gaps for local government infrastructure, which is estimated to be between \$50-\$55 billion for replacing infrastructure in poor condition (2024 National State of the Assets Report).

The 2024 Addressing the Housing Crisis: Unlocking Local Government's Contribution Report by Equity Economics found that 40% of surveyed local governments have reduced new infrastructure developments due to insufficient funding for enabling infrastructure required to support new housing, further exacerbating the housing crisis.

ALGA is calling for a new five-year, \$1.1 billion annual fund that would be provided to all councils to get the foundations right for increasing Australia's housing supply.

We are advocating for local governments to be provided with \$500 million per year for critical and community infrastructure and assets that will help create more liveable communities.

ALGA is also seeking a seat at the table for national discussions on housing policy, including full membership of National Cabinet and the Housing and Homelessness Ministerial Council.

What new programs and policies could the Australian Government develop to partner with local government to support the provision of more affordable housing?

How can local governments be better supported in their role in planning and approving housing, and delivering enabling infrastructure?



4. ROADS AND INFRASTRUCTURE

Local governments are responsible for about one-third of Australia's public infrastructure, including local roads, buildings, facilities, airports, water and land.

According to ALGA's 2024 National State of the Assets report, Australia's councils manage over \$600 billion worth of assets and infrastructure, which is about ten times their annual revenue.

This makes local governments the most asset-intensive level of government. Councils manage local roads, which make up around 75% of the national road network, totalling more than 650,000 km. These roads serve every Australian and business daily, and are key to Australia's productivity.

Safer roads

The unacceptable number of deaths and serious injuries on Australian roads has continued to rise every year since 2020.

Tragically, around half of all fatal road crashes occur on local roads in regional areas. During the 12 months ending August 2025 there were 1,353 road deaths, 4.3% higher than the same time in the previous year, according to national road safety data.

Effectively funding the maintenance and necessary safety upgrades of Australia's local road network is a big challenge, and despite recent increases in the federal Roads to Recovery funding, there is still a \$500 million per year shortfall, according to the 2023 Grattan Institute's Potholes and Pitfalls report.

ALGA is calling for \$600 million per year safer roads fund – with \$500 million for infrastructure improvements and \$100 million for road safety programs – to support all councils to play a more effective role reducing deaths on Australian roads.

Community infrastructure

Local government libraries, playgrounds, bike paths and community centres are vital to the wellbeing and liveability of communities. However, many of these facilities need significant attention and upgrades.

According to ALGA's 2024 National State of the Assets report, around \$8.3 billion of local government buildings and facilities and \$2.9 billion of parks and recreation assets are in poor condition.

On a positive note, since 2021, the amount of local government buildings and facilities in poor condition has fallen from 10 per cent to eight per cent. This is the result of increased federal investment through the Local Roads and Community Infrastructure program, from both the Coalition and Labor governments since 2020.

Unfortunately, this program has ceased and there is an urgent need for ongoing and significant community infrastructure. ALGA is proposing a \$500 million per year community infrastructure fund – to be provided to all councils – to build, (and importantly), maintain and upgrade the local facilities that make communities great.

Are there new programs or initiatives that the Australian Government could adopt to improve the long-term sustainability of local government roads and community infrastructure?

Are there programs or initiatives that the Australian Government could provide to improve the sector's capacity to manage local government infrastructure and to integrate these plans into long-term financial plans?

Are there opportunities for the Australian Government to support councils to invest in local infrastructure that will help address national priorities?

5. CLOSING THE GAP

Local governments play a crucial role in closing the gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians. ALGA is a signatory to the National Agreement on Closing the Gap Partnership, which focuses on four priority reform targets and 19 socio-economic targets in areas like education, employment, health, justice, safety, housing, land and waters, and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages.

Local governments are uniquely positioned to support partnerships that address long-term service gaps and ensure their delivery. However, the Productivity Commission Review of the National Agreement on Closing the Gap found that Federal and state governments are not adequately supporting or involving local governments in these reforms.

