

How-To: ALGA Motion

A toolkit for lobbying your council to support a Gaza motion at ALGA NGA

We acknowledge that APAN works on unceded First Nations land.

Contents



Introduction: 2024 ALGA Conference



Background

- What is the National General Assembly?
- Precedent and case studies
- What is in the Merri-bek motion?



How-To

- Step-by-step guide to persuading your council
- Lobbying your councillors
- Build and demonstrate community support



During and After the NGA



Contact us!

Introduction

2024 ALGA Conference Gaza Motion

We are working on supporting the passage of a Palestine solidarity motion at the 2024 Australian Local Government Assembly (ALGA) National General Assembly. At least half of the council delegates in attendance at the conference must support the motion to see it passed.

We need your help to persuade your local council's delegate to support this motion, brought forward by Merri-bek Council.

This toolkit will provide some context to this tactic, and will provide some information on a few ways that you can advocate for your council to support this motion.

Background

What is the National General Assembly (NGA)?

The 2024 National General Assembly of Local Government will be held from 2 - 4 July in Canberra.

The NGA is an official gathering of local councils, which aims to create a united voice on core issues that affect local communities. Several hundred delegates from local councils across Australia attend in person or online, to move and debate resolutions.

Critically, this is a forum where local councils can influence and exert pressure on the Federal Government on key issues, with each motion passed on to the relevant Federal Minister.

The Australian Government continues to neglect to take action that would help end the ongoing genocide in Gaza, so we plan to use the NGA as an opportunity to put pressure on Federal Government via our local councils, many of whom have already passed motions calling for a ceasefire and an end to the occupation.

Background

Precedent and case studies

There exist several precedents for the NGA debating and/or passing motions that deal with foreign affairs, global humanitarian and social justice issues, or issues of federal importance. To find out more about why this issue is relevant to local councils, check out pages 17 - 18 of our Local Council Motion toolkit.

Case Study 1: Ukraine motion

Less than two years ago, the NGA conference set an incredible precedent for its engagement in global humanitarian issues, with its passage of a motion following the Russian invasion of Ukraine. In 2022, the conference unanimously passed a motion standing in solidarity with the people of Ukraine and calling for peace, security and stability.

Importantly, this provides a very useful example to point towards when justifying a motion for Gaza.

Background

Case Study 2: “Australia Day” motion

In 2017, the City of Hobart Council put forward a motion at the NGA calling on councils to work together on efforts to persuade the Federal Government to change the date of so-called Australia Day.

This motion was controversial and faced stark opposition, passing with 64 votes to 62.

Lord Mayor of Hobart said of the motion, “We know that this a federal issue, but, as local government remains the closest tier of government to the people, local councils are the appropriate vehicle to gauge public opinion and it is our role to represent the aspirations of our communities”.

The Lord Mayor also cited strong attendance at nationwide rallies supporting a change of date as evidence.

This is another example of councils moving beyond those matters that are traditionally considered “council issues” to use their position to influence change at the federal level.

Background

What is in the Merri-bek motion?

Merri-bek Council has put forward the following motion, which will be debated and voted on at the NGA:

ALGA Mourns the tragic and horrific loss of civilian lives in the conflict in Gaza and condemns all attacks that target civilians. This pain resonates deeply worldwide and within our communities across Australia.

ALGA calls on the Australian government to help stop the starvation of people in Gaza by immediately restoring funding to UNRWA and doubling the funding.

ALGA also calls on the Australian government to advance the cause of peace by calling for:

- an immediate and permanent ceasefire*
- the immediate lifting of the siege to allow an unlimited supply of all of the essentials of life to be delivered to people in Gaza*
- ending any weapons sales to Israel and ending any deals with weapons companies that supply weapons to the Israeli military.*
- Urge all parties to uphold international law, including decisions of the International Court of Justice.*

Background

What needs to happen to pass the motion?

How does the NGA work?

The NGA operates much like a regular council meeting, except on a larger scale. Each council will send delegates (usually, but not always the Mayor) who get to participate and debate motions. These motions will have been submitted weeks prior to the conference.

The ALGA board have the right to select or prioritise motions that they deem more relevant, therefore there is no guarantee that a motion will make it up for debate.

How can you help get this motion passed?

Firstly, to make sure that the Merri-bek motion actually makes it onto the floor for debate, we will need some delegates and councils to advocate to ALGA, before the conference, in support of the motion.

Once the motion has been brought forward for debate, it will require at least 51% of the vote for it to pass.

How-To

Step-by-step guide to persuading your council

The best thing you can do to support this campaign is persuade your local council delegate to back this motion when it is debated at the conference. If you have a supportive council, encouraging them to advocate to ALGA prior to the conference in support of the motion is even more useful.

How to persuade your council to back this motion:

Each council is different, with different dynamics, interpersonal relationships and political persuasions. Similarly, each demographic of constituents is different and therefore there is no single pathway to persuading your council to back the motion. Much like passing a council motion at the local level, it will be a case of researching and arming yourself with as much knowledge and experience as possible so that you can persuasively make the argument to your council and their delegate.

Prepare and research

1. Find out who your local council delegate is. Generally speaking, Mayors will attend as delegates to the conference - but this may not always be true, so it's best to check.

How-To

Step-by-step guide to persuading your council

2. Undertake an analysis of your local council:

- Who are the councillors?
- Who is the mayor?
- What are their political views?
- What are the factions?
- What is on their social media?
- Has your councillor indicated any support for this issue, or other social justice/humanitarian issues during their tenure with council?

