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Tuesday July 19th, 2011

Welcome to Excellence in Brief



Welcome to the fourth edition of *Excellence in Brief*.

ACELG's activities continue to expand rapidly and appear to be generating a positive response from a broad cross section of people in local government and other stakeholders. As always, we are keen to receive your feedback so that we can adjust our programs to reflect local government's needs and priorities.

Last week I was in New Zealand as part of a research fellowship with Victoria University in Wellington. ACELG has had strong links with New Zealand colleagues from the outset, and my discussions in Wellington underlined the opportunity for still closer links and more regular exchanges of ideas and experience. In particular, ACELG's recent report *Consolidation in Local Government: A Fresh Look*, which included substantial New Zealand content, has clearly struck a chord on the other side of the Tasman. During the week I made several presentations on the report's findings and had numerous conversations with people from both local and national government who see a need for further change to address emerging challenges, including both some amalgamations and greater use of shared services. In part this reflects a view that following the dramatic reforms in Auckland to create the new 'super city', sooner or later the national government will seek some form of consolidation elsewhere, especially in the larger urban centres. Councils in the Wellington region have already begun to explore options. At the same time the minister for local government has initiated a nation-wide 'Smarter Government – Stronger Communities' project to consider a wide range of potential improvements to the system of local government and, significantly, its relationship to national agencies and agendas.

ACELG will be keeping a close watch on these developments and will take every opportunity to foster the Trans-Tasman dialogue.

Graham Sansom
Director

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Excellence in Leadership Program Commences

Over 40 senior local government staff and councillors are in Canberra this week to participate in the inaugural 'Excellence in Local Government Leadership' program, run by the Australia and New Zealand School of Government (ANZSOG).

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

The first week commenced on Monday 18 July, and the program will re-convene for its second week on 5 September. We are confident the program will be an outstanding success, and we congratulate the participants who have received scholarships to attend. Our thanks go to the federal, state and New Zealand governments, and local government associations, that funded those scholarships.

A news item about this program can be viewed [here](#) and the program website can be accessed [here](#).

Adelaide Reception for Leadership Scholarship Recipients

At a recent mayoral reception in Adelaide for ACELG, three senior employees from South Australian Councils were congratulated for receiving scholarships to attend the inaugural ACELG-ANZSOG 'Excellence in Local Government Leadership' program to be held in Canberra later this month.

The reception was hosted by Adelaide City Council, and Deputy Lord Mayor David Plumridge congratulated scholarship recipients, Jane Trotter, Director Corporate Development, Salisbury Council; Christine Umaphathysivam, Deputy Chief Executive Officer, City of Unley; and Paul Di Iulio, Chief Executive Officer, Campbelltown City Council.

ACELG Directors Graham Sansom and Melissa Gibbs alongside ANZSOG Professor Mark Evans also attended the reception.

www.acelg.org.au



Prof. Mark Evans (top) and Gerry Stoker (bottom), lead presenters at the Excellence in Leadership program.



Deputy Lord Mayor David Plumridge, Prof. Mark Evans and a scholarship recipient.

Innovation and Knowledge Exchange Network Launched



www.iken.net.au

A key function of ACELG is to act as a clearing house for innovation and to foster the adoption of best or better practice within the sector. This can now be achieved through an on-line, interactive forum known as IKEN – the Innovation and Knowledge Exchange Network.

IKEN provides a platform for local government practitioners, researchers and other stakeholders to exchange information and ideas, showcase innovation and provide useful links to resources, research opportunities, collaboration and support.

Innovation and better practice can be found across local government regardless of size and 'capacity', from larger urban centres through to rural-remote communities. The new website was launched at the ALGA National General Assembly.

Visit www.iken.net.au to get involved.

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Local Government Researchers Network



Launched alongside IKEN is another web-based resource called the Local Government Researchers Network. The aim is to assist councils to identify and collaborate with researchers in addressing needs within their local community, region or state. It's the "go to" place to find expertise and resources that can support local government in its work.

The Local Government Researchers Network is accessible via a sign-in process from the new IKEN site (www.iken.net.au). For further information about the Network, please contact [Stefanie Pillora](#).

