



FROM UPPER SPENCER GULF COMMON PURPOSE GROUP TO SPENCER GULF CITIES

Background to our restructure from 1st January 2017

The 68 Council members to the Local Government Association are grouped into 'zones' for the purposes of providing formal representation to the LGA board (formerly 'state executive'). Under the LGA constitution, the non-metropolitan zones are: South East, Eyre Peninsula, Spencer Gulf, Central, Murray/Mallee, Southern & Hills.

From a Local Government perspective, Spencer Gulf Cities zone had languished for many years. During this time, a number of LGA constitutional anomalies resulting in fragmenting the three cities across three different LGA voting zones and diluting the potential for a stronger and more united 'Upper Spencer Gulf' voice.

In mid 2014, the Whyalla, Port Pirie and Port Augusta Councils unanimously agreed to restructure and re-invigorate the LGA's 'Spencer Gulf Cities' zone.

Upon specific request from the Whyalla, Port Pirie and Port Augusta Councils and with no objection from Roxby Council, the LGA board endorsed the restructured 'Spencer Gulf Cities', with membership from early 2015 comprising: Port Augusta, Port Pirie, Whyalla and Roxby Councils.

The reactivation of the Spencer Gulf Cities zone provided opportunity for the zone Councils to appoint one member and proxy member to the LGA board.

Mayor Sam Johnson was elected and appointed as the LGA board member representing Spencer Gulf Cities in 2015, with Mayor John Rohde (Port Pirie) as proxy.

In addition, Spencer Gulf Cities participates on the LGA's 'SA Regional Organisation of Councils' (SAROC) committee. This committee comprises the chair and executive officer from each of the regional LGA zones listed in the LGA constitution. SAROC provides a forum for regional issues to be escalated through to the LGA and another avenue to enhance regional lobbying and advocacy to Government.

Despite the lack of activity by Spencer Gulf Cities for many years, the Upper Spencer Gulf Common Purpose Group instead fulfilled a key role in providing a forum for the three cities to share information, jointly implement initiatives, provide a united voice and work with Government, industry and other stakeholders in the interest of improving the long-term sustainability of the three industrial cities.

The Upper Spencer Gulf Common Purpose Group was formed as an initiative of the Port Pirie, Port Augusta and Whyalla Councils in 1997, with the structure, purpose and membership over its near 20-year history regularly updated to reflect the needs, key influences and drivers of the time. Until recently the Group included voting members from the three Councils, three Regional Development Australia boards, education sectors, and an independent chair.

Following discussion by USGCPG members extending throughout 2016, the USGCPG Inc. amended its constitution from 1st January 2017 to pare back its membership to just the three founding Councils – Port Pirie, Port Augusta and Whyalla - with the three Mayors the board directors and Council CEO's as 'ex-officio' members. The USGCPG also now operates under a trading name of 'Spencer Gulf Cities' to reinforce the tri-city alliance and acknowledge the formal links to the LGA.

These changes fundamentally recognise the need for a strong, united voice by the three cities and a powerful political lobbying and advocacy role, particularly given the precarious economic and social situation facing the USG at present.

The economic development emphasis that commenced with USGCPG in the 1990's is still a strong component of the new 'Spencer Gulf Cities' collaboration effort, with ongoing focus on

transformation of the Upper Spencer Gulf to cleaner, more innovative, liveable and economically diverse regional cities by:

- Realising the potential in advanced manufacturing in minerals processing; storage-based renewable energy generation and new technology testing; event, cultural and marine tourism; defence and value-adding and innovation in agriculture and arid-smart technologies;
- Improving higher education, skills and research capabilities in the region to support these emerging sectors.
- Strategic infrastructure to improve the cities' role as a transport intermodal hub, including expanding existing, under-utilised port facilities in Port Pirie and Whyalla and an alternative national highway crossing of the gulf at Port Augusta.
- Strengthening the role of Pt Pirie, Whyalla and Pt Augusta as regional service centres and improving community confidence and city liveability through facility upgrades; mainstreet redevelopment and activation; and improved buffer zones between heavy industry and city centres.

