



Submissions for the *Australia 2020* Summit

The Rudd Government will convene an *Australia 2020* Summit at Parliament House on 19-20 April 2008 to help shape a long term strategy for the nation's future.

The Summit will bring together some of the best and brightest brains from across the country to tackle the long term challenges confronting Australia's future.

Every Australian has the opportunity to make a submission to the Summit in one of the ten critical areas of discussion:

1. The productivity agenda – education, skills, training, science and innovation
2. The future of the Australian economy
3. Population, sustainability, climate change and water
4. Future directions for rural industries and rural communities
5. A long-term national health strategy – including the challenges of preventative health, workforce planning and the ageing population
6. Strengthening communities, supporting families and social inclusion
7. Options for the future of Indigenous Australia
8. Towards a creative Australia: the future of the arts, film and design
9. The future of Australian governance: renewed democracy, a more open government (including the role of the media), the structure of the Federation and the rights and responsibilities of citizens
10. Australia's future security and prosperity in a rapidly changing region and world.

Submissions

Contributing a submission to the *Australia 2020* Summit is a way for all Australians to be involved in bringing the best ideas forward to address Australia's long term challenges.

All submissions will be made publicly available on this website and will be presented to the *Australia 2020* Summit participants to stimulate discussion and ideas about addressing our future challenges.

Individuals, schools, groups, and organisations are invited to make submissions.

Written submissions are limited to 500 words per topic and should focus on one of the ten identified areas. You may contribute a submission in one or more policy areas.

Submissions will be collected by the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, which is acting as a secretariat for the *Australia 2020* Summit.

All submissions require a 'name for publication'. This can be an individual, group or organisation. In addition to this, each submission is required to include a contact person, their name and details. These contact details will not be published.

Your submission can play an important role in our national discussion about our future and facing Australia's long term future challenges.

What do I have to do to contribute a submission?

If you would like to contribute a submission to the *Australia 2020* Summit in Canberra on 19-20 April 2008, complete this form and return it to the address below no later than **5.00pm Wednesday 9 April 2008**.

Submissions can also be completed online through the *Australia 2020* website at www.australia2020.gov.au.

Before completing the form please read all the information provided on this page to assist in completing your submission.

All submissions require a 'name for publication'. This can be an individual, group or organisation. Your name will appear with your submission when they are published online.

You will also be required to include contact details – your name, address, email address and a contact phone number. These details are collected in case we need to contact you in the lead up to or after the summit to discuss your ideas further. Your details will only be used for this purpose and will not be published.

If you are making a submission as a group, please include the details of a contact person for your group.

Completing the form

The form requires you to complete your personal details and a 'name for publication'. This may be your name or your group's name.

You will then be able to complete a submission for one or more of the topic areas.

Each submission may be up to 500 words per topic to ensure that delegates are able to consider each of the submissions. If just one in every 1000 Australians comments on just one of the ten topic areas, each delegate may have to read more than one million words in the lead up to the Summit. Keeping your contribution concise will ensure that all submissions receive the attention and consideration they deserve.

For this reason attachments, publications, photos and images may not be included in your submission, though you may make reference to any of these you consider useful, including by providing references to further material.

Editorial guidelines

Submissions will be published subject to editorial control that restricts any offensive material or material inappropriate for publication being made public.

If you are hand writing your nomination, please be sure your writing is clear and legible to ensure your submission is able to be considered.

Contacts

Any enquiries regarding the Summit should be directed to:

Australia 2020 Summit Secretariat
Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet
1 National Circuit
BARTON ACT 2600

Toll free number: **1800 703 599** (during business hours Eastern Standard Time)

Privacy and confidentiality

The Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet is committed to the protection of your privacy in accordance with the Federal Privacy Commissioner's Guidelines for Federal and ACT Government World Wide Websites. These guidelines outline the requirements for transparent collection, appropriate and ethical use and secure storage of personal information.

The information you provide to the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet through the *2020 Summit* submission form will be used for the purposes of the *2020 Summit* only.

