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Local government Closing the Gap: A way forward for Australian communities

A new resource to accelerate efforts to provide greater opportunities for Indigenous Australians at the local community level has been published by the Australian Local Government Association (ALGA).

Developed by ALGA and its state and territory association members, the guide sets out key actions councils can undertake to meet the priority reforms laid out under the landmark National Agreement on Closing the Gap signed in 2020.

ALGA's Closing the Gap Implementation Plan will:

- Support Australian local governments to harness the opportunities provided to communities by the national Closing the Gap Plan;
- assist state and territory governments to work with local governments in the implementation of the National Closing the Gap Agreement; and
- support strengthened shared decision-making at the local level, supporting local governments to better partner with the Commonwealth, states and territory governments, and local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

ALGA President Linda Scott said the Implementation Plan reflects local government's strong commitment to giving First Nations people the means to build stronger communities, particularly by accelerating new employment opportunities at the local government level.

"In many communities, councils are proud to be a major employer of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, and benefit from the skills of our highly trained, knowledgeable people in the work we do," Cr Scott said.

"This Implementation Plan is also about providing local governments additional tools to embrace collaboration with our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities to deliver the Closing the Gap objectives in ways tailored to their individual circumstances and needs."

Councils are the level of government closest to the people and play an essential role in supporting and helping to steer the development of policies and programs in partnership with local Indigenous peoples that address our priorities at local and regional levels.

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A motion to support the recognition of Aboriginal controlled councils and ensure stronger collaboration across all levels of government won unanimous support at the National General Assembly of Local Government in June after being put forward by the East Arnhem Regional Council.

The neighbouring West Arnhem Regional Council supports indigenous employment by being a member of Supply Nation – a national database of verified Indigenous businesses facilitating closer connections between Indigenous businesses and procurement departments.

“Our Implementation Plan will build on this work and enhance the shared policy development and decision-making at the local government level that is fundamental to support the development of First Nations communities,” Cr Scott said.

Australia’s reputation as an egalitarian society that values a fair go for all has been sullied by repeated failures over many decades to ensure Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples have the same life outcomes as non-indigenous Australians.

“I am confident this Implementation Plan will enable local governments to work more effectively at transforming local lives through providing local jobs and career pathways,” Cr Scott said.

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Available for interview:

Councillor Linda Scott, President Australian Local Government Association.

Media inquiries:

Cameron Ross | 0418 415 649 | cameron.ross@alga.asn.au