The idea is to work out which councillors are likely to be supportive, persuadable or hostile to help you work out your best tactic to persuade them.

As a rough guide, we suggest finding the category that best suits your council on the following page and using the corresponding approach to persuading your council.

If you have a:

- **Very supportive council that recently passed a Gaza motion with ease**

Lobby your mayor directly, asking them to:

- a) Contact ALGA to advocate for bringing the motion forward
- b) Vote in support of the motion when it gets up at Conference

- **A semi-supportive council, a Gaza motion recently passed but with difficulty**

Lobby your supportive councillors asking them to call on the mayor to act consistently with council wishes by supporting the motion at the ALGA conference

- **A semi-supportive council, if a Gaza motion got up but didn't pass:**

Lobby your supportive councillors, asking them to assist in encouraging the Mayor to back the motion.

- **Unsupportive council, with no Gaza motion likely to pass.**

Approach a supportive/allied councillor directly and discretely, ask them for assistance and guidance.

How-To

Lobbying your councillors

To effectively lobby your councillors or mayor on this issue, you will need to put forward a comprehensive, concise and compelling argument in support of the motion.

Some approaches for lobbying may include:

Holding an in-person meeting

- Call or email your councillor/mayor to schedule the meeting. Be sure to let them know that you would like to meet in regards to a motion being put forward at the ALGA conference.
- Be tactical in your approach, using the table above to work out who to meet with.
- Prepare precisely what you are going to say, and why. You can take some messaging tips from our Conversations for Gaza toolkit.
- Back up your argument with research - reports, articles and case studies of previous motions. You can find some of these at the end of our Local Council Motion toolkit.
- Be prepared to justify why you think this is a relevant issue for the ALGA motion - we have some useful justifications for why on pages 17 - 18 of our Local Council Motion Toolkit.
- Clearly make your ask, and make sure you get a response. If they cannot provide one on the spot, make sure they know that you will be following up over the next few weeks.
- If their answer is “no”, ask why not? Find out what you would need to do to change this answer.

How-To

Lobbying your councillors

Drafting a letter to your councillor/mayor

- Consider which councillor/s you may like to send the letter to. Or, you may consider sending two different letters, depending on the attitude of your councillors.
- Start by introducing yourself and confirming that you are a resident of their council.
- Let them know that there will be a motion raised by Merri-bek Council at the ALGA conference about Gaza, and that you are requesting that your council delegate support it.
- Provide one or two reasons for why you believe this motion has relevance to you and your community.
- Point out previous examples of ALGA motion's, such as Ukraine or Australia Day.
- Provide one or two compelling articles or reports on Gaza for the councillor to read.
- Ask them for a response in the next week or so.
- Be sure to follow up with a phone call if you do not receive a response in a reasonable time.

How-To

Lobbying your councillors

Speaking to your councillor/Mayor on the phone

- Spend some time considering which councillors, and how many, you might need to call.
- Prepare by writing down your key argument into a few dot points. Remember to be concise and succinct, don't waffle!
- Explain that you are calling about the ALGA motion, and that you would like to formally request that the council delegate support this motion on behalf of the community.
- Give a very brief explanation of why you believe this motion is important to you and your community.
- If your councillor cannot give a precise answer, ask them to follow up with you in the following days.
- Follow up the phone call with an email, thanking them and reminding them of your key ask.

How-to

Build and demonstrate community support

Once you have reached out to your councillor or mayor to decide on the best pathway forward, you can consider ways to mobilise your community in support of the ALGA motion.

- Start a petition calling on the council to support the motion. Make sure to check your local councils website as they may have specific rules and protocol around petitions. Make sure to reach out to us at APAN, as we can assist you with the wording and set-up of this petition.
- Start an email campaign targeting your delegate and any influential councillors, using the DoGooder platform, which offers a free two week trial. Again, APAN can help you with wording and set-up. (Make sure to download all your data before the trial ends so you can keep in touch with your action-takers to let them know the outcome).
- Coordinate daily phone calls from various constituents, businesses and organisations in your local area to the mayor and any influential councillors.
- Take turns in writing to your local newspaper's letters to the editor page arguing in support of the motion, or pen a press release about the motion and encourage your paper to follow the story.
- Call local and community radio talk-back shows to talk about the motion.
- Attend the public question time at your local council to ask questions and make statements of support for the motion.

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During and after the NGA

Next steps

Remember, the motion will be voted on in July, and it is likely that the council will decide on their voting pattern at least a month before. So it's urgent that we get onto this tactic quickly - the period of influence is right now!

Highlight the motion on social media while it is being debated.

Take to your social media accounts to post about the motion and let your community know that it is being debated. Remember to tag any relevant Mayors or delegates in your posts.

Follow up on the motion afterwards.

Remember to call or email your councillor contact immediately following the conference to see how the motion went.

You can also check at <https://alga.com.au/motions/#> to see whether the motion has passed or not.

During and after the NGA

Next steps

Follow-up with your councillors/mayor after the NGA

Once the NGA winds up, don't forget to contact your supportive council delegate(s) to thank them for their vote in favour of the motion, and to encourage their ongoing support for Palestine.

If your council has not already passed its own Palestine solidarity motion, this is a great time to start this conversation with your supportive councillor! See our Local Council Motions toolkit for more information!

Contact us

Stay in touch or seek advice

Please don't hesitate to get in touch with us at APAN, to check in, ask questions or seek guidance.

As well as the WhatsApp Community and regular webinars, our campaigners are always happy to help.

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