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Friday September 23rd, 2011

Welcome to Excellence in Brief



The past two months have been exceptionally busy and productive as ACELG's programs all reach full capacity. Across the six program areas we have more than 30 projects under way, covering issues as diverse as social media, employment opportunities for Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders, retention of mature age workers, e-learning, shared services and professional development for councillors. Of course, this wide-ranging program of work simply reflects the diversity and varied roles of local government itself – and is just as challenging!

This edition of the newsletter highlights the completion of our first ANZSOG-ACELG national Excellence in Local Government Leadership program. Although in some respects 'experimental', the program was overall a great success with very positive feedback from the 42 participants. ACELG Chairperson Margaret Reynolds spoke at the final session, and several of ACELG's staff and consortium partners made presentations throughout the second week. Particular thanks go to ACELG Board member Stephanie Foster, Deputy Secretary of the Department of Regional Australia, for her personal contributions and for arranging the participation of other departmental staff. Above all, ACELG is indebted to Professor Mark Evans of ANZSOG and the University of Canberra for his outstanding efforts in coordinating and teaching the program. We have every hope that it will become an annual event and a cornerstone of local government professional development.

Another highlight was the extended meeting between the ACELG Board and the federal minister for Regional Australia and Local Government, Simon Crean. More detail is provided later in this newsletter. ANZSOG and ACELG were delighted that the Minister was able to speak at the farewell dinner for the leadership program, and to present certificates to graduates. He continues to urge local government to play a leadership role in advancing federal agendas such as regional development and low carbon futures, and ACELG stands ready to help advance informed debate and promote effective action around those key national issues.

As part of that process, ACELG has just released a new working paper on 'Unfinished Business' – a review of work still to be done to address the findings of nine major national and state inquiries into local government undertaken during the past decade. The paper identifies the main areas where continuing efforts are required, a number of which are already on ACELG's agenda or, as in the case of federal financial assistance, earmarked for further reviews. Again, ACELG's brief is to facilitate informed debate and we look forward to making a significant contribution to ongoing reform and improvement.

Graham Sansom
Director

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Local Government Excellence Graduates



Federal Local Government Minister, Hon Simon Crean, officiated at the graduation ceremony for the 42 local government leaders who completed the inaugural ANZSOG-ACELG Excellence in Local Government Leadership Program (ELGLP) on Friday 9 September. At the concluding dinner, Minister Crean presented certificates to the graduates, and spoke about the value of the program and opportunities for local leadership across a wide range of federal issues.

“What this program is doing is effectively creating the next generation of local government leaders. It is also providing the opportunity to take this newfound capacity to areas that may not have previously benefitted from these skills.”

Minister Crean also said that as a result of their enhanced leadership capacity, ELGLP graduates can carry local government forward as it faces current and emerging challenges, such as “... moving to a clean energy future, taking advantage of the early rollout of the NBN and driving strong arts and cultural development in communities.”

Minister Crean added: “... you face different challenges than your predecessors,” and that councils are delivering a far more complex range of services such as recreation, child care, infrastructure, tourism and environmental management, planning for a growing and ageing population and the importance of sustainability. “That’s where local government leadership comes in.”

Peter Allen, Deputy Dean of ANZSOG and ACELG Chairperson Margaret Reynolds joined the Minister in presenting certificates.



L-R: Banambi Wunungmurra from East Arnhem Shire Council (NT) receives his certificate from the Minister Simon Crean, ACELG Chairperson Margaret Reynolds, and ANZOG Deputy Dean Peter Allen.



Some of the ELGLP graduates at the graduation dinner.

As stated in our last edition, the ACELG-ANZSOG program provides a unique opportunity for senior local government leaders from all parts of Australia – mayors, councillors and senior executives – to examine in detail the ‘real world’ issues now facing councils and communities. It featured a team of internationally recognised presenters led by ANZSOG Professor Mark Evans and Professor Gerry Stoker, a former senior adviser to the UK government on local government reform.

We congratulate participants for completing the program and thank again the federal, state, territory and New Zealand governments, and local government associations that funded scholarships for some to attend.