Only your 'name for publication' and your submission will be provided to delegates for consideration in their deliberations of 19-20 April 2008, and in this way may be incorporated into the Summit Outcomes.



AUSTRALIAN 2020 SUMMIT SUBMISSION FORM

Nominations must be received **by 5.00pm Wednesday 9 April 2008** to the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet at:

Australia 2020 Summit Secretariat
Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet
1 National Circuit
BARTON ACT 2600

Please Note: fields marked with an asterisk (*) are mandatory

denotes information that will be made publicly available

PUBLICATION DETAILS #			
So that your submission can be published on the www.australia2020.gov.au website before the Summit, we need you to provide a 'Name for Publication' that you are happy to have appear with your submission. If you are submitting on behalf of a group, this may be your group's name.			
Individual Name/Group Name for Publication on the website*	Australian Local Government Association		
CONTACT DETAILS			
We need to collect some personal details from you in case we need to contact you in the lead-up to or after the summit to discuss your ideas further. These details will only be used for this purpose. If you are making a group submission, please provide these details for one member of your group.			
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SUMMIT TOPICS FOR SUBMISSIONS #

(please limit comments to 500 words per topic)

The productivity agenda – education, skills, training, science and innovation

The *Australia 2020* Summit will examine:

- a. Ensure that digital technologies are harnessed to improve consumer services, business productivity and the delivery of government services.
- b. Best prepare for a global economy that will increasingly be based upon advanced skills, advanced technology, low carbon energy sources and integration with global supply chains
- c. Attract and retain the most talented, creative and highly skilled people, including researchers and scientists, entrepreneurs, and professional and skilled workers
- d. Ensure that our children have the highest quality teachers, whether in early childhood, school, TAFE or university, including dealing with the crisis in maths and science related disciplines across the education system

Local government supports further investment in our nation's skills, to ensure Australia continues to prosper and meet future challenges. Investing in infrastructure that supports the delivery and application of these skills is equally important.

Digital technologies

There are over 600 local government bodies across Australia, creating a geographically dispersed network of public administration.

ALGA considers that work should be progressed to 'join up' the three spheres of government in Australia. 'Joined up' government is essential to improving e-delivery and quality consumer services, business productivity and delivery of government services.

ALGA believes that enhancing connections between the spheres of government will best enable local government to deliver programs and meet community expectations, and advance Australia as a modern 21st century nation.

To have effective joined-up-government, there must be:

- Broadband infrastructure,
- Electronic interoperability between and across all governments,
- Accelerated re-engineering of government services at all levels to enable relevant services to be delivered electronically, and
- Enhanced skills development, including access to specialists, as well as incentives for up-skilling all government employees to enable them to work efficiently in a digital environment.

Local government has a critical interest in the development of information communications technology (ICT) across Australia. ALGA commends the Government's \$4.7 billion Broadband Network which aims to deliver high speed, affordable broadband to 98 per cent of Australians. ALGA believes that as a priority, this Network should ensure that all government offices (including local government offices and public libraries) have fibre links, so they can serve the community to the best possible standard. Using government as anchor tenants including in remote and rural areas could provide significant incentives for the economic provision of fast, affordable broadband to all customers in these locations.

The development of electronic local government services will increase the range of services available to the community, enable innovative service delivery and improve the cost effectiveness of providing services. Where local communities have access to affordable, high speed broadband, their economic and social development will be

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boosted.

Skills

Local government provides a great range of important services to business, householders and citizens and relies on appropriately trained staff across a wide range of professions.

Like other parts of the economy, however, local government is experiencing critical skills shortages. These shortages are particularly acute in rural and remote areas, where it has struggled to compete for labour against the mining industry and the corporate sector.

Critical skills shortages in local government can result in the imposition of costs to business and diminish community amenity, putting Australia at a collective disadvantage.

ALGA recognises that there are no easy solutions but believes that small 'education' initiatives could make a significant difference. A dedicated program of training and professional development initiatives for such employees would further address skills gaps.

