



NGAA Strategic Plan

July 2020 – June 2023

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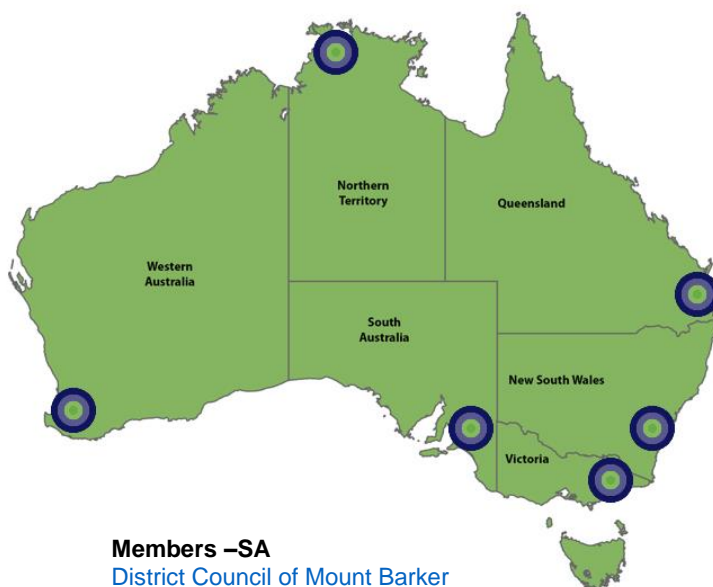
National Growth Areas Alliance

The National Growth Areas Alliance (NGAA) brings together Councils from the fast growing outer urban areas around Australia's major cities. We have a shared vision of growing communities that are resilient, liveable and thriving places. However, this vision remains unachievable while investment in vital infrastructure and services does not keep pace with our population boom.

Supporting growth areas is about equity. We believe that every Australian deserves to live in a safe, sustainable and liveable community – regardless of their postcode.

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.



- Members – WA**
[City of Wanneroo](#)
[City of Swan](#)
[City of Cockburn](#)
[City of Kwinana](#)
[City of Armadale](#)
[City of Gosnells](#)

- Members –SA**
[District Council of Mount Barker](#)
[City of Playford](#)

- Members - NSW**
[Blacktown City Council](#)
[Camden Council](#)
[Liverpool City Council](#)
[Penrith City Council](#)
[Wollondilly Shire Council](#)

- Members – VIC**
[City of Casey](#)
[Cardinia Shire Council](#)
[Wyndham City Council](#)
[City of Melton](#)
[Hume City Council](#)
[City of Whittlesea](#)
[Mitchell Shire Council](#)

The Alliance currently counts 20 Councils as Members from NSW, Victoria, South Australia and Western Australia. Since 2018, the Alliances' governance and operations have undergone transformational change, with a new governance structure in place, increased participation of elected representatives and officers in policy development and decision making, and strategies in place for advocacy and research. Our operations have become more streamlined, to maximise productivity from a small resource base.

The Alliance's work is funded primarily through membership fees from Member Councils, which are set on a sliding scale according to population size. Fees are set at accessible levels and are reviewed during the development of each Strategic Plan. Income is also generated from partnership agreements and public events.

Vision and Mission

The demographic and economic changes that are occurring in our cities are profound. With one in every five Australian citizens (one in four by 2036) living in an outer metropolitan city, suburb or town, the right investment in these areas will not only impact local communities, but the nation.

The National Growth Areas Alliance is an engaged and accountable membership base of established and emerging growth area Councils supported by a national secretariat.

Our vision is for our Alliance to be nationally recognised as the peak body for all Councils experiencing rapid and sustained population growth and the leader in growth area planning issues.

The Alliance's vision for growth areas is clear – resilient, healthy, liveable and productive communities. Each citizen deserves access to safe, sustainable, high amenity places with the opportunity to work and study close to home or in connected centres that are regionally accessible.

Our mission is to influence national policy settings and funding decisions to enhance community and economic development in growth areas; address the infrastructure, jobs and skills deficits; and better prepare and plan for continued population growth.

We will achieve this through: advocating a policy platform to Federal and State Governments that is accessible, realistic and representative of Member Councils' interests; maintaining a solid evidence base of research and best practice; and using the collective knowledge and experience of Member Councils and experts to build local government capacity to build and maintain resilient and productive communities.

Contributions from elected representatives and officers of all Alliance Member Councils, combined with a transparent governance and decision-making process is critical to the impact of our work.

Current Situation

State of Australia's Growth Areas in 2020

Five million people live in just 31 municipalities in Australia's outer urban growth areas, where member Councils of the NGAA are located. The population of outer urban areas has doubled in one generation, and despite Councils efforts to seek appropriate funding, infrastructure provision has not kept pace with that growth.

By 2036, approximately 7.9 million people are expected to live in outer urban growth areas, making up 25% of Australia's population, up from 20% currently. The importance of the outer suburbs to Australia's population will continue to grow, driven by an average growth rate of 3.3% p.a., to Australia's 1.5% (ABS medium series).

