

CI Keith Rhoades AFSM
President
Local Government Association of NSW
GPO Box 7003
SYDNEY NSW 2001

19 April 2012

Dear CI Rhoades

I write on behalf the NSROC President and our member councils of Hornsby, Hunter's Hill, Ku-ring-gai, Lane Cove, North Sydney, Ryde and Willoughby regarding your proposals of 14 December 2011 for improvements for the LGA Conference in 2012

At the NSROC Board Meeting on 9 February 2012, our delegates considered the changes you have proposed. Generally it was felt that the key problems of the 2011 Conference were identified. However there are some further views and proposals our members feel are essential to ensuring successful and well patronised future conferences.

With regard to the specific matters you have identified we would note the following:

- **Purpose of the Conference**

NSROC believes the functions of the Conference as you have described are appropriate.

However greater emphasis is required on policy and organisational development. This should be both in relation to public policy but also include scope for discussion about the LGA's operations and performance.

A key issue which our members have identified is the LGA's accountability in particular in relation to actioning historic motions moved by the Conference.

While it is understood that the Conference Papers include a report on the previous year's motions and subsequent actions, this report is not actively publicised or promoted at the Conference (nor distributed with annual reports of the LGA). Moreover it is not connected to the strategic forward program of the LGA.

We believe that the lack of connection between each year's Conference motions and the future work program and priorities by the LGA has led to a diminishment of confidence by members in the LGA's relevance. This in turn

has led some delegates to feel that the Conference and discussion of motions has little value and this may be a key factor in the continued decline in Conference attendance and quorum difficulties.

- **Election of Executive Members**

NSROC agrees the single voting session for concurrent elections is appropriate and efficient.

- **Time provided for debate**

NSROC appreciates the difficulty in controlling the timing of debate. However it suggests that a change to the standing orders (or a convention be endorsed) whereby general time limits on debate are established.

For example, debate on individual motions could be set so speeches are limited to a total of 30 minutes which would allow for a minimum of five speakers 'for' and five speakers 'against' (if each speaker was to use their full three minute allocation). Of course this limit would be modified depending on amendments and the Chair's discretion would still remain.

- **Premier, Minister and invited guests**

NSROC welcomes the attendance and engagement of key officials at the Conference. A particular highlight of the 2011 Conference was the excellent Ministerial Panel. This format, which included moderated questions from the floor, was particularly informative and should be repeated.

- **Sponsors**

NSROC appreciates the role of the Conference Sponsors and their contribution to reducing the costs of the Conference. However presentations should be time limited and topic related.

- **The Quorum**

NSROC member noted the issues you have raised about quorum. However to clarify our understanding, on behalf of the Board I would request a copy of the LGSA's request for advice to Fair Work Australia which your letter has referenced.

Should there be a mechanism to alter the constitution and to subsequently modify the quorum arrangements, then it is suggested that appropriate clauses referring to the quorum are included. Such clauses could read as follows:

1.1 Quorum

- (a) No item of business shall be transacted at a general meeting unless a quorum of Members entitled under this Constitution to vote is present during the time when the meeting is considering that item.
- (b) Subject to clause 1.1 (a) to constitute a quorum at any general meeting, the number of Members personally present (being Members entitled under these

Rules to vote at a general meeting) shall be half of the Members entitled to be present, plus one.

1.2 Effect of no quorum

- (a) If a quorum is not present within half an hour after the time appointed for the meeting in the notice:
 - (i) if the meeting was convened on the requisition of Members, the meeting must be dissolved; or
 - (ii) in any other case shall stand adjourned to some future date not exceeding 21 days thereafter and to such time and place as specified by the chairperson. If at the adjourned meeting the quorum is not present within half an hour after the time appointed for the commencement of the meeting, the Members present (being not less than three) shall be a quorum.
- (b) If a meeting is adjourned pursuant to clause 1.2 (a) it shall not be necessary to give notice of the adjourned meeting to any Member present at the time the adjournment was announced.

NSROC councils also support electronic voting.

- **Strategic Motions**

Another issue is the capacity for motions to be brought forward by multiple councils or by ROCs representing a shared view across multiple councils. It is understood that the Constitution does not allow for motions to be sponsored in this fashion, however motions which are supported 'en masse' are more likely to have a strategic perspective.

Another mechanism for management of motions is to move motions 'by exemption' and to pre-identify this with delegates in the business paper. This would allow for many non controversial or unanimously supported motions to deal with in a timely way.

- **Late Motions**

The Executive should apply more stringent rules for late motions. As proposed by your letter they should be both 'urgent' and 'emergent' and, of course, strategic.

- **Delegate Responsibilities**

NSROC agrees that each council has a responsibility to ensure motions are sound and relevant to the entire organisation.

Additional issues for consideration

1) Conference themes and interactive structure

As you have noted, a purpose of the Conference should be to inform delegates about key issues. As this is the single major gathering each year, the Conference provides a valuable space for major debate and discussion. However, at times this opportunity has not been maximised.

For example, in April 2010 the Association released its Modernisation Discussion Paper. NSROC, along with many other councils, provided submissions to this Paper and the Association undertook substantial consultation with councillors.

At the 2010 Albury Conference a reference to this paper was made through the categorisation of motions into headings such as "Modernisation of financing" etc however there was no report back, or summary of submissions presented to members, nor any interactive discussion about this important initiative. It is understood that a report on the council responses to the Discussion Paper was later released in April 2011. This report did not appear on the 2011 conference program for consideration or debate.

It is strongly suggested that the Conference include more deliberative and interactive sessions where major initiatives can be discussed and developed. Consideration should be given to the ALGA National Conference format as a template.

2) Specific Suggestions for the LGA Conference in Dubbo 2012

a) Discussion and planning regarding reforms

Obviously discussions on the Destination 2036 Action Plan and the Local Government Review Panel should be the focus of the 2012 Conference.

b) Workshop on the strategic directions and role of the LGA

As noted previously there is a general concern about the activities of the Association and its relevance to the sector.

In light of both the One Association and the Destination 2036 proposals, it is suggested that an interactive session (with break out groups) be conducted that would seek delegates input on the future roles and strategic directions of the Association given these changing circumstances. This could be conducted in a similar format to the consultation processes used in the Destination 2036 process.

These workshops could precede the Conference (day prior) and report back initial views during the conference. The input would not be binding but could inform the Association Executive in their deliberations and planning, and

support other strategic planning consultation processes. (It is understood that the current method for input for Association's strategic planning is via a council survey which has a low response rate.)

For further information please contact me on cjames@lanecove.nsw.gov.au or mobile 0403 150 499.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Carolynne James', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Carolynne James
Executive Director
Northern Sydney Regional Organisation of Councils