



# PROPELLER

**group report 2011**

# CONNECTING QUEENSLAND COUNCILS AS EMPLOYERS OF CHOICE



# LIST OF CONTENTS

<b>INTRODUCTION</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>THE BRIEF</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>OUR JOURNEY</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>CONTEXT</b>	<b>35</b>
<b>RESEARCH</b>	<b>38</b>
Strategy 1    Own councils	38
Strategy 2    Survey	43
Strategy 3    PP11 Group discussion	59
<b>RECOMMENDATIONS</b>	<b>63</b>
<b>CONCLUSION</b>	<b>77</b>
<b>ACKNOWLEDGMENTS</b>	<b>79</b>
<b>REFERENCES</b>	<b>83</b>
<b>APPENDICES</b>	<b>85</b>
Appendix 1    PP11 participants list	85
Appendix 2    Yeppoon survey	87



# OUTLINE

## INTRODUCTION

The Propeller Program (PP11) is a personal and professional development program facilitated by LGMA Queensland. The focus of the program is on developing future leaders through experiential learning.

This means that largely through self-management, program participants explore both their own and each other's leadership style/s, expanding their knowledge and experience relating to a broad spectrum of facets of Queensland local government. Participants also build their leadership skills and capabilities as supervisors and managers within our organisations.

PP11 consisted of sixteen participants from local governments across Queensland (See Appendix 1). The number of participants this year was significantly less than in previous years, due to the increased pressures on local government resulting from widespread natural disasters impacting many regions in Queensland in early 2011, and the need to achieve cost savings.

There was representation from a range of regional and metropolitan councils in the 2011 program. Program participants came from as far north as the Cassowary Coast, Isaac and Longreach and in the south west, Western Downs and South Burnett. Participants in between came from Logan, Brisbane, Townsville and Redland City Councils, Gympie, Mackay

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and Sunshine Coast and Regional Councils. Needless to say, logistically, one of the biggest challenges was enabling sixteen participants to come together approximately every six weeks to meet program commitments.

Additionally, experience and knowledge of participants both inside and outside local government varied. A broad array of professions were represented in the 2011 program. These included librarian, criminologist, town planner, account executive and development officer. Many facets of what is generally considered core business for local government, such as waste management and governance were also represented. Disciplines such as infrastructure management and finance were not as well represented this year.

A key deliverable of the program was for all participants to work collaboratively in order to deliver a group project. The topic provided by LGMA Queensland was broad and challenging to address from a whole of Queensland perspective. What was evident was that while our organisations were structured differently, with diverse community priorities and needs, our infrastructure and economies worlds apart, issues around the topic were consistent.

This report serves to provide an overview of the processes undertaken by PP11 participants in order to deliver a group project consistent with the expectations of LGMA. It documents learnings for each participant and presents discussion on the current context of the project topic. Opportunities are also identified for local governments across Queensland to work collaboratively into the future to build the reputation of local government as an attractive place to work.



# UNDERSTAND **THE BRIEF**

**Local government is not generally seen as an attractive employment option. Your task is to develop a programme to promote local government as a career to school leavers, graduates and adults returning to the workforce.**



## “Local government is not generally seen as an attractive employment option.”

Never before has the above statement been so true. The 2008 local government amalgamations threw local governments across the state into the spotlight. Increased media pressure, both through less councils to report about and increased community awareness of local governments and Councillors, has resulted in reputations of elected members and organisations consistently being challenged in a public forum.

## What is attractive about working in an organisation that is constantly ‘hammered’ by local media, residents and ratepayers?

Should the reputation of local government be diminished by our local media? Open and transparent governance is designed to make more information about local governments and its administration more publicly accessible. Continued legislative change such as the *Local Government Act 2009*, *Integrity Act 2010*, *Public Sector Ethics Act 2010*, *Right to Information Act 2009* and *Information Privacy Act 2010*, all focus on councils and their documents being more readily available in the public forum. While this may be the case, it is true to say that local government is by nature the most accessible form of government and therefore expectations for its transparency are greater than at state and federal levels.



## What type of reward and recognition do staff receive for delivering good outcomes for their community?

Throughout the year, PP11 participants have thoroughly questioned their own motives and reasons for working in local government and regularly debated and discussed them in PP11 forums. Many of the disciplines practiced by this year's participants could be argued as being specific to the industry (town planning, waste management, librarianship and others), and their opinions therefore biased towards working in local government. The loss of program participants (two of 16) in the course of the program could naturally reflect similar levels of natural attrition experienced by all councils, but largely their reasons for leaving were to pursue opportunities in other locations. While PP11 participants all seem to be comfortable with their salaries (though we could always earn more!), reasons for continuing to pursue careers with particular councils were largely a result of their love of place, and desire to be effective in their communities.

It is quite often evident that local government officers are not rewarded in the same fashion as those working for private companies such as the mining industry. Remuneration and flexibility are two factors for local government to consider in order to compete with such commercial entities.

The complexity of the project brief rendered it difficult to breakdown which led to much discussion as to how the group might achieve this.





The original premise decided upon was that the stability that local government offers could be considered a major draw card for local government recruitment activities. This became a challenging premise given that the majority of participants underwent major restructures in their organisations during the course of the program. Challenged with negative organisational cultures, while at the same time having to assess the benefits of working in local government, the task presented an element of conflict to many participants both personally and professionally.

Needless to say, making local government an attractive employment option doesn't stop with graduates, school leavers and adults returning to the workforce. These are just three of the target groups that councils must consider in their recruitment strategies and campaigns. Technical fields such as engineers and accountants are equally difficult to attract. Competition, particularly in regional areas, against the likes of the mining industry or in our major cities where companies centralise administrative and management type functions, is increasingly difficult to address.

Additionally, the current market and economic environment adds further challenges. With the risk of further economic decline, employees are more reluctant to stay put. Job security has become a significant factor for employees looking for alternative jobs or opportunities to progress their careers (Dream employers 2011 report, <http://www.insyncsurveys.com.au/resources/research/2011/09/dream-employers-2011-report>).

In addressing this task, the PP11 group closely examined the tools that are currently used to attract prospective employees. Rapidly evolving technologies, such as the rise in the use of social media tools, mean that councils need to closely look at exploiting marketing opportunities in all age

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brackets. Internet based methods of advertising have challenged more traditional forms (i.e. newspapers), though it would appear that these still maintain a place in recruitment campaigns.

Queensland councils have experienced a tumultuous year in general, with many being affected by the extreme weather events of January 2011, which included Cyclone Yasi and major flooding throughout the state. Though the efficiency of the mobility of councils like Brisbane served the organisation well, with the coordination of legions of volunteer residents working with council employees serving the image of Brisbane in general, the on-going effect of costs to restore damaged assets has meant the widespread reduction in budget allocations in many local authorities. Many councils have either had to shed staff or shelve recruitment campaigns as they strive to achieve efficiency dividends and refine their business processes to reduce costs. The challenge for many councils with otherwise active Human Resources (HR) recruitment strategies is to maintain the momentum of promoting the benefits of working in council whilst not actually actively recruiting.

Lastly, one of the contentious discussion points has been another question posed by the group: "Is it that local government is not seen as an attractive employment option or just not an employment option at all?" By this it is meant, do enough prospective employees really understand the opportunities and diversity that working in a local government for our local community creates? For many people the intrinsic rewards such as satisfaction in serving the community in which you live often outweigh the extrinsic rewards such as salaries and employee benefits. But how much value do potential recruits to council jobs place on the more altruistic ambitions and motives that working in local government provide?

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Councils have also been promoting work-life balance for many years. Are we doing this well or have we become complacent in continuing to be innovative in this space? Councils may promote work-life balance, but do we “walk the talk”?

Upon reviewing numerous Queensland local government corporate plans it is evident that a key goal is for the majority of councils is to become an Employer of Choice (EOC). What does this mean? What are the characteristics of an “employer of choice”?

Warwick Cavell from Linnergy (Employer of Choice, <http://www.linnergy.com.au/Documents/EmployerofChoice.pdf>) defined the term this way:

*In simple terms an employer of choice means that [quality] people will choose to work for you and they will:*

- *Choose to dedicate themselves to your success*
- *Choose to stay with you, even when they are being courted by recruiters from other employers - recruiters with exceptionally attractive inducements.*

*An employer of choice is one who inspires highly talented workers to join them and stay with them.*

*This definition comes from the book “Employer of Choice” by Herman and Gioia.*

*The emphasis in the definition is on the word “choose”.*



**This** brief discussion has presented an array of additional questions or statements for consideration by all local governments.

There is no guarantee our solution will be a 'fix it' solution. Mindsets, organisational cultures and leadership within councils will be paramount in ensuring that we turn the tables and create organisations that are well known as "the only place to work".



# PROPPELL

## OUR JOURNEY



As in the normal course of life, PP11 was not without its ups and downs. Pregnancies, marriages, engagements, resignations and organisational restructures became standard news items from one session to the next. Additional to this, each participant still had to fulfill their normal work and life obligations.

The geographical and professional differences created some challenges for participants. Maintaining effective communication with team members who were vast distances away from each other, in vastly different professions, different backgrounds, skills base, knowledge and experience, all made for a challenging year. It was also thought that the greatly reduced team size from 24 in 2010 to 16 (eventually revised to 14) in 2011 created a level of additional stress during session planning and delivery, as well as project deadlines.

Anecdotal feedback would suggest that almost universally, the PP11 participants enjoyed the group dynamic of coming together, despite a commitment to local government being their only common bond upon commencement of the course. The diversity of disciplines and longevity of service made for some excellent discussion and shifts in perspective as the participants gained a better understanding of the unique challenges of each of the councils they represented.

On the following pages each participant has provided you with their story and thoughts on how they would address the topic. It is evident that there was much expertise among the group with many participants having tertiary qualifications and/or many years experience in local government.



Their ideas are food for thought. If any trigger your interest you are encouraged to contact participants for further discussion.



## Ant's story

Sunshine Coast Council, Senior Development Officer (Creative)

### **Biographical information - council**

Senior Development Officer (Creative) - four months

Development officer (Grants) - two years

Community Events Officer - two years

Venue Officer - two years

### **Outside of council**

Current - 10 years running my own grant writing business for bands and creative businesses and one year as fund raiser for The Seed, a not-for-profit organisation set up by John Butler to support artists and arts managers.

Past - two years as EO of Q Music (Peak body for the music industry in Queensland) and 20 years as a touring musician.

### **How would I promote local government as an Employer of Choice?**

I would focus on a positive expression of working for your local community, based in your local community.

