

THIRD BOARD MEETING

Draft Minutes of Meeting held in Melbourne on Friday 30 April 2010

Present

- Hon Margaret Reynolds, Chairperson
- Prof Attila Brungs, Deputy Vice Chancellor (Research) UTS
- Penny Holloway, Local Government Managers Australia
- Prof John H Howard, Pro-Vice Chancellor (Development) UC
- Peter Allen, Deputy Dean, ANZSOG
- John Truman, President, Institute of Public Works Engineering Australia (IPWEA)
- Stephanie Foster, Deputy Secretary, DITRDLG

In Attendance

- Prof Graham Sansom, Director ACELG
- Melissa Gibbs, Acting Assistant Director ACELG
- Prof Attique Islam, Edith Cowan University
- Prof Ian Thynne, Charles Darwin University
- John Ravlic, national CEO, Local Government Managers Australia
- Victoria Musgrove, ANZSOG

Item 1: Welcome and Apologies

The Chairperson welcomed all those present, in particular Prof Islam and John Pritchard.

Apologies were received from Cr Geoff Lake and Adrian Beresford-Wylie, President and CEO of ALGA; Prof Mark Evans, ANZSOG Institute, University of Canberra; and Chris Champion, national CEO, IPWEA.

Item 2: Minutes of Meeting held on 14 December 2009

Resolved:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 1 October 2009 be adopted without amendment.

Item 3 Matters Arising

No matters were raised.

Item 4: 2009 Annual Report and Financial Statements

Melissa Gibbs tabled copies of the report for the period 1 July to 31 December 2009. She advised that this had been submitted to the Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Local Government in early April. Under the funding agreement between the Commonwealth and UTS, ACELG is required to produce a progress report on activities in the first week of April each year. The progress report is to contain:

- Details of progress and performance against activities and milestones
- Copies of any published reports
- A statement of receipts and expenditure in respect of funding.

Board members expressed their satisfaction with the report and with the progress being made. It was suggested that since the Prime Minister had announced ACELG, a copy of the report should be forwarded to his office as well as the Minister for Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Local Government.

Resolved:

That the Board receive and note the 2009 report and financial statements, and that copies be forwarded to the offices of the Prime Minister and Minister for Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Local Government with a covering letter from the chairperson.

Item 5: Secretariat Update

The Director provided an update on staffing and moves to strengthen the 'core' secretariat of the Centre, based at UTS. He advised that some staff appointments have had to be deferred due to unavoidable delays in refurbishment of additional office space, but that the required space should become available in early June. Further recruitment is therefore proceeding.

Secretariat staffing arrangements are as follows:

- Melissa Gibbs has agreed to extend her contract as Acting Assistant Director until 30 September
- Dr Chris Aulich has been engaged on a one-year part-time contract to coordinate the Research and Policy Foresight program (based at UC)
- Daniel Grafton, currently with the UTS Centre for Local Government, has taken up the part-time position of ACELG Programs Officer
- Nuha Saad will continue as part-time Administrative Officer, and some additional administrative/IT support will be provided later in the year as the workload builds up
- The position of Research Fellow/Senior Research Officer has been advertised.

Appointments have also been made to the positions of Program Coordinator for Women in Local Government (Ms Karen Purser), and Project Manager for Asset Management and Financial Planning (Mr Leon Patterson) – the latter based with IPWEA.

Resolved:

That the Board note the information.

Item 6: Proposed Collaboration Agreement

Melissa Gibbs reported that UTS had prepared and circulated to consortium members a draft collaboration agreement to facilitate working relationships between the parties. This had been

accepted by all parties except ANZSOG, which proposed a number of amendments. These have now been discussed and agreement reached on the way forward. It is proposed that an amended agreement be circulated for signature within the next week.

Prof Brungs and Peter Allen confirmed that there should now be no difficulty in finalising the agreement. Stephanie Foster indicated the Department hoped the consortium could finalise this matter very quickly.

Resolved:

That the amended collaboration agreement be circulated for out-of-session adoption by the parties as a matter of urgency.