Over the past year, the three cities – through the USGCPG/SGC – have been active in pursuing these goals through the following initiatives:

Federal Election Campaign

2016 Federal Election campaign, which saw a solid lobbying effort to secure the five key 'game changers' for the three cities:

- Solar thermal electricity generation and a renewable energy test-site for Port Augusta.
- Securing a viable and sustainable future for the Whyalla steelworks.
- Port Pirie smelter redevelopment, including e-waste processing.
- Implementing a new model of higher education and research across the Upper Spencer Gulf to secure the region as the "Centre for Arid Innovation".
- Amending Commonwealth Government procurement policies to maximise local content as a condition of all direct spend contracts and grant funding.

SEGRA Conference

Winning the right to host the 2017 national SEGRA conference – the first time in the history of this event it will be in South Australia – was also another significant achievement that was directly attributed to the combined bid that demonstrated the strong history and collaboration between the tri-city alliance.

USG Mayors and MPs MOU

Signing of the Upper Spencer Gulf Mayors and MPs Memorandum of Understanding in 2016 between the Mayors and the Federal Member for Grey, State Liberal Member for Stuart, State Labor Member for Giles, Independent Member for Frome, Geoff Brock was another achievement – and the only such agreement in the state. Whilst symbolic in nature, the MOU commits the members to meet regularly, and in the spirit of cooperation, to discuss common challenges and potential solutions and identify opportunities for collaborative effort.

USG Economic Transition Planning and Special Economic Zone

In addition, instigating support for an Upper Spencer Gulf Economic Transition Plan with State Minister for Manufacturing and Innovation Kyam Maher and Regional Development Minister Geoff Brock and the current push to have the Upper Spencer Gulf cities declared a 'Special Economic Zone' by the SA Government was a direct result of the united front by the three Councils. If successful, this will unlock government purchasing and contracting opportunities for local businesses in Whyalla, Port Pirie and Port Augusta – an occasion not afforded to any other region in the state except Northern Adelaide.

Community Owned Tertiary Education Centre

The three cities all suffer from a lack of technical and professional workforce, an increasingly centralised training and education offering, high and intergenerational unemployment.

The Upper Spencer Gulf Higher Education and Research Centre is an initiative to provide greater local control over tertiary education delivery, outcomes and industry links, improve higher education outcomes for regional residents, and fosters and builds a local research capability that supports transformative industry development in the Upper Spencer Gulf.

Spencer Gulf Cities – Local Government Collaboration

With grant funding from the LGA, Spencer Gulf Cities is also now escalating work with the three Councils and a range of other stakeholders to investigate a number of local government collaboration opportunities, including:

Spencer Gulf Cities Joint Planning Board

- Until 2007 the Port Pirie, Port Augusta and Whyalla Councils were all part of the 'Upper Spencer Gulf Development and Landuse Planning Region'. This meant specific issues associated with the needs of the three industrial cities were considered and dealt with through a very focussed, targeted approach. Unfortunately, this arrangement was amended by the Department of Planning in 2008, with the cities split up across three different Planning Strategy volumes. Port Augusta within the Far North, Port Pirie in the Mid North and Whyalla in the Eyre Peninsula planning region. The May 2016 agreement by the Port Pirie, Port Augusta and City of Whyalla to 'investigate a joint planning board' under the new *Planning, Development and Infrastructure Act 2016* will hopefully provide opportunity to again streamline a number of these functions and reduce the level of duplication.

Elected Member Governance Training

- Spencer Gulf Cities is also finalising a program of combined elected member governance training to be held in the region, including the Office of Local Government, Ombudsman, LGA Governance Panel, Auditor General and Independent Commissioner Against Corruption/Office of Public Integrity. The program is proposed to cover key governance aspects for Councils under the direct jurisdiction of these agencies, with intent to schedule this as an annual event.

