

Strategic Plan 2021-2024





Acknowledgement of country

In the spirit of reconciliation, the Local Government Association of the Northern Territory (LGANT) acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of country throughout the Northern Territory and Australia, and their connections to land, sea and community. We pay our respect to their Elders past and present and extend that respect to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples today.

LGANT strategic plan

The Local Government Association of the NT (LGANT) is a membership-based peak body for the local government sector in the Northern Territory. LGANT helps local government councils to create the most valued, culturally diverse, sustainable and liveable communities in Australia.

LGANT's mission, vision and purpose will guide the organisation over the next three years, providing a clear picture of what we hope to achieve and how we will achieve it. This will enable a range of stakeholders to understand what LGANT does and staff to find meaning in their work.

Mission

LGANT is the voice of local government in the Northern Territory. LGANT leverages the strength of our member councils and advance their interests for the betterment of our communities.

Vision

A robust local government sector creating diverse, sustainable and liveable communities across the Northern Territory.

Purpose

LGANT supports and represents member councils to drive economic and social development for NT communities by providing:

Advocacy and
representation

Capacity
building

Promotion of
the sector

Governance
development

Service delivery
& infrastructure

Our strategic priorities are to support members to...

1. Aboriginal outcomes

Assist Aboriginal people to have a greater voice to achieve better social, cultural and economic outcomes

2. Finance, governance & workforce

Strengthen financial sustainability and governance, and develop the workforce

3. Infrastructure

Maintain and construct over 2,000kms of regional and remote roads and support delivery and maintenance of other infrastructure

4. Climate, circular economy & environment

Adapt to the effects of climate change, manage waste and preserve the natural environment

5. Profile & reputation

Build the profile and reputation of the local government sector

6. Economic development

Take a leading role in economic development

7. Community Services

Advocate local government interests in community services

To provide this support we will invest in:

Communication

Enhance our communication with members

Financial security

Secure and broaden our revenue base

Data & evidence

Strengthen our use of data and evidence

Partnerships

Build trusted partnerships with key stakeholders

Overview and context

This strategic plan outlines LGANT's direction for 2021-2024. The strategic plan directly aligns with Local Government 2030 Strategy. It describes the role of LGANT, as the peak body, in achieving the ten-year vision. LGANT and member councils will work alongside the Northern Territory Government (NTG) to implement the Local Government 2030 Strategy.

The strategic plan is supported by the development of annual business plans and Communications, Marketing and Advocacy Plans, as well as detailed reporting measures.

The strategic plan will be reviewed and refreshed in 2024.

The 2021-24 Plan includes the following sections:

Purpose

Provides a clear picture of LGANT's purpose and what the organisation hopes to achieve, and how we will achieve it.

Strategic Priorities and outcomes

Sets out the strategic priorities for the sector over the next three years, including the outcomes to achieve.

LGANT strategic priority actions

Demonstrates how LGANT will support its members over the next three years across our strategic priorities, including the specific actions LGANT will take to achieve the priorities and how LGANT will know if we have been successful in implementing the strategic plan.

Enablers

Describes the internal processes and practices that will enable LGANT to successfully deliver on our identified strategic priorities, including the actions we will take.

LGANT's purpose

PURPOSE

LGANT supports and represents member councils to drive economic and social development for NT communities by providing:

Policy, Advocacy and representation

- We influence decision makers by developing future-focused and evidence-based policy positions.
- We represent the interests of members and advocate for change to key decision makers.
- We represent the sector on relevant Territory and Commonwealth boards and committees.
- We act as a conduit to other spheres of government, non-government organisations, media and industry groups.
- We work with the Australian Local Government Association (ALGA) to advocate directly to the Commonwealth Government on policy issues.

Capacity building

- We pursue continuous improvement of local government performance.
- We undertake research on the most important issues facing local government.
- We disseminate information on current best practice and recent policy changes.
- We provide networking opportunities and other professional development.
- We partner with other peak bodies to share knowledge and practices.

Promotion of the sector

- We promote the role and achievements of local government to communities, other spheres of government and other stakeholders.
- We recognise high achieving elected members and employees through the local government awards.
- We facilitate collaboration between local councils to share ideas and information.

Governance development

- We coordinate governance training and support to member councils.

Service delivery and infrastructure

- We promote shared services between member councils.
- We maintain an effective local road network.
- We deliver the best possible value for our member local government councils.



SP1: Assist members to ensure Aboriginal people have a greater voice to achieve better social, cultural and economic outcomes.