Item 7: Deed of Agreement with Commonwealth

Melissa Gibbs reported that the Department had prepared a Deed of Standing Offer with UTS – in its capacity as the lead agency of ACELG – as a mechanism for the Department to engage ACELG to provide services at agreed rates and conditions, over and above the scope of the main funding agreement for the Centre’s operations. The deed will be followed up with work orders specifying the services to be provided on each occasion.

The deed is almost finalised but recent discussions with ANZSOG have highlighted a few matters needing attention:

- An additional higher level daily rate for consultancy/research services is needed to cover the occasional engagement of very high profile Australian or international academics and practitioners
- Daily rates should exclude associated expenses
- It needs to be clear that neither ACELG nor individual consortium members are obliged to provide services (ie that work orders must be negotiable).

Board members generally considered the proposed arrangements satisfactory subject to those matters being addressed.

Resolved:

That the Board concur with UTS signing the Deed of Standing Offer with the Commonwealth, subject to the matters raised being addressed satisfactorily.

Item 8: Women in Local Government

The Director reported that agreement had been reached with the Australian Local Government Women’s Association (ALGWA) for ACELG to manage the *50:50 Vision – Councils for Gender Equity* project on its behalf. This involves development and delivery of an awards and recognition program for councils, which will encourage councils to achieve significant improvements in the participation and status of women. ALGWA will receive \$250,000 from the Department and the Office for Women, of which \$210,000 will be paid in instalments to ACELG over two years to cover appointment of a Program Coordinator until April 2012; development of program elements, questionnaires and a web-based toolkit; establishment and servicing of a national steering committee; marketing and promotion; and associated tasks and costs.

Ms Karen Purser has been appointed Program Coordinator and commenced duty at ACELG/UTS on 27 April 2010. Management of the program beyond April 2012 will be ALGWA’s responsibility.

In addition, the Department will provide \$100,000 directly to ACELG to develop, deliver and maintain (subject to state and territory cooperation) a nationally consistent database on women's participation in local government, plus a further \$100,000 for scholarships for women to participate in the ANZSOG Excellence in Leadership program. The work on data will be integrated with other data projects to be funded under the Local Government Reform Fund, and with ACELG's involvement in workforce strategies.

John Ravlic also briefed the Board on the outcomes of the LGMA Management Challenge, which focused this year on women in local government and produced detailed information from over 100 councils on the status of women, issues arising and action needed to increase women's participation.

The Chairperson and Prof Ian Thynne highlighted issues concerning Indigenous women.

Stephanie Foster advised that the Department had received a request from ALGWA to defer presentation of the 2010 National Award on women's participation until the ALGWA conference in late November. Board members endorsed this suggestion.

Resolved:

That the Board note the action taken to implement projects on women in local government.

Item 9: Local Government Reform Fund

The Director reported on continuing discussions with the Department on the approach to be taken in selecting projects for funding through the \$25m Local Government Reform Fund (LGRF). He also advised that the department had invited ACELG to lodge a proposal to implement the 'data' component of the LGRF, and to consider what role it might play in facilitating linkages between other funded projects of national significance.

In response, the secretariat has proposed (in accordance with the Project Plan and in consultation with ACELG partners):

- A package of projects costed at up to \$690,000 to establish and maintain national minimum data sets for asset management, financial sustainability and the local government workforce; to complete guidelines for long-term financial planning; and to introduce a national assessment framework for asset and financial management
- Options for facilitating national roundtables and other steps to link strategic projects in the areas of climate change, data collection and management, and workforce planning.

All these activities would support achievement of the objectives set out in ACELG's Project Plan, and link to core ACELG programs. It is expected that the outcome of these discussions and proposals will be known during May.

Stephanie Foster commented on the value of ACELG's input to the LGRF.

Board members expressed some concern that the ACELG workload could become excessive, but agreed that the proposed projects would support implementation of ACELG's Project Plan.

Resolved:

That the Board note the action taken to secure funding for additional activities through the Local Government Reform Fund, and to offer ongoing support for implementation of other LGRF projects of national significance that have strong links with ACELG programs.

Item 10: Report of the Programs Committee

Melissa Gibbs reported on a program coordination workshop held on 16 April, and a meeting of the Programs Committee later that day to consider issues raised during the workshop.