There is significant catching up to do in terms of overall infrastructure investment in growth areas. Between 2011-16, outer urban growth areas accommodated 35% of Australia's population growth with only 13% of overall infrastructure spending.

The deficits in jobs, skills and infrastructure in outer urban growth areas are severe, and if left unaddressed will have significant impact on the future productivity and resilience of one fifth (soon to be one quarter) of Australia's population. The demographic profile of this population is mostly working families along with a high number of young people in education or seeking work.

Federal Policy Directions

The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic has changed the trajectory of the Australian economy. The initial policy response from Government is to contain the spread of the virus and stimulate economic activity through wage support for business, and stimulus packages across a wide number of sectors.

While the longer term strategies for economic recovery are still under development, it is clear that the focus will need to be on job creation and supporting major industries such as construction and retail.

Existing policy mechanisms are expected to be maximised during the recovery phase, particularly City Deals, which involve contributions from State and Local Government as well as Federal.

NGAA heavily influenced the Government's decision to introduce City Deals (2016 election) and the Urban Congestion Fund (18-19 Budget and 2019 election). While these two mechanisms are fundamental to our Member Councils' development, and provide the way forward for long-term strategic planning to meet rapidly growing populations and tackling localised congestion hotspots, we recognise that the country is in new territory as it faces the challenge of post COVID-19 recovery. We will be required to respond quickly to emerging opportunities be it policy, funding or influencing decision making and this plan will need to adapt to those changing circumstances.

The place of local government representation at the national level will also need close monitoring during this plan's implementation, given the replacement of the Council of Australian Governments (in which the Australian Local Government Association participated) with the National Cabinet which has no local government representation.

Political Context and Election Cycle

The next Commonwealth General Election will be held sometime between August 2021 and May 2022 (assuming a simultaneous half-Senate and House of Representatives election).

Growth area seats changed very little in the 2016 election, with only one changing hands and only a handful with either a significant swing against the incumbent or a close margin.

Given the timing of the response to COVID-19, both major parties will be formulating long-term policy responses from mid-2020. This provides NGAA the opportunity to pursue its advocacy objectives during this critical time.

Strategic Goals

1. Federal and State Government policies impacting outer urban growth areas better meet local government needs and expectations

Strategies

- 1.1. **Policy platform** reflecting Members' interests is updated annually to reflect new evidence and changes in policies and priorities.
- 1.2. **Research program** that connects NGAA and Members with experts on growth area issues, delivers research outcomes to support our policy platform, and builds on the work being undertaken within our Member Councils.
- 1.3. Ongoing **advocacy** to relevant Federal and State parliamentarians, bureaucrats and stakeholders pursues adoption of the NGAA Policy Platform, promotes our research and influences policy decisions, including **Federal Election Campaign** and contribution to Members' State Election advocacy
- 1.4. **Communications and events** build consensus across membership and stakeholders, and position NGAA as the 'go to' source of expertise on growth area issues.

Measures of Success

- Policy shifts made by Federal and State Governments reflect our Policy Platform
- Growth Areas added to a ministerial portfolio
- Political representatives and bureaucrats seek out our input to policy development
- Our research findings are referenced in national discourse
- Election commitments from major parties respond to our advocacy asks

2. Member Councils have increased capacity to build liveable, resilient communities

Strategies

- 2.1. **Development of specialist networks**, peer review and support at officer and elected representative levels addresses issues and experiences shared across growth area councils
- 2.2. Access to international and national **thought leaders** on issues related to our Policy Platform is provided through our research partnerships, policy discussions and events
- 2.3. **Individual advice** on policy, strategy and advocacy is provided to Member Councils

Measures of Success

- Purposeful, outcome focussed network activities involve all member councils and produce improved practices
- Member Council strategies and policies are informed by NGAA's policy platform and evidence base
- Elected representatives and officers from all Member Councils contribute to, benefit from and are involved in NGAA activities

3. Both the challenges and opportunities in growth areas are positively represented in national discourse

Strategies

- 3.1. Issues affecting growth area councils are regularly represented in **traditional and social media** and include reflection of NGAA Policy Platform and profiling of our Member Councils
- 3.2. Our **research findings and Policy Platform are clearly articulated** directly to and indirectly through our stakeholders, membership and media
- 3.3. Collaboration with stakeholders, national events and advocacy campaigns **raise our profile**

Measures of Success

- NGAA-generated media campaigns receive national coverage and NGAA representatives are regularly sought out for media comment
- Invitations to NGAA to present to stakeholder groups, participation in NGAA events, downloads of NGAA documents, social media engagement and our stakeholder network have all increased by a meaningful margin
- Growth area case studies are highlighted in media coverage of relevant issues