I would also focus on the huge diversity of roles possible and the way that an individual can have lots of different careers in local government.

Also the opportunities to take your skills into a regional area and utilise them to provide a great developmental influence for that community, whilst also gaining exceptional skills to make you highly employable back in the city.

The great potential to live a stable, relaxed lifestyle without the instability of many workplaces.

I would focus on a state-wide expression of jobs and even work towards one employer across the state for all local councils.

I'd definitely look at all technologies and mediums to promote local government work, e.g. YouTube, Facebook, etc.





# Holly's story

Longreach Regional Council, Events/Marketing Officer

## Biographical information

I have been working in local government now for a little over 12 months, and already, I have been exposed to the exceptional opportunities that are available working for such a diverse workforce.

I came to local government as a 20 year old, having a half finished Business Degree with a dual major of Sports and Events Management and Tourism Management. I started as the Admin Assistant for the Director of Corporate Services for nine months, and since then, have been promoted to working as the Events/Marketing Officer.

In the short six months I have been working as the Events/Marketing Officer, I have also had the opportunity to fulfil the role of Acting CEO Executive, for the past month whilst the position is being filled.

Although this has been a huge struggle to learn new jobs and split my focus to two completely different jobs, this has allowed me to broaden my skill base. I now have knowledge how to prepare an agenda, minutes and annual report,

which are skills that I would not have had the opportunity to learn with the event/marketing role.

## How would I promote local government as an Employer of Choice?

If I had the opportunity to promote local government, I would focus primarily on the job opportunities available. As I am one of the youngest and least experienced workers in my working cohort, I have been exposed to various opportunities to increase my learning capacity. I believe the experience I have had could impact various others, that don't necessarily have the degrees or diplomas. LG can give you the experience, the knowledge and help you establish a great work ethic.

Local government has various strengths and weaknesses that impact people individually. Strengths that should be noted with local government are things such as job opportunities, work life balance with a nine day fortnight, flexibility to work within a certain timeframe, and a generous five weeks annual leave.



## Jakki's story

Isaac Regional Council, Waste Management Coordinator

### **Biographical information**

When I first left school I commenced study at Maritime College. On completion of this course, I undertook further studies to become a Marine Biologist. During my university study, I came across the benefits of working for local government.

I work as a waste management coordinator for Isaac Regional Council. My job is to coordinate waste and recycling operations and services across the 58,000 square kilometres of the Isaac region.

I work with contractors to collect approximately 50,000 waste and recycling collections each month. I also coordinate the operations of four waste transfer stations and six landfills. I manage between 30 staff and contractors to provide the most economical, reliable and cost effective service to our ratepayers and residents. I also work with another four local governments on wider regional waste contracts.

I first came to the Isaac region when my husband who decided he had had enough of working in the mining industry and bought a business.

For seven years we have lived in the mining community of Moranbah, where we raise our three children.

After having our children, I decided I wanted to return to work at local government because I love the opportunities and challenges that you can encounter when working for council.

I am drawn to the waste sector of local government as waste is an ever evolving and competitive industry.

When I walk around the waste sites that I coordinate, I don't see piles of rubbish, but I see opportunities. I see ways in which we can make improvements to my community, ways in which we can reduce the effects on the environment and ways in which we can turn waste into valuable resources.

My team continually works hard to remove thousands of tonnes of waste from landfill to be recycled into other beneficial products.



Working for council allows me the flexibility I require with being a working mother and having a young family.

I love my job because every day I go to work is different. Every day I go to work my office is in a different location. Every day I go to work at my council, I am making a real difference in the community my children are growing up in.

**How would I promote local government as an Employer of Choice?**

People who have never worked for local government have the standard opinion that council only provides manual labouring (blue collar) jobs and basic administration roles. To the majority of people these are not inspiring roles, therefore people rarely consider local government when searching for a career move.

Whereas people who have worked for a council know that local government is a large and incredibly complex industry comprising of an extensive amount of

diverse career opportunities in an even wider depth of locations.

Local government has the significant strength of being able to offer employees a secure work environment with the opportunity to progress their careers across multiple councils and locations. This diversity and opportunity would most likely be extremely appealing to potential employees, but it is not effectively marketed.

At present, the perception is that local government is seen at best as a job and not a career. I would suggest that a marketing campaign should show that hundreds of local governments across Australia are made up of a diverse range of career options. The marketing campaign should have the aim of promoting local government as an industry rather than an individual organisation.



## Jane's story

Gympie Regional Council, Corporate Governance Officer

### Biographical information

After graduating from high school, I studied a Bachelor of Business. After working for both the private and government sector for a couple of years, I became an Australian Volunteer Abroad. As a "volunteer" earning local wages and living in local conditions, I worked in the tertiary education and non-government sector in Java, Indonesia between 1994 to 1998.

When I returned to Australia, I worked with Indigenous communities and within the University sector. I then commenced a Masters of Human Services at UQ, focusing on community development and social research. After graduating in 2000, I commenced work within the international aid and development sector, primarily working for a research and policy advocacy think tank - the Foundation for Development Cooperation. In this role I established the Social Capital and Capacity Building program and assisted in the establishment of the ICTs for Development program.

After some time in state government I joined local government in March 2008. I saw the amalgamation process as an opportunity for challenge and change. I also saw an opportunity to work closer to home, which as a full time working mother, was very attractive. Not having to commute so far made it very attractive. I was also using this role as a step in my life plan to move back to the Sunshine Coast.

I worked for the Moreton Bay Regional Council's (MBRC) Community Development Team. In my role I was project manager for the then Community Renewal projects in Caboolture East. This then lead to my involvement into Community Transport and Affordable Housing initiatives. However, my main role was in developing a Community Engagement Framework including policy, guidelines and training resources.

After two years with MBRC, I then moved to the Sunshine Coast and took up a role with the Gympie Regional Council in their Change Management team to work on the Community Plan, Corporate Planning and Reporting and other governance related matters. I am



commuting again but I get to live in a part of the world where I want to live and thus lead a lifestyle I enjoy.

I am enjoying LG as it provides me with a unique opportunity to use a combination of my strategic planning, social research and policy skills as well as my community development and capacity building expertise. NGOs, academia and the private sector are thin on strategic planning, state and federal governments are thin on meaningful community engagement and community development. Only a local government can provide a platform for the utilization and combination of all of these diverse skills.

### **How would I promote local government as an Employer of Choice?**

If we had better communication with our communities, telling them about the things we were doing, we would have a workforce proud to be working in LG and so we would be in a better position to retain staff - as we all know prevention is often easier than the cure.

Therefore, I would like to see a collaborative initiative shared and driven by various local government stakeholders - including the LGMA, LGAQ, local government Innovation and

Knowledge Exchange Network (IKEN), Australian Centre of Excellence for Local Government (ACELG) - that provides communication support for councils - in particular, the regional, rural and remote councils that do struggle with recruitment. This initiative could focus on the development and distribution of Communication and Marketing Strategies and templates - inclusive of internal and external communication strategies. I believe if we can prevent the development of the negative stereotypes with positive media, i.e. Council Open Days, we then won't have to chase the target groups. They would already be open to and willing to work with us.

In summary, I believe it is about Collaboration, Communication and Connection:

- Collaboration not competition between councils and stakeholders
- Communication with potential workforce through positive engagement and relationships
- Connecting with the right candidates who want to connect into their local community and the global community of local government work.

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# Jen's story

Logan City Council, Community Safety Planner

## Biographical information

I started my working career in private industry, working as Activities Coordinator for Bunnings. It was here that I gained a sense of workplace culture and how this has a profound impact of the outcomes of individuals and companies as a whole.

When I commenced working at a university I really missed working in an environment that encouraged fun and enjoyment in the workplace. There was very little motivation for me to excel in my position or be passionate about my work. Accordingly, I left this organisation to work at council.

I very quickly realised that I loved working for local government. I was exposed to opportunities that the commercial/corporate environment could never provide.

I was already studying criminology when I commenced with council and was so fortunate to have the opportunity to take a secondment to work in this field. I felt supported and valued through the whole process and realised that there were so few other organisations where

the shift from events to criminology would be seen as absolutely natural considering my studies. In a commercial industry I would have had to look outside the organisation for opportunities.

I have been with local government for over five years now and for someone of my age (<30 years) that is considered quite a long time. When I started with LG I never imagined that I would stay this long! And I have no thoughts of leaving any time soon! local government is such a great fit with both my personal and professional value sets that I can't really imagine another workplace that could provide me with the level of satisfaction that I get from working in LG.

## How would I promote local government as an Employer of Choice?

I feel that it's important to acknowledge that working in local government is not for everyone. There will always be people who strongly believe that LG is



for those who can't make it in the corporate world.

Then there are many people who aren't necessarily anti-LG but have just never really thought about it as an option. In many cases they may not even be aware that councils have positions that relate to their field of work. For example, before working at council I was unaware that many councils had community safety officers.

I strongly believe that the diversity of opportunity that councils offer is their greatest selling point. From unskilled labour to highly qualified experts, there really is no other organisation that offers careers in so many fields.

It is hard to say if this is true across all LGAs but the culture and opportunities that Logan City Council offers could be a huge selling point. To deliver this message to the general public would be a difficult balancing act between promoting the great working conditions (nine day fortnight, culture journey activities such as inter-branch soccer, bushwalking, etc., training and development opportunities) and managing the fact that we are financed by ratepayers and their expectations around expenditure for this type of activity.

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# Kim's story

Redland City Council, Branch Librarian - Victoria Point Library

## Biographical information

My career in local government began over 10 years ago. Previously I had been employed in the private sector in a range of administration and IT roles with Sharp Australia and Telstra. After finishing both a Bachelor of Arts (Humanities) followed by a Graduate Diploma in Library and Information Science I was fortunate to gain a position with Redland City Council as the Graduate Librarian. This position gave me an opportunity to develop skills and knowledge in the public library arena.

In the past 10 years I have progressed through other positions to my current role as the Branch Librarian at Victoria Point Library. This was an exciting role for me as it I was part of the project team that developed the new library at Victoria Point. This included design of the interior fit out, recruit and train staff as well establishing occupancy in the buildings. The library has gone onto to run many successful programmes such Loud@the Library, Author visits (Jessica Watson, Francis Whiting and Michael Rowbottom) etc.

One of the best things about Victoria Point Library is the team of people I work with and the people who visit the library. I enjoy leading a dynamic team of staff and seeing them develop both personally and professionally.