The Director provided the following summary of progress against key 2010 deliverables:

Key Deliverable 2010	Progress to April
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The first ANZSOG Excellence in Local Government Leadership program 	Preparations and consultations well advanced; program scheduled for Nov-Dec (3 week residential); \$100K federally-funded scholarships for women; discussions with States on further scholarships
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ A new national Emerging Leaders program for middle managers, including a Graduate Certificate in Local Government Leadership 	Will build on existing LGMA programs (where available); discussions held in all States/Territories; Grad Cert awaiting final UTS approvals and detailed design
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The third national Local Government Skills Forum 	Held in Canberra 23-24 March
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ A Local Government Workforce Development Blueprint 	Steering Committee established; Blueprint in final draft stage; discussed at Canberra forum; likely launch in June/July; review of training programs under way
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ A 'Green Paper' on Indigenous employment in local government 	In final draft stage; discussed at Canberra forum; working links established with DEWR
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Guidelines on Asset Management for Small Communities 	Consultant engaged and work almost completed
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ A national assessment framework to measure progress in improving asset management and long-term financial planning 	IPWEA has engaged project manager; discussions with DITRDLG on possible LGRF funding for framework, linked to asset management roll-out
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ A national strategy to address the special capacity-building needs of small rural-remote and Indigenous local governments 	Scoping studies under way in WA, NT, Qld; national roundtable to be held 30/7 at ANU
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Launch of the Innovation and Knowledge Exchange Network and website to highlight best practice 	Preliminary investigations completed; website under testing; discussions with DITRDLG on links to national awards
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ A special LGMA Management Challenge to develop strategies for increased women's participation in over 100 councils across Australia 	Challenge held in March; 129 teams; all completed pre-Challenge task on increasing women's participation; national finals scheduled for July; \$40K federal funding to promote outcomes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Assistance for the Australian Local Government Women's Association to implement its gender equity accreditation and awards program 	Negotiations completed for ACELG to manage \$250K grant for ALGWA awards program; project coordinator appointed; launch proposed for ACLG Plenary in June
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An upgraded Business Excellence Framework for local government 	Councils using ABEF surveyed; discussions under way with LGBEN and SAI Global on possible upgrading; alternative frameworks being researched
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A new national research and policy development program, including initial projects on strengthening local democracy and new options for more effective service delivery 	Research coordinator appointed; national forum held in Canberra in March; project briefs under development; trans-Tasman partnership being negotiated; scoping study on climate change completed
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • National minimum data sets for key programs: asset and financial management, workforce development, women in local government. 	Discussions with DITRDLG re links to LGPMC Workforce Strategy and funding via LGRF data component; \$100K separate funding for data on women in local government

The Programs Committee reported on several key issues:

Local Government Association of South Australia – Collaborative Research Project

Agreement in principle has been reached with the Local Government Association of South Australia (LGA SA) to undertake a collaborative research project into options for consolidation in local government. The research would provide an up-to-date assessment of the various options available for structural reform and consolidation, including the potential benefits and pitfalls of each, based on rigorous analysis of the evidence available.

The budget for the project is \$119,000. A cash contribution of \$60,000 will be provided by LGA SA. ACELG will contribute the time of several senior staff as part of its Research and Policy Foresight program. There is also a distinct possibility that Local Government New Zealand will become a third partner in the project.

Board members noted the importance of ensuring that the analysis is seen to be completely impartial and balanced, and that findings are discussed and shared with other states.

Resolved:

That the Board approve the proposed agreement to undertake a collaborative research project with LGA SA.

Appointment of ‘Executive Fellows’ of ACELG

At the coordination workshop there was lengthy discussion around the concept of building a network of graduates from the ANZSOG program to:

- Act as ambassadors for ACELG
- Mentor emerging local government leaders
- Become champions for innovation and excellence in the sector
- Become peer reviewers of ACELG innovation and best practice case studies.

In order to recognise the ongoing leadership provided by program graduates, it has been suggested that ACELG confer the title of Executive Fellow on graduates of the ANZSOG program.

Board members supported this proposition on the basis that Executive Fellows commit to making ongoing contribution to the enhancement of local government, and that other pathways for similar recognition be explored in future. It was also proposed that this concept should be referred to the Local Government and Planning Ministers Council for wider consideration.

Resolved:

That the title of Executive Fellow of ACELG be conferred on graduates of the ANZSOG Excellence in Leadership program.