ALGA is calling for more resourcing and funding for local government, to support place-based initiatives or broader programs to enable councils to better facilitate and meet Closing the Gap objectives in their communities.

ALGA is also advocating for the Commonwealth to:

- Establish a national framework/set of protocols outlining which Federal Government departments/agencies should engage with local government in place-based initiatives, and planning for community-level projects or expenditure.
- Seek greater local government input in programs that impact on Closing the Gap targets to better shape programs with local knowledge and the needs of specific communities.
- Develop programs, with state and territory governments, to include funded support positions for local government coordination and partnership efforts (including member associations).
- Recognise councils with majority or all Aboriginal-elected members as key service delivery bodies in policy and program development.

Are there programs or initiatives that the Australian Government could adopt to assist local government to advance reconciliation and close the gap?

Are there practical programs or initiatives that local government and the Australian Government could introduce to maintain, build and strengthen the level of trust between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders and governments?

6. JOBS AND SKILLS

Australia's jobs and skills crisis is significantly impacting local governments, which employ around 213,000 people nationwide. ALGA's 2022 Local Government Workforce Skills and Capability Survey found that nine out of ten Australian councils face jobs and skills shortages, hindering project and service delivery.

Town planners, building surveyors, and engineers are the most in-demand professions. These roles are crucial for supporting and enabling communities to become more resilient and to help boost local economic growth and national productivity. National priorities, such as increasing housing supply, cannot be achieved without local government support and the right professionals to undertake this work.

Several factors drive these skill shortages, including difficulty attracting young people to local government jobs, lack of available training courses, wage competition, and insufficient resources to upskill the current workforce. This includes access to training facilities for rural and remote councils, workplace supervisors, subject matter experts, and contextualized training resources.

Councils urgently need more federal funding to invest in workforce development and training programs, attract workers to regional areas, and address broader skills shortages in the national economy. ALGA is calling for the Federal Government's National Skills Plan to acknowledge the vital role of local governments as employers in training and skills development. ALGA also seeks funding opportunities for council employees to access training for identified skills shortage areas, especially in regional and remote communities.

Additionally, it is important for the Commonwealth to undertake a national audit of institutions offering urban and land use planning, building surveyors, and engineering qualifications, and to identify more readily available pathways for regional and remote study.

Are there programs or initiatives that the Australian Government could implement that would enhance local government's capacity to attract and retain appropriately skilled staff now and into the future?

Are there programs or changes to existing programs that would increase local government's ability to employ apprentices and trainees?

Are there other initiatives that the Australian Government could provide to improve the sector's ability to plan and develop skills fit for the future?

7. ENVIRONMENT

Local governments play a crucial role in protecting our local environment including places, flora and fauna.

