

LGNSW Conference 2017: An Overview



The new LGNSW President Cr Linda Scott (Labor) - photo courtesy LGNSW Twitter

1. LGNSW Election

The first Local Government NSW (LGNSW) Association Conference held following the forced amalgamation of councils by the NSW State Government took place 4 - 6 December 2017 in Sydney. The election of the new Board signalled a significant shift towards the Labor Party.

The Liberal/National Party candidate for the position of President Cr Gail Giles-Gidney was defeated, and there are only five representatives of the Coalition on the Board of 19 members. This devastatingly poor result follows a similar poor performance in the recent local government elections.

The result of the election was as follows:

President Cr Linda Scott (City of Sydney Council - Labor), Treasurer Cr Marjorie Spooner O'Neill (Waverley Council - Labor), and Vice President (Metro/Urban) Cr Angelo Tsirekas (Mayor of Canada Bay - Labor).

Cr Lindsay Brown (Eurobodalla Shire Council) Vice President (Rural/Regional).

Directors (Metropolitan/Urban)

Karen McKeown (Labor), Mazhar Hadid (Liberal), Julie Griffiths (Labor), Khal Asfour (Labor), George Greiss (Liberal), Lesley Furneaux-Cook and Michael Regan.

Directors (Rural/Regional)

Darriea Turley (Labor), Phyllis Miller (Nationals), Marianne Saliba (Labor), Ruth Fagan (Nationals), Ben Shields (Liberal), Rod Kendall and Paul Harmon.

2. Motions Carried

Anger felt by councils and their communities over forced amalgamations and that their views had been ignored by the Government no doubt contributed to the carriage of motions 82 and 85:

Lack of consultation by State Government with local government - Motion 82

That Local Government NSW lobbies the Minister for Local Government for improved consultation with the local government sector, so that prior to the introduction into Parliament of any legislation affecting the sector, that the State Government consults and engages with LGNSW.

Binding referendum on amalgamations - Motion 85.

That NSW Local Government's policy on amalgamations includes the requirement that where an amalgamation with one or more councils is proposed there be a binding referendum in each council area asking voters if they want their council to be amalgamated or not. In order for an amalgamation to go ahead, each council area would need to achieve a majority vote in favour of the amalgamation.

This reflects the recently defeated Bill passed by the Upper House on the same idea [Local Government Amendment \(Amalgamation Referendums\) Bill 2017](#); to allow individuals to vote on amalgamations and for their voices to count.

Communities wanting their chosen council back may take heart in the statement released this week by the Save Our Councils Coalition (SOCC) President Brian Halstead:

Our aim in the next twelve months is to build our organisation and continue to show amalgamations do not work, support those seeking de-amalgamation and take action on all the other threats to local democracy coming from this Government.

The introduction of legislation by the State Government mandating local planning panels (IHAPs) which are effectively controlled by the State, is seen by many as a continuation of the Government's attack on local councils and local democracy.

This resulted in motion 4 being strongly supported and carried:

Mandatory Independent Hearing and Assessment Panels (IHAPs) - Motion 4.

1. That Local Government NSW campaigns with NSW councils against the State Government takeover of planning powers through IHAP legislation.
2. That Local Government NSW calls on the NSW Parliament to revoke legislation that mandates Independent Hearing and Assessment Panels (IHAPs) for all councils in Sydney and Wollongong.

For the full LGNSW 2017 Conference Record of Decisions see ([PDF, 314KB](#))



Delegates at the NSW Local Government Conference held in Sydney Dec 2017

3. Ministers Addresses

1. The Acting Premier John Barilaro was jeered and heckled when trying to sell the Government's decision to allocate 2 billion dollars to knock down and rebuild two stadiums in Sydney, a sentiment many NSW residents are echoing by signing a [Petition](#) started by Peter FitzSimons, which generated 140,072 supporters within 7 days.

2. The Minister for Local Government (and Environment) Gabrielle Upton focused in her address on the broadcasting of council meetings and making that mandatory. She refused to answer any questions.

The NSW Government is releasing a draft Model Code of Meeting Practice for consultation with the sector. It is intended for there to be a uniform set of meeting rules for councils across the state to help ensure "more accessible, orderly, effective and efficient meetings".

The Government has already released a new draft Model Code of Conduct, sections of which are causing controversy.

4. President's Address

The outgoing President Keith Rhoades in his final address said that “strong, democratically-elected local government is the only way to ensure the community continues to have a say in the future of their neighbourhoods and day-to-day lives.”

“Councils would always remain the closest to and most in touch with every day Australians”, he concluded.

5. Recent LGNSW Research

[A Report](#) released by LGNSW at the Conference cites that 75% of NSW residents believe local government is the best sphere of government to make decisions about their local areas.

The research, undertaken by Micromex Research and Consulting in May this year also found 82% were happy with their local council, with responses ranging from “somewhat satisfied” to “very satisfied”.

The most common reason for satisfaction given was councils’ knowledge and understanding of the local community.

LGNSW Chief Executive Donna Rygate said the overall image of councils had improved significantly over five years, with 61% now rating their council’s image as good to excellent, and only 16% describing council image as poor or below.

Respondents nominated council competency, trust, acting in the best interest of local communities, financial management and value for money as the reasons for their response.

Save Our Councils Coalition (SOCC) 11 December 2017

Courtesy of and as edited from the following articles online:

https://www.lgnsw.org.au/files/LGW4817_0.pdf

<https://www.lgnsw.org.au/events-training/local-government-nsw-annual-conference>

<https://www.lgnsw.org.au/news/media-release/media-release-local-government-voice-community>

<http://www.pittwateronlinenews.com/LGNSW-Annual-Conference-2017-Wrap.php>