



# **STRATEGIC PLAN**

JULY 2024 - JUNE 2027

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## About the National Growth Areas Alliance

The National Growth Areas Alliance (NGAA) is the peak body for local governments in Australia's fast-growing outer metropolitan cities and suburbs. We advocate to State and Federal governments for improved policies and funding for growth area councils, to create communities that are resilient, liveable and thriving places.

Member councils of the NGAA represent more than five million people living in Australia's fast-growing suburbs, united by the shared experiences of population growth rates at double the national average and long-term under-investment in vital infrastructure. NGAA member councils have first-hand knowledge of and experience in:

- understanding and managing some of the fastest growing populations in Australia
- the impact of unplanned population growth rates at double the national average
- inadequate transport, health, education, community and social infrastructure to cope with increased demand, and
- lack of government focus on the health, education and employment prospects of communities in rapidly-developed greenfield suburbs.

We take an evidence-based approach, with a Policy Platform built on the foundations of our comprehensive research strategy and our members' deep knowledge of their communities. Through case studies, policy discussions and information-sharing networks, we also help to develop Alliance Councils' capacity to deliver their planned growth.



## About Growth Areas

The 29 growth area LGAs, located in outer metropolitan and peri-urban areas across Australia's capital cities have accommodated over 30% of Australia's population growth this century.

### **We are fast growing**

More than 5 million people live in growth area LGAs across Australia, representing 21% of Australia's population. Growth area communities grew at 3% per annum 2016-21 compared to the 1.2% national average.

### **We are diverse**

Growth area communities are culturally diverse, with more residents born overseas in NGAA municipalities than Australia as a whole. 5% of all residents in growth areas were born in India, a proportion almost twice that of Australia's population overall (2.6%). There are also higher percentages of residents born in New Zealand and the Philippines compared to Australia as a whole.

Cultural diversity can also be found in the different languages spoken. 29% of residents in fast-growing outer cities and suburbs speak a language other than English at home, compared to 22% for Australia.

### **We are ambitious**

Australia's fastest growing outer metropolitan cities and suburbs are a largely unrealised economic asset. Compared to the rest of the nation, Australia's growth areas had higher rates of productivity, accounting for over 12% of GDP despite only making up around 6% of Australia's 545 LGAs.

However population growth continues to outrun economic growth, causing a growing job deficit. In 2021, there were 810,000 fewer jobs than employed residents, causing 65% of residents to work outside their LGA, daily congestion across our cities and high costs (economic and social).

The employment and economic potential is there. In 2021, 14% of jobs were in the growth areas, growing from 10% in 2006. The geographic location of these new communities are becoming hubs for sole traders and small businesses, which account for over 90% of all businesses in growth areas, above the Australian average of 89%. There has also been an increase in the number of residents who have obtained a Bachelor or Higher Degree qualifications, an increase of almost 5% since 2016, higher than in Australia (4% increase).

To unlock the full economic potential of Australia's fastest growing outer metropolitan cities and suburbs, targeted investments in infrastructure are needed. This would help connect job opportunities with the growing population, fostering further economic development in these fast-growing communities.

### **We are innovative and resourceful**

Residents in outer metropolitan cities and suburbs are innovative, pragmatic and resourceful. Getting on with life and establishing a positive lifestyle despite the many challenges they face. Challenges that have been caused by chronic under funding in investment. Nightmare commutes, overcrowded trains, traffic jams at highway exits, no safe footpaths for kids to walk to school – this is the daily experience of life in the outer suburbs. Additionally, basic health, education, social and community services and facilities are either unfunded or inadequately funded.

Australia's potential will come from growth areas. All levels of government must work together and align investment with the ambitions and determination of new communities.

# Planning and Reporting Process

INFORM		ACTION		MONITOR & REPORT	
Members	>	<b>Strategic Plan</b>	<	Strategic Advisory Committee	
Policy Advisory Committees Committee of Management	>	<b>1. Advocacy Strategy</b> <b>2. Research and Policy Development Strategy</b> <b>3. Governance and Engagement Framework</b>	<	Committee of Management	
Secretariat	>	<b>Annual Delivery Plan</b>	<	Committee of Management Secretariat	

## Strategic Direction set by NGAA Member Councils

### Our Value Proposition

- We use the collective scale of NGAA member councils to inform and influence Australian Government policy
- We are a trusted source of evidence that informs our solutions-based advocacy to all tiers of government
- Advocating on shared issues increases potential impact
- We are stronger as a national body: not representing smaller state and local issues allows us to maintain focus.