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Research Underway

As mentioned in our March edition (#2) ACELG has initiated



A screenshot from the Innovation and Knowledge Exchange Network ([IKEN](#)) showing a 'Community of Practice'.

a Research Partnership scheme to build research capacity and support applied research in the local government sector. Three partnership scheme projects are now underway:

- Comparative analysis of Regional Organisation of Councils in NSW and WA - to gain a better understanding of the roles and operations of ROCs in the development of regionalism, reform and modernisation of local government activities. Led by Northern Sydney Regional Organisation of Councils supported by the WA DLG and NSW DLG.
- Options for a local government framework for measuring liveability - to explore appropriate benchmarks to help improve the quality of life for communities in metropolitan areas and enhance the consistency and credibility of reporting. Led by Penrith City Council with the support of ACELG and Melville City Council (WA).
- Social Enterprise as a New Way of Governing with Communities - an analysis of social enterprise as a new way for local government to engage with communities in responding to local issues and how it is currently implemented. Particular interest is upon the practical considerations for Councils using social enterprise within the context of place-based participatory development. Led by Central Coast Council (TAS) supported by the Institute for Regional Development, University of Tasmania.

Other continuing ACELG research projects include: Unfinished Business - a review of recent local government inquiries; Roles and Relationships between Mayors and Chief Executives; Approaches to Community Engagement; and, Evolution in Community Governance: Building on What Works.

Completed papers will be promoted in future editions of the newsletter and other forums.

Stay in touch with us about a planned Local Government Researchers Forum in Sydney towards the end of the year (tentative). ACELG's research work is managed out of its 'Research and Policy Foresight' program and we invite readers to provide feedback, raise issues and make suggestions for further research. For further details contact [Stefanie Pillora](#).

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New Staff

The following people have recently joined ACELG as the Centre's momentum builds:

- Mervyn Carter - to work on the National Data Project as Project Manager
- Penny Finlay - to assist in the management of the

Research and Policy Foresight and Rural-Remote and Indigenous Local Government programs

- Anne Howard - Research Fellow with the Innovation and Best Practice program at the University of Canberra (an ACELG Partner)
- Ellen Grady - Research Assistant for the Innovation and Best Practice program.

We welcome them and their varied expertise.

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Roundtable on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Employment in Local Government

ACELG will run a national roundtable on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander (ATSI) employment in local government in Sydney, 26-27 July. The Roundtable is a part of ACELG's Workforce Development program and is co-ordinated by Local Government Managers Australia, an ACELG Partner.

The roundtable is an important component of work leading to a national strategy for ATSI employment in local government, and will feature demonstration projects with potential to attract partners and funding agencies.

Outcomes from the roundtable (and responses to the previously released *Closing the Gap through Place-based Employment*) will inform the development of a white paper.

The roundtable will be opened by Hon. Mark Arbib, federal minister for Indigenous Employment and Economic Development. Further information about the ACELG Workforce Development program can be found [here](#).

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New ACELG Reports



Working Paper: 'Henry' Tax Review and Local Government
A new ACELG Working Paper was released last month to coincide with the ALGA National General Assembly of Local Government. Called The Henry Review of Australia's Future Tax System: The Implications for Local Government, it has been prepared by

John Passant and John McLaren of the University of Canberra. The research closely examines a range of issues canvassed by the 2010 review that relate to local government, and concludes that it would be unwise for local government to plan for nothing more than minimal change.

The release of the paper is timely as there will be

opportunities for local government in light of the federal government's Tax Forum planned for October 2011 plus the Productivity Commission review of local government regulation and the upcoming review of Financial Assistance Grants. The paper can be downloaded from [here](#).

The ACELG Working Papers series aims to review the current state of play in particular policy areas, provide background on policy issues, and identify examples of effective responses. For further details about this series contact [Stefanie Pillora](#).

Long Term Financial Planning

A Practice Note is nearing completion to assist local governments in Australia to develop Long Term Financial Plans in accordance with the Australian Infrastructure Financial Management Guidelines. [Read more](#).

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Asset Management Training

As mentioned in the last issue the Asset Management for Small, Rural and Remote Communities Practice Note is available free of charge to all Australian councils with a population less than 5,000. A series of training opportunities related to this work is now being organised by IPWEA, an ACELG Partner – view the schedule [here](#).

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Recent Events, Presentations and Addresses

ACELG Stand at ALGA Congress

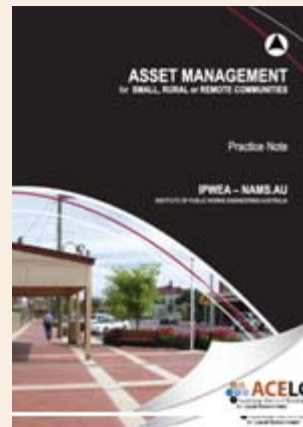
We were delighted that so many delegates took the time to visit our stand. ACELG staff renewed acquaintances with former colleagues, made some new links and got in touch with a number of people from councils, associations and Commonwealth departments we were hoping to meet.