It is critical that LGANT advocates for the removal of barriers to the wellbeing of Aboriginal people, including by supporting increased participation in elections, addressing disadvantage and better coordinating local service delivery. The 2020 *National Agreement on Closing the Gap* shows a failure to meet targets in improving levels of Aboriginal childhood mortality, life expectancy, school attendance and employment.

Local Government is now a signatory to the new Closing the Gap agreement that will guide funding to Aboriginal people and organisations.

LGANT seeks the following outcomes for the local government sector:

- Local government councils better understand their role in implementing initiatives such as the Local Decision Making policy, NT Treaty, National Voice and Closing the Gap.
- Local government councils productively and regularly engage with local Aboriginal authorities to understand their needs.
- Local government councils are engaged in active reconciliation.
- Local government councils are proactive in removing barriers to Aboriginal employment in the local government sector.

Key initiatives and actions LGANT will take to promote engagement between local governments and Aboriginal people to achieve better outcomes:

Initiative	Advocate for clear roles and responsibilities for local government in implementing local and national initiatives and policies relating to Aboriginal people.	Build capacity of local government councils to engage meaningfully with local Aboriginal communities to understand their needs.	Build the capacity of local government councils to engage in reconciliation.
Actions	<p>Work with NTG to clarify the role of local government in Local Decision Making and the involvement of Local Authorities.</p> <p>Contribute meaningfully to the Closing the Gap Implementation Plan.</p>	<p>Source high quality cultural competency training for local government.</p> <p>Work with councils to develop a process to facilitate the sharing of ideas between councils.</p> <p>Represent the sector in regards to Aboriginal National Voice and NT Treaty Commission.</p>	<p>Prepare and implement a LGANT Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP).</p> <p>Share the lessons learned and advice regarding preparation an effective RAP with member Councils.</p>
Measures of success (for LGANT)	LGANT has advocated for clear roles for local governments in Local Decision Making and Closing the Gap.	<p>LGANT has identified cultural competency training for members.</p> <p>LGANT has developed a process for sharing ideas between councils.</p>	LGANT has shared finished RAP with member councils.



SP2: Strengthen local government financial sustainability and good governance, and develop the local government workforce.



With a diverse and highly dispersed population, communities and local government councils face distinct and substantial challenges in the provision of basic infrastructure and community services.

The viability of local government councils across the NT is vulnerable to changes in Commonwealth and NTG funding policy.

Most funding is based on short-term contracts that do not allow for long-term asset management, planning or workforce development.

LGANT seeks the following outcomes for the local government sector:

- Commonwealth and Territory policy settings that support local government councils to function effectively.
- Local government councils in the NT are financially sustainable, modern and well governed.
- The NT local government workforce is capable, motivated and committed.
- An effective, efficient and appropriate shared services model is in place in the NT.

Key initiatives and actions LGANT will take to develop local government financial sustainability, good governance and workforce capability:

Initiative	Advocate for policy and legislative settings that enable local government councils to function effectively.	Build local government capability in governance, financial management and human resource management.	Support local government councils with appropriate shared services models that address affordability, security and service delivery.
Actions	<p>Lobby NT government to remove rate caps.</p> <p>Partner with the NT Government to drive the Local Government 2030 Strategy.</p> <p>Advocate for the return of a department for local government.</p> <p>Advocate for the incorporation of all unincorporated areas.</p>	<p>Develop a workforce development plan for the local government sector.</p> <p>Coordinate training in governance, conflict resolution, the Local Government Act and financial management.</p> <p>Support councils to improve data collection.</p>	<p>Review the current shared services model and implement recommendations.</p> <p>Investigate shared services models for other council functions outside of administration, IT and financial services.</p>
Measures of success (for LGANT)	<p>The Local Government 2030 strategy is implemented and best reflects the perspectives of the local government sector.</p> <p>The NTG understands LGANT's position on rate caps and political representation.</p> <p>Unincorporated areas are either fully incorporated or heading that way.</p>	<p>A workforce development plan for the local government sector is finalised.</p> <p>LGANT has developed training resources to build the capacity of local councils.</p> <p>All elected members have completed training in governance.</p>	LGANT has made improvements to the shared services model, based on best practice and an independent review.



SP3: Maintain and construct 1888kms of regional and remote roads and support delivery and maintenance of other infrastructure.



Local government councils are responsible for the implementation, development and maintenance of community infrastructure across the Territory including, but not limited to, local road network, stormwater drainage, street lighting, and swimming pools. Councils also have an interest in other enabling infrastructure such as telecommunications, water, and housing.

LGANT seeks the following outcomes for the local government sector:

- Increased funding for roads and infrastructure projects
- Better coordination and advocating via relevant roads and infrastructure committees
- Increased and improved capacity of capital works and asset management
- Ensuring Local government have access to sufficient, timely disaster relief.