### Positioning Ourselves for Maximum Impact

- We must be **nationally representative**
- Present growth area councils as **delivery partners** for federal priorities
- Champion growth area councils ability to provide **innovative solutions**, and demonstrate **strong returns on investment** for government
- Advocate **beyond political cycles**.

## **Pillar 1: NGAA influences the national agenda**

Our advocacy reflects the shared priorities and aspirations of our members. To influence federal policy and decision-making, we use the collective scale and political importance of our members and their communities, and offer evidence-based policy solutions.

### **Strategic Directions**

1. The Australian Government along with State Governments, understands the role of growth areas in metropolitan cities and the opportunities they offer to deliver national objectives
2. Advocacy will position growth areas as solutions-focused delivery partners to meet national priorities
3. Government partners have clarity on the key advocacy priorities, reforms and investments required to support NGAA member councils

### **Measures of Success**

At a high level, the measures of success against this pillar are:

1. Increased Federal Investment in Infrastructure: Influence federal government decisions to secure funding for infrastructure in growth areas.
2. Policy Inclusion and Commitments: Ensure growth area needs are addressed in political party platforms and secure specific policy commitments.
3. Enhanced Public Awareness and Media Coverage: Raise public awareness of growth area challenges and increase media visibility of these issues.
4. Partnership Development: Develop new and strengthen existing partnerships to support advocacy efforts.

*Outcomes against comprehensive measures of success contained in the 2024-27 Advocacy Strategy (Schedule 1) will be reported to the NGAA membership annually.*

## **Pillar 2: Our research is targeted and supports our advocacy**

Research is pivotal to inform our evidence base, develop policy recommendations, and build the capacity of member councils.

Evidence-based advocacy underpins the NGAA's role as a respected and trusted advisor to the Federal Government. Growing the research capacity of the NGAA is a priority for member councils.

### **Strategic Directions**

1. NGAA's research program optimises the development of innovative and compelling policy recommendations to support advocacy priorities
2. NGAA is a trusted research partner with a program of partnerships and collaborations that extend the reach and impact of growth areas-focussed research.

### **Measures of Success**

At a high level, the measures of success against this pillar are:

5. Research Collaboration Growth: Expand collaborative efforts and enhance research capabilities through new partnerships.
6. Increased Research Outputs and Funding: Increase the quantity and financial support for research activities.
7. Member Engagement in Research: Enhance member participation in research-related activities and events to strengthen NGAA's educative role.
8. Knowledge Sharing and Policy Advancement: Promote dissemination of research findings to encourage implementation of best practice across growth areas and ensure currency of Policy Platform.

*Outcomes against comprehensive measures of success contained in the 2024-27 Research Strategy (Schedule 2) will be reported to the NGAA membership annually.*

## **Pillar 3: We are well-governed with clear engagement pathways**

The NGAA will benefit from continuing its operational model that is both lean and agile, with transparent governance processes reflective of the size of the organisation and expectations of member councils.

Our success in delivering our agreed outcomes requires that we continue to have a clear and purposeful engagement pathway with member councils and key stakeholders.

### **Strategic Directions**

1. We continue to build our membership and our partnerships to strengthen our national voice and enable the expansion of organisational and operational capacity of the NGAA
2. Our engagement activities have clear alignment to our strategic directions and continue to raise the profile of growth areas and strengthen relationships with our stakeholders

### **Measure of Success**

At a high level, the measures of success against this pillar are:

9. **Effective Decision-Making and Strategic Implementation:** The governance framework should lead to more efficient decision-making processes and the successful implementation of strategic initiatives.
10. **Improved Member Engagement and Representation:** The framework should ensure high levels of engagement and balanced representation from all member councils across different states.
11. **Operational Efficiency and Performance Monitoring:** The new structure should enhance operational efficiency and establish effective performance monitoring mechanisms.

