

Items of business for LGA General Meetings

**Frequently Asked
Questions**

June 2023

Items of business for LGA General Meetings

Introduction

The Local Government Association of South Australia (LGA) schedules two General Meetings each year:

- the Ordinary General Meeting (OGM) is held annually in April or May; and
- the Annual General Meeting (AGM) is held annually in October or November.

A key purpose of the AGM/OGM is to bring together member councils to consider 'items of business' that are of strategic importance to local government.

Proposing and voting on items of business for a General Meeting is one of the important ways that member councils participate in the development of policy and strategy on issues and influence the advocacy agenda for local government in matters affecting councils and their communities.

This FAQ provides helpful guidance to councils about how to successfully participate in this process.

General overview of process

Items of business can be submitted by member councils to either SAROC, GAROC or the LGA Board of Directors for approval to be placed on the agenda of a General Meeting.

It is at the discretion of councils whether to refer an item to SAROC (regional councils), GAROC (metro councils) or the LGA Board of Directors. As a general guide, all policy and advocacy matters should be referred to SAROC or GAROC, and matters related to the operations of the LGA should be referred to the LGA Board.

Items of business can be submitted at any time during the year. Councils do not need to wait for the call for items from the LGA. However, to enable all items to be assessed by the relevant body and for reports to be prepared and included in the Agenda, a closing date is determined for each General Meeting. This closing date will typically be around 8-10 weeks prior to each General Meeting. If you miss the deadline, you can still submit your item, but it will be held until the following General Meeting.

Councils must submit their items by completing and submitting the LGA General Meeting - Proposed Item of Business form.

Proposals should be accompanied by enough supporting information to make informed decisions and recommendations. Councils are encouraged to discuss proposed items of business with the LGA Secretariat before they are submitted for advice on LGA policy, current activities and the type of supporting evidence or documentation that may be required.

SAROC, GAROC, or the LGA Board of Directors may decide to approve an item of business for inclusion on the agenda of a General Meeting. If appropriate, they may determine another course of action, including approving with amendments, requesting further information, referring the matter back to the council, or resolving that the matter be dealt with by the LGA/SAROC/GAROC without progressing to an OGM/AGM.

Once an item of business has been recommended for inclusion on the agenda for a General Meeting, and subsequently carried by member councils by a majority vote, the LGA will use its best endeavors to achieve the outcomes sought by member councils based on available resources.

Before proposing an item of business, member councils are encouraged to carefully consider the following *Frequently Asked Questions* and to refer to the *Guidelines on Considering Proposed Items of Business for LGA General Meetings*¹.

Frequently Asked Questions

- Why should I consider an item of business for an LGA general meeting?
- What is a 'strategically important' issue?
- What supporting evidence does the LGA need to consider my item of business?
- When should I submit a proposed item of business to the LGA?
- I have read the agenda for the next General Meeting and think an issue needs to be on there. Can I submit a late item of business?
- How do I submit a proposed item of business?
- Can I write a letter to the LGA President or CEO to submit a proposed item of business?
- Who makes the decision on my proposed item of business / where should I refer my item of business to?
- Why might the LGA decide not to allow my proposed item of business to go to a General Meeting?
- Can I get help to prepare a proposed item of business?

Why should I consider an item of business for an LGA general meeting?

- Member councils should consider submitting a proposed item of business if they believe there is an opportunity for the LGA to take the lead on an issue that is strategically important to local government and will benefit the sector as a whole.
- There is significant value and impact in local government speaking with one voice through the LGA to influence State and Federal Government setting the policy, legislation and funding arrangements that support the delivery of council services and operations. Similarly, the LGA can bring councils together to assist with capacity building and knowledge sharing within local government.

What is a 'strategically important' issue?

- The policies and activities that are resolved at the LGA General Meetings are important in guiding the priorities and work plans of the LGA, and it is important that the Association's resources are focussed on the issues that will be of the greatest benefit to councils and communities.
- Generally, an item may be deemed to strategically important if:
 - it has direct relevance to the role of local government, or council services and operations
 - it will benefit the local government sector as a whole
 - there is alignment with LGA/SAROC/GAROC strategic and business plans
 - there is alignment with the LGA Policy Manual.

¹ https://www.lga.sa.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0032/467744/ECM_670949_v6_Guidelines-Considering-Proposed-Items-of-Business-for-LGA-General-Meetings-2.pdf

What supporting evidence does the LGA need to consider my item of business?

- Good public policy positions need to be supported by solid evidence so that the issues are well understood and that the proposed course of action provides the most efficient and effective solution.
- A strong evidence base is critical to successful advocacy, particularly when trying to change government policy, influence public opinion or attract additional funding.
- To support SAROC, GAROC and the LGA Board of Directors in determining whether an item of business should be recommended to an LGA General Meeting, all submissions should provide a summary of the issue, a clear definition of the problem and its impact on local government or council services and operations. Information should be provided on any relevant legislation, policy settings and relevant research reports and papers.
- If sufficient supporting evidence is not provided, SAROC, GAROC or the LGA Board of Directors may refer an item back to the submitting council with a request for further information.
- In many cases the evidence needed to support a position might not be readily available. In these circumstances it is best for a motion to seek further investigation of an issue and/or further consultation with councils, rather than seeking endorsement of a specific policy position or action.

When should I submit a proposed item of business to the LGA?