One of the things I have enjoyed about working in LG is the connection to the community in which I live.

## How would I promote local government as an Employer of Choice?

I think the answer to this question would be different for each profession and each council (especially in terms of remote, regional and metropolitan councils). However some of the keys areas that need to be addresses regardless are:

- Common local government branding
- Advertising on social media such as Facebook, LinkedIn, etc
- Secondment opportunities between LG
- Partnerships with the private sector such as mining and construction.





# Leah's story

Mackay Regional Council, Principal Planner

## Biographical information

Previous to working at local government I worked at a private consultant for four years starting as a Graduate Planner (Bachelor of Applied Science Majoring in Environmental and Urban Planning with Honours) straight out of University progressing to a Senior Planner. I also worked for one year at a local government in Canada as a Planner.

I commenced as Senior Planner for Mackay City Council in 2008 and progressed to my current role of Principal Planner in 2009. I made the decision to move to local government from the private sector for several reasons, firstly it is advantageous to be able to present both public sector and private sector experience on your resume, secondly I was working for a very small consultancy and had received

mentoring and learned from a limited number of people. I decided I wanted to get experience and advice from a larger organisation.

It was a deliberate decision to move to local government and I took a significant pay cut. I felt this was justified by gaining the experience, opportunities for training, more relaxed work environment and greater super contributions.

## How would I promote local government as an Employer of Choice?

Local governments' strengths lie in its flexibility; the large organisation making it possible to work with a variety of people and the variety of work.

Local governments' weakness lies in the red tape experienced internally and externally.



# Mark's story

Brisbane City Council, ICT Account Executive

## Biographical information

I came to Brisbane City Council after working in account management for a Queensland Government owned ICT service provider - CITEC, where I promoted IT services to government departments, as well as government owned corporations, and energy and mining companies. I'd switched careers in my early thirties after studying fulltime for a Bachelor of Information Technology at Griffith University, after which I joined CITEC as an IT analyst/programmer. Despite majoring in software engineering, I came to the swift conclusion that although technology would be my primary focus, I was more interested in its application in a social sense. Moving back into a service related position enabled me to work on the human side of IT, and see how the application of technology solutions is achieved in large organisations.

While managing CITEC's customer base, I spent time working with representatives from Brisbane City Council, who we supplied network communications services. The more time I spent with BCC employees, the more the idea of

working for the community became appealing to me. A few years later I joined council as a relationship manager, working the interface between IT and the business, translating business needs into IT solutions. Five years later I continue to be amazed at the breadth of BCC's services to the community. I've worked with health inspectors, community liaison reps, asphalt plant operators, parking meter inspectors, plumbers, librarians, civic engineers, construction project managers, designers, traffic managers, policy writers and call centre operators - and they all share one thing in common: their love for the City of Brisbane, and their dedication to its residents.

## How would I promote local government as an Employer of Choice?

We need to celebrate and promote its diversity. Local government in Queensland is a multifaceted and multi-disciplined industry, populated with dedicated and experienced people providing key services to their communities. We should focus on the



uniqueness of each community but also highlight the generic nature of roles that each council depends on. I believe there should be a strong focus on creating a collegiate system in Queensland where employees are encouraged to gain experience with other councils. This approach should also

be considered with private enterprise, where trades common to both council and mines (for example) could provide employees with job-swapping opportunities and further strengthen relationships between local Government and private enterprise within its boundaries.



## Mei Lin's story

Townsville City Council, Coordinator, Library Customer Service and Operations

### **Biographical information**

I grew up on the Sunshine Coast hinterland and completed a Bachelor of Science at UQ, majoring in Marine Biology. Like many, I first considered local government for a professional career when I fell into it, volunteering at the Caloundra Library over a long university summer break. Prior to this, carving out a career in council had never been on the radar, even though I grew up on council turf, gaining a unique insight into both the council political arena and engine room, thanks to Dad's 15 year involvement as Councillor then Mayor for Caloundra City Council.

I went on to complete a post-graduate librarianship in 1995. Since then I've roamed back and forth, working up and down the Queensland Coast for numerous universities (JCU, Bond University, QUT, CQU and ACU) and regional councils (Caboolture, Redcliffe and Mackay). In 2006, we settled in Townsville to raise a family and be near my husband's family.

I chose a career in local government because I enjoy working in the 'real world', giving back to the Townsville

community that has visible ties with our family both past and present. Being challenged, creative and part of a supportive team is motivating and Queensland councils have offered me the opportunity to learn directly from some remarkable leaders and work on interesting cutting edge innovations. Local government is sizeable, so I've also been able to stretch my wings by moving into different types of roles as I became keen to explore new skills. In 2009, I was able to ease the transition back into fulltime work following 12 months maternity leave with council's fantastic support of a flexible arrangement to work four days onsite and one day at home for the first six months.

### **How would you promote local government as an Employer of Choice?**

Council is a great place for young people to grow and achieve. Tweaks in areas, for instance, making it easier to hook into your own technology applications/devices and flexible working arrangements, will ensure that councils can meet the values and



expectations of upcoming generations. A big picture state-wide campaign would be a great starting point for a career campaign, to capture the uniqueness of working in a sector where you can enjoy working from outback to

coast, achieve work-life balance, visibly add to your community, work with diverse people, encounter a variety of jobs, lead in innovation and be supported in education and learning.



# Mick's story

South Burnett Regional Council, Cultural Services Coordinator

## Biographical information

My local government career started in 1983 as a 16 year old straight out of school in the position of Junior Cost Clerk/Payroll Officer with the Nanango Shire Council, my hourly rate of pay was around \$3.60 p/hr. This was in the days of long socks, shorts and where every desk had ash tray sitting on it. There were no air conditioning, only fans and lots of big rocks holding down your paperwork. Due to the size of our Council I was fortunate to learn all aspects of general office duties from customer service, debtors, creditors and rating and this was a great learning path for my future career in local government.

I was then fortunate in 1991 to be offered the position as rates assistance and in 1993 was offered the position of Rates Manager. In 1995, I applied for the position of Rates Manager with Murgon Shire Council and remained there for three years; I thoroughly enjoyed my time with Murgon Shire Council and only left due to family circumstances. Not only was I the Rating Manager but I also did a variety of jobs

from payroll, debtors and looking after the saleyards operations to introducing the NLIS system, teaching the saleyards staff the new process. Also in this time, thanks to Craig Stower DCEO as mentor, I started learning more about financial management, General Ledger, Job Costing, Bank Rec, BAS, Investments and Financial Statements, etc.

I was then approached by Nanango Shire Council in December 1998 and offered a position as Payroll Manager. However the real reason I was going back was because I was advised that the Rates Managers position would be available in April 1999 and it was mine if I wanted it.

I took the Rates Managers position, and whilst in this position did twelve months Acting Finance Manager whilst the DCEO was on maternity leave. This was a very busy period managing both roles, but thoroughly enjoyed the challenges. In November 2005, I was offered the position of Rates/Administration Manager, in this position I was responsible for the rating functions and staff, customer service staff, Library and Visitor Information



staff. This was certainly a busy time but thoroughly enjoyed my new role within council. I remained in this position until amalgamation.

Amalgamation gave me the opportunity to choose from numerous roles in council, which was due to the multi-skilling /experience gained working in the smaller councils. I had been working in the finance area for approximately 25 years and was offered the opportunity to become the Cultural Services Coordinator. This was a time of uncertainty but I through it was time to have a change. This role has certainly turned out to be a very enjoyable; as I get to work with the community bringing cultural events to the area, e.g. Big Screen Film Festival and get to met people like Sigrid Thornton and Jackki Weaver just to name a couple. I also coordinate the Visitor Information Centres, Art Galleries and Museum, Regional Arts Development Fund (RADF),

Grants and Donations policies and council-hosted or supported events.

I have worked for local government for 28 years and still enjoy working in this sector. I have been fortunate to have worked alongside many CEOs and fellow workers who have been great teachers and mentors.

I have achieved this without any formal recognised qualifications; however, have many years of practical training.

### **How would I promote local government as an Employer of Choice?**

I would recommend a career in local government to anyone wanting job security, good working conditions, flexibility, fair pay conditions, the scope of opportunities due to the many and varied jobs within council and most of all, the bond you make with the people you work and network with.



## Nancy's story

Corporate Governance Coordinator, Cassowary Coast Regional Council

### Biographical information

With a career spanning thirty years, I worked primarily in Canberra for various Federal Government Departments including Industrial Relations, Science and Technology, Health and Austrade. Working for the Federal Government afforded me many wonderful opportunities to learn and develop in addition to travelling the world training staff and installing software/hardware in overseas trade posts. My initial skill set being secretarial and bookkeeping followed by Information Technology and later studying Accounting and Business. In 2003, I made a move to Townsville where I accepted the position of General Manager for the Anglican Diocese of North Queensland in which I stayed for a period of four years.

Mission Beach, between Cairns and Townsville, quickly became the place I wanted to be. This sparked a move to

Cairns where I worked as a Business Manager for 18 months before an opportunity came up in local government (Cassowary Coast Regional Council). I took on the position of Governance Officer, this being a new role, I really had no idea where it would lead. After 12 months the position was reviewed and upgraded to Corporate Governance Coordinator. The diversity of this role is incredible and exciting. The areas of Local Laws, Delegation, Enterprise Risk Management, Policy Development, Statutory compliance, Insurance, providing advice on legislative requirements, processing RTI and IP applications, etc. can only be described as challenging. Isn't that what everyone wants from their workplace? local government has it all.





## Nicole's story

Redland City Council, Workplace Relations Manager

### Biographical information

I come from a small beach community in New Zealand and moved to Australia in the late 1980's. I finished high school in Brisbane and swiftly moved down to the Gold Coast to be back by the beach and to undertake my university degree - Bachelor of Business - Major in Human Resource Management.

After finishing university, I travelled the globe for a few years, working in Restaurants and Pubs. It was at this stage that I knew I had undertaken the right degree, as the more I worked and interacted with people, the more intrigued and interested I became in the attitudes, behaviours and mannerisms of people.

I then moved back to Brisbane and started working at a private training college (how to get that job) as the Executive Assistant to the General Manager, Dean and Vice President of the college, and then as a Traineeship Consultant.

An opportunity arose in a HR Department in a 5 star Hotel in Brisbane and this is where I developed my

passion for Employee Relations and Industrial Relations. I began my Masters of Employment Relations and I quickly won my dream Workplace Relations role in the Federal Government. Unfortunately my role and the agency were made redundant with the change of government – thanks Kevin 07!