*Outcomes against comprehensive measures of success contained in the 2024-27 Governance and Engagement Strategy (Schedule 3) will be reported to the NGAA Membership annually.*



# Schedule 1 - Advocacy Strategy

NGAA's advocacy aims to ensure that the needs of rapidly expanding suburban regions remain at the forefront of political discourse and policy agendas. We advocate for comprehensive policy reforms and increased investment in essential infrastructure projects to address the challenges faced by growth areas, including strains on transportation networks, housing affordability, and service provision.

To achieve this goal, NGAA delivers a multifaceted advocacy strategy, leveraging research, political engagement, and strategic partnerships to elevate the profile of growth area issues and secure commitments from political parties to implement effective solutions.

Through targeted campaigns, policy briefings, and direct engagement with policymakers, NGAA will work to ensure that the needs of local governments and their communities in growth corridors are heard and heeded on an ongoing basis but particularly in the lead-up to the 2025 Federal Election.

## The Advocacy Landscape

### Politics

As a Federal-focussed advocacy group, NGAA's government relations work is bipartisan and covers Ministerial portfolios as well as Parliamentarians representing our Member councils, Senators with a particular interest in growth areas, members of the cross-bench and minor parties.

NGAA's influence is growing as outer suburban seats become less safe as demographics and voting preferences change.

### Policy

NGAA's Policy Platform is reviewed annually and adopted by Members. It is the foundation document from which we take opportunities to influence policy development at the Federal, and at time State, level. The breadth of coverage of the policy Platform allows us to engage with politicians across a range of portfolio issues and geographic areas and ensure all Members feel their advocacy priorities are being highlighted.

The annual review of the Platform, led by NGAA's National Research and Policy Lead, ensures the policy environment is monitored, our successes are noted and shifting priorities are reflected.

## Engagement Strategy

NGAA's advocacy uses a range of tactics throughout the year, which are enhanced in the lead up to an election.

### Government Relations

- NGAA Chair and CEO hold meetings and briefings held throughout the year (in person or online) with Government and Opposition portfolio holders, growth area MPs
- Meetings used to advocate for policy change and funding decisions outlined in Policy Platform, Pre-Budget Submission and other submissions, research outcomes

### Policy Submissions

- NGAA is an active contributor to Parliamentary and Departmental consultations and lodges submissions on issues of relevance which are contained in our Policy Platform and on which we have meaningful data, research or perspectives to share

## Media Relations

- We raise awareness of growth area issues through regular media releases and social media activity, geared towards providing commentary on relevant issues and announcing policy initiatives and research findings.

## Coalition Building

- As a small organisation, NGAA can multiply its impact through alliances with like-minded organisations with more significant resources, where our objectives and perspectives align. This will shift on different issues, but may involve organisations such as ALGA, UDIA, Green Building Council, state and federal infrastructure bodies, commercial researchers and consultants.

## Grassroots Engagement

- Through our Member Councils, NGAA has access to large communities and community experiences and perspectives. While NGAA does not engage directly with communities, we may collaborate with our Members to highlight community sentiments.

## Measures of Success

### 1. Increased Federal Investment in Infrastructure

**Measure:** Influence federal government decisions to secure funding for infrastructure in growth areas.

**Indicator:** Amount of federal funding committed to transportation, health, community, and educational infrastructure in growth areas.

**Target:** Priority projects from Members are progressed.

### 2. Policy Inclusion and Commitments

**Measure:** Ensure growth area needs are addressed in political party platforms and secure specific policy commitments.

**Indicator:** Inclusion of growth area policies in the election platforms of major political parties. Number of public commitments made by political leaders to address growth area issues.

**Target:** Achieve policy inclusion in the election platforms of all major political parties. Obtain a minimum of five public commitments from political leaders annually.

### 3. Enhanced Public Awareness and Media Coverage

**Measure:** Raise public awareness of growth area challenges and increase media visibility of these issues.

**Indicator:** Frequency and reach of media coverage on NGAA's campaigns and growth area issues.

**Target:** Secure coverage in at least 10 major national media outlets each year.

### 4. Partnership Development

**Measure:** Develop new and strengthen existing partnerships to support advocacy efforts.

**Indicator:** Number of new partnerships established with government agencies, industry, and community organizations. Level of collaboration and support from existing partners.

