

Australian Local Government Assembly



Attended Sunday 26th of November –
Thursday 30th of November

Cr Alex Makin
Loughnan's Hill Ward

Location: Canberra, ACT

Introduction:

The Australian Local Government Association (ALGA) is the national body that represents the 673 councils within Australia. ALGA was formed as a federation of state and territory associations such as the Municipal Association of Victoria (MAV) and other state or territory local council organisations.

As a national body, ALGA is suitably poised to advocate on behalf of local councils and their constituents at a national level.

The National General Assembly of Local Government provides the opportunity for councils to debate issues of national significance, with approved motions being used by ALGA for advocacy to the Federal Government.

Since I had proposed a motion on behalf of Maroondah City Council I attended this year's National General Assembly from the 26th to the 30th of November in Canberra.

Motion - Sustainable Cities and Transport:

In September 2005, The House of Representatives Standing Committee on Environment And Heritage tabled its report on an inquiry into Sustainable Cities.

The Standing Committee's vision is for Australian cities to be vibrant and healthy – environmentally, socially and economically. In order to work towards this vision, the Committee identified that there is a need for the Australian Government to assume a significant leadership role.

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The report outlined seven (7) key recommendations relating to improving transport sustainability within Australia. Of significance is the recommendation that the Federal Government significantly boost funding for sustainable transport and in particular, urban public transport.

Recommendation 6 in particular states that *“the Australian Government significantly boost its funding commitment for public transport systems, particular light and heavy rail, in the major cities”*.

There is growing acknowledgement around the world that at the national level, government has a key role to play in the provision of urban public transport. In the United States, the Federal Government provides approximately 50% of capital funding for public transport. The UK Government's current ten year plan will see a £120 billion investment in transport, with explicit provision for rail, light rail, buses and other sustainable transport projects.

In contrast, the Australian Federal Government is reluctant to make a commitment to fund urban public transport infrastructure, even though the opportunities for greater involvement are increasing.

This motion is even more relevant given projected fuel costs and limited long term supplies of fuel with Australian Oil fields *“coming to end of productive lives”* (Peter Costello April 2005).

This motion calls for the Commonwealth Government to embrace the recommendations of the Standing Committee's sustainable Cities Report and to adopt the transport recommendations as a matter of urgency.

The specific wording of the motion was as follows:

That the National General Assembly calls on the Commonwealth government to adopt the transport recommendations as outlined in the House of Representatives

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Standing Committee on Environment and Heritage - Sustainable Cities Report (September 2005).

I am pleased to announce that delegates at the National Assembly passed this motion meaning that ALGA as a national body for local government will be making representation to the Federal Government for funding of urban public transport.

A number of similar motions were also passed in particular a motion by Maribyrnong City Council, which is as follows:

That the National General Assembly calls upon the Commonwealth government to:

- 1. Provide federal government funding for urban public transport; for example through the AusLink program by allocating a percentage of federal fuel taxes and petroleum resource rent tax to public transport investment, or establishing a sustainability fund through which urban public transport projects could be funded**
- 2. Introduce tax reform in support of public transport usage**

The success of sustainable transport motions reflects the growing desire and need for the Federal Government to view urban transport as an issue of national importance and as such follow the lead of other countries around the world in funding urban public transport.

Local Context:

Federal funding of urban public transport infrastructure will ensure a national approach to sustainable transport and help ensure that there is a viable alternative to car dependence in outer suburban municipalities such as Maroondah.

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While the operations and funding of public transport should remain a State Government responsibility there is a need for the Federal Government to provide a nationally coordinated approach and to provide matching funding for strategically important urban transport projects.

Conclusion:

The National General Assembly provided the opportunity to support the Maroondah City Council motion on sustainable transport as well as supporting motions proposed by other councils.

Given the national focus of ALGA representation is crucial to ensure that concerns of Maroondah are heard and acted upon.

ALL ENQUIRES: CR ALEX MAKIN ON 0408 311 645

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