



Local Government Ministers' Forum

Terms of Reference

These terms of reference provide guidance on the structure, operations, and expectations of the Local Government Ministers' Forum (LGMF). This document is intended to be a living document to be reviewed and updated as and when required.

1. Purpose

Ministerial Councils progress priority work that requires intergovernmental collaboration. LGMF provides a forum on matters of national importance to the local government portfolio to enable:

- National collaborative action and consistency on enduring strategic issues
- Addressing issues requiring cross jurisdictional collaboration and
- Discussion of reform opportunities with the sector.

LGMF is to be supported by the Local Government Senior Officials Meeting (LGSOM) in these objectives by:

- providing relevant, comprehensive and timely advice to LGMF on local government issues including appropriate recommendations for future action
- overseeing the LGMF workplan and satisfactorily delivering on its actions, and
- sharing jurisdictional insights on local government issues to support informed decision-making.

2. Membership

The Commonwealth Minister for Local Government will convene the forum and be responsible for the finalisation of the meeting agenda. Membership comprises:

- the Commonwealth Minister for Local Government and
- State and Territory Ministers with responsibility for local government.

Members responsibilities are to:

- Participate in discussion on issues representing the experience and views of their jurisdiction
- Contribute to the development and delivery of the LGMF work plan and
- Consult their governments as appropriate and, where they have authority, represent their government's position at LGMF.

Members may nominate a proxy parliamentary colleague to attend on their behalf if they are unable to attend the meeting. Where possible, the aim should be for all members to be represented at a meeting (including by proxy). Members can be supported at meetings by a maximum of three staff (officials and advisers) to allow for open discussions.

Ex-officio membership is extended to the president of the Australian Local Government Association (ALGA) in recognition of the intrinsic relationship between the work of LGMF and the local government sector. Ex-officio members may attend meetings and participate in discussion at the discretion of the chair but will not cast a vote on decisions of LGMF which is the exclusive purview of member ministers and their proxies.



Chair

The Commonwealth Minister for Local Government will chair the LGMF. The chair ensures that the meeting operates effectively and collaboratively to deliver outcomes requiring joint action by the Commonwealth, state and territory governments. The chair's responsibilities are to:

- have a thorough understanding of LGMF's workplan and maintain a focus on achieving outcomes
- finalise meeting agendas and ensure all agenda items are discussed within the allocated time
- encourage full participation by all members
- ensure contentious issues are debated in a professional manner and mediate when conflict arises and
- facilitate decision-making by consensus.

3. Secretariat

LGMF is supported by a secretariat in the Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications, Sport and the Arts (DITRDCA), which is the Commonwealth department with responsibility for local government policy. The secretariat can be contacted at local.government@infrastructure.gov.au.

4. Meetings and Frequency

LGMF will be held in-person at least twice per year. Shorter, more targeted discussions can be held virtually at other periods, if required, for more urgent matters as they arise.

Meetings should, where possible, avoid Parliamentary sitting days for all jurisdictions.

The secretariat will work with the chair and jurisdictions to settle dates as far in advance as possible.

5. Meeting Agenda and Papers

The chair is responsible for finalising the agenda. The final agenda should be circulated no later than two weeks prior. A draft agenda should be circulated no later than four weeks prior.

Items being considered by LGMF will be presented through a paper. Agenda papers should be circulated no later than two weeks prior to a meeting.

LGSOM will consider items before they progress to LGMF. Consensus on the topics for discussion should be achieved at LGSOM or, where progressed without a consensus, note this in the paper itself once it progresses.

6. Forward Work Plan

LGMF will produce a forward workplan with up to five priorities per year, which deal with matters that are of significance to local government and would benefit from a national approach.

The workplan will detail the priority items and timeframes for completing these to ensure meetings remain focused on progressing key priorities. Complex, long-term reform items will be broken down into discrete and tangible deliverables that can be progressed within 12-18 months.

LGMF may agree appropriate cost-sharing arrangements to support the management and delivery of activity required under the workplan.



Routine, non-controversial or technical matters will be delegated to LGSOM or progressed out-of-session.

7. Hosting Duties

Hosting of LGMF shall be on a rotating basis to allow each member jurisdiction the opportunity to host with the next host agreed at each meeting. The hosting member shall be afforded the privilege of bringing forward an item for discussion of their choosing.

The host jurisdiction will:

- organise a dinner to be held the evening before the forum for members
- provide a suitable venue for the meeting
- provide any associated services for the meeting e.g. video conferencing

The Secretariat will remain responsible for the management of the meeting including the distribution of meeting papers, invitations and the formalisation of the agenda.

Costs associated with hosting the meeting shall be borne by the host jurisdiction with the exception of catering for the meeting which will be met by the Secretariat. Jurisdictions will retain responsibility for any travel and accommodation costs associated with the attendance of their members and observers at meetings.

8. Record of Meetings

The secretariat will prepare draft meeting outcomes, records of decisions, attendance and agreed actions. These will be circulated to members for comment no later than ten (10) working days after a meeting. Members (or senior officials on behalf of members) may provide comments or suggest changes to the minutes ahead of their finalisation.

Following each meeting, the Chair—with the agreement of members—will release a communique of the meeting's key decisions and discussions.

9. Freedom of Information requests

Where a request is made to make a document public through a Freedom of Information (FOI) request, a request from a Royal Commission, or some other avenue, the relevant jurisdiction's FOI legislation should be followed. The relevant jurisdiction should seek views of other members on the public release of a document prior to publication consistent with the third-party consultation requirements of that FOI legislation.

10. Conflict of Interest

The secretariat will record any conflicts of interest at the start of each meeting and then, as they might arise.

11. Caretaker

Jurisdictions in caretaker should be guided by their caretaker conventions/guidelines. During caretaker, a jurisdiction can be represented by an appropriate departmental senior official.



12. Sunset Clause

In line with the [Guidance for Intergovernmental Meetings](#) issued by the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, LGMF can be disbanded and can do so when members recognise key outcomes have transitioned from actions to primarily information sharing and when strategic priorities are achieved with no further priorities identified or the timeframe for resolving those issues expires.