I took at Voluntary Redundancy and started looking for a challenge in government, but at more grass roots level. I wanted to be involved and see the changes and differences I advised on occur. My current role eventuated and I have not looked back. I love the diversity of my role and the fact that I can influence and see positive changes in not only the direction of council as an organisation, but also individuals that I help. I love managing a team of about 15 high performing individuals and being able to assist them grow both personally and professionally.

I love the fact that I have gone full circle by working in a small beachside community in a challenging discipline which I love.



### **How would I promote local government as an Employer of Choice?**

Local government needs to mature more as an Industry and pull together. Instead of being separated by electoral boundaries, the corporate services aspect can be centralised:

- Have a common recruitment website like [apsjobs.gov.au](http://apsjobs.gov.au) or [smartjobs.qld.gov.au](http://smartjobs.qld.gov.au)
  - Have a common base line certified agreement and common industry wide directives
  - Have one industry body.
- Have industry funded advertising campaigns and rebrand local government as one - instead of one council competing with another
  - Advertise the diversity of roles and seek out high profile recruits.



## Todd's story

Western Downs Regional Council, Environment and Health Manager

### Biographical information

I've been working in local government for 13 years now in Environmental Health and Town Planning fields. After spending time at uni and working in SEQ, I returned to work in my home town.

I love the work I do in local government - and I love the fact that I am making my local area better.

My career has been very diverse, and has included jobs ranging from food hygiene, environmental protection, Natural Resource Management (NRM), waste management and dangerous goods inspectorial and project roles through to large scale development assessment, strategic land use planning and being the proponent and project manager for significant public projects.

There is incredible diversity in the work, and you can really make a positive difference in your community.

### How would you promote local government as an Employer of Choice?

The fundamentals of local government are strong; in terms of the conditions, salaries and flexibility local government is often a market leader. And the variety of roles offered and the nature of the work it does also makes it different to almost all other employers. Local government really makes a difference.

In terms of promoting itself as an Employer of Choice, local government simply needs to promote itself better - both as an employer and as an organisation. By its nature, local government seems too introverted and it needs to speak up, be loud and proud. Rather than simply taking a passive role in the public domain, local government needs to run with the positive stories, be more strategic and smarter in terms of its self promotion.



## Vanessa's story

Townsville City Council, Coordinator Corporate Planning and Performance

### Biographical information

I grew up in Ipswich and spent the first 10 years out of school living in the Redlands. It was during this time that my career in the travel industry soared. In my late 20's I travelled abroad and lived in London for a period of nearly 18 months. Significant change occurred in my life when I left London to reside in outback Queensland, in a place called Mitchell.

In Mitchell, with a total population of around 1,500 people, local government was the 'only' employment option.

I commenced with Booringa Shire Council (now amalgamated with the Maranoa Regional Council) in October 2002 to re-establish their electronic record keeping systems. I quickly progressed through a variety of positions including Executive Assistant to the CEO and the council's Corporatised Business Unit, Booringa Enterprises Pty Ltd.

In April 2006, my family relocated to Townsville so that I could take up the position of Executive Officer - Council Minutes at Thuringowa City Council (now amalgamated with Townsville City Council).



With the increased focus on council's governance functions following amalgamation I was successful in obtaining the position of Coordinator Corporate Planning and Performance and am currently in that role. My role coordinates the following council wide governance functions:

- Council meetings support
- Councillor support
- Corporate and Operational Planning
- Corporate Performance Management and Reporting.

In recent years my lifelong desire to obtain a degree is slowly being realized.

I am driven by success and extremely passionate about local government. One of the most fascinating aspects of working in the field of governance is that each day brings a new and exciting challenge. One day I could be writing the annual report and the next, a councillor policy.

I am proud of the organisation I work for and in particular to be a part of a team who are driven by delivering

good governance and quality outcomes for our community.

**How would I promote local government as an Employer of Choice?**

The responses to this topic are endless and I don't believe that there will be a 'one size fits all' solution. I firmly believe however, that local governments both within Queensland and interstate can strive to work better as a nationally recognised 'industry'.

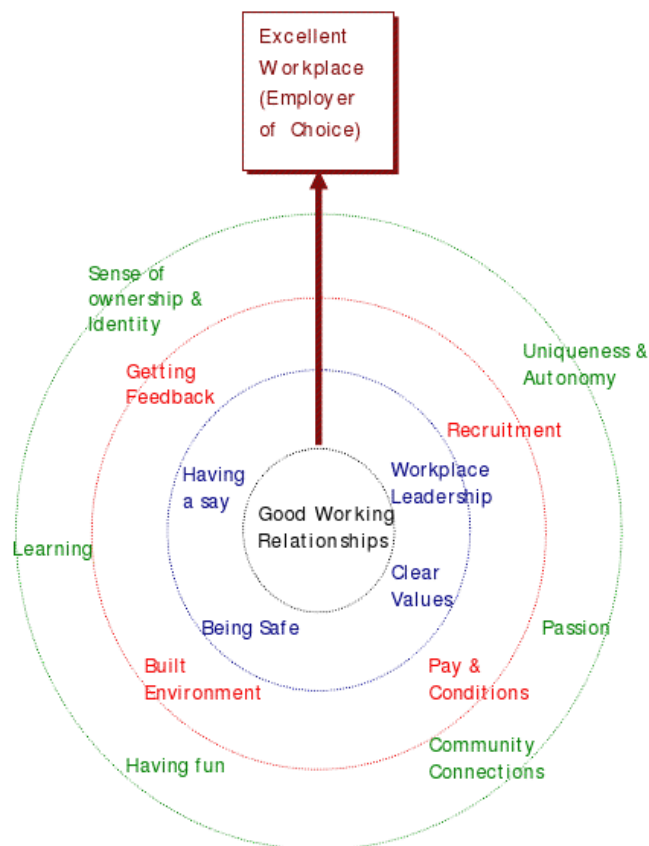
As such there could be opportunities to second staff from other local governments, create pools and access to a variety of skills, experience and professions. Facilitate policy that will enable the transfer of employee provisions both intrastate and interstate. Additionally, the opportunities to further identify financial savings locally and nationally are endless.

After all we are like a piece of the jigsaw, a series of pieces that make up a state, which in turn, piece together to create the wonderful and diverse county in which we live.



# IDENTITY CONTEXT

An Employer of Choice has been defined as an organisation that people choose to work for and can be seen to have the qualities /characteristics represented in the chart below by Linnergy (Employer of Choice, <http://www.linnergy.com.au/Documents/EmployerofChoice.pdf>):



The latest Leadership, Education and Development (L.E.A.D.) Survey results for public and private sectors conducted by Leadership Management Australasia have identified the following as the top 5 (out of 20) characteristics of an Employer of Choice:

<b>Top 5 Characteristics of Employer of Choice</b> <i>As of Now – Employee View (2010)</i>	<b>% in Top 5(Rank)</b>
Recognises and rewards staff well	57 (1)
(=) Invests in the learning and development of its people	53 (=2)
(=) Operates ethically and fairly at all times	53 (=2)
Has family/life friendly workplace practices	42 (4)
Management is passionate and engaging to work with	40 (5)

*The message is very clear – leaders and managers must recognise and reward staff for their efforts during the difficult economic times of recent years – and do so quickly before they walk, (as one in four are already out there applying for new jobs).*

*But they must also invest in the learning and development of their people, operate ethically and fairly and build a family / life friendly environment where people want to stay rather than leave for better opportunities.*

(Top 5 characteristics of Employer of Choice, <http://www.leadershipmanagement.com.au/lead-survey-news/lead-top-5s/top-5-characteristics-of-employers-of-choice-%e2%80%93-employee-view-2010/>)



**The challenging question is:**

**Do all of our Queensland local governments possess these qualities/characteristics? If not, how can we further develop these qualities and characteristics?**

From the very first session PP11 participants agreed that local government is not generally seen as an attractive place to work. Factors identified that contribute to this view included:

- Not being externally recognised as an employer of choice
- Negative and increased media attention
- Lack of public communication and consultation
- Remuneration and reward packages
- Lack of leadership, qualifications of elected members or apparent political influence
- Bureaucratic, compliance organisations with lack of opportunities to be innovative
- Still perceived as a step towards retirement, a job with tenure.





## Strategy 1 Own councils

As part of the project, the group chose to examine some of the recruitment practices currently utilised within our own local government.

Participants liaised with their Human Resource (HR) or recruitment staff to identify what their councils currently do to attract school leavers, graduates and adults returning to the workforce into local government employment.

The questions asked included:

### Question 1

**How do council promote LG as a career to school leavers, graduates and adults -- Queensland specific?**

### Question 2

**Does HR have a current retention and attraction policy? If not, how do they maintain staffing levels and attract staff?**



### Question 3

What industry contacts are used by HR/council in relation to employing staff?

### Question 4

What markets do you use to sell benefits of working in council?

## RESPONSES FOR CURRENT RECRUITMENT STRATEGIES

**BRISBANE CITY COUNCIL** has a variety of approaches but each is dependent on the skill they are looking for. Graduate days and recruitment events are tailored to the specific event and the recruitment climate at the time.

*“Brisbane City Council offers more than four thousand different types of jobs. Whether you are a school leaver, professional, working mum or tradesperson, we could have a position that suits your interests, lifestyle and career plans.”*

(Jobs and careers, <http://www.brisbane.qld.gov.au/about-council/careers/index.htm>)

**CASSOWARY COAST REGIONAL COUNCIL** is currently developing a retention and attraction strategy - it seems to have little problem retaining staff as demonstrated by its large number of long term employees (30-40 years service). The council is small enough to nurture a more personable environment compared to larger councils and this helps attraction and

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retention of staff. The council is situated in a beautiful part of Queensland and people are making lifestyle changes and the area is attractive to them. CCRC attends job expos held locally and around the state, jointly hosted with community representatives from the Chamber of Commerce.

**GYMPIE REGIONAL COUNCIL** regularly participates in Centrelink Job Expos, part of Wide Bay organised events aimed at mature workers returning to the workforce, attracting up to 2000 participants. Also Careers Expos, a school orientated event with up to 800 participants.

They are also often invited to join the Sunshine Coast University Careers Expo and in the past have done some direct school promotion.

**LONGREACH SHIRE COUNCIL** has only recently been active in Careers Expos, with a relatively new HR department. To date, LSC usually hires external contractors to perform its advocacy work (ADHOC).

The council often promotes traineeships and packages within local schools.

