**Media speaking points**

Background

* On 13 March 2020 Australia’s First Ministers (the Prime Minister, Premiers and Chief Ministers) agreed to establish a National Cabinet to meet at least weekly to address the country’s response to the coronavirus.
* On 29 May 2020, First Ministers, through the Prime Minister, announced the continuation of National Cabinet, which they considered to be a much more effective body than COAG for taking decisions in the national interest.
* Local Government was not given a seat at the National Cabinet table despite being a member of COAG, since its establishment in 1992, through the Australian Local Government Association (ALGA).
* Local Government was included in COAG because all parties recognised that Australia has three levels of government and that the level of government with most impact on people’s daily lives in terms of the provision of local services and infrastructure is Local Government.
* All Federal Governments in the last three decades saw value in the three levels of government working together through membership of COAG.

Reaction

* We are disappointed in the decision to exclude Local Government from the National Cabinet table.
* All Australians expect their governments to work together for their benefit, at all levels, across all issues that can improve their lives and livelihoods.
* Local Government brings strengths that other levels of government do not – a grass roots perspective that is apolitical and the resources, capacity and expertise to support local implementation of policy and programs at a community level.
* This is a missed opportunity to ensure that Australia bounces back better as Local Government plays a significant role in the social and economic recovery of communities.

Outcomes on a national scale

* Australians expect their three levels of government to be working together, and to see evidence of that. Including Local Government in National Cabinet would demonstrate a strong unity of purpose and a combined commitment to promote and implement National Cabinet decisions across the broadest implementation platform available to government.
* The Prime Minister has indicated that on the path to recovery existing economic policy settings must be examined very closely and that there will be significant reforms going forward. Reform involving the streamlining of legislation and regulation requires all the levels of government which are involved in regulation working together to achieve the benefits of reform for everyone without imposing costs or burdens on local communities. Getting it right on the ground is Local Government’s area of strength.

Outcomes on a local scale

* If we are going to promote economic and social recovery, we need all three levels of government working together. We need to make sure that local impacts of decisions are known.
* Our community and region could be overlooked or have policies and programs imposed upon us that have detrimental impacts if our interests are not protected in National Cabinet by ALGA. The Premiers take a macro view. ALGA takes the local view.
* It is at the local level that the social and economic effects of job losses will be most markedly felt and programs to address the impacts can have the most benefit.

Call to action

* Local governments across Australia are calling for representation on the National Cabinet.