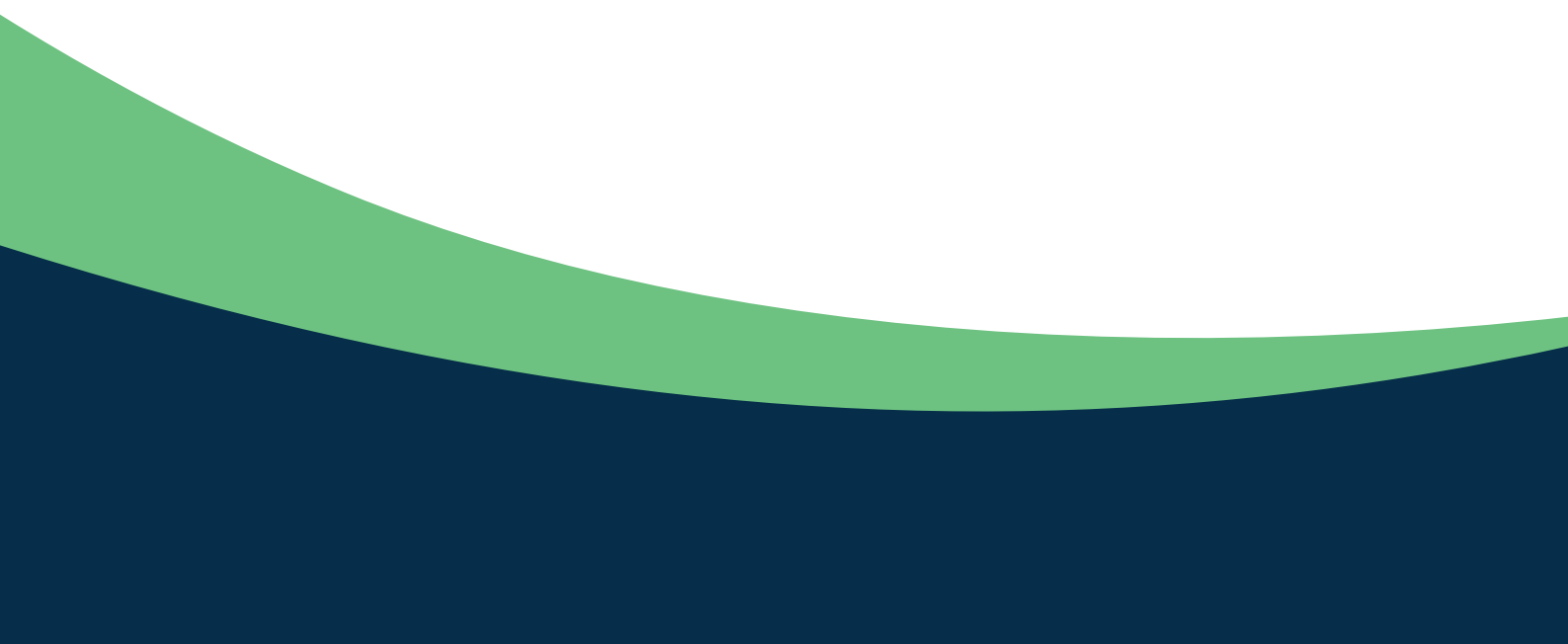
Councils spend more money on environmental protection than any other level of government. According to SGS Economics and Planning, councils spent \$6.75 billion in 2021-22 on biodiversity, biosecurity, water management, and waste management. By comparison, states and territories spent \$6.62 billion, and the Commonwealth allocated \$6.7 billion over the same period.

Local government is also key in improving waste management and resource recovery to reduce pollution, maintain communities and keep people healthy. However, as the Australian Government recently reported, we are running out of viable landfill space and circular economy solutions are required.

Local governments are ideal partners for on-the-ground action to deliver environmental priorities and outcomes, but they need better funding and support.

Councils bring a local, community-based and integrated approach to managing environmental issues, including weed and pest management, monitoring and protecting threatened species, contributing to water security and enhancing biodiversity.

ALGA is calling on the Federal Government to:

- Fund councils to support the delivery of national environmental outcomes. This includes outcomes stipulated in international conventions, threatened species action plans, matters of national, state, and local environmental significance, and any new obligations/expectations under reforms to the Environmental Protection and Biodiversity Conservation (EPBC) Act.
 - Fund local governments to manage environmental threats, including pests, weeds, and biosecurity threats.
 - Ensure local government is appropriately recognised and engaged through environmental law reform processes.
 - Seek agreement, under the National Water Initiative, on the overarching social, cultural, economic and environmental outcomes and goals for water on a national and holistic basis, and action planning and funding and achieve these outcomes and goals.
- 

Waste management and resource recovery

Collecting, treating, and disposing of waste costs local governments an estimated \$3.5 billion annually.

The 2022 National Waste report revealed waste generation has increased 20 per cent over the last 15 years (8.3 per cent coming from municipal waste). Although, recycling and recovery of Australia's core waste has increased by 57 per cent since 2006-07, Australia still has one of the lowest rates of recycling among OECD countries.

The responsibility and cost for waste reduction in Australia should be borne by industry, and not local governments.

Implementing mandatory product stewardship, including payments to local governments for any residual resource recovery services, would ensure producer responsibility is operationalised and reduce the cost and risk burden on councils.