4. The Alliance is sustainable, accountable and engaged

Strategies

- 4.1. **Financial viability** is achieved through recruiting new Member Councils and establishing partnerships with like-minded organisations.
- 4.2. Elected representatives and officials from all **member councils** are engaged and involved in our governance, policy development, research and advocacy activities
- 4.3. NGAA's **resources** are allocated to obtain maximum efficiency, and the skills and experience of officers within Member Councils are available to offset activity costs

Measures of Success

- Our Membership has increased by at least 25% and includes Councils and Partners in all eligible states
- Membership of our governance committees is stable, and elections are well-contested
- All Member Councils are represented in contributions to our Policy Platform
- Our annual Operational Plans and Budgets are fully implemented

Governance

NGAA is auspiced by the City of Whittlesea. An auspicings agreement outlining provision of services by City of Whittlesea and a process for ensuring delivery of the NGAA Operational Plan by NGAA Secretariat (who are employees of the City of Whittlesea) is reviewed and renewed on a regular basis. The Alliance has three levels of governance:

1. Annual Meeting of Members

Responsibilities:

- Elect Councillors/Mayors to Strategic Advisory Committee for two year terms
- Receive NGAA annual report and accounts
- Receive reports on Strategic Plan and Policy Platform

2. Strategic Advisory Committee comprising elected officials (Councillors) from Outer Urban Growth Council Members

Responsibilities:

- Approve Strategic Plan, Operational Plan and Policy Platform
- Advise on advocacy strategy
- Convene Annual Meeting of Members

3. Committee of Management comprising Chief Executive Officers of Outer Urban Growth Council Members.

Responsibilities:

- Develop and Recommend Strategic Plan, Operational Plan and Budget and Policy Platform to the Strategic Advisory Committee
- Set Executive Officer KPIs
- Confirm NGAA policies

The Alliance's Governance Manual is available in the Members' section of NGAA website.

Membership Categories

Outer Urban Growth Councils

- Councils whose cities, suburbs and towns are in established, emerging or future outer urban growth areas
- Current, recent or projected rapid and sustained population growth rates above the national average
- Inadequate transport, freight, community and social infrastructure stemming from investment not keeping pace with population growth.

Associate Members

- Councils outside NGAA geographic areas who are also experiencing rapid population growth (for example Geelong, Wollongong etc)

Partner

- Industry organisations with an interest in growth areas.
- State and Federal Government and research and academic organisations
- Local Government groups outside NGAA geographic areas who are also experiencing rapid population growth

Development of this Plan

Consultation

A Strategic Planning workshop held as part of the 2019 Congress was attended by 38 participants from 14 councils. On a scale of 0-10 (where 0 = Stop – shut up shop... and 10 = Expand, grow, revolutionize! Size, scope, outcomes), the average of participants votes came out at 7.8 – so erring toward the end of positive change.

In line with those findings, the Strategic Advisory Committee approved (Meeting 24 February 2020) expanded membership categories and a revised fee structure. A draft Strategic Plan was made available for all Members in May 2020 and was approved by the Strategic Advisory Committee on 15 June 2020.

Review

This plan will be reviewed annually by the Strategic Advisory Committee.

Appendix – NGAA Tools and Tactics

Policy and Research

Policy Platform

The Alliance's Policy Platform, developed in consultation with officers from Member councils, reflects shared priorities of growth area councils. The Policy Platform is informed by evidence from NGAA's own research or recent research from leaders in the specific policy field, and is reviewed annually (in consultation with Members) to reflect the changing Federal policy environment.

Research Strategy

The aim of the Research Strategy is to provide a research framework that enables the Alliance to build its Policy Platform on a sound contemporary evidence base.

The Strategy is implemented through a Research Plan (reviewed annually) that details the proposed broad line of inquiry, priorities and actions. Annual research investment is detailed in a Research Investment Plan.

To ensure that NGAA resources are optimized for the best outcomes, three broad categories of research are used:

- NGAA research
- member-led research
- partner-led research.

Research and Practice Reference Group

The Research and Practice (RAP) Reference Group comprises six members who are officers of Member Councils. They are selected through an Expression of Interest process and appointed for a period of 2 years. The RAP Group provides feedback on research subjects and curates member research activities that might have national application.

Advocacy

Government Relations

The NGAA is the Federal Government and Opposition's go-to source for guidance and evidence of the impact of rapid and sustained population growth in the cities, towns and suburbs on the outskirts of Australia's capital cities.

With high level access to Ministers and Shadow Ministers across relevant portfolios, we are regularly sought out to provide advice on a range of policies.

NGAA makes submissions to the Federal government on behalf of its Member Councils, and undertake four delegations to Parliament House each year.

Election Campaign

Alliance Members deliver a national advocacy campaign in the lead up to each Commonwealth General Election.

Advocacy Network

Advocacy experts from Member Councils meet online regularly for professional development, peer-to-peer learning and to provide advice on advocacy issues.

Stakeholder Engagement

Stakeholder Map