Now in its 18th year, the ALGA National General Assembly (NGA) is the largest event on the local government calendar with a record turnout this year (over 900 delegates). The NGA provides an important forum for councils from across the nation to come together to discuss and debate issues affecting local government, and to hear from the nation's political leaders and leading experts. It offers ACELG a valuable opportunity to 'take the temperature' of local government and assess the value of its activities. Melissa Gibbs' blog about the Assembly is [here](#).

ALGWA Dinner

ACELG was very pleased to be able to help the Australian Local Government Women's Association celebrate the 60th anniversary of the founding of the national organisation, at a sumptuous dinner at historic Old Parliament House.

Nearly 300 guests, including federal and state MPs, Mayors



Cover of the 'Asset Management for Small, Rural and Remote Communities' Practice Note, a resource currently being distributed to small councils across Australia.



ACELG Chairperson Margaret Reynolds and Prof. John Howard at the ACELG stand at the ALGA National Congress.



Governor-General Quentin Bryce, ALGWA President Darriea Turley, and other delegates at the ALGWA 60th anniversary dinner.

and a veritable whose who in local government attended the function, which was opened by Her Excellency, Quentin Bryce, the Governer General.

The Honourable Kate Ellis MP, Minister for the Status of Women addressed the dinner, congratulating ALGWA on their fine work and noting that for 60 years, ALGWA has been working hard to support women's participation in local government and to ensure that women's voices are heard and represented equally.

Professor Graham Sansom also spoke at the dinner, noting that during his long association with ALGWA he had been privileged to work alongside many of the inspiring women of ALGWA in partnering with them in the research and delivery of their key programs, and acknowledged the passion and commitment ALGWA women brought to the table. For more information click [here](#).

Recent Secretariat Activities

- Presentations by the Director to the NSW Finance Professional conference and LGMA.
- Information stands at the LGMA National Congress in May and at the ALGA National General Assembly in June.
- Director Graham Sansom presented to the MAV's 'Future of Local Government Summit' 29 June. View his PPT [here](#).
- A session facilitated by the Assistant Director at the LGMA National Congress on the needs of CEOs in small rural-remote and Indigenous councils (held in conjunction with LGMA Queensland).
- Attendance by the Chairperson, Director, Assistant Director and Program Coordinator- Women in Local Government at the ALGWA 60th Anniversary Dinner in Canberra on 19 June.
- Deputy Director, Melissa Gibbs convened a workshop at the ALGA Congress the 'Rural Remote Program'.
- Participation by the Director at the meeting of the Australian Council of Local Government held in Canberra on 21 June.
- Participation by the Director in meetings of reference groups for the SA 'Local Excellence' program in May; and the regional governance review being conducted by the Southern Tasmania Councils Authority in June.
- Visit by the Director to New Zealand in early July to discuss consolidation and other reform issues with national and local government organisations (as part

of the Director's 'Don Trow' fellowship at Victoria University, Wellington)

- Participation by the Assistant Director in the organising committee for the NSW Destination 2036 (future of local government) summit to be held in August.
- Presentation by the Program Coordinator – Women in Local Government at the Government Recruitment and Retention Conference in Melbourne, May.
- Information stand at the NSW ALGWA conference in May.

Other recent ACELG events include:

- Launch of the new IKEN and Researchers Network websites at the ALGA National Congress.
- Reception at Adelaide City Council for South Australian recipients of ANZOG-ACELG 'Excellence in Leadership Program' scholarships.
- National Climate Change Roundtable (with ALGA, ICLEI, NCCARF), Sydney, 4 May.
- National Assessment Framework Workshop (Asset and Financial Management), Melbourne, 18-19 May.

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Upcoming Events

- Excellence in Local Government Leadership Program 18-22 July & 5-9 September.
- Roundtable on Aboriginal and Torres Strait employment in local government, Sydney, 26-27 July.
- Benchmarking Best Practice Conference in Local Government, 3-4 August.
- Local Government Business Excellence Forum, Melbourne, 4 August.
- Australasian Management Challenge, Sydney, 11-12 August.
- MAV workshop – 'The growing role of local government in strengthening community governance: What works', 24 August.

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For more information on ACELG programs and activities,

please visit our website:

www.acelg.org.au

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An Australian Government Initiative

