

7.2 NATIONAL GROWTH AREA ALLIANCE MEMBERSHIP

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SUMMARY

Mitchell Shire is Victoria's fastest growing municipality, with the population expected to more than triple over the next twenty years. The National Growth Areas Alliance (NGAA) is the peak advocacy body for growth areas across Australia. The NGAA works with, and on behalf of, 21 Councils to achieve a vision where residents have equitable access to housing, jobs, education, health services, cultural activities and the physical and community infrastructure that support these outcomes – no matter where they live.

This report outlines how Mitchell Shire Council (Mitchell) meets the criteria for eligibility to be a member of the NGAA. It highlights the benefits which come from membership of the NGAA including contributing to the Alliance's Policy Platform, access to substantive academic research, and partnering on advocacy issues central to growth areas.

RECOMMENDATION

THAT Council resolve to become a member of the National Growth Areas Alliance (NGAA).

BACKGROUND

The NGAA works with, and on behalf of, 21 Member Councils across Australia to achieve a vision where residents have equitable access to housing, jobs, education, health services, cultural activities and the physical and community infrastructure that support these outcomes – no matter where they live.

The Councils which the NGAA works with represent nearly 5 million people living within Australia's fast-growing outer suburbs across five states. The NGAA is in a unique position to represent growth areas to the Federal Government. It brings together Councils from across Australia in a manner which no other national body does and provides them with a united voice at a Federal level. This is distinct from the Interface Councils which focuses on representing Melbourne's growth areas to the Victorian State Government.

The NGAA's current 2019 membership includes:

Blacktown City Council	City of Playford	City of Wanneroo
Camden Council	City of Casey	City of Swan
Campbelltown City Council	Cardinia Shire Council	City of Cockburn

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Liverpool City Council	Wyndham City Council	Serpentine-Jarrahdale Shire
Penrith City Council	City of Melton	City of Kwinana
Wollondilly Shire Council	Hume City Council	City of Armadale
District Council of Mount Baker	City of Whittlesea	City of Gosnells

The NGAA has a small secretariat consisting of an Executive Officer Research and Policy Coordinator, Communications Coordinator and an Events Coordinator.

ISSUES AND DISCUSSION

Membership Eligibility

To be eligible for membership to the NGAA Councils must:

- **Have population growth above the national average, or are projected to within 5-10 years**
 - o Mitchell Shire is projected to be the fastest growing Local Government Area (LGA) in Victoria from 2018 – 2036. The Shire has a current population of 49,044 people and is projected to grow to 270,000 by 2048
- **Are designated growth areas by State or Territory Governments**
 - o Wallan and Beveridge are within the Urban Growth Boundary (UGB) set by the State Government
- **Are located on the outskirts of capital cities**
 - o Mitchell is a member of the Interface Councils and sits on the outskirts of Melbourne

Based on the above criteria Mitchell Shire is eligible for membership of the National Growth Areas Alliance.

Benefits for Members

The primary benefits attributed to membership can be categorised into research, policy and advocacy.

Research

The NGAA commissions research to inform its national policy development and advocacy positions and support individual members' submissions and strategies.

Membership provides Councils direct access to, and the chance to be involved in or profiled in research by national and global thought leaders in a range of different fields. Example research partners included RMIT, The University of Melbourne, The University of Adelaide, The University of Western Australia, KPMG, SGS Economics and Planning and .id Consulting.

Along with this the NGAA is often invited to participate or contribute to a range of national research projects. The NGAA's involvement in these projects helps to

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promote the profile of growth areas and contributes to a deeper understanding of the particular challenges and opportunities presented within these communities. Combining efforts, the NGAA is a conduit to research opportunities which are often overly costly or complex for individual councils to arrange or participate in.

Policy

The NGAA's policy platform outlines the Alliance's position on a broad range of national policies, including detailed background and evidence and a clear call to action for the Government. The platform is an evidence-based comprehensive and up-to-date document outlining the most pressing policy issues for Member Councils.

To support the broader platform the NGAA produces Policy Briefs on specific and topical issues.