ALGA is advocating for the Federal Government to:

- Establish a mandatory product stewardship approach for waste materials and ensure product stewardship schemes include, and are effective, in regional and remote areas.
- Ban the importation and manufacturing of products containing identified contaminants.
- Prioritise national policy attention to waste streams with the highest potential to improve environmental outcomes, reduce costs to local government, and create economic opportunity.
- Introduce a 'local government impact assessment' into national waste policy and reform processes to ensure council interests are systematically incorporated into policy design.

How could the Australian Government partner with local government to strengthen Australia's environmental services and infrastructure?

What new programs could the Australian Government partner with local government in to progress local regional and national objectives?

What actions and investments should the Australian Government prioritise to improve resource recovery rates?

What initiatives and approaches should the Australian Government take to improve waste, recycling and resource recovery in regional, rural and remote LGAs?

What are the most significant opportunities in the circular economy and how can the Australian Government engage with local governments to leverage these opportunities?



8. CYBER SECURITY

Cyber security is a growing risk for all Australian governments and businesses, and councils are not immune. However many local governments are under-resourced and struggle to deal with increasingly sophisticated cyber threats and attacks.

Local governments manage large amounts of sensitive data about communities and community members, including private information from the aged care, health, and social services they deliver. Furthermore, most councils are responsible for managing critical infrastructure, including water, waste, power networks, and transport systems.

Councils need greater support to strengthen their cyber security preparedness and response capability, and protect valuable data.

ALGA is calling for greater funding and support from the federal government to improve cyber security capability and capacity across the local government sector.

Drawing upon your council's experience, and your knowledge of other councils within your state or territory, are there programs and initiatives that the Australian Government could implement to help local government develop its digital technology services and infrastructure?

Are there actions the Australian Government could take to improve cyber security within the local government sector?

9. CLIMATE CHANGE

The impacts of climate change – including from more frequent and severe natural disasters, coastal erosion and rising temperatures – are being felt right across every community.

Councils, being the closest government to communities, are crucial in creating a sustainable future and helping the Federal Government achieve net zero emissions by 2050. However, they need support to manage these impacts.

Climate adaptation

Local governments are on the frontline of climate adaptation. They build public swimming pools to keep people cool, plant trees for shade, and upgrade stormwater systems to handle heavy rains. With their local knowledge and leadership, they play a vital role in addressing climate risks and seizing new opportunities from new industries and achieving national climate adaptation objectives.

Councils are already investing significantly in climate adaptation, but they need more support to match the scale of the challenges. ALGA's modelling shows that councils deliver \$0.8 to \$3.1 in benefits for every \$1 invested. A \$2 billion investment by 2030 could benefit local communities by \$2.2 to \$4.7 billion.

ALGA is calling for a new \$400 million per year climate adaptation fund, to be distributed across all councils to provide local, place-based solutions to Australia's changing climate.

We are also asking the Federal Government to:

- Streamline and make it easier for local governments to undertake climate risk management. This should involve implementing a voluntary climate risk framework for local government which supports consistent climate risk assessment, reporting, decision making and expenditure.
- Develop, operate and maintain an information and data suite designed specifically for local government adaptation use (on an opt-in basis).

Emissions reduction

The Australian Local Government Climate Review 2024 found that 86% of councils (out of 120 respondents) had an emissions inventory. However, they face barriers in reducing corporate emissions, such as internal resourcing (69%), funding (64%), and staff capability (40%).

While councils are committed to reducing emissions locally, they need more funding to avoid burdening ratepayers and to allow communities to benefit from low-emissions technologies sooner.

ALGA is asking the Federal Government to:

- Collaborate with local governments as part of a multi-level governance approach (per the Australian Government's pledge to the Coalition for High Ambition Multilevel Partnerships) to undertake strategic planning and prioritisation of net zero projects, infrastructure and service needs on a regional level.
- Fund emissions reduction plans with local governments across states and territories to facilitate a place-based approach to achieving net zero communities.
- Expand, and make more accessible, existing funding programs which enable local governments to reduce emissions and support community emissions reduction.
- Provide councils with accessible and nationally harmonised tools to maintain pace with trends in emissions measurement and reporting.
- Ensure local governments are compensated where emissions reduction processes place additional pressure on services and infrastructure (e.g, heavier EV truck impact on maintenance/standards of roads/bridges).

