



MEDIA RELEASE

Much more than rates, roads and rubbish: a transformative agenda for local government

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There are a host of challenges that face local government in the 21st century: delivering services, financial pressures, workforce development, and ageing infrastructure. Local Government has also suffered from a PR crisis of sorts, whereby citizens many think that “rates, roads and rubbish” are the key areas of local government business.

The reality is that Australian local government, like local governments around the globe, is multi-functional and place-based providing over 200 needed services to their communities. Local government’s role and the services it delivers has been extended in a number of ways.

In an effort to understand the challenges and the opportunities facing the sector, and to dispel some myths about local government along the way, LG Professionals Australia commissioned a research paper to provide a technical, non-partisan perspective on the value proposition for local government in the future of Australian governance.

Speaking at the launch of the paper in Canberra, LG Professionals Australia CEO Lauren Oakey, said “This paper is a timely given the Federal Government’s [transformative government agenda](#). We believe what is needed now is for the Commonwealth and States to recognise the capacity of local government and enter into a dialogue – both political and professional – to explore the options for increased collaborative problem-solving in the areas the report highlights as key touch points for local government’s intersect with communities.”

“This does not depend on recognition in the Australian Constitution or a major injection of additional grant support, nor does it require a revival of the White Paper on the Reform of the Federation process from the Office of the Prime Minister.”

LG Professionals Australia National President, Dr Shayne Silcox, said “We thank everyone who contributed ideas and case studies during this consultation process, in particular the LG Professional Australia Federation state partners, and sector experts Professors Mark Evans and Graham Sansom who lead the engagement. This has resulted in a robust contributions from the sector, ensuring the paper is reflective of the issues and opportunities at the centre of local government in Australia as well as being an important consideration in the development of local government policy, both pre and post Federal election.”

Regional development, digital services, innovation are some of the key themes that have emerged from the paper, published today on the [LG Professionals Australia website](#). Case studies are also available on the [website](#) and in the paper.

Background information

LG Professionals Australia original intent for this consultation process was a formal contribution to discussions on the White Paper on Reform of the Federation, and the implications for Local Government, followed the release of a release of a discussions paper, which made little reference to the role of local government. The Office of the Prime Minister announced the 'White Paper on the Reform of the Federation' (PM 2014) in June 2014.

The objectives of the White Paper were to:

- reduce, as far as possible, the waste, duplication and second guessing between the different levels of government;
- achieve a more efficient and effective Federation, and in so doing, improve national productivity;
- make interacting with government simpler for citizens; and
- achieve agreement between State and Commonwealth governments about their distinct and mutually exclusive responsibilities and subsequent funding sources for associated programs.

As well as to ensure our federal system:

- is better understood and valued by Australians (and the case for reform supported);
- has clearer allocation of roles and responsibilities;
- enhances governments' autonomy, flexibility and political accountability; and
- supports Australia's economic growth and international competitiveness.

LG Professionals Australia National President, Dr Shayne Silcox, said at the time of the consultation process that "it (was) important that local government's critical contribution to Australian society and productivity is understood and positioned strongly in any reform of the federation".

LG Professionals Australia facilitated ranging discussions with sector about what implications the Federal White Paper could have for local government, culminating in a forum in Canberra in December 2015 at Old Parliament House.

LG Professional's CEO Lauren Oakey said at the time. "Engaging the sector for their response on issues of importance to local government such as the role councils should play as part of the Federation, the tax system, strengthening local democracy, regional collaboration between levels of government, and ensuring the best possible services to communities, is critical to our role as the leading professional association for local government practitioners".

Media inquiries:

Melissa Misuraca

comms@lgprofessionalsaustralia.org.au

Mobile- 0418141335