Initiatives need to be designed to deepen and strengthen the quality of the local government workforce. This will improve council service delivery, reduce business costs, and provide depth of skills in the local community.

SUMMIT TOPICS FOR SUBMISSIONS #**(please limit comments to 500 words per topic)*****The future of the Australian economy***

The *Australia 2020* Summit will examine ways to:

- a. After a long period of sustained economic growth and with the added benefits of the global mining boom, how do we best invest the proceeds of this prosperity to lay the foundations for future economic growth
- b. How we best prepare for a global economy that will increasingly be based upon advanced skills, advanced technology, low carbon energy sources and integration with global supply chains
- c. How we take advantage of Australia's proximity to the fast growing economies in the world
- d. How we boost public and private investment in economic infrastructure
- e. Foster innovation in the workplace; encouraging the transfer of ideas across businesses and economies.

Local government believes Australia's long-term economic prosperity will continue to depend upon extensive global engagement. Greater co-operation between the three spheres of government in Australia is necessary for Australia to effectively engage internationally.

Global engagement

Over the past decade, the importance of strengthening and deepening Australia's economic and social ties internationally, and in particular with Asia, has been highlighted in many areas, particularly mining.

Local government recognises the importance of people to people linkages. To this end, Australian local government (through ALGA) is an active member of the United Cities and Local Government - Asia Pacific, the Commonwealth Local Government Forum and is engaged in Sister Cities International. Through these engagements, Councils in Australia are involved in numerous and diverse social, cultural and economic development projects including programs to enhance local governance in numerous countries.

The Government should recognise and support local government international links as a key to broadening Australia's engagement, especially with our trading partners.

Infrastructure under-investment

ALGA commends the Government on the establishment of Infrastructure Australia (IA) to facilitate a nationally coordinated and strategic approach to planning and development of the nation's infrastructure.

ALGA considers it critical that IA recognise the importance of, and need to address, what is sometimes referred to as 'the last mile' issue. That is, for transport, almost every journey generally commences and finishes on a local road. Local government is responsible for around 84 per cent of Australia's roads (by length) and provides and maintains road and related infrastructure worth more than \$100 billion. It is critical that local government has appropriate funding for local transport infrastructure.

Local government already currently spends in excess of \$3.5 billion per annum of its own money, as well as Roads to Recovery (R2R) funding, on roads. ALGA commends the bipartisan support to extend the R2R program to 2014, at \$350 million per annum. Local government's successes in making our roads safer for all Australians have been widely recognised.

ALGA also welcomes the Government's commitment to the AusLink Strategic Regional and Blackspots Programs. This funding will continue to assist local government to address the backlog in local roads maintenance and renew ageing infrastructure.

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(please limit comments to 500 words per topic)

Despite this substantial investment, ALGA urges the Government to develop a permanent solution to the chronic under-funding of local roads. The Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Local Government estimates a continuing national *local* road deficit of about \$400 million per annum. As the nation's transport task continues to grow, so will the road maintenance and renewal task faced by local government.

SUMMIT TOPICS FOR SUBMISSIONS #**(please limit comments to 500 words per topic)****Population, sustainability, climate change and water**

The *Australia 2020* Summit will examine:

- a. How Australia develops a long term plan to adapt to the growing impacts of climate change on our environment
- b. How does Australia best plan for its long-term water and energy needs
- c. How we position Australia to become a global leader within the next decade in the new low carbon technologies and industries
- d. How do we plan future population growth at a national and regional level, given the constraints of water shortages and sustainability.

Local government understands the importance of acting locally to manage the global effects of climate change. At \$4.1 billion in 2002–03, local government environmental expenditure accounted for more than half of total environmental spending across Australia's three spheres of government. Environmental work accounted for more than a quarter of local government total annual expenditure. Local government must be a key player in climate change initiatives, in partnership with other governments, business and the local community.

Councils are already leading the way in climate change mitigation projects. They are at the forefront in areas such as: the Cities for Climate Protection program; innovative landfill solutions; Greenhouse Alliances and community information; beach front stabilisation; habitat protection; and education programs.