Joint Procurement and Resource Sharing

- Stronger level of resource sharing in terms of technical and professional staff (ie building and environment services, asset management, engineering, planning etc) is also being considered across the three Councils. Whilst in its early stages, if successful, this approach would help build a solid and self-sustaining level of capability within the Upper Spencer Gulf that would then be better placed to assist smaller, neighbouring Councils. From a cost-savings perspective, the opportunity for the three large regional cities to aggregate their buying power in the joint purchase of goods and services which can't be provided locally also provides a substantial leverage point. For example, large contracts like road reseals, waste management.

2018 State Election Campaign

- With support from the other regions, the provincial cities around the state and the LGA, Spencer Gulf Cities is leading the development of the 'Regional Election Strategy'. The election campaign revolves around seeking a political commitment from whoever forms, or can influence, the next Government to the following three goals: (1) Growing our Regional Centres, (2) Royalties for Regions and (3) Decentralising the Public Service.

Resourcing

The Councils each contribute \$30,000 per year as core funding towards the work of the USGCPG/SGC.

This is leveraged with:

- \$39,000 annual funding support from the LGA to support the SGC board/SAROC representation/collaboration.
- a further \$50,000 grant from the LGA to specifically assist progress with the joint planning board, shared services, regional training and other council collaboration initiatives.
- Funding grant of \$75,000 pa for two years from Regions SA to support the economic transition work of the USG.

Over the history of the USGCPG/SGC, the Group has also gained a range of other grants for various specific purposes.

Summary

There is no doubt the political clout of the three cities when acting with a united voice.

The tri-city alliance between Whyalla, Port Augusta and Port Pirie formally has existed for nearly 20 years and is, arguably, as relevant now, as it ever was.

In addition to the long-standing focus on economic development across the Upper Spencer Gulf, the closer links - and financial support - from the Local Government Association, now affords an expanded opportunity to more closely consider collaborative initiatives that will foster longer term cost-savings, efficiencies and service viability and importantly, help to transition, diversify and strengthen the economies and communities of the Upper Spencer Gulf cities.

LGA Spencer Gulf Cities Zone Summary of Decisions

<p>20 May 2014 Upper Spencer Gulf Common Purpose Group</p>	<p><u>2.3 Local Government Collaboration</u> Motion: That the Upper Spencer Gulf Common Purpose Group ... liaise with LGA regarding realignment and strengthening of the Spencer Gulf Cities zone. S. Johnson/ P. Peppin CARRIED</p>
<p>16 June 2014 City of Whyalla</p>	<p><u>19.1 Local Government Association Spencer Gulf Cities Zone</u> Moved Cr Carter, seconded Cr Hodge C1513-2014 That, in accordance with Section 18.1 of the Local Government Association of South Australia (LGA SA) constitution, the Whyalla City Council resolves to make application to join the Spencer Gulf Cities zone from 1 July 2014 and formally advise the LGA of this decision. Carried Unanimously</p>
<p>23 July 2014 Port Pirie Council</p>	<p><u>1.1.2 LGA Spencer Gulf Cities Zone</u> MOVED Cr Stephens SECONDED Cr Nayda OM161/14 That, in accordance with Section 18.1 of the Local Government Association of South Australia constitution, Port Pirie Regional Council resolve to make application to join the Spencer Gulf Cities zone effective immediately, and formally advise the LGA of this decision. CARRIED</p>
<p>29 January 2015 LGA Board</p>	<p>LGA board formally endorsed changes in LGA zone membership as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Port Pirie Regional Council from Central Region to Spencer Gulf Cities • City of Whyalla from Eyre Peninsula to Spencer Gulf Cities • Port Augusta and Roxby Councils remain in Spencer Gulf Cities • City of Port Lincoln from Spencer Gulf Cities to Eyre Peninsula Region
<p>11 March 2015</p>	<p>Appointment of LGA Board delegate - Mayor Sam Johnson (Port Augusta) and Proxy Delegate - Mayor John Rohde (Port Pirie)</p>
<p>6 October 2016</p>	<p>Re-appointment of LGA Board delegate - Mayor Sam Johnson (Port Augusta) and Proxy Delegate - Mayor John Rohde (Port Pirie)</p>