

3 Presentation of officer reports

3.1 Boroondara City Council Motions to the Australian Local Government Association (ALGA) National General Assembly (NGA) of Local Government

Abstract

This report informs councillors and seeks endorsement of a proposed motion regarding the current volunteer management activity (VMA) funding arrangements that is proposed to be put forward to the Australian Local Government Association (ALGA) National General Assembly in June 2021.

Motions carried by the National General Assembly become Resolutions. These resolutions are then considered by the ALGA Board when setting national local government policy and will also feed into the Australian Council of Local Government processes.

Officers' recommendation

That the Services Delegated Committee resolve to adopt the motion (as annexed to the Minutes) to be put forward to the Australian Local Government Association (ALGA) National General Assembly in June 2021.

Responsible officer: Phillip Storer, Chief Executive Officer

1. Purpose

The purpose of this report is for councillors to give consideration to endorsing a proposed motion regarding the current volunteer management activity (VMA) funding arrangements that is proposed to be put forward to the Australian Local Government Association (ALGA) National General Assembly in June 2021.

2. Policy implications and relevance to community plan and council plan

The ALGA is the peak body for local governments in Australia and should take a lead role in advocating to the Federal Government on a variety of issues of concern to local governments in Australia. Submitting motions to the ALGA National General Assembly is consistent with Council's practice of advocating on behalf of the community.

This report is consistent with the strategy within the Council Plan 2017-27 to "*Ensure transparent decision making through open governance processes*".

3. Background

The National General Assembly of Local Government will be held in Canberra from Sunday 20 June to Wednesday 23 June 2021. The Assembly is a major event and typically attracts more than 600 Mayors, Councillors and Senior Officers from Councils across Australia.

The ALGA is calling for motions for the 2021 National General Assembly (NGA) under this year's theme 'Working Together for Our Communities'.

To be eligible for inclusion in the NGA Business Papers, motions must follow the following principles:

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;
3. be consistent with the themes of the NGA;
4. complement or build on the policy objectives of the Municipal Association of Victoria (MAV); and
5. not be advanced on behalf of external third parties that may seek to use the NGA to pressure 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.

Motions must be received at ALGA by 5pm on Friday 26 March 2021.

Motions that are carried by the NGA become Resolutions. These resolutions are then considered by the ALGA Board when setting national local government policy and will also feed into the Australian Council of Local Government processes.

4. Outline of key issues/options

Attachment 1 provides the details of the proposed motion being put forward which is as follows:

- Motion 1 - Volunteer Management Activity Program (Submitted by Community Support)

5. Consultation/communication

The proposed motion has been prepared in consultation with the Executive Leadership Team.

6. Financial and resource implications

There are no direct financial implications to Council in presenting this motion to the ALGA other than Council officer time in preparing and submitting the motion.

These costs are met from the Council operating budget.

7. Governance issues

The implications of this report have been assessed and are not considered likely to breach or infringe upon, the human rights contained in the Victorian Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006.

The officer responsible for this report has no general or material conflict of interest requiring disclosure.

8. Social and environmental issues

The motions to be considered at ALGA will cover a range of matters.

The motion sponsored by Council has the potential to achieve worthwhile results for the Boroondara community and the broader Australian community.

Manager: David Thompson, Manager Governance and Legal

Report officer: David Thompson, Manager Governance and Legal

National General Assembly (NGA)

20 to 23 June 2021

Motions Submitted by Members

MOTION 1 VOLUNTEER MANAGEMENT ACTIVITY PROGRAM

Submitted by: Boroondara City Council

MOTION

The National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to maintain the current volunteer management activity (VMA) funding arrangements for all volunteer support agencies and to increase the allocation in the next Federal Budget, as volunteering is key to keeping people feeling connected and supplied with essential services and critical support, particularly vulnerable, isolated and disengaged residents, at a time of high unemployment.

NATIONAL OBJECTIVE (MAX 100 WORDS)

[Why is this a national issue and why should this be debated at the NGA?]

The Department of Social Services has announced a redesign of the Volunteer Management Activity program.

Funding has been directed from 52 volunteer support services to state and territory volunteering peak organisations, with a focus on delivering services online. An equitable funding model is yet to be determined, but many localised volunteer support services may not receive funding.

Funded volunteer support services, including dedicated volunteering functions in local government, require ongoing, sustainable operational funding to continue meeting the needs of volunteering-involving organisations, volunteers and prospective volunteers. This includes prospective volunteers who are socially isolated, disengaged or experience barriers to finding opportunities to volunteer.

SUMMARY OF KEY ARGUMENTS (MAX 300 WORDS)

[Provide relevant background information and arguments in support of the motion to assist consideration of the motion.]

The Australian Government's investment in volunteer management must focus on delivering a federally funded program that meets the operational and resourcing needs of volunteer support services.

Volunteer support services need to maintain their current funding arrangements, so as not to disrupt the support offered to organisations and prospective volunteers who heavily rely on the localised support these services provide.

The program should not exclusively focus on the delivery of services online, but also:

- build the capacity of volunteer-involving organisations, particularly 'small' or 'medium' community organisations that require dedicated, ongoing support due to resourcing requirements

- drive the growth, sustainability and accessibility of local volunteer opportunities
- enhance opportunities for people from diverse backgrounds to volunteer, including people from culturally and linguistically diverse communities and people with a disability
- provide multiple pathways for prospective volunteers, both online and in person, to find relevant and meaningful volunteering opportunities.

The support delivered should include:

- updated, targeted freely available resources to support managers of volunteers with topics including the national standards for volunteer involvement, legal issues in managing volunteers, volunteer recruitment
- increased opportunities for managers of volunteers to participate in volunteering forums, networks, professional development workshops and community events
- resourcing to allow place-based support services to develop and deliver targeted initiatives, responsive to community trends
- promoting volunteerism in the community through strategic marketing and communications
- supporting individuals to find relevant and meaningful volunteer opportunities, particularly individuals who experience barriers to independently searching for volunteer opportunities online (i.e.: social isolation, age, access to technology, disability, cultural sensitivities).

Volunteer support services have been overwhelmed throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, experiencing a significant increased demand for volunteer placement while also managing volunteer management support for small-medium sized organisations that had to temporarily suspend programs, operate at a reduced capacity or upscale efforts to meet community demand.

Ceasing VMA funding during community recovery and at a time of high unemployment will damage the crucial structures volunteer support services provide the community sector. Most material aid and social support services rely heavily on volunteers and demand for these services will continue to remain high.

Funding to volunteer support services must be increased in the next Federal Budget to ensure that volunteering remains an important pathway to employment, social connection and positive mental wellbeing and building community resilience.