*“Longreach Regional Council is a best practice and innovative organisation employing about 180 people.”*

(Employment opportunities, <http://www.longreach.qld.gov.au/web/guest/council/employment.shtml>)

**REDLAND CITY COUNCIL** has several approaches to the attraction and retention of many target groups. We currently have a “More than a Job” campaign running, which highlights the diversity, flexibility and lifestyle balance that RCC can offer potential applications.

With respect to particular targeted drives, RCC attends numerous expo’s during the year, with a particular focus on:

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- Students - we have great linkages with schools in the Redland Region
- Tafe and University Expos - to attract graduates
- Traineeship program - this annual program is a targeted effort to attract, women, youth, return to work and indigenous applicants
- General Career Expo's which is open to the general public.

Furthermore, we have a fantastic work experience program with Griffith University, which can act as a feeder to graduate positions within our Environmental Planning Department.

We do have various other approaches and strategies that are all dependent upon the requirements of the position and department.

**SOUTH BURNETT REGIONAL COUNCIL** has a PDF copy of the slide show that we use at the South Burnett Careers Market which is held once a year where all schools in the South Burnett Region attend. We also try to have interactive displays to encourage the kids to stop and have a look at our stand.

*“South Burnett is located just over 2 hours drive from Brisbane, and is even closer to the Sunshine Coast and Toowoomba. Let's not forget the Bunya Mountains, less than 1 hours' drive to spectacular rainforest walks, hidden chalets and one of the best scenic views that Queensland has to offer. With a regional population of 31,000, the area boasts award-winning tourism facilities, and excellent educational, medical, sporting and recreational facilities. An excellent opportunity exists for you to develop your career and enjoy a great work environment and lifestyle.”*

(Careers with council, <http://www.southburnett.qld.gov.au/web/guest/careers-with-council>)



**TOWNSVILLE CITY COUNCIL** has recruitment strategies that are few and far between with very little promotion taking place even within the region itself. Historically, the region provides council with a captive market with one of Australia's highest populations of youth aged <18 years and between 18 to 35 years. The army base attracts employees to the region who possess a high skills level. James Cook University provides a valuable source of graduates and in previous years, cadetships. The council shares a similar skills shortage with other Local Government Areas (LGAs) such as engineering and the environment

Current strategies include attendance at careers expos, school presentation, and marketing campaigns.

Council has recognised that future recruitment strategies (known as 'how to capture an interest') will play an important role in workforce planning. 2011-2012 planning includes:

- Increase the number of presentations at schools to attract emerging talent and create an interest
- Overarching marketing campaign for expos and events that includes designer brochures with the theme of 'building' (e.g. 'building your city', 'building your culture')
- Provide training in recruitment strategies for departments.



## Strategy 2 Survey

The team took advantage of the captive audience at the LGMA State Conference held recently in Yeppoon, seeking feedback on council recruitment from Chief Executive Officers (CEOs) and senior staff in attendance. A brief survey tool was developed (see Appendix 2) in order to seek the audience's views as to:

- 1** Is local government seen as an attractive place to work?
- 2** Do our councils generally market to our target groups of school leavers, graduates and return to work?
- 3** What marketing strategies and tools are currently in place?
- 4** Suggestions on a tag-line to sell council as an employer of choice.



# SURVEY RESULTS

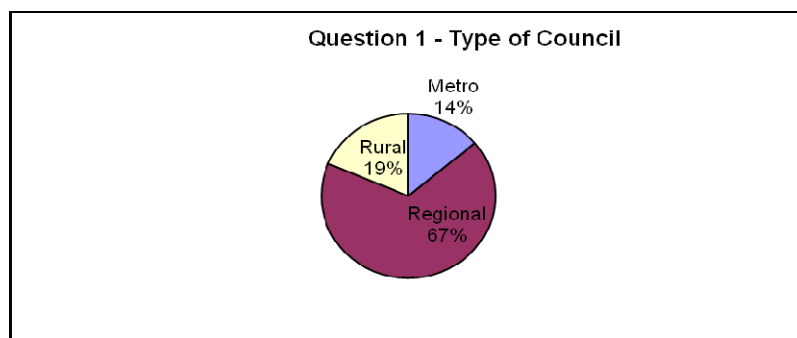
At the chosen conference session, 43 attendees responded to the survey.

## Question 1

Is your council?

- Metropolitan     Regional     Rural

67% of the respondents identified their council as regional and 19% as rural. Interestingly, given that a large percentage of the state's local government employees work in metropolitan council's only 14% of attendees at the conference were identified in this category. This is, perhaps, a reflection of the re-categorisation of local governments as a result of the 2008 local government reforms with a vast majority of our local government areas being re-categorised from rural to regional based local governments.

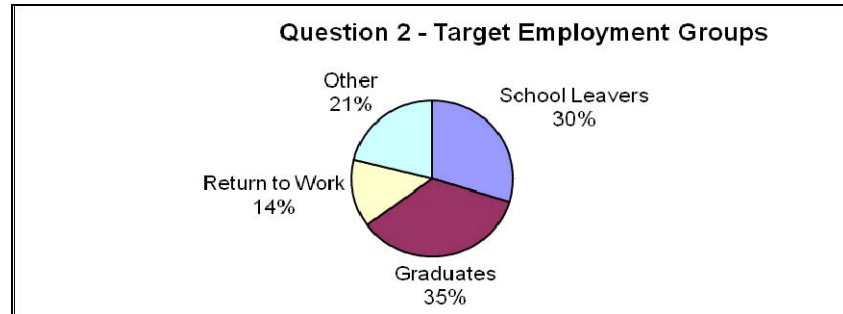


## Question 2

Does your council target any of the following groups in terms of employment?

- School Leavers
- Graduates
- Return to Work
- Other

30% of councils currently target school leavers and 35% graduates as potential council employees, while 14% target the return to work group. The 21% of responses relating to other target groups included professional positions such as engineers and accountants. Included in this response were trainees from a diverse range of groups including school leavers, return to work, disability and cultural backgrounds such as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders.



## Question 3

What strategies do you use to promote your council to perspective employees? (Tick as many boxes as required)

- Newspaper
- Online – Website, Seek, etc.



- Social Networking - Facebook, LinkedIn, etc.**
- TV/Cinema**
- Career Markets/Expos**
- School/University Visits**
- Professional headhunting/Talent Seeking**
- Other \_\_\_\_\_ (please specify).**

Somewhat surprisingly, according to the delegates surveyed, their council's number one approach for recruiting potential employees into local government is still via traditional methods such as newspaper advertising. Online strategies such as SEEK and advertising directly on council websites follow closely behind receiving 38 responses. In the ever growing age of social media such as Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn only nine of 43 respondents currently use this avenue as a marketing strategy for employment. Career expos and school/university visits rated as 23 and 10 respectively.

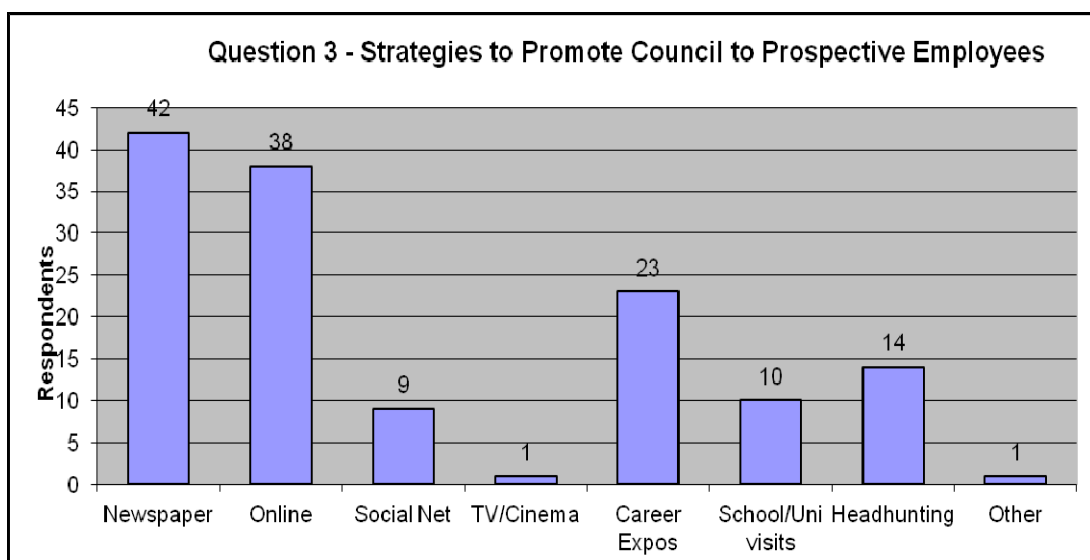
This in itself presents Queensland local government with an opportunity to seriously consider how other industries are effectively targeting potential employees and the potential for such methods to be utilised by councils. Are councils missing good employees to private industry as a result of maintaining traditional methods of recruiting?

Additionally, if 30% and 35% of councils target school leavers and graduates respectively, why are only 23 councils attending Career Expos

and 10 attending schools or universities? The marketing gap in this respect needs further consideration.

The other response identified networks as an opportunity to seek potential employees. This coupled with 14 councils headhunting potential employees promotes the perception that word of mouth and the tradition of “it’s not what you know but who you know” still exists. Does this appear a positive or negative for councils? Positively, potential employees could gain satisfaction that further career progressions can be facilitated by an understanding of the intricacies of local government. On the down side, does this hinder councils demonstrating a fair and transparent recruitment process? The group had no defined view in relation to this, however, suggests that this may be of benefit in the long term.

The recently announced LGMA secondment program is an example of how local government experience can be used to secure opportunities for further development and career progression without having to leave the industry.