**Target:** Establish at least six new strategic partnerships each year. Strengthen relationships with 10 existing partners to enhance advocacy efforts (ALGA, MAV, LGNSW, WALGA, NBN, ENE-HUB, UDIA, PCA, ASBEC, Suburban Futures).

## Schedule 2 – Research and Policy Development Strategy

The Research Strategy underpins the National Growth Area Alliance (NGAA) policy platform and advocacy. The Research Strategy provides a research framework that enables the NGAA to continue to improve and refine the policy platform with a robust evidence base. We do this by placing the needs of growth area communities at the centre of a process of inquiry to determine the policy settings and actions required to support the rapid growth our nation's capital cities are experiencing. We ground our research in discovery, exchange, and impact.

The Research Strategy outlines the proposed broad line of inquiry, priorities and actions. The research investment may vary year to year and shapes the extent and content of the research.

### Objectives

By continuing to ground our research in discovery, exchange and impact, we will:

- Demonstrate the NGAA and its members are leaders in evidence-based policy development and forward thinking on growth areas.
- Leverage relevant current and planned research activities undertaken by members and other stakeholders to advance a national policy position.
- Facilitate knowledge sharing between members of place-based research and practice to advance the collective and individual advocacy efforts of members.
- Provide an engagement framework which allows members, individually or collectively, to participate in leading edge research.
- Measure the impact of evidence-based advocacy through regular review of the Policy Platform.

To ensure NGAA resources are optimized for the best outcomes, we rely on a combination of four approaches to accessing research. These include:

- research carried out by the NGAA;
- research commissioned by the NGAA;
- member-led research; and
- partner-led research.

Each will inform key areas of inquiry to support the NGAA Policy Platform.

### NGAA Research

The NGAA will carry out research where there is a specific need for additional evidence to advance the national advocacy position. This research may take various form such as collating together the individual state responses to policy issues or regulation to enable comparison across Australia to use as a basis for policy development and advocacy, or building a dataset from ABS data.

### Commissioned Research

NGAA has regularly commissioned research to provide new primary data or analysis of existing data to support specific policy and advocacy activities. This research is funded through NGAA Membership fees and additional contributions if required.

### Member-Led Research

NGAA Member Councils carry out significant research to support their local advocacy agendas. Where the issue is of national significance, we encourage Members to share the findings for the benefit of other Members and to strengthen the educational value of NGAA membership.

### Symposium

The aim of the Symposium is to facilitate the sharing of knowledge, research and practice between growth councils and to add to the evidence base on which the NGAA Policy Platform is built.

## Partner-Led Research

NGAA is regularly approached to participate in collaborative research projects by industry partners, research institutions and government. NGAA has contributed “in kind” and financial resources to support research initiatives that support policy development and the advocacy plan for Members.

## Annual Research Plan

The Annual Research Plan is designed in the context of the Policy Platform and the Federal Government election cycle.

There is a five-step process to develop the Research Plan:

- Reviewing the policy platform in the context of the current policy settings. This involves research of current or proposed government policy and consultation with federal politicians and advisors.
- Reviewing member priorities for further knowledge and evidence base. This is informed through the Symposium, the NGAA Strategy Day, and discussions with the RAC and Policy Advisory Committees.
- Identifying the lines of inquiry that will best support the policy platform. This is informed through the RAC, the Strategy Day, and discussions with NGAA Member Councils.
- Aligning current Member-led and Partner-led research activities to the identified gaps in knowledge.
- Identifying evidence and knowledge gaps that will inform the Research Plan during the current government.

## Measures of Success

### 5. Research Collaboration Growth

**Measure:** Expand collaborative efforts and enhance research capabilities through new partnerships.

**Indicator:** Number of new research partnerships formed.

**Target:** Establish three new research partnerships during this Plan’s duration.

### 6. Increased Research Outputs and Funding

**Measure:** Increase the quantity and financial support for research activities.

**Indicator:** Number of research publications produced and amount of research funding received annually.

**Target:** Increase research publications from 6 to 8 per Strategic Plan period. Increase research funding by 20% compared to the previous period.