Linkages between Excellence in Local Government Leadership and Emerging Leaders Programs

Program coordinators developing the Excellence in Leadership and Emerging Leaders programs have identified a number of opportunities to link activities. For example:

- Graduates of the Excellence in Leadership program could provide mentoring support to participants in the Emerging Leaders program
- The two groups could engage on what they see as the characteristics and requirements of executive leaders

- Winning teams from the LGMA Management Challenge might make presentations to the Excellence in Leadership program
- Graduates of the Emerging Leaders program could be favoured candidates for scholarships in the Excellence in Leadership program

Resolved:

That the Board note the information.

Rural-remote and Indigenous Local Government Program – Scoping Studies and National Roundtable

As advised previously, ACELG has engaged CDU and ECU to undertake scoping studies in NT and WA respectively. In Queensland, the Local Government Association recently completed a study on the capacity building needs of non-amalgamated councils. In addition, ACELG has engaged Dr Michael Limerick to produce a report covering issues and potential strategies for capacity building in Indigenous councils.

ACELG will convene a national roundtable on 29-30 July to consider the findings of the three scoping studies and commence development of a capacity building strategy.

Board members strongly endorsed the action being taken, and pointed to opportunities for further linkages with federal departments, Regional Development Australia, state/territory agencies and others. It was agreed that as many of these organizations as possible should be invited to the roundtable. Stephanie Foster indicated that the department would be willing to assist with invitations, and suggested that this initiative should be reported to the Local Government and Planning Ministers Council.

It was also agreed that further consideration of the definition of ‘rural-remote’ councils would be needed in formulating and disseminating a strategy.

Resolved:

That the Board note the information.

Managing Expectations

As program partners further develop their activities, it has become apparent that the sector has great expectations of ACELG. This applies particularly to rural-remote and Indigenous local government, which is crying out for support and capacity building at a level that is almost certainly beyond ACELG’s capacity. Personnel from CDU and ECU have made it clear that ACELG’s resources and capacity to deliver is limited, but the expectations remain.

Board members endorsed the Programs Committee’s concerns, and highlighted the need to correct a mis-perception of ACELG’s role.

Resolved:

That the Board note the information.

Stakeholder Meetings

The Committee feels the time will soon be right to report back to local government on progress. Accordingly, it has been suggested that a national stakeholder forum be held between the ALGA National General Assembly and Australian Council of Local Government (ACLG) meetings in

Canberra on Thursday 17 June. This would enable ACELG to tap into a ready-assembled audience of Mayors, councillors and senior managers from across the country. The meeting would take the form of a briefing session on ACELG activities, with time for comment and feedback.

The Programs Committee has also canvassed the possibility of convening a forum for key Commonwealth government agencies on the morning of Friday 18 June, perhaps co-convened with DITRDG.

Board members strongly endorsed this proposal. Representatives of both ALGA and the Department offered their support.

Resolved:

- **That the Board approve the proposal to hold stakeholder forums in Canberra on 17-18 June**
- **That a further report be submitted on development of a broader information and communications strategy, as proposed at the inaugural Board meeting.**

Item 11: Program Action Plans and Budgets for 2011

The Director reported that Program Action Plans and budgets for each of the key areas of activity identified in the adopted Project Plan are now ready for formal adoption by the Board in accordance with the provisions of the Collaboration Agreement, and will provide the basis for firstly, quarterly progress payments to consortium members, and secondly, acquitting those funds at the end of 2010 as part of the annual reporting process. Necessary adjustments can be made with the Board's approval from time to time.

A full set of plans and budgets was attached.

The Director also advised that work is under way to establish a consistent approach amongst the partners to the calculation of in-kind contributions, consistent with the consortium's bid for federal funding. However, it will not be possible to produce detailed figures until the Centre has been operating for at least a full year. The information on in-kind contributions contained in the draft Program Action Plans will be deleted from the final document.

Stephanie Foster sought an assurance that all budgets were in line with the approved Project Plan. The Director gave that assurance, and Prof Howard agreed that the budget for Program 2, currently showing a deficit for the year, had to be brought into balance.

