

**Report to the Future Melbourne (Finance and Governance)  
Committee**

**Agenda item 6.7**

**Participation at upcoming local government forums**

**14 April 2015**

**Presenter:** Keith Williamson, Manager Governance Services

**Purpose and background**

1. The purpose of this report is to provide for Council participation in the following upcoming local government forums:
  - 1.1. Municipal Association of Victoria (MAV) State Council Meeting to be held in Melbourne on 15 May 2015. Member councils have the opportunity to submit motions for consideration on matters which are of state-wide significance to local government.
  - 1.2. Australian Local Government Association (ALGA) National General Assembly (NGA) to be held in Canberra between 14 and 17 June 2015. The NGA theme is *Closest to the Community: Local Government in the Federation*. The theme intersects with the Australian Government's current work with state and territory governments and the ALGA to develop White Papers on the reform of the federation and taxation. The NGA is seen as an opportunity to address the aspirations of local government in the White Papers. Member councils have the opportunity to submit motions of national significance to local government.

**Key issues**

2. Attachment 2 outlines details of draft motions developed by Councillors relating to the following subjects proposed for consideration at the MAV State Council Meeting:
  - 2.1. Voting at State Council meetings and Board elections.
  - 2.2. Improving level and standard of support to Victorian local government.
  - 2.3. Increasing participation by women in local government.
3. Attachment 3 outlines a motion relating to the following subject proposed for consideration at the ALGA National General Assembly:
  - 3.1. Leadership in good governance and transparent government.
4. The Committee is requested to nominate Councillor representation at the ALGA NGA. The cost associated with participation is estimated at \$3139 per Councillor. This includes airfare, accommodation for three nights, registration fees and incidental costs.
5. The deadline for submission of motions to the ALGA and MAV forums is 17 April 2015.

**Recommendation from management**

6. That the Future Melbourne Committee:
  - 6.1. approves the motions outlined in Attachments 2 and 3 for consideration at the Municipal Association of Victoria's State Council meeting and the Australian Local Government Association's (ALGA) National General Assembly respectively
  - 6.2. nominates a Councillor(s) to represent Council at the ALGA National General Assembly in Canberra between 14 and 17 June 2015 at an estimated cost of \$3139 per Councillor.

**Attachments:**

1. Supporting Attachment
2. Motions proposed for the MAV State Council
3. Motions proposed for the ALGA National General Assembly

## Supporting attachment

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### 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 ALGA NGA in Canberra is estimated at \$3139 per Councillor. This includes conference registration fees (\$1129), accommodation for three nights (\$800), airfare (\$530) and incidental costs (\$680).

### 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 direct or indirect interest in relation to the matter of the report.

### Relation to Council policy

4. The MAV State Council meeting and the ALGA NGA provide Council with the opportunity of demonstrating local government leadership by advancing key issues and contributing to discussion on matters connected to the goals contained in the Council Plan 2013–17.

### Environmental sustainability

5. The carbon emission resulting from air travel to attend the ALGA NGA will be offset with the purchase of credits.

**PROPOSED MOTIONS: MAV STATE COUNCIL MEETING, 15 MAY 2015****SUBJECT: VOTING AT STATE COUNCIL MEETINGS AND BOARD ELECTIONS****Motion**

That State Council recognises that:

1. Best practice representative voting at State Council and in MAV Board elections involves full consultation with council colleagues before determining a voting position.
2. Where practicable on major decisions, a formal council voting position for the representative should be adopted.

**Background**

The MAV Rules of Association (Rules) provide for membership, appointments and operation of the MAV, State Council and Board activities. Part 7 of the Rules, outlined below, provide for obligations of representatives and Board members and makes reference to the approach to be undertaken by representatives when voting at State Council including consultation.

*“7.2. A representative must:*

*7.2.1. attend every meeting of the State Council and if he or she is unable to attend a meeting, must encourage the council’s substitute representative to attend;*

*7.2.2. if present, vote on every matter under consideration by the State Council, in accordance with either the resolution of his or her council or the view of the majority of the Councillors where known, unless prohibited from doing so;*

*7.2.3. provide regular reports to his or her council on matters discussed and considered by the Association and on the decisions made; and have regard to any codes or guidelines published by the Board that relates to his or her functions as a representative.”*

The current practice does not provide for the highest governance standards and leads to significant inconsistency in the approach taken by representatives when voting on matters before State Council.

Part 7.2.3 refers to codes and guidelines to assist representatives. This, along with a review of expectations of representatives, should be an area of significant focus for the MAV and will lift the standards and consistency when considering issues of State significance to local government. A review to allow a representative to best reflect the position of his/her Council should also address the timing of availability of State Council business papers and recognition of the general approach of Victorian Councils with formal committee and council meeting cycles.