There is increasing recognition of the need for adaptation strategies to allow communities (through their local Councils) to deal with the effects of climate change and reduce exposure to the possible impacts. At the Council level, measures such as increasing the efficiency of lighting, alternative technology for heating, cooling and water treatment plants, and promoting climate-friendly built and natural environments (for example through town planning and building control practices), can be implemented.

At the wider community level, Councils can undertake environmental education/awareness raising, promote energy efficiency in residential, industrial and commercial settings, and promote alternative methods of transport and waste management services and policies.

ALGA also considers that a secure supply of good quality water to the community is critical. Local government is extensively involved in water management, including in urban areas, and can influence community behaviour through water sensitive urban design, promotion of recycling, community education, direct support for water saving measures and more.

Local government is already undertaking water projects at the local level, but ALGA considers more collaboration between all spheres of government is needed to achieve integrated water outcomes.

Given the drought and heightened awareness of the need for better local water infrastructure and conservation at the community level, local governments can play a crucial role in advancing water supply and water quality programs. ALGA supports programs that would enable Councils to augment and renew old/leaky systems, treat water and take action to stop nutrient contamination of rivers and water supplies. Local level projects needing support include: development of water sensitive urban design principles; storm water harvesting and implementation programs; and water and sewerage services in remote Aboriginal communities.

ALGA advocates structural adjustment packages for those local communities which will face major redistribution of and/or acquisition of water entitlements or significant increases to the cost of water. Local government should be a partner in the assessment of community impacts and the development of such packages.

ALGA urges the Government to continue harnessing local government skills and knowledge in delivering natural resource management and supporting effective local government engagement with regional natural resource

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management bodies through the provision of local government facilitators to the national and state/territory local government associations.

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Future directions for rural industries and rural communities

The *Australia 2020* Summit will examine:

- a. What rural industries are best positioned to take advantage of the global consumer markets of the 21st century
- b. What options are possible for effective structural adjustment for rural industries and communities suffering the long term impact of climate change
- c. What is the most intelligent form of support the Government can provide to ensure the long term sustainability of rural and regional communities, including the fostering of the next generation of Australian farmers.

ALGA is concerned about critical labour shortages, especially in regional and rural Australia. Such shortages can be addressed by increasing regional skilled migration. Australia's immigration programs and visa arrangements should be simplified to facilitate greater flexibility and provide the capacity to meet labour shortages in rural and regional Australia. Associated settlement services to support migrants should also be enhanced.

Increased Government funding to local communities, through local government, is essential to meet the challenge of sustaining our local regional and rural communities, many of which are struggling with the drought and climate change. At present, local government responsibilities are growing, but the sector continues to be under-funded.

Whilst local government has sought to equitably raise revenue to meet the ever-increasing demands upon it, many Councils simply cannot impose greater charges upon taxpayers. Continued under-funding of local government by state and federal governments is severely limiting the capacity of local communities to reach their full potential.

Addressing under-funding would allow Councils to maintain critical social and economic infrastructure without increasing the financial pressures on local residents through rate rises and fees and/or charges to maintain services. ALGA believes that greater Government investment in local communities and supporting local infrastructure would achieve greater regional equity and promote innovation.

Community infrastructure, which provides the social backbone for every community, particularly in rural and regional Australia, must also be considered. Communities with inferior infrastructure and limited social support services will simply not be able to fully participate in the benefits of our strong economy and will be left behind.

To address the backlog in community infrastructure, ALGA seeks the establishment by the Government of a Community Infrastructure Renewal Fund. Funding of at least \$250 million per year for four years would be a positive and effective way for local government to target renewal and replacement of ageing community infrastructure like libraries and ovals.

ALGA encourages the Government to recognise the contributions of farmers and rural land managers in the care and protection of natural resources, in particular in rural and remote areas. ALGA believes the Government should continue to invest adequately in eco-system services and land stewardship programs.

