

# Research and Policy Foresight Program



## Overview of ACELG

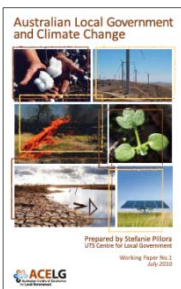
The Australian Centre of Excellence for Local Government (ACELG) was established in mid 2009 to encourage the adoption of innovative practices and solutions, from the way services are delivered through to advancing the interests of local communities in national policy discussions. ACELG's activities are grouped into six program areas: Research and policy foresight, Innovation and better practice, Governance and strategic leadership, Organisation capacity building, Rural-remote and Indigenous local government and Workforce development. For more information, please visit the ACELG website ([www.ancelg.org.au](http://www.ancelg.org.au)).

## Why is the research program a priority for ACELG?

Research is a priority for ACELG because it believes that without sound evidence local government is vulnerable to poor public policy making. The contribution by local government to the national research and development effort is currently considered to be minimal<sup>1</sup> and ACELG believes this situation should be challenged.

ACELG produces applied research which responds to key issues relevant to the local government sector and aims to inform policy development by local government decision makers. The Centre's research is intended to both utilise and complement the research efforts of local government practitioners.

## What are the current research activities?



Research activities include a working paper series which reviews the current state of play in particular policy areas, provides background on that policy issue and identifies examples of effective responses to those issues. Topics are linked to key themes for local government, - governance, financial sustainability, community wellbeing and environmental sustainability.

The first paper in the series, *Local Government and Climate Change*, is now available on the ACELG website.

Topics for other working papers to be substantially completed in 2010 include:

### **From Governing Organisations to Governing Communities**

Led by the ACELG Secretariat, this paper will draw on international literature to review concepts of governance, summarise community governance theories and frameworks and begin to explore the application of community governance approaches by Australian councils.

### **Approaches to Community Engagement**

Led by the University of Technology Sydney, this paper will review current approaches to community engagement, explore the application of community engagement methodologies by Australian councils - including emerging technologies, and highlight questions and challenges for councils.

<sup>1</sup> ABS Data (2008) 8109.0 Research and Experimental Development, Government and Private Non-Profit Organisations, Australia

### **Local Government Reviews and Inquiries**

Too often, local government enquiries have not been acted upon. This research project, led by the University of New England, will review state and national inquiries and reports into local government reform to determine the common issues, patterns of policy recommendations or recurring unresolved matters with a view to developing strategies to address the 'unfinished business'.

### **Implications of the Henry Review of Taxation for Local Government**

Led by the University of Canberra, this paper will provide a summary of the Henry Tax Review; identifying matters both specific and general that are relevant to local government; discussing the consequences for local government; and identifying those issues which local government might advance in discussions concerning the review of taxation.

### **Options for Consolidation in Local Government: A Fresh Look**

This collaborative research project is being prepared for the Local Government Association of South Australia in partnership with Local Government New Zealand. It addresses the various issues involved in considering various forms of consolidation, such as amalgamation, resource sharing, shared service delivery and other means of structural reform.

### **Roles and Relationships between Mayors and Chief Executives**

This project is a collaboration between University of Canberra and La Trobe University, and examines the complexities and challenges in the Mayor/ CEO relationship. The project will identify different models that are operating in Australia and give insights into how the relationship might be enhanced.

## **How is the research program being managed?**

A Research Advisory Committee chaired by Professor Mark Evans from the University of Canberra meets bi-annually to oversee current research projects and advise on future research activity. The Committee includes a mixture of local government practitioners and local government researchers. The program is supported by a Program Coordinator, Prof Chris Aulich from the University of Canberra and ACELG Senior Research Officer, Stefanie Pillora.

## **Where will the research be disseminated?**

ACELG research papers will be made available on its website promoted through newsletters, seminars and roundtables, conference presentations and other forums.

## **How can councils get involved?**

Australian Councils are invited to provide feedback on completed papers, provide suggestions for further research topics and request advice and assistance in undertaking their own research. A small research grants program is under development and will also be available to councils in 2011.

### **Further information**

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