The NGAA endorses a set of guiding principles to inform policy and investment decisions to support Growth Areas:

- Reform and Rebalance
- Invest in Places for People
- Accelerate Economic Transition
- Connect Communities
- Innovate for Funding, Financing and Governance Mechanisms

Advocacy

The NGAA uses its evidence-based policy platform to advocate directly to Government for improved outcomes for Member Councils and Australia's Growth Areas. They combine strong relationships with key members of Government with substantial skill in running campaigns in order to ensure effectiveness in advocacy.

Notably in 2019 they ran the *Catch Up with the Outer Suburbs* campaign. This campaign saw more than 50,000 emails being sent to key politicians urging them to Catch Up with the infrastructure needs of Growth Areas. The campaign launch was held at Parliament House in Canberra with nearly 20 Members of Parliament in attendance and included speeches from the Minister and Shadow Minister. Ultimately the campaign supported funding commitments for close to \$1billion for priority projects in NGAA Member municipalities and commitments for two City Deals in Melbourne.

Advocacy is one of our Strategic Objectives from the Council Plan, and joining the Alliance, with the power of speaking as one with other growth areas, strongly empowers Council to be a more effective advocate for our community.

Mitchell Shire Council – Membership

As a member it is envisaged that Council's logo may be displayed along with the logos of other members and on the NGAA website. Council may also be able to use the NGAA logo as appropriate. It is envisaged that there will be some staff in-kind support from time to time associated with supporting and contributing to the activities (under research, policy and advocacy) of the NGAA. There will be opportunities for Councilors to attend conferences and be involved in campaigns and other policy sessions.

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CONSULTATION

The NGAA Executive Officer presented to Councillors at its Strategy session on 2 September 2019 regarding the benefits and opportunities offered by membership.

FINANCIAL, RESOURCE AND ASSET MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS

The NGAA has a membership cost based upon a sliding scale responding to the variability in population across Australia's Growth Areas.

Population	Annual Membership Fee
100,000+	\$20,000 plus GTS
50,000 -100,000	\$17,000 plus GST
Under 50,000	\$12,000 plus GST

Mitchell Shire's population is currently under 50,000, corresponding to \$12,000 plus GST per annum. It is of note, however, that Mitchell will soon progress into the second category (\$17,000 plus GST).

Current membership can be arranged for Mitchell Shire for a pro-rata fee from November 2019 – June 2020 of \$8,000 plus GST.

This cost would be funded within the Advocacy and Community Services Directorate. In addition to financial costs with Council becoming a member, it is envisaged that there will be some staff in-kind support from time to time associated with supporting the activity of the NGAA which is consistent and in-line with Council's advocacy work focused on planning and delivering services and infrastructure that underpin healthy, connected and sustainable communities. There would also be requests for Councillor participation at NGAA Congress', conferences and other policy and research events.

POLICY AND LEGISLATIVE IMPLICATIONS

Local Government Act 1989

Public Health and Wellbeing Act 2008

Planning and Environment Planning Act 1987

It also aligns with:

Mitchell Shire Council Plan (2019 Revision) Strategic Objective 1

SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS (SOCIAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL)

The NGAA's vision is to work with, and on behalf of, their member Councils to achieve a vision for Australian cities where residents have equitable access to housing, jobs, education, health services, cultural activities and the physical and community infrastructure that support these outcomes – no matter where you live. The NGAA focus on ensuring creating places and spaces for people now and into the future in the growing outer areas.

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CHARTER OF HUMAN RIGHTS IMPLICATIONS

The rights protected in the *Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006* were considered in preparing this report and it's determined that the subject matter does not raise any human rights issues.

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE IMPLICATIONS

The NGAA's vision is to work with, and on behalf of, their member Councils to achieve a vision for Australian cities where residents across all life stages have equitable access to housing, jobs, education, health services, cultural activities and the physical and community infrastructure that support these outcomes – no matter where you live.

OFFICER DECLARATION OF CONFLICT OF INTEREST

No officers involved in the preparation of this report have any direct or indirect interest in this matter.

CONCLUSION

As advocacy is one of the Strategic Objectives from the Council Plan and Council's population is growing and changing it is appropriate for Council to now become a member of the NGAA (pro-rata fee for 2019-2020). Membership of the National Growth Areas Alliance presents a great opportunity for Mitchell Shire Council.

The cumulative benefits from research, policy and advocacy would enable Council to be a stronger and more effective advocate for our community, helping us to better serve our community.