Structural change in some local communities is inevitable as individuals, families and businesses seek to adapt to changing economic and social circumstances. Farm consolidation, ageing of communities, migration as a result of adverse impacts of climate change and industry restructures will change the nature of Australia's rural communities. Where government policies accelerate these changes, structural adjustment funding should be provided to affected individuals **and** the local community. (Changes in water policy, for example, will benefit some communities as water moves to higher value use, but may also adversely affect communities where water is permanently traded out of the area. In such cases, all members of the local community are impacted).

There is also merit in examining potential 'enterprise zoning' and other taxation incentives as a way of furthering

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sustainable regional development outcomes, whilst addressing diverse regional challenges.

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(please limit comments to 500 words per topic)

A long-term national health strategy – including the challenges of preventative health, workforce planning and the ageing population

The *Australia 2020* Summit will examine:

- a. How we invest to help prevent chronic and acute health problems
- b. How we plan to ensure all Australians continue to have access to the very best of modern medical technology including pharmaceuticals
- c. How we meet the emerging regulatory challenges of modern medical technology
- d. The use of electronic infrastructure to facilitate efficient and effective patient care
- e. Strategies to preserve Australia's internationally unique blend of public and private health services
- f. How Australia best plans for the future demands on our medical workforce.

ALGA believes that all governments and health professionals must acknowledge the benefits of working in partnerships with other stakeholders in delivering a long-term health strategy.

As part of such a strategy, ALGA urges the Government to place greater emphasis on preventative health care. Local government provides a wide range of health services, including public and environmental health. Importantly, local government provides a range of other services that are not traditionally thought of as delivering health outcomes. These are most often thought of as community infrastructure, recreation services or leisure services. For example, the provision of shade in public open spaces and sports grounds provides protection against exposure to excessive sunlight and therefore helps guard against illnesses like skin cancer. Well-maintained footpaths and cycleways encourage increased physical activity.

Fully maintained local footpaths and community ovals ensure all Australian can access healthy spaces and places, thereby encouraging them to exercise and enjoy good health. Governments must acknowledge and support the provision of these complementary services as a means of enhancing Australian's health status. The provision and enhancement of Council recreation services and programs can help address and prevent illnesses such as obesity, diabetes and heart disease. For this reason, ALGA has called upon the Government to establish a Community Infrastructure Renewal Fund in its Budget 2008-09 submission at www.alga.asn.au/policy/finance/PreBudgetSubmission2008and09/ALGA2008-09BudgetSubmissionFINAL.pdf.

ALGA considers that local government roles and responsibilities in public and environmental health should be better acknowledged and supported by other spheres of government. In the health arena, local government is responsible for a range of enforcement services on behalf of other levels of government. These roles are often under-valued and under-funded. For example, food regulation enforcement through Council Environmental Health Officers provides a critical service to the public and food businesses. Council fees are often regulated by other spheres of government and in many cases do not relate to the actual cost of providing this service, which the local community depends upon.

ALGA calls on governments and industry to work in partnership to streamline and better fund essential food regulation.

Nationally, local government provides 18 per cent of preschool immunisations. Immunisation is a vital public health service that protects Australians, and provides protection from vaccine preventable diseases. However, some preventable diseases continue and, in light of a possible influenza pandemic, maintaining the health gains achieved through immunisation programs relies on renewed efforts.

Government support for immunisation by local government has not increased, despite rising costs caused by the increasing complexity of immunisation schedules and the introduction of new vaccines. The Government should commit to a new national immunisation strategy that clearly defines the roles and responsibilities of all stakeholders

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including local government, as well as the goals and targets. A national immunisation strategy would ensure better use of resources, reduce waste and duplication and improve the delivery of immunisation services.

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(please limit comments to 500 words per topic)

Strengthening communities, supporting families and social inclusion

The *Australia 2020* Summit will examine:

- a. How we provide practical support to families to combine the tasks of work, raising children and caring for ageing parents
- b. How we make a long term difference on homelessness
- c. How we better harness the goodwill and commitment of the Australian community through voluntary and community organisations and philanthropic endeavour
- d. How we build social capital within and between communities, particularly those that are cut off from the economic mainstream.