#### Question 4

<b>Focussing on social media as a marketing tool:</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>
<b>a. Does your council plan on using social media for recruitment in the next 5 years?</b>		
<b>b. Does your council have the skills and resources to undertake recruitment via social media campaigns?</b>		
<b>c. Would your council be interested in a collaborative social media campaign for Qld local governments?</b>		

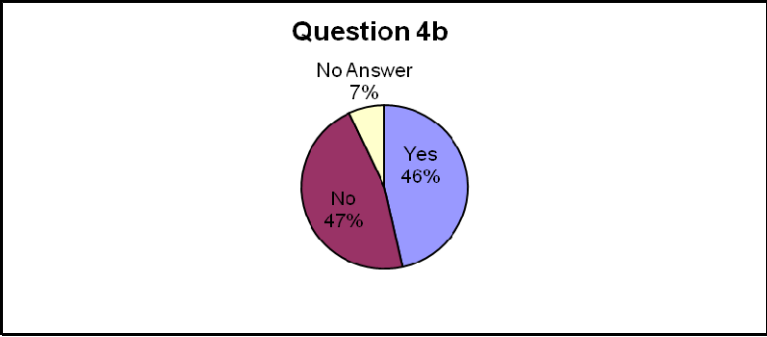
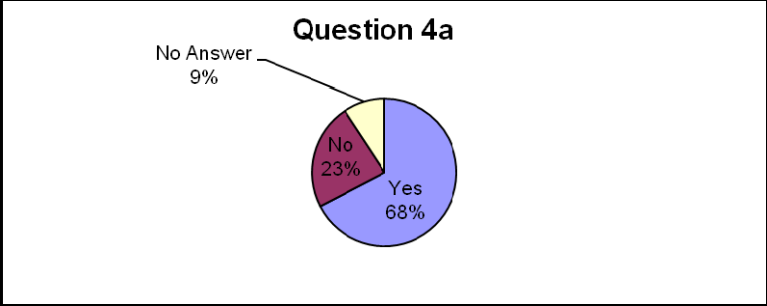
Given the subject of our topic the group felt that it was necessary to further explore the responses relating to social media. As previously suggested, social media is quickly increasing as a marketing tool for the recruitment industry. A high percentage of Australia's population that use social media are <25 years of age. Traditionally, this fits our target groups of school leavers and graduates.

Even though only nine of the survey respondents indicated that they currently use social media as a recruitment strategy, 68% indicated that they are planning on utilising this as a marketing tool in the next five years. Around half of the respondents planning to use social media in the future believe that they currently have relevant skills in-house to implement on such strategies.

It was identified that opportunity exists to consider the skills and requirements of staff within our councils' recruiting and marketing departments. If councils

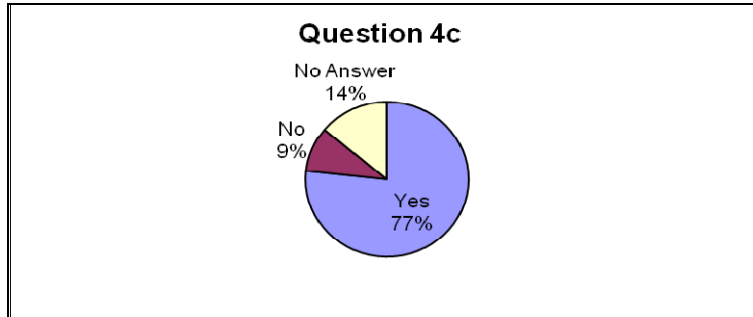
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are considering this strategy as an option in the next five years they need to consider potential training needs now. What additional skills are required and how will councils provide this type of training to staff to ensure they are well positioned to implement these strategies?



In an effort to continue to promote ongoing sustainability within the local government industry, respondents were asked to consider their interest in a collaborative approach to utilising social media as a recruitment strategy. 77% of respondents indicated an interest in investigating a collaborative approach. 9% were not and 14 % of survey respondents did not respond to this question.



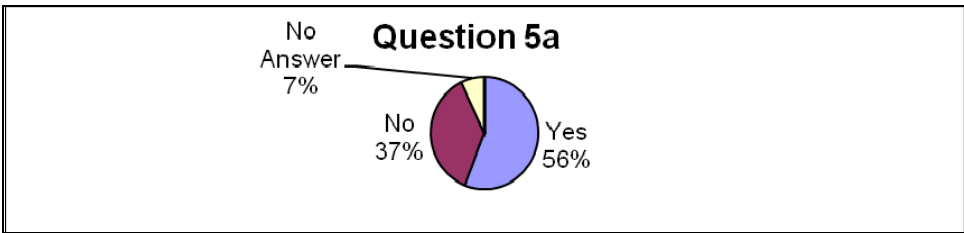


**Question 5**

<b>Focussing on processes and systems as a tool:</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>
<b>a. Does your council have an effective recruitment strategy?</b>		
<b>b. Is your recruitment strategy flexible, e.g. managers can adapt processes to their departmental need(s)?</b>		
<b>c. If not, would your council benefit from having more flexible recruitment processes ?</b>		
<b>d. Would your council benefit from a combined state-wide local government approach to recruitment?</b>		

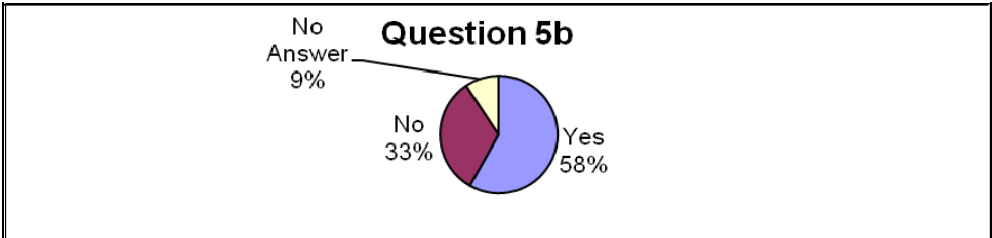
Survey respondents were asked to assess their views as to the success of their council’s current recruitment strategies. 56% of respondents agreed that their council has a successful strategy in place. 37% disagreed and 7% did not provide a response. If 37% of respondents felt that their council recruitment strategy was ineffective, what can be done to improve this?

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The effectiveness of recruitment strategies was the topic of discussion in many PP11 sessions. Were the strategies themselves ineffective or the implementation of them?

33% of survey respondents suggested that council recruitment strategies could be more flexible. Pleasing to note, however, as the end users of these strategies, 58% of respondents agreed that the strategies were flexible enough for managers to adapt to their individual departmental needs.



## Question 6

If you could have one tag-line to sell council employment, what would it be?

Recognising the innovation and creativity that currently exists in councils, survey respondents were asked to identify a tag-line to promote local government as an employer of choice.

## THE VERDICT



Consistent themes that were identified in responses included:

- The benefits of working for the communities in which we live
- Making a difference
- Being proud of what is well known internally as a challenging, diverse and rewarding industry in which to work.

There are some fantastic tag-lines identified, as outlined in the table further below. Consensus in our group is towards one of the following:

- 1** **Your community, your future**
- 2** **Local government – local employment, a world of possibilities**
- 3** **Your job, your community**
- 4** **Working for and with your community**
- 5** **Our community, our future.**

It is evident that these tag lines place a focus on the value of communities. councils exist to deliver high quality outcomes to and for the communities in which we live, work or visit.





## TAG LINE SUGGESTIONS

The tag lines have been themed and grouped as follows.

### **COMMUNITY**

Work for your community  
An opportunity to positively impact the community  
You can make a difference within your community  
Do something for your community, get into Council  
Your community, your future  
Your community, your council. Join in  
Variety. In your community space  
Community  
Make a difference in the community you live  
Working with your community  
Value adding to your community  
Your job, your community  
Caring for our community through diversity/Community service through diversity  
Make a difference locally  
Working for and with your community  
Be local, be proud  
Making a difference (x2)  
In working for local government you can make a difference  
You make decisions that impact the quality of life of so many people  
Make a contribution

### **FLEXIBILITY**

Long term variety and options always opening up



Variety and versatility - that's local government  
Secure, flexible & family friendly environment/workplace

## **CAREER**

Varies opportunities  
Exciting and challenging  
Something which promotes the opportunities for experience and advancement for professionals  
A career you can take anywhere - worldwide  
Local government - local employment. A world of possibilities  
Local and secure  
Diversity with sustainable opportunities  
Security, career opportunities  
Check out the benefits i.e. secure employment, 12% super, RDOs, attractive work arrangements etc  
Stability and security

## **TOURISM**

Region of first choice (x2)



## Question 7

**LG is not generally seen as an attractive employment option. Do you agree with this perception and why do you feel it is or isn't correct?**

Survey respondents presented mixed views as to whether local government is seen as an attractive employment option or not. This question also presented the PP11 participants with much discussion and ensuing conflict in attempting to come to a consensus on a definitive answer. The table below outlines respondent's opinions on this topic.

### **VIEWPOINT AND REASON/S OF RESPONDENTS**

#### **COUNCIL IS AN ATTRACTIVE EMPLOYMENT OPTION**

LG offers career advancement & further training in whatever area you choose for your career.

No. Mining sector is the major issue for our Council. This aside, Council is attractive. Gen Y issues must also be considered.

Security, contributing to greater good, good employer.

LG provides excellent family and community values/opportunities. Also offers opportunities for personal achievement and self esteem growth.

Local government is seem as an attractive employment option because of security of employment.

I think people see Council as a secure employment option, but I think when they get there, they realise it is that and so much more.

I feel that this statement is incorrect. Many people I know & have met see Local Government as having good salaries and attractive benefits such as security, close to home, flexibility and RDOs.

No, I believe it is an attractive option for employees.

No. Variety of roles does attract good quality candidates.



**COUNCIL IS NOT AN  
ATTRACTIVE  
EMPLOYMENT  
OPTION**

No - I have enjoyed Local Govt for the past 23 years.

No, I don't believe people understand the diversity of jobs and career opportunities or the work/life balance available working within LG.

I don't agree, however, LG is not promoted as a viable career option.

No - Local government is now a well respected employer in most communities and jobs are sought after. The issue of high level professionals such as engineers and planners are still difficult to recruit mainly due to cash offered by big industry.

I do agree with the perception, but I love it!

Prospective employees do not understand the career opportunities offered by Local Government.

Correct.

Yes.

Agreed. Partly because is often a "community whipping boy".

Public is not aware of variety of career opportunities and diversity of work in LG. They only see roadworks and we don't promote ourselves at all.

Yes, agree yes, stereotype opinion is based on 'old' services such as road construction and garbage collection. Need to alter opinion to highlight more community based services and technical services (higher based services).

Yes, but it's getting better.

Yes, the community only sees the outside workforce and that their salaries are low but the work is hard. For those that know better, they also know that currently there is not a work life balance and project progression is slower than in private enterprise.

I agree that this is a perception and part of this reasons is the belief that Council workers are bludgers and Councils are reactionary.

Yes, I agree but this is driven by incorrect perceptions from little or bad media about the interesting and diverse work.

Yes, LG is seen as a last choice option as people don't understand the diversity Council offers and that Councils



are not seen/perceived as a real career choice. Council needs to become performance oriented organisations.

The community has high expectations and when these expectations are not met - it seems Council's productivity & processes are to blame that extends to the perception that employees are slack, or the org as a whole - this affects Councils reputation as an employer.

