

SOUTH AUSTRALIA'S STRATEGIC PLAN

1. Purpose

This paper summarises the collaboration between the Office of Local Government (OLG) and the Local Government Association (LGA) to further the implementation of South Australia's Strategic Plan (SASP), and the achievements of the LGA project *Making the Connections*. It proposes several actions and recommendations designed to progress the next iteration of SASP in partnership with the Local Government sector.

2. Background

On 27 October 2004, a State-Local Government workshop initiated by OLG and the LGA, and sponsored by the Minister's Local Government Forum on SASP was held. This workshop provided council members and staff with information about the SASP, and formally opened discussions between State and Local Government on ways in which the Local Government sector can influence and respond to the Plan.

Shortly after this workshop, letters were exchanged between the Minister for State/Local Government Relations and the President of the LGA formalising an overall process by which issues arising in the implementation of SASP will be progressed. It was agreed that the Forum would be the appropriate body to provide recommendations to both Cabinet and the LGA in order to facilitate State and Local Government cooperation in the implementation of SASP.

It is intended that recommendations from the Forum on actions involving the Local Government sector to further progress SASP will be made both to the LGA State Executive, and to the Executive Committee of Cabinet (ExComm), as ExComm is the State Government body that has primary responsibility for the implementation of the SASP.

2.1 Making the Connections – first stage

The LGA has completed the first stage of its initiative, *Making the Connections*, the project established both to assist councils to make links between their strategic plans, SASP and other State plans, and to identify ways in which better alignment of State and Local Government strategic plans can be achieved.

The first stage of this project undertook to assess the current levels of alignment between State and Local Government strategic plans, and to identify any barriers that hinder better alignment. Overall, this assessment found that there is a strong agreement from both State and Local Government that strategic planning is a vital process for effective government, and that there already exists close alignment between Local Government strategic plans and SASP in key areas such as infrastructure, road safety and the environment.

However, the assessment of the current similarities between State and Local Government strategic priorities also raised several overall issues that could hinder better alignment of strategic plans. These include:

- What could be perceived as 'gaps' in the SASP – issues of importance to the Local Government sector that do not have a high profile within SASP;
- The need to acknowledge Local Government as a key partner in the implementation of more priority actions that are aimed at achieving the SASP targets; and
- The difficulty of assessing alignment across State and Local Government plans when councils' plans vary significantly in structure, wording, and timing of preparation, as do the different plans of individual State agencies.

A copy of the progress report that outlines the results of this assessment is attached. The LGA released this draft report for councils' consideration in July/ August 2005. Comments received by the LGA from individual councils and Regional Local Government Associations on this report:

- Agree with the issues identified in the report;
- Raise a number of additional issues of a detailed nature for further consideration; and
- Express strong support for continued cooperation between State and Local Government on jointly agreed strategic projects and programs.

2.2 Making the Connections – second stage

The second stage of *Making the Connections* is the identification and prioritisation of specific strategic priorities on a regional basis. This has begun with a pilot project based in northern Metropolitan Adelaide managed by the Office of the North and involving the Salisbury, Gawler and Playford councils and relevant State agencies. This project has identified a number of strategic priorities that are shared by the three councils, and that reflect SASP targets in the areas of:

- Land and infrastructure planning in the Northern Region
- Waterproofing the North
- Workforce development in the region
- Business development strategy for the region
- Health and wellbeing

The project group has agreed on specific priorities and projects under each of these broader areas. It is intended that the Northern Chief Executives' group will formally endorse a document summarising these projects before it is submitted to the three Councils' elected bodies and relevant Ministers for consideration and approval.

The pilot project is close to being finalised and has provided an excellent example of a number of councils and the State working together to identify and progress strategically important issues within a particular region. It is expected that this work will provide a model for other regionally based groups to further coordinate strategic planning between councils and between individual State agencies, as well as the State and Local Government sectors overall. The Office of the South has also expressed interest in undertaking a similar exercise in southern Metropolitan Adelaide, involving Marion and Onkaparinga Councils.

3. Actions

It is expected that after a detailed report in mid 2006 is made on the progress that has been made on the implementation of the SASP targets, the SASP will be reviewed, and a new edition prepared. This provides an excellent opportunity to engage with the Local Government sector to both facilitate awareness of the nature and achievements of the SASP and also to ensure that councils are able to make a meaningful contribution to the next iteration of the Plan.

The preparation of a detailed report on progress made on current SASP targets also provides an opportunity for information to be provided to the Executive Committee of Cabinet (ExComm) on action undertaken to engage Local Government in the implementation of relevant targets. A method to achieve this is to request that the Chief Executives of departments that have the primary responsibility for these targets to provide information to ExComm on the involvement of the Local Government sector in their implementation.

The first stage of *Making the Connections*, as described above, assessed the current degree of alignment between Local Government strategic plans and all SASP targets (primarily at a regional level). This work also revealed a number of topics that are of importance to the Local Government sector, but are not contained as a priority within SASP. These include social development issues, urban water management, aboriginal reconciliation, urban animal management, environmental health issues and heritage and urban design.

Accordingly, it is suggested that a consultation process focus on the preparation of a detailed prospectus on the strategic priorities of Local Government, with an emphasis on both their alignment with current State Government initiatives, and their level of inclusion on the current edition of SASP. This will ensure that the next edition of SASP is prepared in full knowledge of the issues that are considered to be of strategic importance to Local Government. Enabling meaningful Local Government input into SASP will also be necessary to achieve Target 5.7 of SASP, the alignment of State and Local Government strategic plans.

It is proposed that the consultation process would be developed between the LGA and State Government (the Office of Local Government and the Department of Premier and Cabinet, in particular, the SASP Community Connection Unit). It is likely to consist of a number of jointly arranged regional visits, involving all regional LGAs, and providing elected members and staff of regional councils with an opportunity to discuss with representatives from the SASP Community Connection Unit their SASP related interests and proposals. Similar events would also be held in Metropolitan Adelaide in close conjunction with the Metropolitan Local Government Group. It is proposed that this process be undertaken in conjunction with similar work planned by the SASP Community Connection Unit.

Given the success of the October 2004 workshop on SASP, it is also suggested that another workshop be held when the detailed report on SASP is complete, but before a new edition has been drafted, to provide a summary of SASP achievements and issues to the Local Government sector as a whole, and also to finalise a submission to ExComm that will result from the consultation process outlined above.

4. Recommendations

That the Minister's Local Government Forum:

- 1. Note the significant work undertaken by *Making the Connections* to assess the current level of alignment between Local Government strategic plans and SASP;**
- 2. Note progress made by the Northern Partnerships in identifying the strategic priorities for councils and the State Government in metropolitan Adelaide;**
- 3. Support the development of a proposal to the Executive Committee of Cabinet that Chief Executives report on work undertaken with or by Local Government to achieve SASP targets; and**
- 4. Endorse the preparation of a report to the LGA State Executive and the Executive Committee of Cabinet outlining a consultation process with Local Government that builds upon the conclusions of *Making the Connections* in preparation for the next iteration of SASP.**