Local government plays a critical and growing role in local communities. For this reason, the saying that 'we often live in a society, and not an economy,' resonates strongly with this sphere of government. Family, social networks, education, employment and employment opportunities, transport services, cultural and recreation services, and a sense of social belonging all underpin social capital and esteem.

Importantly, local government owns and manages more than \$12 billion of community infrastructure in Australia. This includes community halls, swimming pools, ovals, playgrounds, theatres, libraries, footpaths, walking trails and boat ramps, among other assets. Community infrastructure provides the social backbone for every community, particularly in rural and regional Australia, and is a fundamental ingredient in fostering the health and wellbeing of all Australians. Unfortunately, a lack of funding in the past has made it necessary for some Councils to allocate scarce funds to service delivery over infrastructure renewal.

ALGA believes the Government should establish and fund a national Community Infrastructure Renewal Fund to address the backlog in community infrastructure. To maximise the delivery of its benefits, funding should be at least \$250 million per year for four years, and be targeted at the renewal and replacement of ageing community infrastructure. Local government has already identified around 1000 projects that could be funded under such a program.

ALGA considers that the program would deliver substantial benefits, including:

- Addressing the growing backlog in existing community infrastructure in order to support community activities and social interactions at the local level;
- Allowing communities to gain more value and use from existing infrastructure;
- Enabling local governments to improve the condition of their entire asset base by focusing on renewal rather than new infrastructure;
- Providing a significant boost to the long term sustainability of the local government sector;
- Enhancing social networks and community reliance;
- Enhance and assist local and regional economic development;
- Strengthening community pride and vibrancy; and
- Building on the success of the Roads to Recovery program.

More broadly, ALGA notes that more can be done to overcome government red tape affecting the delivery of services and support to all Australians. Governments at all levels must work together to deliver more integrated services through case management and increased local and regional planning. Local government welcomes the Government's commitment and priority given to address homelessness. Failure of the private sector to deliver

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affordable housing must be addressed by active intervention including increased funding to community not for profit providers of social housing. Housing must be located close to and/or have access to quality services and facilities. ALGA welcomes its involvement in the COAG Affordable Housing Working Group and is committed to working with the Government to achieve a long-term positive difference on homelessness.

SUMMIT TOPICS FOR SUBMISSIONS #**(please limit comments to 500 words per topic)****Options for the future of indigenous Australia**

The *Australia 2020* Summit will examine:

- a. How we forge a new partnership with between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australia to overcome disadvantage and provide practical pathways to the future
- b. The role of targeted programs and interventions such as the Northern Territory Intervention and the Cape York Welfare Reform Trials in achieving change in remote communities
- c. How we might promote economic development in remote Australia to provide Indigenous community members with the opportunity to be economically independent
- d. Improving access to mainstream programs by Indigenous Australians
- e. Promoting and preserving Indigenous culture, languages and traditions.

Local government is concerned at the poor outcomes for indigenous Australians, in particular infant mortality, health, education, and employment. ALGA is gravely concerned at the inadequacy of Indigenous housing, particularly in remote and rural Australia.

Australian Government data support the need for more culturally appropriate Indigenous housing. While Indigenous housing, health and education are the responsibility of the Australian and State/Territory Governments, local government acknowledges its role, particularly in the Northern Territory, where community Councils provide and run Indigenous-housing programs. In this regard, ALGA commends the Government's existing contribution to Indigenous housing, especially the additional funding provided to the Emergency Response initiatives in the Northern Territory, as well as the Healthy Indigenous Housing program. This includes the provision of over 11,000 bedrooms in the Northern Territory alone.

In many remote and rural Indigenous communities in Australia, housing and related infrastructure - including local government infrastructure - remain grossly inadequate. The Commonwealth Grants Commission Report on Indigenous Funding 2001 concluded that the expenditure backlog for Indigenous housing was close to \$4 billion.