Young people are focused on finding a career rather than an employer. The varies career options within LG make it difficult in activating the interest of young people.

Yes, because of media negativity.

## NEUTRAL/UNSPECIFIC

Public perception is that Council is responsible for roads and waste as these are highly visible in community.

More needs to be done to inform community on all services provided by Councils.

Legacy.

I don't think it is well/widely known as an option -but wouldn't say it is unattractive.

Everyone loves to 'Council bash' however many find once employed in Local Government it is challenging, rewarding and never a dull moment.

It depends! It varies from person to person, job to job. Can't generalise LG as suitable and attractive for many who aren't able to be close to home, have flexible work hours and make a contribution in their own community, for example. Cant compete with industries like mining in terms of money/salary, however, LG offers something else.

In the boom, it is tough to attract the skill shortage roles (planners/engineers) but in the tough times, the security and work conditions attract people. How do we (LG) take advantage of this - like now!

It is a great career for those in regional and remote Qld.

Yes and no.

I think LG has a lot to offer but we need to sell it.

Yes and no. Those who know about Council see it as an attractive option.

Probably not marketed enough on the variety of employment opportunities.



# What are the current strengths and weaknesses that councils have in recruitment approaches?

## STRENGTHS

- 1 Merit based selection process, which ensures fair and equitable selection process
- 2 Diverse offering of employment types
- 3 Community based employment/ Location based employment
- 4 Generally stable and secure working environment
- 5 Average wages and average flexibility offered
- 6 Developing Graduate/Traineeship portfolio employment
- 7 Great opportunity to grow in the arena of attraction and retention strategies due to councils primarily being in the infancy stage of development
- 8 A consistent and know approach to attraction and retention



- 9 Opportunity for a long and varied career with one employer.

## **WEAKNESSES**

- 1 Territorial based focus with attraction and retention instead of Industry based focus
- 2 The limitations of current merit based selection methods and interpretation of the legislative term “merit based selection”
- 3 Time frames to recruit
- 4 Lack of flexibility with remuneration packages and benefits
- 5 Remuneration and Benefits Strategies do not in general get the attention from the Executive Leadership Groups
- 6 Lack of single industry body coordinating attraction and retention strategies
- 7 Lack of cooperation between councils for secondments/transfers. This stems back to a territorial approach instead of an Industry focused approach
- 8 The limitations of the current legislation and the decision of local government being under the State Industrial Relations jurisdiction
- 9 The red tape required in all facets of local government.



# Opportunities

It is thought that if the attraction and retention of good quality and high performing candidates is to occur and continue to occur in the local government sector, a significant shift in paradigm is required in how LG is viewed from a political perspective. Currently, LG is not recognised under the constitution, and as such, is seen to be a “puppet” of the state government. This has been reinforced by several decisions relating to the arena of Industrial Relations over the past few years as a way of example. It is thought that if LG is recognised under the constitution, then the sector would be more legitimised and therefore, would be in a far more powerful position to lobby and decide upon its own direction and future.

It is also thought that there is a significant need for one industry body or department, to be responsible for the coordination of the attraction and retention strategies of the Industry. Furthermore, it is thought that having the two industry bodies, LGAQ and LGMA representing LG can be confusing.

It would be a far more concerted and coordinated approach to have:

- A job board for all LG that is run free of charge, with links to the relevant council for more information.
- A marketing and promotional campaign funded by all councils highlighting this job board.
- A push for a base line certified agreement which can be implemented across all councils, with the flexibility for individualistic amendments to occur.





- A single industry body which represents and lobby's for all of councils.
- A review of the legislation which would encompass all councils, e.g. Brisbane City Council has its own Act.



# P R O P O S E RECOMMENDATIONS

The group met on eight separate occasions throughout 2011, primarily to discuss topics relating to leadership development. Progressing the group project was of importance to all participants and, as such, many additional hours were spent outside of the standard workshops working on the project. From commencement of discussions relating to the group project it was evident that any proposed solutions would need to be multifaceted with a set of deliverables that LGMA could recommend to its members to implement or provide for significant consideration. Throughout the course of the program there was much discussion and debate on the merits or otherwise of a wide variety of responses to the project question.

Through research, and supported by the feedback provided by attendees at the LGMA State Conference, the group acknowledges the contribution already made by qualified practitioners in recruitment and marketing to the problem. It was identified that this situation is not just endemic to Queensland local government bodies, but appears as more of a nation-wide issue.



Research undertaken by the group identified the existence of websites such as:

**CareerOne's job search page**

<http://jobsearch.careerone.com.au>

**LGJobs**

<http://www.lgjobs.com.au>

**Australian Local Government Job Directory**

<http://www.job-directory.com.au>

**Seek Australia's government job page**

<http://www.seek.com.au/government-jobs>

In analysis of the functions they mean to perform, it is evident that much research has already taken place as a precursor for their development and marketing on the internet. These sites already show significant evidence of professional research and development of the issue.



PP11 therefore suggests the following approach to the dilemma that LGMA posed in January 2011.

## **RECOMMENDATION 1**

**Consider an increase in attention to the use of social media in advertising positions and for marketing local government in general.**

The PP11 group believes that the current use of social media sites relevant to local government recruitment such as Facebook (<http://www.facebook.com>) and LinkedIn (<http://www.linkedin.com>), is nowhere near intensive enough for today's market. We recommend that further research be undertaken to utilise this medium effectively.

According to research undertaken by media monitor Socialnomics, five of its top ten social media statistics for 2011 are very relevant to the issues in question within this report:

- *Over 50% of the world's population is under 30 years old*
- *Social Media is now the number one activity on the web*
- *Facebook tops Google for weekly traffic in the U.S.*



- *If Facebook were a country it would be the world's third largest and two times the size of the U.S. population*
- *80% of companies use social media for recruitment, % of these using LinkedIn is 95%.*

*(10 wow social media statistics, <http://www.socialnomics.net/2011/06/07/10-wow-social-media-statistics/>)*

## **Businesses actively using Facebook**

*According to SocialBakers, Australia is ranked 16th in the amount of Facebook users with about 10,035,700 users. With this many Australian visitors to the Facebook site every month, users are more likely to view Facebook business pages.*

*Businesses surveyed by MYOB Business Monitor revealed that only 18% of business owners used social media like Facebook, YouTube, MySpace or Twitter to promote their business. This low percentage, compared to the amount of people logging onto Facebook shows that businesses can really benefit from promoting their businesses using Facebook, as well as other social media sites.*

*Current businesses that have created Facebook pages are international brands, such as Coca-Cola, Pringles, Toyota and KFC. Since any business can create a Facebook page, there is no better time than now to do so.*



(Australian online marketing trends - 2011,  
<http://thedma.com.au/blog/australian-online-marketing-trends-2011/>)

The added power of the social media approach is the ability to target the marketing or promotion to an audience who are already in alignment with your goals. The following screen capture from a Facebook illustrates this point. By choosing age group (and or gender), location and interests we can identify a potential market of just over 1.2 million candidates.

The screenshot displays the Facebook targeting interface with the following settings:

- Location:** Country: Australia (selected). Options: Everywhere (selected), By State/Province, By City.
- Demographics:** Age: 21 - 30. Option: Require exact age match. Gender: All (selected), Men, Women.
- Interests:** Precise interests: Enter an interest.

**Estimated reach:** 1,207,060 people

- who live in **Australia**
- between the ages of **21** and **30** inclusive
- who **have graduated from university**

□

To demonstrate how a tool such as this might be used to promote local government employment opportunities, PP11 participants have constructed a mock-up of a LinkedIn (<http://www.linkedin.com>) site.

You can view PP11's social media site ***"I WANT TO CONNECT Queensland local government"*** via the Propeller 2011 website (<http://propeller.drupalgardens.com>).



## RECOMMENDATION 2

### Pursue avenues within the LGAQ to continue to market the diversity of job opportunities and professions within local government

In the course of program diversity of opportunities was a key theme relating to positive aspects of working for local government. This was especially evident in regional councils where, unlike many metropolitan councils, officers do not work to a defined position description that is written for a particular skill set (i.e. water engineer).

It was identified that local government is one of very few employers that employ officers from almost every professional field available. This diversity allows officers to potentially gain a better understanding on different professions and up- skill their current skill set. A more concerted effort is required to change the long-standing perception that councils employ administration staff and works staff only. With the modern local government model moving well beyond traditional views of the role of local government in the local community it is imperative that this role diversity is made very apparent, especially to the key target markets of school leavers, graduates and those returning to the workforce.





## RECOMMENDATION 3

### Further promote the humanistic aspects of working for local government in marketing and recruiting campaigns

Anecdotal evidence for survey respondents and PP11 participants strongly suggests that making a difference to the community is a key reason why many people commence employment with local governments and why many stay in this industry for a large part of their working life. The term community could be considered a heuristic and repeated use of this will lead to an increased recognition of local government's strong links to community, potentially increasing the effectiveness of marketing and recruitment campaigns. Accordingly, it is recommended that this facet of working for local government be better captured in marketing and recruitment collateral.

As part of the project delivery PP11 participants agreed to deliver on one of the opportunities. As a result is a website which depicts. The PP11 group has developed a mock campaign and program that demonstrates the use of social media tools and other traditional methods aimed at attracting school leavers, those returning to work and graduates to local government.



Building on the feedback from the participants of the LGMA State Conference, and the key themes that emerged regarding possible marketing slogans, the website has been developed using the community theme.

Community was the key word in the feedback, but when we unpack and examine what community means, we find it means different things to different people. Community often conjures up feelings of belonging, of being part of something, of being connected.

Acknowledging the power that certain “value loaded” words (heurism) play in the choices we make, the concept we have identified, revolves around inviting potential employees to “connect”. This call to action is about recognising the role of local governments in their community: being the fabric that holds communities together, being the glue, being the connector.

The group also felt that the call to “connect” would be quite timely for people who may be feeling disengaged due to current economic, political and social landscapes. In times of insecurity the desire to connect becomes stronger and this is something that local governments can currently exploit to their advantage.

The campaign is titled “***I WANT TO CONNECT***”



The campaign, while founded on the concept of connect, further develops heuristic based campaigns for each cohort. From this primary concept three secondary tag lines evolved:

**CONNECTING TO MY LIFESTYLE** for school leavers

In recognition of the fun factor being a focus for many young people. Young people are seeking jobs that allow them to maintain their exciting sociable lives with their friends and family. Whether it is going surfing before work, motor-cross riding and team sports after work or attending music festivals on their Rostered Days Off (RDOs).

