

Media Release



21 February 2019 / Media contact: Liddy Clark 0403 542 411

Citizenship Ceremonies Should Reflect Local Needs and Reality

The Victorian Local Governance Association (VLGA) surveyed its membership regarding the proposed changes to the *Australia Citizenship Ceremonies Code*. The survey was completed by 22 councils from both metropolitan and rural municipalities, representing 28% of the 79 Victorian councils.

The survey revealed that

- None of the 22 councils received any direct financial assistance from the Federal government to host citizenship ceremonies. Council contributions towards these ceremonies ranged from a few hundred dollars for rural councils to several thousand dollars for metropolitan councils (one council reported an annual budget allocation of \$65,000 for citizenship ceremonies). The cost for councils to host ceremonies on special days increased significantly due to staffing costs and some councils offering extra services such as entertainment and welcome to country on these occasions.
- 21 out of the 22 councils currently hold citizenship ceremonies on Australian Day. The council that does not hold ceremonies on January 26 has not done so for the past 20 years and holds it on January 25 for “*logistical and operational reasons*”
- Most councils do not currently hold citizenship ceremonies on Citizenship Day (September 17).
- Councils reported some qualified support to the requirements for councils to conduct ceremonies on Australia Day and Citizenship Day due to a number of reasons, including
 - Insufficient number of conferees for the ceremonies if they are mandated
 - Some conferees feel intimidated by it and/or want to be part of a smaller, more intimate ceremony involving mostly family and friends
 - The potential for ceremonies to be held on days of council meetings and/or other council events
- There was overwhelming opposition for a recommended dress code for ceremonies as councils reported that they do not have any problems with this issue.

Based on the survey findings, the VLGA recommended that the dates for ceremonies and dress codes remain at the discretion of councils, and that the Federal government should consider direct financial assistance to councils for conducting citizenship ceremonies on its behalf, noting the financial impost they have on councils.

Importantly, the feedback that councils have received from their communities which indicate that some people would rather not have their citizenship ceremony on Australia Day as they feel intimidated by so many people and that they would rather be part of a smaller, more intimate ceremony involving mostly family and friends, should not be overlooked in this discussion.

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The VLGA submission, including data and comments from councils, can be accessed via <https://www.vlga.org.au/news/australian-citizenship-ceremonies-code-submission-victorian-local-governance-association>

Ends:

Please attribute to Chief Executive Officer Kathryn Arndt