Key initiatives and actions LGANT will take to support our members to maintain and construct regional and remote roads and support delivery and maintenance other infrastructure:

Initiative	Enhance local government’s role in the provision of roads and infrastructure.
Actions	Lobby for the retention of Roads to Recovery funding.
	Deliver ongoing maintenance of 2,000 kms of regional and remote roads.
	Work with the CCF, Commonwealth/Territory governments to develop a workforce development plan for civil construction.
Measures of success (for LGANT)	Retention of Roads to Recovery funding.
	Continuation of LGANT’s role in regional and remote road maintenance.
	Workforce Development Plan for the Civil Construction industry completed.



SP4: Support our members to adapt to climate change, the circular economy, and preserve the natural environment.



The climate change forecast for the NT is one of more extreme weather events. Increased flooding will make it harder for councils to maintain roads and community assets. Greater saltwater inundation and drought will increase pressure on public and industry water supplies and dependent ecosystems.

Communities expect local governments to provide leadership in adapting to these climate pressures. While a small number of councils are implementing climate adaption plans, the majority of councils are still in the initial stages of adaption planning.

Another major environmental management issue for councils is waste management. There is no over-arching plan for the NT that dresses the 4Rs of waste management:

Rethink, Reduce, Reuse, Recycle. Waste is a problem but also a potential economic opportunity through the development of markets for recycled materials that support the transition to a circular economy.

LGANT seeks the following outcomes for the local government sector:

- Local government have access to sufficient, timely disaster relief.
- All NT local government councils have and are implementing climate adaptation plans.
- Infrastructure and markets are established to manage the circular economy across the NT.
- Council waste and water resource management efforts are guided by Territory-wide plans and strategies established by the NT Government.

Key initiatives and actions LGANT will take to support our members to adapt to the effects of climate change, manage waste and preserve the natural environment:

Initiative	Facilitate natural disaster preparedness and resilience among local governments.	Facilitate viable circular economy solutions for local governments.	Support local government councils to maintain water quality and security
Actions	Lobby the NT and Commonwealth governments for effective disaster relief funding mechanisms.	Lobby NT and Commonwealth governments for a CRC for Waste, Recycling and the Circular Economy.	Advocate and lobby the NT government to develop a water security and water quality plan.
	Collaborate with Police, Fire and Emergency Services (PFES) to coordinate training to effectively plan for and respond to natural disasters.	Work with industry associations to improve access to recycling in regional and remote councils.	
	Source a climate adaption plan template and toolkit for local governments councils.	Hold workshops with Local Government Councils to explore hub and spoke models for resource recovery opportunities.	
Measures of success (for LGANT)	LGANT has sourced a climate plan template and toolkit.	LGANT has investigated a cost-benefit analysis for processing recyclables locally.	LGANT has advocated for the development of a water security and water quality plan for the NT.
	LGANT has sourced and coordinated natural disaster training.	LGANT has advocated for greater investment in recycling infrastructure to NTG and industry.	

SP5: Build the profile and reputation of the local government sector.

The role of local government and what it actually does is misunderstood by many people and organisations. LGANT will lead in creating and narrative for the sector to promote that we are the closet to the people and have the largest footprint in the NT, we are transparent, trusted and valued.

To be most effective, the local government sector needs to have a strong reputation among other levels of government. This will enable better representation for its constituents and more effective advocacy.

LGANT seeks the following outcomes for the local government sector:

- The NT and Commonwealth governments seek local government input into policies and solutions.
- The local government election system is robust and there is high voter turnout.
- Communities across the NT understand the value of local governments.
- LGANT and member Councils operate to high ethical standards.
- Local government Councils attract high quality elected member nominations.

Key initiatives and activities LGANT will take to build the profile and reputation of the local government sector:

Initiative	Position the local government sector as an important partner of the NT and Commonwealth governments.	Increase participation in local government elections.	Build community understanding of and respect for local government.
Actions	<p>Develop and implement a communication strategy that highlights the critical role of the local government sector.</p> <p>Proactively contribute to policy processes impacting the local government sector.</p>	<p>Advocacy for legal vetting of candidates for councils.</p> <p>Lobby for simpler enrolment and polling processes to remove barriers to participation.</p> <p>Coordinate an education campaign to increase voter enrolment, nominations for council and voting in local government elections.</p>	<p>Create and implement an awareness campaign promoting the valuable roles played by local government.</p>
Measures of success (for LGANT)	<p>LGANT has implemented a communications strategy.</p> <p>LGANT is an active participant in the formulation and implementation of NT Government policies impacting the local government sector.</p>	<p>LGANT has advocated to simplify and maintain the integrity of the local government system.</p> <p>LGANT has developed resources for local government councils to encourage greater voter enrolment, nominations for local council and voting in local government elections.</p>	<p>LGANT has developed relevant and appropriate resources to promote the local government sector to the community.</p>

SP6: Facilitate the local government sector to take a leading role in economic development.