**CONNECTING TO MY FUTURE** for graduates

In recognition of the new focus that young professionals have on building their careers and being recognised in their chosen field of expertise. Graduates are seeking jobs that allow them to apply their new found knowledge and skills and an opportunity to showcase their expertise and spread their wings professionally.

**CONNECTING TO MY WORLD** or return to work

In recognition of the world of knowledge and experience they bring with them from their worlds into their new roles with local government. Employees returning to work are seeking jobs that allow them to utilise skills they have already developed but also jobs that fit with and align to their current lifestyles. This can include part time work, flexible work modes or study leave options.



This approach led to the development of branding/logo below:



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To support the ***"I WANT TO CONNECT"*** campaign three phases were identified:

**VIRAL VIDEO**

How can we demonstrate connecting?

To be shared via email from PP11 group or LGMA and uploaded to YouTube.

Then used to introduce our Linked in and Facebook group pages.

**FOLLOW UP  
SOCIAL MEDIA  
CAMPAIGN**

Twitter posts.

Facebook groups and pages campaigns.

Blog - an alias, divulging the "secret" life of council workers (focus on positive aspects).

**MAINSTREAM  
MEDIA WITH  
WEBSITE**

Mainstream website linked in to the other local government employment websites - demonstrating collaboration.

Other mainstream tools include newspaper articles and PowerPoint presentations for career expos and open days.

The outcomes of the ***"I WANT TO CONNECT"*** campaign can be viewed at the Propeller 2011 website (<http://propeller.drupalgardens.com>).



## **RECOMMENDATION 4**

**Councils provide a link from their jobs webpage to a generic state-wide webpage that highlights the benefits of working for local government in general**

It is common place for councils to have an employment webpage detailing current employment opportunities. A number of councils also have webpages outlining the benefits of working for that specific council.

In order to support other state-wide initiatives aimed at promoting local government as an employer of choice, it was identified that a generic webpage outlining the multitude of benefits of working for local government as an industry would be beneficial. As the peak advocacy body for local government, the LGAQ was identified as best situated to provide this webpage. A web presence such as this would allow council to pool resources for the betterment of the industry.



## **RECOMMENDATION 5**

### **Increase search functionality of web-based local government employment services**

If local governments are serious about targeting key markets for recruitment, it follows that accessing information relating to available jobs be made as easy and specific as possible. Accordingly, it is recommended that websites focusing on local government based employment include filters that allow target groups to view only jobs relevant to their interests (e.g. graduate positions). Improving search functionality will make it easy for target groups to see the diversity of positions available that suit their specific employment needs.



# W R A P U P CONCLUSION

In summary, the PP11 participants have identified thoughts, opportunities and suggestions to help make Queensland local government an *attractive place to work*. To target graduates, school leavers and return to workers is not enough. Other opportunities exist for local government to collaborate and market better in order to attract prospective employees looking for intrinsic rewards such as self-gratification, a sense of community, personal satisfaction, the benefits of work culture and team values, work-life balance and diversity.

The website provides readers, potentially industry organisations, with a foundation on which to build. It provides some insight into how we might work together state wide to market our positions using social media.

The last 10-12 months have been a journey for PP11 members. Many individuals have experienced both personal and professional growth and development as part of the journey. Many participants have been exposed to a wealth of local government functions that they may not have been at all familiar with in the normal course of their jobs. PP11 has delivered significant lessons for us all, not least of all rising to the challenge of achieving group





goals while collaborating over a dispersed geographical area. Accessing mentors and learning from a variety of leaders will contribute to our professional development to enable us to become future leaders of Queensland local government.

We all sincerely thank our individual councils for providing us the opportunity of this experience.



# THANKS ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Councils who participated in PP11 include:

**Brisbane City Council**

**Mackay Regional Council**

**Cassowary Coast Regional Council**

**Redland City Council**

**Gympie Regional Council**

**South Burnett Regional Council**

**Isaac Regional Council**

**Sunshine Coast Regional Council**

**Logan City Council**

**Townsville City Council**

**Longreach Regional Council**

**Western Downs Regional Council**

Councils who hosted the PP11 participants in their various locations include:

**Cherbourg Aboriginal Shire Council**

**Redlands City Council**

**Gympie Regional Council**

**Rockhampton City Council**

**Logan City Council**

**Sunshine Coast Regional Council**



The PP11 participants acknowledge the support given by the following:

### **COUNCILLORS**

**Cr Bob Abbot**, Sunshine Coast Regional Council

**Cr Ron Dyne**, Mayor, Gympie Regional Council

**Cr Melva Hobson**, Redland City Council

**Cr Donna Neilson**, Gympie Regional Council

**Cr Russell Lutton**, Deputy Mayor, Logan City Council

**Cr Gordon Wragge**, Deputy Mayor, Cherbourg Aboriginal Shire Council

### **CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICERS**

**Bryan Ottone**, Central Highlands Regional Council

**Craig Manson**, Acting CEO, Gympie Regional Council

**Evan Pardon**, Rockhampton Regional Council

**Gary Stevenson**, Redland City Council

**John Oberhardt**, Deputy CEO, Logan City Council

**Michelle Clarke**, Richmond Shire Council



**Michelle McFadyen**, Longreach Regional Council

**Peter Stewart**, Goondiwindi Regional Council

**Ross Higgins**, Deputy CEO, Cherbourg Aboriginal Shire Council

**Shane Cagney**, McKinlay Shire Council

**Ross Higgins**, Deputy CEO, Cherbourg Aboriginal Shire Council

### **LOCAL GOVERNMENT OFFICERS**

**Amanda Daly**, People and Change Manager, Redland City Council

**Alf Caruso**, Service Executive, Brisbane City Council

**Brett Bacon**, Strategic Manager Land Use, Rockhampton Regional Council

**Don Cartwright**, Manager Human Resources, Gympie Regional Council

**Jane Frawley**, Community Services Branch Manager, Logan City Council

**Mark Hartley**, Director Planning and Development, Gympie Regional Council

**Mike Ellis**, People and Culture Manager, Logan City Council

**Nick Clarke**, General Manager Governance, Redland City Council

**Pam Potter**, Employment and Development Coordinator, Sunshine Coast Regional Council

**Veronica Campbell**, Manager Corporate Improvement and Strategy, Rockhampton Regional Council



## **LGMA QUEENSLAND STAFF**

**Allison Page**, Manager Member Services

**Peta Irvine**, Chief Executive Officer

**Robyn Walker**, Administration Manager

**Sandy Pearl**, Administration Manager

## **OTHER SPEAKERS AND FACILITATORS**

**Ada Simpson**, Guide, Cherbourg Ration Shed Museum

**Karen Schmidt**, Consultant, Let's Grow

**Peter Sansby**, Principal, Cherborough State School

**Sue Scheinpflug**, CEO, United Synergies

**Suzi Woodrow-Read**, Facilitator, Performance Froniters

**Taya Seidler**, Facilitator, Performance Frontiers



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Townsville City Council



# APPENDICES

## Appendix 1 PP11 participants list

<b>NAME</b>	<b>POSITION</b>	<b>COUNCIL</b>	<b>MY STORY</b>
<b>Ant McKenna</b>	Senior Development Officer Community Services	Sunshine Coast Regional Council	15
<b>Holly Blyth</b>	Events/Marketing Officer	Longreach Regional Council	16
<b>Jakkii Fenlon</b>	Waste Management Coordinator	Isaac Regional Council	17
<b>Jane Prasetyo</b>	Corporate Governance Officer	Gympie Regional Council	19
<b>Jennifer Fredericks</b>	Community Safety Planner	Logan City Council	21
<b>Kim English</b>	Branch Librarian	Redland City Council	23
<b>Leah Sorohan</b>	Principal Planner	Mackay Regional Council	22





<b>Mark Leaney</b>	Account Executive Information Services	Brisbane City Council	25
<b>Mei Lin Gray</b>	Library Coordinator Customer Service and Operations	Townsville City Council	27
<b>Michael Hunter</b>	Cultural Services Coordinator	South Burnett Regional Council	29
<b>Nancy Gassin</b>	Corporate Governance Coordinator	Cassowary Coast Regional Council	31
<b>Nicole Dodimead</b>	Service Manager Workplace Relations	Redland City Council	33
<b>Todd Summerville</b>	Environment and Health Manager	Western Downs Regional Council	34
<b>Vanessa Green</b>	Coordinator Corporate Planning and Performance	Townsville City Council	35



# Appendix 2 Yeppoon survey

## The Propeller Affair

Welcome to the presentation by participants of the LGMA Propeller Programme 2011. We have been tasked to consider the following question:

***Local government is not generally seen as an attractive employment option. Your task is to develop a programme to promote LG as a career to school leavers, graduates and adults returning to the workforce.***

This has proved to be a challenging question which has resulted in a lively and often lengthy discussion on the merits of the question, local government as an employer, our own career aspirations and choices as we have looked enviously on some of the slick recruitment campaigns by organisations such as the mines and armed services.

Therefore, we would like to hear your thoughts on this matter via the survey below.

### Question 1

Is your council?

Metropolitan

Regional

Rural

### Question 2

Does your council target any of the following groups in terms of employment?

School Leavers

Graduates

Return to Work

Other

### Question 3

What strategies do you use to promote your council to perspective employees? (Tick as many boxes as required)

Newspaper

Online – Website, Seek, etc

Social Networking - Facebook, LinkedIn, etc

TV/Cinema

Career Markets/Expos

School/University Visits

Professional headhunting/Talent Seeking

Other \_\_\_\_\_ (please specify)

### Question 4

<b>Focussing on social media as a marketing tool:</b>	Yes	No
Does your council plan on using social media for recruitment in the next 5 years?		
Does your council have the skills and resources to undertake recruitment via social media campaigns?		
Would your council be interested in a collaborative social media campaign for Qld local governments?		

**Question 5**

<b>Focussing on processes and systems as a tool:</b>	Yes	No
Does your council have an effective recruitment strategy?		
Is your recruitment strategy flexible, e.g. managers can adapt processes to their departmental need(s)?		
If not, would your council benefit from having more flexible recruitment processes ?		
Would your council benefit from a combined state-wide local government approach to recruitment?		

**Question 6**

If you could have one tag-line to sell council employment, what would it be?

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**Question 7**

Local Government is not generally seen as an attractive employment option. Do you agree with this perception and why do you feel it is or isn't correct?

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Thank you from all the 2011 Propeller Heads