### 7. Member Engagement in Research

**Measure:** Enhance member participation in research-related activities and events.

**Indicator:** Percentage of members participating in research activities and events annually.

**Target:** Achieve 90% member participation in research activities and events annually.

### 8. Knowledge Sharing and Policy Advancement

**Measure:** Promote dissemination of research findings and ensure currency of Policy Platform.

**Indicator:** Number of knowledge-sharing events hosted and frequency of Policy Platform updates with new research findings.

**Target:** Host four knowledge-sharing events annually with 80% positive feedback from participants. Annually update the Policy Platform with findings from new research projects.

## Schedule 3 – Governance and Engagement Framework

NGAA has a bespoke governance framework that allows for clear decision-making processes and representation across officers and elected members. The Governance Framework serves as an important engagement vehicle, supplemented by a comprehensive internal and external communications and events plan. The goal of the combined framework is provide opportunities and encouragement for participation in NGAA activities by both our members and our stakeholders.

### Governance Bodies

#### NGAA Annual Meeting of Members

- **Responsibilities:**
  - Elect Strategic Advisory Committee
  - Receive annual reports and accounts.
  - Review and confirm the Strategic Plan and Policy Platform.

#### Strategic Advisory Committee of elected members (SAC)

- **Responsibilities:**
  - Approve the Strategic Plan, Operational Plan, and Policy Platform.
  - Oversee CEO KPIs and annual agreements with the auspicating council.

#### Committee of Management (CoM) of CEOs/Directors

- **Responsibilities:**
  - Develop and recommend the Strategic Plan, Policy Platform, and Budget to SAC.
  - Monitor the Operational Plan and Budget.
  - Set and monitor CEO KPIs.

### Advisory Bodies

The NGAA Secretariat convenes Research and Policy Advisory committees on a regular basis, comprising officer representation from the NGAA Membership. These bodies provide input to policy submissions and research plans as well as provide the opportunity for knowledge sharing.

### NGAA Secretariat

- **Membership:** Chief Executive Officer, National Research and Policy Lead, National Communications Coordinator, administration support and various contractors as required.
- **Responsibilities:** Implement approved Strategic Plan, Policy Platform, and Operational Plan and auspicating arrangements.

### Decision-making process



## Engagement Framework

NGAA distributes regular newsletters to Members and stakeholders outlining advocacy progress, research findings, event information and administrative issues. We also hold regular events throughout the year, including:

- Parliamentary Event in Canberra, usually November
- Members' meeting during ALGA NGA in Canberra, usually mid-year
- Congress (thought leadership) hosted by a different member council each year and held at different times of the year depending on election cycles
- Annual Awards
- Research Symposium online webinars
- Other events such as state-based gatherings as required.

The goal of our event plan is to bring members together to hear leading speakers on an agreed theme, showcase Member research and best practice, provide opportunities for partners and sponsors to connect with members, and to engage at a political level in Canberra.

## Measures of Success

### 9. Effective Decision-Making and Strategic Implementation

**Measure:** The governance framework should lead to more efficient decision-making processes and the successful implementation of strategic initiatives.

**Indicator:** Timeliness and effectiveness of decisions made by the Strategic Advisory Committee (SAC) and Committee of Management (CoM).

**Target:** At least 90% of strategic decisions are made and implemented within the set deadlines, aligning with the NGAA's strategic objectives.

### 10. Improved Member Engagement and Representation

**Measure:** The framework should ensure high levels of engagement and balanced representation from all member councils across different states.

**Indicator:** Increased number of Member Councils from all states; Participation rate and satisfaction among member councils in governance activities, including elections and meetings, events and communications

**Target:** Achieve 90% participation of all eligible member councils in key activities and at least an 80% satisfaction rate in feedback surveys, reflecting equitable representation and involvement. Achieve above 50% open rate for newsletters.

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### . Operational Efficiency and Performance Monitoring

**Measure:** The new structure should enhance operational efficiency and establish effective performance monitoring mechanisms.

**Indicator:** Completion rate of performance reviews for the SAC, CoM, and the Chief Executive Officer, and the achievement of set KPIs.

**Target:** 100% of required performance reviews completed annually, with at least 85% of KPIs met, indicating successful implementation and management of operational tasks.