ALGA notes the acute need for additional housing for Indigenous Australians. There is also an acute need for services and infrastructure required to support such new housing. These include roads, sewerage and stormwater drains, waste management and other property-related services. Importantly, in 2001, the Housing Ministers' Conference adopted a statement of new directions for Indigenous housing, *Building a Better Future: Indigenous Housing to 2010*. This statement recognises the clear relationship between housing, living standards and the health and wellbeing of Indigenous people.

ALGA urges the Government to consider allocating at least an additional \$100 million per year for 4 years for the provision by local government of municipal services to Indigenous communities, to ensure Indigenous local communities have a higher overall quality of shelter and accommodation.

With the Government's plan to establish a new Indigenous representative body, ALGA also considers it timely that the Government review all national strategies for the delivery of improved Indigenous housing and associated infrastructure.

ALGA believes a direct strategic partnership between local and Federal governments, as well as all relevant state and territory agencies, can best ensure satisfactory housing outcomes are achieved. If all relevant government agencies work more closely to bring their combined resources and expertise together, the future of Indigenous Australia can be properly addressed.

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SUMMIT TOPICS FOR SUBMISSIONS #

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Towards a creative Australia: the future of the arts, film and design

The *Australia 2020* Summit will examine:

- a. Future directions for Australia's principal arts bodies
- b. Future directions for the ABC, SBS, Australia Television and Radio Australia
- c. How best to develop a globally innovative and competitive film industry
- d. How to encourage participation in emerging global industries such as game design, the internet 2.0, graphics-rich applications and animation
- e. How we build on the creative sector's potential as a major Australian export industry.

Local government has a longstanding role in providing cultural activities and facilities in local communities and recognises that cultural activities encompass the visual, performing and literary arts and that such activities are an important aspect of fostering local identity.

Local government believes that creativity in the arts, film and design can play an important role in fostering the wellbeing of all Australians and enhance Australia's international competitiveness.

Whilst much of the decision-making about supporting these endeavours remains with the Federal and state and territory governments, local government recognises that these industries can contribute to Australia's overall economic and social prosperity.

In the ALGA State of the Regions 2002 report, ALGA highlighted the strong correlation between creativity, innovation and economic development. From a local government perspective, ALGA considers it appropriate to provide the arts and creative sectors of the economy with similar support to that of other important industries.

ALGA supports the building of effective partnerships with other stakeholders in local cultural development.

In addition, ALGA would emphasise the importance to every local community of access to both the SBS and the ABC. ALGA supports the extension of our free-to-air public broadcasters into all parts of Australia together with an extension of local programming. This would result in more Australians having better access to the information that they need to make them aware of developments in their local communities.

SUMMIT TOPICS FOR SUBMISSIONS #

(please limit comments to 500 words per topic)

The future of Australian governance: renewed democracy, a more open government (including the role of the media), the structure of the Federation and the rights and responsibilities of citizens

The *Australia 2020* Summit will examine:

- a. How best to implement an effective an agenda of open government which best balances the legitimate requirements of the media and the confidentiality requirements of cabinet government in the Westminster system
- b. How best to engaged the community in government decision making
- c. What forms of Federation reform are appropriate for the future to maximise outcomes for the economy and the community
- d. How to ensure the future viability of local government operations and infrastructure provision.

Local government is the third sphere of government in Australia, but appears the least understood. Yet, local government represents almost all Australians and delivers an increasingly broad range of services that make a real difference to the everyday lives of Australians across our nation.

ALGA endorses the principle of subsidiarity but notes subsidiarity requires adequate resources, including a more certain and equitable distribution of national taxation, and consultation. ALGA notes the positive contribution that the Inter-governmental Agreement on Principles for Inter-governmental Relations with Local Government has made to encouraging an open and productive relationship between the three spheres of government, including greater transparency in the financial arrangements between them in relation to local government services and functions.