Graduates are now part of the ANZOG Alumni program, and ACELG and ANZOG will create a 'graduates network' where 2011 participants might further explore and promote the goal of excellence in local government within their region and networks.

The next ELGLP is scheduled for 2012. For more information please visit the ACELG webpage [here](#). Minister Crean's speech to the Excellence in Local Government Leadership dinner for graduates can be viewed [here](#).

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Minister Crean meets the ACELG Board

The ACELG Board held a lengthy meeting with Minister Crean before the Leadership Program dinner. This was a valuable opportunity to brief the Minister on ACELG's role and progress thus far, to outline key issues on its agenda for the next year or so, and to discuss how ACELG could contribute to some of the Minister's priorities.



Key items covered included climate change and low carbon futures, infrastructure finance, regional development, workforce strategy and opportunities for ongoing reform. Mr Crean commented that the government had established the Centre because "...we wanted to drive innovation and best practice in the local government sector. It is doing great work."

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ATSI Employment in Local Government Roundtable



The National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Employment in Local Government Roundtable was held in Sydney in July, and opened by Hon Mark Arbib, federal minister for Indigenous Employment and Economic Development.

Its aim was to inform the development of potential cross-sectoral and intergovernmental partnerships and alliances on the topic, and showcase demonstration projects such as indigenous owned and operated services, and Latrobe City Council's 'Indigenous Employment Program', among others. A number of presentations were also given, and these are now available for download [here](#).

The Roundtable received strong endorsement by Minister Arbib, as well as Indigenous participants and

researchers. The Minister said "[ACELG] has identified that local government is facing a crisis in long-term workforce planning ... The solution is right in front of us – investment in local Indigenous communities and individuals who can provide those skills in the long term."

Outcomes from Roundtable discussions will inform the development of an interim 'White Paper' building on the 'Green Paper' released earlier this year: '[Closing the Gap through Place-based Employment](#)'. The interim White Paper is due for completion by the end of 2011.

The Roundtable was part of the 'Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Employment in LG Strategy', co-ordinated by the LGMA (National) Local Government Practice Unit for ACELG. Further information about the ACELG Workforce Development program can be found [here](#).



Aunty Millie Ingram, giving the Welcome to Country.



LGMA Chief Executive John Ravlic leading a workshop.

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Advancing Leadership Partnerships

ACELG's Advancing Leadership initiative is continuing across Australia with the upcoming launch of the Graduate Certificate in Local Government Leadership program in the Northern Territory, and its continuing development in WA as a partnership between Edith Cowan University and the LGMA.

The NT program will commence on 25 September with 16 local government personnel from across the Northern Territory. The first subject, 'New Perspectives in Local Government Leadership', will be delivered in Darwin by the UTS Centre for Local Government and will include sessions with keynote presenters from the NT Department of Housing, Local Government and Regional Services, ACELG, Charles Darwin University, Local Government Association of the Northern Territory, the LGMA and Darwin City Council. This initiative is part of ACELG's '[Governance and Strategic Leadership Program](#)'.

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Business Excellence Forum



The forum 'Business Excellence in Local Government: Debating Future Directions' was held in Melbourne last month to discuss the future development of the Australian Business Excellence Framework (BEF) in local government. Hosted jointly by ACELG and SAI Global, it was attended by chief executive officers and council managers with a reputation for taking a lead in promoting excellence and continuous improvement within their councils. Attendees debated the themes of excellence; continuous improvement; public value and local government development generally in the context of the

BEF. Outcomes of the forum will inform ACELG's '[Review of Excellence Frameworks](#)' project currently underway.

Further details and presentations from the Forum can be viewed [here](#).

Local Government Researchers Forum

ACELG is inviting local government researchers from Australia and New Zealand to present their research at a two day forum in December. The Forum which has the theme 'Local Governance in Transition' will take place on the 14th and 15th December 2011 at the University of Technology, Sydney. As well as disseminating new research which addresses key challenges facing local government, the forum is designed to build networks between researchers and identify future directions for local government research. An interactive session which explores how researchers and practitioners can better work together is also planned.

The call for papers, which was sent out through a wide range of networks nationally over August and September, has attracted over twenty five responses from universities, councils, state government departments, research consultants and PHD students.