Renewable energy transition

Local governments are crucial partners in the transition to net zero. They engage with project proponents, negotiate community benefits, provide trusted information to residents, and manage the impacts of large projects on roads, housing, and local skills.

Councils strive to create a positive long-term legacy while balancing the immediate risks and impacts of the transition.

ALGA is asking the Federal Government to:

- Create a program of work dedicated to understanding local government experiences with renewable energy transition in their local area and region and develop specific supports for local governments.
- Establish a national approach and mechanism for cost recovery to local governments for the role of brokering benefits between project proponents and their communities, benefitting all Australians.
- Develop and maintain regional plans and a national map demonstrating zoning for prospective and proposed renewable energy projects and transmission corridors.

Noting the Australian Government's approach to reducing emissions, are there partnerships, programs, and initiatives that local government and the Australian Government can form to achieve Australia's 2050 net zero emissions target?

What are the opportunities to support councils to increase community resilience to the impacts of climate change?

What support do councils need to ensure that renewable energy projects deliver lasting benefits to the communities that house them?

What are the most significant climate risks being faced by local governments and what approach should the Australian Government take to supporting councils?

What roles and responsibilities for emissions reduction and climate risk management is your council shouldering that should be primarily managed by other levels of government? How should this responsibility be shared or rebalanced?

What are the most significant emissions reduction opportunities for your council and what could the Commonwealth provide to enable you to implement these opportunities?

10. INTERGOVERNMENTAL RELATIONS

ALGA has unique access and insight into government decision-making in Australia.

We represent local government at Ministerial Councils and forums on a range of key issues including transport, emergency management, energy, climate, environment, planning, culture and Closing the Gap.

At these meetings, ALGA's leaders provide a powerful and strong voice for councils and communities, and ensure local perspectives are considered in national policy development.

However, ALGA does not have a permanent voice on National Cabinet – the main forum linking all governments across the nation.

For almost 30 years, ALGA was a valued member and contributor to the Council of Australian Governments (COAG). However, ALGA's membership did not carry over when COAG transitioned to National Cabinet in 2020, and ALGA now only attends one meeting each year as an observer. ALGA is also invited to attend one meeting per year of the Council on Federal Financial Relations.

ALGA is calling on the Federal Government to return ALGA as a full member of National Cabinet with ongoing membership and voting rights. This will enable local government leaders to provide local perspectives on national decision making and ensure the views of Australian communities are understood and considered.

We are also seeking full membership of the Local Government Ministers' Forum, which ALGA currently attends in an ex-officio capacity.

Given the important role councils play delivering local solutions to national priorities, how can intergovernmental arrangements be further improved in Australia?

Are there new initiatives and programs that could be adopted to improve the level of cooperation and collaboration between the Australian Government and local government?

CONCLUSION

Thank you for taking the time to read this discussion paper and your support for the 2026 National General Assembly of Local Government.

A final reminder:

- Motions should be lodged electronically at www.alga.com.au and received no later than **11.59pm AEST on 27 February 2026**.
- Motions must meet the criteria published in this paper.
- Motions should commence with the following wording: *This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to...*
- Motions should not be prescriptive in directing how the matter should be pursued.
- Motions should be practical, focussed and relatively simple.
- It is important to complete the background section on the form.
- Motions must not seek to advance an outcome that would result in a benefit to one group of councils to the detriment of another.
- When your council submits a motion there is an expectation that a council representative will be present at the 2026 National General Assembly to move and speak to that motion if required.
- Resolutions of the National General Assembly do not automatically become ALGA's national policy positions. The resolutions are used by the ALGA Board to inform policies, priorities and strategies to advance local governments within the national agenda.

We look forward to hearing from you and seeing you at the 2026 National General Assembly in Canberra.