Local government fulfils a significant and increasingly important role within the Federation, as reflected in its inclusion on the Council of Australian Governments (COAG), and key Commonwealth-State Ministerial Councils. However, Australia is yet to follow the lead of many other nations and recognise local government in our nation's Constitution.

ALGA notes the bipartisan support already expressed towards the longer-term goal of full Constitutional recognition contained in the motion passed through both houses of Federal Parliament in October 2006. This motion was ground-breaking because it recognised the role of local government in Australia's federation.

ALGA seeks support for the continued recognition of local government's role in the Australian Federation, including working towards full constitutional recognition.

In addition, ALGA seeks a commitment to address chronic under-funding of local government.

Whilst local government has maintained its revenue-raising effort and has worked hard to expand own-source revenue over the past 30 years in order to avoid under-funding, other spheres of government have reduced their general funding to local government, at a time when Councils are being asked to do more with less resources.

The Government has the capacity to address the imbalance faced by local government income compared to expenses. Similarly, the Government has an obligation to achieve horizontal fiscal equalisation across states and across local government to ensure that all Australian taxpayers receive equitable levels of government services. Currently, Financial Assistance Grants (FAGs) paid to local government by the Commonwealth do not fully address either of these issues.

The FAGs system is both outdated and insufficient to meet real cost growth and increasing demand for local government infrastructure and services. While local government welcomes the bipartisan support for Roads to Recovery payments, additional and more permanent general funding is required if local communities are to reach their full potential.

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(please limit comments to 500 words per topic)

ALGA seeks an increase in Commonwealth untied funding to at least 1 per cent of total Commonwealth taxation revenue (excluding GST) per annum. This would ensure that Councils gain access to a fair revenue stream that can keep pace with demand for service delivery and infrastructure provision, and so deliver better outcomes for all local communities.

SUMMIT TOPICS FOR SUBMISSIONS #

(please limit comments to 500 words per topic)

Australia's future security and prosperity in a rapidly changing region and world.

The *Australia 2020* Summit will examine:

- a. How Australia best protects its national security interests in the face of an increasingly complex threat spectrum, including terrorism, bio-security and other threats to human security – as well as the adequacy of existing institutional arrangements for dealing with the threat spectrum into the future
- b. How Australia should maximise its cooperation with its long-standing ally the United States
- c. How Australia engages with China and India in the coming decades as both play an increasingly important economic and political role
- d. How Australia can make the greatest contribution both within and outside the framework of the United Nations in addressing the challenge of extreme poverty
- e. The long-term adequacy of Australia's existing foreign language capabilities to meet increasingly complex challenges presented by the globalisation.

Local government believes that Australia's national security interests can be significantly enhanced with strong national security capabilities and greater economic and social integration into the global community.

ALGA considers that Australia must maintain its defence capability and emergency preparedness and response procedures to protect Australians from threats to its national security.

ALGA believes greater priority should be given to enhancing social inclusion across the country, and the prevention of 'home-grown terrorists', and suggests that the Government should work in partnership with local government which can play a vital role in facilitating social inclusion and delivering community relations programs, drawing upon best practice and international experience, to reduce the risk of radicalisation.

Local government recognises the importance of people to people linkages. To this end Australian local government is an active member of the United Cities and Local Government - Asia Pacific, the Commonwealth Local Government Forum and engaged in Sister Cities International. Through these engagements councils in Australia are involved in social, cultural and economic development projects including programs to enhance local governance in numerous countries.

Surprisingly, whilst the Australian Government has a very active policy of trying to engender stable government at the national level in regional neighbours such as PNG and the Solomon Islands, there is no recognition or policy in the Government which addresses the importance of strengthening democracy in our neighbours by supporting the development of local democracy through local government structures. The Commonwealth Government should recognise and support local government international links as a key strategy to broaden Australia's engagement in our region and promote stability in our neighbours. A specific objective in our foreign policy and aid policy should be the aim of strengthening local governance.

Local government supports increased an emphasis on the importance of foreign language programs at school and within the community. Such programs are a good way to facilitate social inclusion and broaden awareness of cultures across the nation.