The papers broadly cover new approaches to local governance and community engagement, governance challenges for rural, remote and indigenous councils, structural reform and financing options, workforce challenges in the context of demographic change, and responses to managing the physical environment more sustainably.

Further information, including the program, will be available on ACELG's website in October 2011. For information on how to participate in the forum contact Penny Finlay on 9514 2595 or Penny.Finlay@acelg.org.au (Monday – Wednesday).

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ACELG and 'Destination 2036'

ACELG was pleased to contribute to the NSW Division of Local Government's 'Destination 2036' event held in Dubbo recently. Melissa Gibbs represented the Centre on the project's External Reference Group and gave a presentation at the forum. As the Division states, the initiative aims to "provide a process and a forum for local government to explore these issues and to consider and develop structures and approaches to local government in NSW that will allow the sector to meet the needs and expectations of our communities of the future."

Melissa's speech to Destination 2036 can be viewed [here](#) or read her blog at IKEN [here](#). The Destination 2036 Communiqué is [here](#).

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Social Media and Local Government

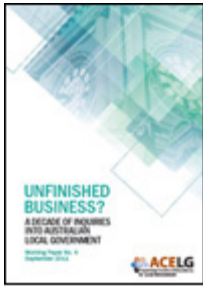
ACELG is planning a national summit about social media and local government early next year. Provisionally called 'Social media for inclusive local community engagement and democracy', the summit will be held in Canberra, 27-28 March 2012, led by ACELG partner the University of Canberra. A brochure with a 'call for' expressions of interest and presentations will be available from mid-October. For further information contact either [Paul Bateson](#), ACELG Program Co-ordinator, Innovation and Best Practice, or [Ellen Grady](#), ACELG Research Assistant. Visit [IKEN](#) (ACELG's Local Government Innovation and Knowledge Exchange Network website) for news about this and other developments from the [Innovation and Best Practice](#) program.

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New Publications

Unfinished Business? A Decade of Inquiries into Australian Local Government

This Working Paper examines the findings, recommendations and outcomes of nine major national and state inquiries into local government over the period 2001-08. It



explores three key questions: what have been the major themes and ideas to emerge; to what extent have the principal findings and recommendations been implemented; and how much 'unfinished business' remains to be transacted in order to place Australian local government on a sounder footing.

The paper identifies eight elements of an ongoing agenda for reform and improvement identified by the inquiries that require further work. These include expanding local government's own source revenues (chiefly rates); a review of federal financial assistance grants (commencing shortly); responding to the special needs of rural-remote and Indigenous local governments; full implementation of long term strategic, financial, asset management and workforce planning; improving financial governance; regional collaboration and resource sharing; further examination of selective amalgamations; and review of the inter-government agreement on cost-shifting (also about to commence).

This Working Paper is part of a series from ACELG's Research and Policy Foresight program, and can be downloaded [here](#).

Implementing the Australian Business Excellence Framework: Eight Local Government Case Studies



ACELG and the UTS Centre for Local Government have published a series of case studies about the implementation of the Australian Business Excellence Framework within local government. The research studied eight Australian councils known for their progressive and innovative approach to local government policies. The work was undertaken in consultation with SAI Global and the Local Government Business Excellence Network. The case studies can be downloaded [here](#).

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Other ACELG News

- ACELG Board member Cllr Genia McCaffery and ACELG Director Graham Sansom have been appointed to the federal government's Expert Panel on Constitutional Recognition of Local Government. The Panel held its first meeting in Canberra on 26 August and has to report by December.
- Graham Sansom delivered a keynote address at IPWEA International Public Works Conference and spoke about 'Excellence in Local Government: What Does It Mean?' Assistant Director Melissa Gibbs presented at one of the workshop sessions. View the program [here](#).
- Melissa Gibbs also spoke at Destination 2036 (see above) and Program Manager, Research Stefanie Pillora participated in a MAV workshop, 'The growing role of local government in strengthening community governance: What 'works''. Click [here](#) for more information.

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Further news about ACELG's work can be found at the ACELG website and at each program page.

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Australian Centre of Excellence for Local Government

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