

# ANNUAL REPORT

2020-21



NATIONAL  
Growth Areas  
ALLIANCE

## Chair's Report

The financial year 2020-21 has been another productive and effective one for the National Growth Areas Alliance despite the extremely challenging circumstances.

Through our advocacy we maintained our profile with political leaders, bureaucrats, the media and like-minded peak bodies and cemented our role as the 'go to' organisation for expert research and advice on the issues facing local government in outer metropolitan regions of Australia's capital cities.

The growth areas of Sydney and Melbourne proved to be the regions hardest hit by COVID-19 and I would like to commend my fellow elected representatives as well as all staff from NGAA Members who met the extreme challenges of a pandemic with professionalism, compassion and admirable stamina.

At the same time, it was refreshing to hear from colleagues in South Australia and Western Australia that life was continuing 'as usual' – a situation that I sincerely hope continues.

The national response to COVID-19 and in particular the quick pivot to remote working was a turning point for many people living in growth areas who suddenly saved many valuable hours by avoiding congestion and lengthy commutes.

NGAA was quick to seize the chance to measure the impact of remote working and devise new policy positions based on the outcomes of our national survey on the experience of working from or near home in growth areas, which was released in August 2020.

That research, combined with our extensive library, was pivotal in our contribution to Infrastructure Australia's 2021 Australian Infrastructure Plan. NGAA was sought out to host and attend Infrastructure Australia workshops and provide extensive feedback on drafts of chapters on Transport, Social Infrastructure and Place-based Outcomes for Communities.

While the Government's attention to Cities policy was diverted by the pandemic this financial year, NGAA nevertheless maintained a strong reputation as a pragmatic and trusted resource to inform policy development and funding decisions.

Our meetings in Canberra were restricted this year due to travel restrictions, but we were nevertheless able to hold discussions online with Ministers and Shadow Ministers and their advisors. It was wonderful, however, to be able to meet with some of you in person at our Members meeting at ALGA in Canberra in June.

I would like to thank the Mayors, Councillors and officers who give their time and expertise on the Strategic Advisory Committee, Committee of Management, Research and Practice Reference group, our professional networks, and who have contributed to our submissions and reports.

On behalf of all Members, I would also like to thank the NGAA Secretariat for their continued dedication and the tremendous value they deliver to our Members. As you look through this annual report and take in the vast amount achieved by NGAA, we are sure you will agree that our small team goes 'above and beyond' for all of us.



**Cr Matthew Deeth**  
Mayor of Wollondilly Shire Council

## NGAA Governance

### Elected Representatives

- Chair – Cr Matthew Deeth, Wollondilly Shire Council
- Deputy Chair – Mayor Tracey Roberts, City of Wanneroo

### Strategic Advisory Committee

- Cr Matthew Deeth, Mayor, Shire of Wollondilly (NGAA Chair)
- Mayor Tracey Roberts, City of Wanneroo (NGAA Deputy Chair)
- Cr Charishma Kaliyanda, Liverpool City Council
- Mayor Ann Ferguson, Mount Barker District Council
- Mayor Glenn Docherty, City of Playford
- Cr Collin Ross, Cardinia Shire Council
- Cr Peter Maynard, Wyndham City Council

#### Strategic Advisory Committee Meetings

#### Committee of Management Meetings

2020

13 October

7th August  
2nd October  
11th December

2021

26th February  
16th April  
14th May (with Committee of Management)

19th February  
9th April  
11th June

### Strategic Advisory Committee

**Cr Matthew Deeth**  
Shire of Wollondilly  
(NGAA Chair)



**Mayor Tracey Roberts**  
City of Wanneroo



**Mayor Ann Ferguson**  
Mount Barker  
District Council



**Cr Charishma Kaliyanda**  
Liverpool City Council



**Cr Collin Ross**  
Cardinia Shire Council



**Mayor Glenn Docherty**  
City of Playford



**Cr Peter Maynard**  
Wyndham City Council



## NGAA Governance

### Committee of Management

#### NSW

- Ben Taylor, CEO, Wollondilly Shire Council
- Chris Shannon, Manager Strategic Planning, Blacktown City Council
- Rachel Pleasant, Head of Corporate Strategy, Wollondilly Shire Council (2021)

#### SA

Sam Green, CEO, City of Playford

#### VIC

- Kelly Grigsby, CEO, Wyndham City Council (until March 2021)
- James Collins, Director City Planning & Infrastructure, City of Casey
- Natalie Walker, Head of Strategy and Policy Impact, Wyndham City Council

#### WA

- Daniel Simms, CEO, City of Wanneroo
- Rachel Pleasant, Acting Director of Planning, City of Cockburn (2020)

### Research and Practice Reference Group

The RAP Group expanded in May 2021 following and Expression of Interest Process after the departure of two valued Members: Dr Robin Visser, formerly of Wyndham City Council and Caralene Moloney, formerly of the City of Whittlesea

#### NSW

- Dr Anne Hurni, Coordinator – Research and Policy, Penrith City Council

#### SA

- Greg Sarre, Manager Economic Development and Sustainable Futures, Mount Barker District Council
- Dr Greg Pattinson, Executive Strategic Advisor, City of Playford

#### WA

- Maria Cooke, Director City Regulation, City of Kwinana
- Steve Marmion, Manager Advocacy and Economic Development, City of Wanneroo
- Sinead Bullock, Research and Reporting Officer, City of Gosnells

#### VIC

- Joanne Kyrkilis, Manager Equity and Inclusion, City of Whittlesea
- Joanna Noesgaard, Head of Infrastructure and Facilities Planning, City of Casey



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## Committee of Management Report

We are pleased to report the 2020-21 Operational Plan resulted in significant outcomes for our Members.