The economic health of a community is a significant determinant of its levels of wellbeing. Economic recovery from COVID-19 for the NT will be led by the stimulation and activation of local economies.

Local governments are in many cases, the largest employer and “business” in their community. They therefore play an important role, in both the short and long term, to reinvigorate local economies and play a part in their economic recovery.

LGANT seeks the following outcomes for the local government sector:

- Local government councils directly stimulate local economies through procurement policies and generating employment opportunities.
- Reduced regulatory barriers affecting development of new businesses and the growth of current firms across the NT.
- The impact of local governments on the NT economy is well understood across industry and the NT government.

Key initiatives and actions that LGANT will take to facilitate local government’s role in regional economic development:

Initiative	Promote the important role of local government in stimulating economic development.	Facilitate a reduction in regulatory barriers to local businesses and development.
Actions	<p>Implement a trade services panel to assist councils with local procurement.</p> <p>Promote research into the localised economic contribution of local governments.</p> <p>Make Commonwealth and NT Government pre-budget submissions.</p> <p>Increase the utilisation of councils of LocalBuy.</p>	<p>Develop policies and procedures to reduce red tape.</p> <p>Develop training materials to build the capacity of local governments to reduce red tape.</p> <p>Lobby NT government to reduce red tape and regulatory barriers.</p>
Measures of success (for LGANT)	<p>LGANT has supported local government councils to create the environment for businesses to grow.</p> <p>LGANT has implemented a trade services panel.</p> <p>The use of LocalBuy by member councils has increased.</p>	<p>LGANT has developed and delivered training and model policies to local government councils to reduce red tape.</p> <p>LGANT has advocated to NTG for the reduction of red tape.</p>



SP7: Advocate local government interests in community services.

This strategic priority was an addition for 2023 after it was identified the resourcing this area requires. Subject matter covered includes, but it’s not limited to: anti-social behaviour and crime; libraries; sport and recreation; children and youth; domestic, family and sexual violence; drugs and alcohol; suicide; disability; aged care; meal services and nutrition programs; and animal management.



LGANT seeks the following outcomes for the local government sector:

- NT and Commonwealth governments seek local government input into policies and programs
- Adequate resourcing

Key initiatives and actions LGANT will take to support our members in advocating their interests:

Initiative	Advocate local government interests
Actions	Prioritise policy and advocacy activity in this sector according to member requirements
Measures of success (for LGANT)	Local government is considered in policy development and program implementation

Organisational enablers will support LGANT to achieve our strategic priorities

LGANT will invest in the following organisational enablers over the next three years. These are the internal processes and practices that will enable us to successfully deliver on our identified strategic priorities. Key actions have been identified for each enabler.

E1: COMMUNICATION

We will communicate regularly and openly with member councils about what LGANT does and how we can support our members.

Actions LGANT will take:

- Visit all 17 member councils to communicate the LGANT Strategic Plan and listen to local voices.
- Build productive working relationships with member councils.
- Implement the marketing, communications and advocacy plans.
- Be clear and consistent when communicating with members.
- Focus on increasing communication between LGANT and council officers.

E3: DATA AND EVIDENCE

LGANT will build its capacity to collect, store and analyse data (both internal data and member data). This will contribute to data-driven decision making.

Actions LGANT will take:

- Conduct a baseline survey of member councils.
- Inform members why all data is being collected.
- Identify data needed to support submissions (and implement systems to collect this).
- Ensure existing data collection mechanisms are used to minimise burden on staff and members.

E2: FINANCIAL SECURITY

LGANT will improve its internal financial management to be sustainable and flexible. This will include diversifying revenue sources and finding savings.

Actions LGANT will take:

- Develop a shortlist of potential revenue opportunities, drawing on inspiration from interstate Local Government Associations.
- Advocate for a seat at the table when NTG funding decisions are made.
- Develop a prioritised list of investments to use when funding becomes available.
- Continually look for ways to be more effective and efficient.

E4: PARTNERSHIPS

LGANT will seek to deepen and broaden its partnerships with other organisations across the NT for the benefit of its members.

Actions LGANT will take:

- Foster relationships with industry to assist with service provision.
- Connect with potential partners to share LGANT strategic plan (e.g. NT Chamber of Commerce, Cattlemen’s Association, Fishing groups).
- Build our relationship with NTG.
- Build our relationship with key research organisations such as Charles Darwin University.