Resolved:

That the tabled Program Action Plans and budgets be approved by the Board in accordance with the provisions of the Collaboration Agreement, subject to an amendment to Program 2 to eliminate the proposed deficit.

Item 12: Establishment of Research Advisory Committee

The Director reported on the first ACELG Researchers' Forum held at the University of Canberra on 22 March, which involved almost all of the currently active local government researchers from more than a dozen universities together with representatives from local government associations and professional bodies, Commonwealth and local governments and the Australian Services Union.

As one follow-up measure, and as indicated in the Project Plan, it is now proposed to establish a small Research Advisory Committee to develop key priorities for future research activity. Discussions at the

Forum point to the following membership, which provides a mix of academics, practitioners and research clients:

Chair: Professor Mark Evans

'Executive Officer': Dr Chris Aulich (and later the ACELG Research Fellow/Officer)
ACELG Director

Members (subject to their agreement):

Prof John Martin (La Trobe University, Bendigo)
Prof Ian Thynne (CDU and later on a personal basis)
Nominee of ECU
Nominee of LGA of SA
Nominee of LGAQ
Brendan McRandle (DITRDLG)
Dr Tim Robinson (Fairfield City Council, NSW)

The principal functions of the committee would be to monitor developments in Australian and international local government research; promote cooperative efforts; advise ACELG on research and policy development priorities; and make recommendations for funding of specific research projects.

Board members made the following points:

- The Researchers Forum should become an annual event
- Consideration needs to be given to a range of measures to maximise dissemination of ACELG research findings
- Every effort should be made to ensure an appropriate gender balance in the membership of the proposed committee.

Resolved:

That the Board note the success of the inaugural Researchers Forum and approve the establishment of the Research Advisory Committee along the lines proposed, and that a progress report be submitted to the next meeting.

Item 13: New Website

Melissa Gibbs reported on development of new, permanent ACELG website to provide:

- Background on ACELG – its structure and key personnel
- ACELG news and events
- Detailed coverage of each program area
- A library
- Information about, and links to program and consortium partners.

She advised that ACELG has also established Twitter and Facebook accounts.

Operation and sample content of the website was demonstrated to Board members.

Board members expressed satisfaction with the quality of the website.

Resolved:

That the Board receive and note the report on the website.

Item 14: Liaison with Australian Services Union

The Director reported on the strong interest of the ASU in the Centre's work, particularly in the areas of workforce strategy and women in local government. He advised that meetings had been held with the Assistant National Secretary for local government matters, the National Secretary and State secretaries. Those discussions have reflected both the ASU's willingness to collaborate with ACELG, and concerns amongst some ASU members that ACELG could promote or support policy and management agendas that might cut across current industrial relations settings.

ASU has requested a meeting with the ACELG Board to discuss areas of common interest and how an ongoing dialogue might best be maintained.

Board members endorsed the need for a sound working relationship with ASU as a key national stakeholder, whilst noting that the union is already represented on the Workforce Development Committee and is regularly invited to other ACELG events. Representatives of ALGA and LGMA confirmed that their organisations – and therefore ACELG – should not be seen as involved in industrial relations issues.

Recommendation

That the National Secretary of the ASU be invited to meet with the Board at its next meeting for further consultations.

Item 15: Other Business

- The Director advised that the Forum of Federations, which co-hosted the international roundtable on metropolitan governance held in conjunction with the December Board meeting, has requested ACELG's assistance to convene a follow-up event in Brisbane in late August/early September. Preliminary discussions with the South-East Queensland Council of Mayors indicate that this would be viable. Board members agreed that this proposal should be explored further.
- John Ravlic advised that the Green Paper on Indigenous employment issues in local government would be released by July.
- John Truman proposed that consideration should be given to a formal delegation of authority to the Director to take action considered necessary or desirable to implement the Project Plan, in accordance with the Collaboration Agreement and approved Program Action Plans and budget. Other views expressed were that such a delegation already effectively exists, and that further delegation might be given to the Programs Committee.

Resolved:

That the Director circulate a report and recommendations out-of-session on the need for any further delegation of authority to bring about speedy and effective implementation of the Project Plan, and the form such delegation might take.

Item 15: Next Meeting

Resolved:

That the next Board meeting be held on 29 July 2010 at the University of Canberra.