- Items of business for LGA General Meetings can be submitted at any time throughout the year.
- A proposed item of business will be referred to SAROC, GAROC or the LGA Board of Directors at their next available meeting, along with a report with recommendations from the LGA Secretariat.
- The LGA will advise member councils of the final date for submitting proposed items of business for the next available General Meeting. This 'closing date' is required to ensure that the LGA Secretariat can engage with the submitting councils and make recommendations to SAROC, GAROC or the LGA Board of Directors at their meeting prior to preparation of the General Meeting Agenda.
- Generally, proposed items of business for the Annual General Meeting (October/November) need to be with the LGA in August and proposed items of business for the Ordinary General Meeting (April/May) need to be with the LGA in February.
- The 'closing date' for each General Meeting is communicated to councils via LGA Latest News, typically five months in advance.

I have read the agenda for the next General Meeting and think an issue needs to be on there. Can I submit a late item of business?

- No. Once the Agenda has been finalised for a General Meeting, no further items of business will be accepted for that Meeting. The Agenda is provided to councils at least 30 days prior to a General Meeting to enable each council to discuss and determine a position on the items of business.
- Any items that are received after the closing date will be held until the following General Meeting.

- The LGA Board of Directors, SAROC and GAROC may decide to progress an issue that is strategically important to local government if there is a level of urgency required to deal with the issue outside of the scheduling for the LGA General Meetings.

How do I submit a proposed item of business?

- To submit a proposal please complete the *LGA General Meeting - Proposed Item of Business* form. This form requires councils to identify:
 - Which body the proposed item of business is being referred to ie SAROC, GAROC or the LGA Board of Directors.
 - The subject of the proposed item of business - a short title is preferred.
 - The proposed motion for the General Meeting – a succinct and clear motion ie that the Annual / Ordinary General Meeting requests the LGA to....
 - Supporting information - attachments are permitted to ensure adequate supporting information is provided.
 - Alignment to the LGA Policy Manual - consider if this item requires a change to the LGA Policy Manual (new policy or amendment to existing policy)?
 - Alignment to LGA Strategic Plan reference - identify links to one key initiative and one strategy.
 - A Council Contact Officer responsible for submitting form - the LGA may wish to liaise with the proposing council to request additional information or consult on potential amendments to the motion.
 - Council Meeting minute reference and date of meeting - all proposed items of business must be appropriately considered by the submitting council before being sent to the LGA.

Can I write a letter to the LGA President or CEO to submit a proposed item of business?

- No. To ensure that all the required information is provided and that proposed items of business are handled correctly by the LGA Secretariat, please use the LGA General Meeting - Proposed Item of Business form and submit it to lgasa@lga.sa.gov.au

Who makes the decision on my proposed item of business / where should I refer my item of business to?

- It is at the discretion of councils whether to refer an item to SAROC, GAROC or the LGA Board of Directors.
- The Guidelines on Considering Proposed Items of Business for LGA General Meetings, suggests that items should be referred to SAROC (from regional member councils) or GAROC (from metropolitan member councils) if they relate to the development of LGA policy and strategy, advocacy issues, the LGA Policy Manual, and operational matters related to SAROC or GAROC.
- Otherwise items should be referred to the LGA Board of Directors if related to:
 - the LGA Constitution or Ancillary Documents
 - a subsidiary of the LGA

- a commercial service provided (or proposed to be provided) by the LGA
- an activity requiring the allocation of significant resources by the LGA
- any LGA operational matter

Regional councils may choose to refer their proposed items of business to their Regional LGA prior to submitting with the LGA. This is not required, but it often assists councils with refining the proposed actions and may help to inform and build support for the proposed item of business in their region.

Why might the LGA decide not to allow my proposed item of business to go to a General Meeting?

An item may not be recommended for consideration at a General Meeting:

- If it is not considered to be 'strategically important' to local government; for example, it is not an issue that is within the scope of local government to address or influence.
- If progressing the item would impact negatively on the reputation of local government in South Australia.
- If an issue is only relevant to a particular group of councils it may be referred back to a council or Regional LGA, or resolved that the matter be dealt with by SAROC (for regional issues) or GAROC (for metropolitan issues) without progressing to a General Meeting.
- If there is insufficient supporting evidence provided in support of the policy position or course of action being sought. In some instances, an item may be referred back to the submitting council with a request for further information.
- In circumstances where the evidence needed to support a position might not be readily available, it would be appropriate for a proposed item of business to request that the LGA seeks further investigation and/or further consultation with councils, rather than seeking endorsement of a specific policy position or action.
- If the LGA already has a supportive policy position in relation to the proposed item, further consideration by members at a General Meeting may not be required.
- If there are a lack of resources available to the LGA to progress the proposed item of business. In some cases, the items of business put forward by members require significant resources to be allocated in order to achieve the desired outcome. Resources may not be available through the LGA to tackle every issue. The Board, SAROC and GAROC may determine not to proceed with (or defer) an item of business if the resourcing required would detract from the achievement of outcomes of greater priority for members.
- The submitting council will be advised of the outcome and reasons if not referred to a General Meeting.

Can I get help to prepare a proposed item of business?

- Yes. All member councils are encouraged to contact the LGA Secretariat early in the process to discuss the development of their proposed items of business.

Please email: lgasa@lga.sa.gov.au or telephone: 08 8224 2000.