The Secretariat's KPIs were set out in 13 strategies that reflected the four goals contained in the 2021-24 Strategic Plan.

Numerous measurable actions were set out under each strategy, and despite the impact of COVID-19, 90% of those actions were complete, with the remainder impacted by the pandemic.

Some achievements of the year included:

- Government meetings continued during the pandemic resulting in direct requests for NGAA policy formulation from Government and Opposition
- New research commissioned on the opportunities arising from working from home in growth areas with significant media coverage
- Closer collaboration with Infrastructure Australia including being sought out to contribute to Australian Infrastructure Plan.
- Eight submissions to government including Budget submission

- Virtual event pivot, with webinar series to replace Symposium resulting in nine events, 20 speakers and over 300 registrations
- 2021/22 election campaign strategy was designed with extensive member consultation
- All NGAA members continued to be engaged even during extreme economic uncertainty, with increased participation in governance and networks.
- Media profile increased through 11 pieces of coverage, six background briefs provided to journalists and 17 media releases
- Staffing structure reduced due to COVID, with two staff leaving and five months with an FTE of 1.6



9 webinar events

20 speakers

300 registrations

## Executive Officer Report

2020-21 was an extremely challenging year. It was a live example of the importance of our Alliance: our willingness to learn from our shared experiences, the strength of a united voice in Canberra, and our shared dedication to building stronger, more resilient communities in Australia's growth areas.

In the eastern states, the impact of COVID-19 on communities and councils in growth areas was devastatingly persistent and harsh. Health, mental health, financial and job insecurity remain headline issues, and NGAA Member councils have had to respond in ways we never have before.

NGAA was quick to respond, commissioning research into the opportunities that remote working offers growth area communities. Our research received considerable attention from Government, Opposition, state and federal infrastructure advisory bodies as well as the media.

We also responded quickly by shifting our annual Symposium online. A series of webinars showcased our Members' work and made sure important evolving issues such as mental health services, financial stress and approaches to placemaking in a post-pandemic world remained on the national policy agenda.

I would like to acknowledge the incredible commitment of the NGAA Secretariat, particularly Helen Wells, who met so many challenges head on, and kept a fast, steady pace even when the extended lockdowns we experienced in Melbourne were taking a toll on our personal and professional wellbeing. We farewelled a valued team member, Kelly Toghil, whom many of you know from our events, and welcomed Nicola Ward as National Research and Policy Lead. We were also lucky to have Jess Gordon join us for an internship where she produced a valuable analysis of the 2019 Federal election.

I also thank all of you who have actively contributed to our Alliance's knowledge base, policy development, advocacy and governance in 2020-21.



**Bronwen Clark**  
Executive Officer



## Delivering on the 2020-21 Operational Plan

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

### Advocacy

Discussions with:

- The Hon. Alan Tudge MP, Minister for Cities and Urban Infrastructure
- Address by Minister Tudge at Members' Meeting 8 December
- Andrew Giles MP, Shadow Minister for Cities and Urban Infrastructure
- The Hon. Catherine King MP, Shadow Minister for Infrastructure
  - Advisors to:
    - The Hon. Paul Fletcher MP, Minister for Cities and Urban Infrastructure (from December 2020)
    - Senator the Hon Michaelia Cash, Minister for Employment, Skills, Small and Family Business
    - The Hon. Michael Sukkar MP, Minister for Housing

### Submissions

- Infrastructure Australia Priority List
- Department of Home Affairs on Migration Planning
- House of Representatives Inquiry into Cultural and Creative Industries
- Federal Budget
- Infrastructure Victoria's draft 30-year Infrastructure Plan
- Australian National Audit Office on Urban Congestion Fund
- Infrastructure and Project Financing Agency on Review of the National Housing Finance and Investment Corporation
- National Road Safety Strategy



Caption????

## Delivering on the 2020-21 Operational Plan...continued

Member Councils have increased capacity to build liveable, resilient communities

### NGAA's research strategy and partnerships

In 2020, Symposium took the form of a series of webinars due to COVID-19 restrictions, with a total of 18 presenters and 293 attendees.

1. Shifting planning policy or shifting planning responsibility? A report from the weekly Planning Ministers meetings
2. Dis/Advantage: Young people in Australia's outer suburbs after Covid-19
3. Work from home research presentation
4. Financial Stress in Growth Areas – the ticking time bomb
5. Youth mental Health - Getting help where it is needed in growth areas
6. A Post-Budget look at the economic impact of COVID-19 on Australia's outer urban growth areas
7. Placemaking for nervous people

In 2020, two pieces were commissioned:

- Working from Home in the Outer Suburbs – Opportunities and Benefits
- Working from Home in the Outer Suburbs – Jobs and Commuting

Significant media coverage was garnered for both research reports, and both have been referenced by Government and Opposition and key Departmental and Advisory bodies.

