



Election Statement by LG Professionals Australia National President, Andrew Wardlaw

A FRESH AGENDA FOR AUSTRALIA'S CITIES AND REGIONS: COLLABORATION, INNOVATION AND LOCALISM

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Australians want a fresh approach to the way we govern our local communities, cities and regions. Governments must work together to do better with less, and to regain public trust. Our current federal arrangements are not delivering the results Australians need and expect.

Research conducted by LG Professionals Australia, the association representing senior managers of more than 500 local Councils across the country, shows that high-performing local government is essential to add strength, resilience and responsiveness to a revitalized federation. This must be part of a new agenda based on collaboration, innovation and localism. Otherwise Australia will fail to respond effectively to the challenges of the 21st Century.

National President of LG Professionals Australia, Andrew Wardlaw, said today that Australia is lagging behind moves around the world – most notably in the United Kingdom – towards devolution, localism and ‘place-based’ government.

“Australians want better results, not a re-run of tired old debates about ‘who does what’ and ‘who’s in charge’. We are failing to bring a localist – community – perspective to bear on federal policies and Commonwealth-State relations. No wonder governments are seen to be out of touch,” he said.

“At this 2016 Election, all parties need to recognise the importance of local and regional communities as the building blocks of our national life – and the potential of local government to contribute much more. They should commit to a new dialogue – both political and professional – to explore the options for collaboration and real partnerships to address the issues Australians care most about,” he continued.

LG Professionals has released a detailed Election Statement based on its recent research report *Australia in a Century of Transformative Governance: A Federation for Communities and Places*.

The report shows that the skills and resources of Australian local government are being seriously under-used in the way we manage the federation and address national issues. For example, both the ‘Henry’ tax review and the Productivity Commission have identified opportunities to make better use of local taxes (‘rates’) in the overall tax mix. But Australia’s two largest states impose arbitrary limits

on how much revenue local councils can raise – reducing our capacity to provide high quality community services and infrastructure.

“With the right policy settings, Councils could do much more to advance national objectives and take some of the load off the Commonwealth and States,” said Mr Wardlaw. “In particular, they have demonstrated capacity for innovation in addressing local and regional issues. One of the greatest benefits of a localist approach is that it offers hundreds of potential sites of innovation in differing contexts across all parts of Australia, and an abundant source of knowledge and new ideas. This is not about allocating more resources at any level of government, it’s about using the existing resources efficiently and effectively to meet the real demonstrated needs of local communities,” Mr Wardlaw added.

LG Professionals’ Election Statement is therefore a call for action to promote cooperative government, and to realise local government’s potential role and value within the federation. This does NOT require constitutional recognition or big increases in federal funding. But among other things all parties should commit to:

- **Develop fresh policies to address national issues that reflect localist perspectives, and find better ways to promote collaboration between all levels of government, business and communities.**
- **Re-establish under COAG both a dedicated Local Government Ministers Council and Officials Committee, and a federal Office of Local Government.**
- **Form genuine partnerships with local government – not just the States and Territories – in the negotiation of proposed ‘City Deals’ (or similar initiatives) and new regional development programs.**
- **Support a national local government think-tank as one of several centres for innovation in government and service delivery along the lines of the UK ‘What Works Network’.**

See LG Professionals Australia’s Election Statement *A Fresh Agenda For Australia’s Cities And Regions: Innovation, Collaboration And Localism* at:

<http://www.lgprofessionalsaustralia.org.au/advocacy.html>

See the research report *Australia in a Century of Transformative Governance: A Federation for Communities and Places* at:

http://www.lgprofessionalsaustralia.org.au/uploads/3/7/4/2/37423121/lgprof_australian_federation_paper_march2016.pdf

Media contact- Melissa Misuraca, Public Affairs on 03 8658 5876

LG Professionals Australia

Local Government Professionals Australia (formerly Local Government Managers Australia (LGMA) was established in 1936 with the primary purpose of advancing the professionalism of local government. Today LG Professionals is the leading national professional association representing the senior managers of more than 500 local councils across Australia. Drawing on the high-level skills and knowledge of its members, it can speak with confidence on the measures needed to transform and strengthen local and regional governance.

For further information contact CEO Lauren Oakey - 0447 143 578

email:ceo@lgprofessionalsaustralia.org.au www.lgprofessionalsaustralia.org.au