**SUBJECT: IMPROVING LEVEL AND STANDARD OF SUPPORT TO VICTORIAN LOCAL GOVERNMENT**

**Motion**

Jurisdictional issues to one side, the State Council acknowledges the Victorian Auditor General's Office performance review of the MAV in the report titled 'Effectiveness of Support for Local Government' and calls on the MAV Board and management to pro-actively accept the report's findings and implement a clear majority of its recommendations.

**Background**

The Victorian Auditor-General's Office (VAGO) performance audit report released on 26 February 2015 identified significant shortcomings in the effectiveness and operation of the MAV and Local Government Victoria. The report highlighted deficiencies in the MAV governance framework with particular reference to inadequate systems and processes consistent with contemporary standards of public administration.

As the peak body representing a membership of 79 Victorian councils, it is imperative that the measures and improvements recommended by VAGO are embraced and pro-actively implemented by the MAV Board and management. Adoption of the measures outlined in the report will improve the level of support provided to local government in Victoria and restore confidence in a peak body representing the tier of government closest to the community.

**SUBJECT: INCREASING PARTICIPATION BY WOMEN IN LOCAL GOVERNMENT**

**Motion**

That State Council:

1. Endorses the Victorian Government's policy of at least 50 per cent female representation in future judicial and paid board appointments.
2. Notes that the MAV has never had a female president elected through the regular election cycle.
3. Calls on the MAV Board to explore a system of quotas to increase the proportion of female delegates.
4. Authorises the MAV Board to commit funding and resources towards a campaign to lift female representation on councils after the 2016 council elections.
5. Encourages councils to actively lift female representation amongst the ranks of council CEOs and senior executives.

**Background**

The Victorian Government's recent announcement regarding appointments to government boards and the judiciary has reignited community discussion on level of representation by women in positions of political and community life. Premier Andrews has indicated that the long-term project will aim to achieve a level of no less than 50 per cent of female representation on future appointments to paid government boards and Victorian courts.

Female representation in local government continues to be a low level. In Victoria, only 34 per cent of councillors are women and this does not reflect the composition of local communities where women make up just over 50 per cent of the population. This is reflective of the trend occurring in parliaments of State and Commonwealth governments which show that women comprise less than one-third of all parliamentarians and one-fifth of all ministers.

As the tier of government closest to the community, local government has the opportunity of making inroads at a grass roots level. The MAV should demonstrate leadership by actively reviewing its approach and strategy of encouraging greater female participation in local government.

The 2014 National General Assembly (NGA) of Australian Local Government Association (ALGA) adopted a motion presented by the Melbourne City Council aimed at taking national action at increasing participation by women in local government. The resolution called on the ALGA Board to

1. develop a revised strategy aimed at increasing the level of participation by women in council elections throughout Australia
2. work with local government peak bodies in each Australian state and territory to implement a renewed campaign, aimed at increasing the level of participation by women, in advance of the next local government elections.

The motion now presented to State Council seeks to escalate and advance the work commenced following the 2014 NGA.

**MOTION PROPOSED FOR ALGA NATIONAL GENERAL ASSEMBLY, 14 to 17 JUNE 2015**

**SUBJECT: LEADERSHIP IN GOOD GOVERNANCE AND TRANSPARENT GOVERNMENT**

**MOTION**

That the National General Assembly endorse the following transparency and disclosure principles as measures to be considered by local government across Australia to demonstrate leadership in good governance and transparency.

1. Public disclosure on council website of a full lease register detailing the terms of any arrangements with third parties who occupy council-owned land and buildings.
2. Annual public disclosure on council website details of independent valuations of council-owned land and buildings above a threshold of \$1 million.
3. Disclosure in council annual reports the employment terms of their five most senior officers including name, position, remuneration and length of contract.
4. Making an audio recording of council and committee meetings available alongside the formal minutes where practicable and affordable.
5. Allocation of at least 15 minutes each month to unscripted oral public questions at a full council or committee meeting.
6. Periodic disclosure on council website of expense claims made by councillors
7. Pre-approval of interstate and international travel by councillors at an open council or committee meeting.

**NATIONAL OBJECTIVE**

The 2015 NGA theme is 'Closest to the Community: Local Government in the Federation'. As the tier of government closest to the community, local government has the opportunity to take real and proactive steps to demonstrate leadership in good governance and transparent government.

**KEY ARGUMENTS**

The proposed measures, if applied in councils across Australia, would further enhance local government's reputation as an accessible, transparent and inclusive level of government. One of the key ways of achieving this is to create opportunities for greater input and awareness in decision-making forums of councils. The measures outlined in this motion would provide communities such opportunities and a layer of transparency in local decision-making.

The measures identified above are those adopted by the Melbourne City Council as part of a program of further strengthening its reputation as an open and transparent organisation. One of the Melbourne City Council's eight goals under its Council Plan 2013-2017 is to provide for '*An accessible, transparent and responsive organisation.*'