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

Secured national profile of NGAA's policy priorities

- 17 media releases and news items
- 14 separate pieces of media coverage
- 151 Twitter posts and approx. 15% increase in Twitter followers from previous year
- 49 Linked In posts and approx. 45% increase in Linked In followers from previous year



## The Alliance is sustainable, accountable and engaged



### Communication and engagement with NGAA Member Councils

45 e-newsletters, policy and event updates were published.



### Member Engagement

All Members were represented in our governance structure or officer-level networks.



### Finance

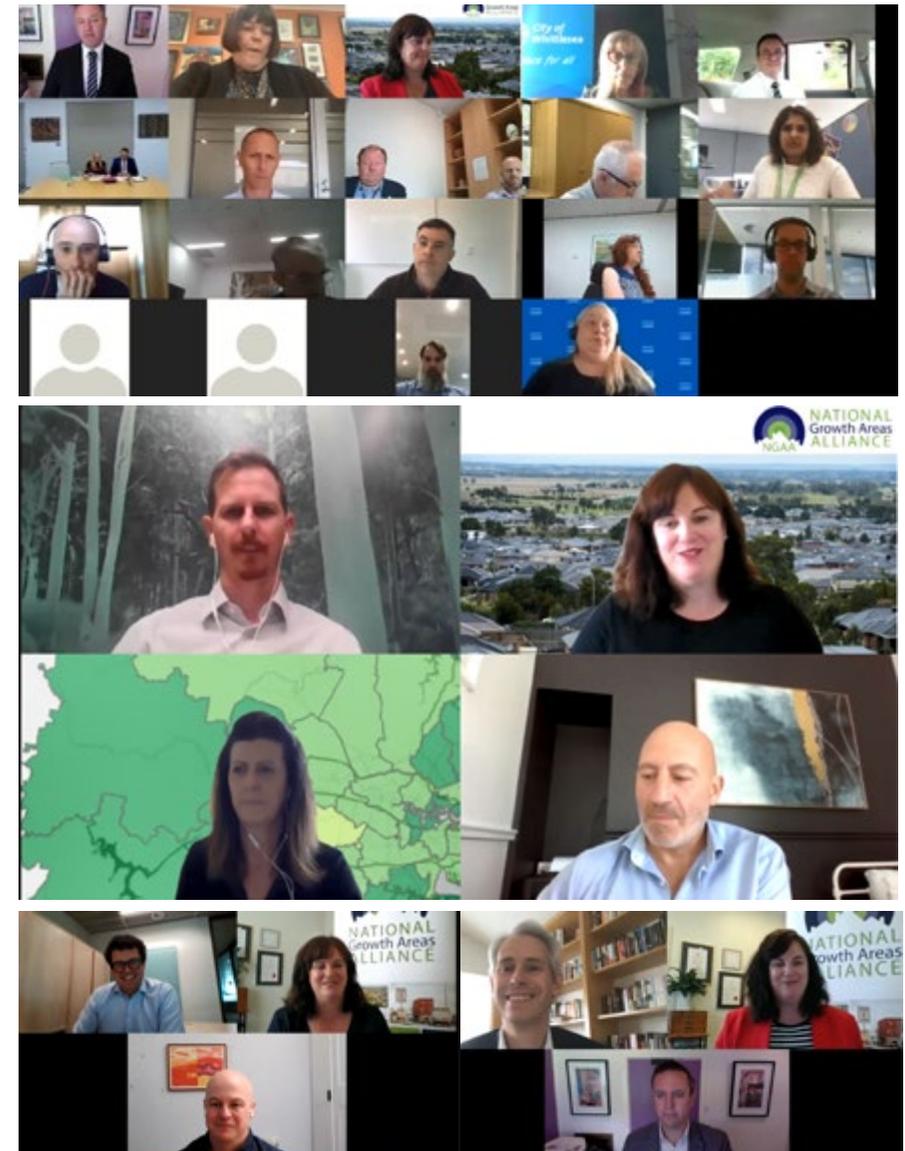
The 2020-21 Budget was revised in December 2020 to take into account the reduced expected income from the postponement of the new Membership fee structure. Staffing, travel and operating costs all came in under budget in 2020-21, with pre-payment of research and event fees for 2022 taking the consultants budget over its forecast level. A surplus of \$13,741 will be carried forward to 2021-22.



### Secretariat

Secretariat staffing levels were reduced in response to the uncertain economic environment at the onset of the pandemic, with only the Executive Officer and Communications coordinator (or 1.6FTE) for nearly five months of the year. Our Events Coordinator was transitioned to a casual role in November 2020 and the Research and Policy Coordinator role was filled by Nicola Ward in March 2021 after Melanie Learson's departure in November 2020.

Meeting with our members - 2021 style



## Member Councils 2020 - 2021

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