A NATIONAL REVIEW OF
TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT COUNCILLORS

ACELG
Australian Centre of Excellence
for **Local Government**

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CENTRE FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT

LEARNING
IN LOCAL
GOVERNMENT

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A NATIONAL REVIEW OF
TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT COUNCILLORS

Australian Centre of Excellence for Local Government.

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Sydney NSW

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About the Learning in Local Government Project

The 'Learning in Local Government' project explores the often unique and complex needs of education and professional development in Australian local government. It aims to inform and facilitate the development of education and training programs through the Australian Centre for Excellence in Local Government (ACELG). ACELG has committed funds to the project through its Workforce Development Program with a view to coordinating, commissioning or (in rare instances) delivering training programs to address priority needs.

Work and discussions continue to explore gaps in the content and availability of education and professional development specifically tailored to local government's needs. ACELG is advocating an integrated national approach that:

- is forward looking and reflects the changing environment and role of local government;
- addresses sector needs for essential skills now and into the future;
- focuses equally on people working in the sector and meets their personal needs to enhance their skills and develop their careers; and
- offers seamless pathways between vocational and higher education and ongoing professional development.

About the Authors

Sue Davy is a human resource management practitioner who has worked for six years as the Manager of People and Capacity Development functions for the Local Government Association of the NT. For 20 years prior to this she held senior human resource management roles in organisations in the NT. Sue has been an active member of a number of national local government groups including the Industry Advisory Committee, Human Resources Network and Workforce Training and Development group. She now works as a consultant in local government, and is based at Kilcoy in Queensland.

Jenny Brands is a leader in the field of research translation: ensuring that research is translated into action and is of value to those who work it may effect. She worked for six years as the Research and Development Manager for the Cooperative Research Centre for Aboriginal Health, where she was part of a major reform to include stakeholders at every stage of the research process: from the setting of research priorities, designing and refining a research project, direct involvement in research itself, to communication, dissemination and implementation of research findings. Jenny is now Research Implementation Manager in the Centre for Primary Health Care Systems, Menzies School of Health Research.

Acknowledgements

Acknowledgment is also given to the many colleagues and stakeholders who have been addressing this issue of councillor training, and for their contributions to the many policies, programs, discussions, initiatives and reports that have helped to inform this paper.

Abbreviations

ACELG	Australian Centre of Excellence for Local Government
ALGA	Australian Local Government Association
ALGWA	Australian Local Government Women's Association
AM4SRRC	Asset Management for Small, Rural or Remote Communities
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
CLG	Centre for Local Government
IPWEA	Institute of Public Works Engineering Australia
IAC	Industry Advisory Committee
GSA	Government Skills Australia
LGA	Local Government Association
LGANT	Local Government Association of the Northern Territory
LGASA	Local Government Association of South Australia
LGAT	Local Government Association of Tasmania
LGMA	Local Government Managers Australia
LGSA	Local Government and Shires Associations of New South Wales
LGPMC	Local Government Planning Ministers Council
LGAQ	Local Government Association of Queensland
MAV	Municipal Associations of Victoria
NAMS	National Asset Management Strategy
RPL	Recognition of prior learning
RTO	Registered Training Organisation
UTS	University of Technology, Sydney
VET	Vocational Education and Training
WALGA	Western Australian Local Government Association

Definitions

For the purpose of this report the following definitions are used:

By 'training' we mean formally planned and delivered seminars and workshops, structured professional development programs, mentoring arrangements, and accredited courses and qualifications. This review did not consider ad hoc informal meetings or discussions that may carry good learning opportunities. These initiatives fell outside the practical scope of this project.

By 'governance' we mean how the responsibilities of those in power are exercised, how decisions are made and how community members and stakeholders have their say in such decisions. This includes, but is not limited to the resources and structures that allow good debate and good policy and decision-making to occur.

By 'councillor' we mean all local government elected officials elected to councils, including aldermen, chairpersons, presidents and mayors.

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Executive Summary

Local government in Australia is undergoing rapid change that has significant implications for the role of councillors. Increasingly, the changing responsibilities and increased breadth of activity being undertaken by local government councils requires councillors to have a high level and broad range of skills and knowledge.

This national review of councillor training was carried out at the request of key local government stakeholders in order to inform future training developments, identify possible gaps, and share information about good practices that may have national application. The review found that there is a range of high quality, relevant training and professional development available for local government councillors. Local government associations, councils, government departments and private providers are providing councillor-specific training in a wide range of topics and formats.

There are, however, some gaps in the training and professional development being offered, with significant differences from state to state. There is also interest sector-wide desire to see a nationally coordinated approach to providing accredited programs that cover the full range of knowledge and skills required to fulfil the role of councillor. At present, most accredited training which is tailored to the needs of councillors is at Diploma level or above.

While high quality relevant training and professional development is available in most areas, this review found that uptake by councillors remains low. This is particularly true of accredited training. There is a need to know more about successful strategies to make training more attractive and accessible to councillors, along with other methods to support them to carry out their roles effectively.

There is also a gap in the preparation of intending councillors for the realities of the role. Many newly elected councillors feel surprised and unprepared for the workload. Few fully understand the depth and breadth of the responsibilities they face when elected. While a range of organisations run education sessions and provide information for intending councillors, there is a need to know more about how to effectively prepare those considering standing for election without discouraging potential nominees.

About this Report

The majority of the information in the following report has been sourced from semi-structured interviews with various stakeholders within the local government sector.

The Learning in Local Government project has undertaken previous sector consultations, including an online survey of practitioners to canvass their experiences and opinions. Where appropriate the results from this survey and the perspectives of the councillors who completed it have also been included.

The examples of practices cited in the report are intended to show a range of activities from across states and the Northern Territory, but no formal evaluation has been undertaken by the authors as that was outside of the scope of the study. Examples of practice were gathered during the period from July to November in 2011, and it is understood that programs are continually evolving and therefore that some of the facts could already be out of date.

There continues to be an increase in organisations (RTOs and others) that are delivering 'governance' training to councillors, however consultation with RTOs was not conducted for this report as their role in the sector is new and changing rapidly. This is however an area we suggest as worthy of further investigation.

Next steps

The following options are put forward for consideration by the Australian Centre of Excellence for Local Government, Local Government Associations, state and federal governments, councils, Government Skills Australia and training providers:

1. ACELG could play a facilitating role in national coordination of initiatives to accredited training for local government councillors, by bringing together key sector representatives, particularly the LGAs, and the Local Government Industry Advisory Committee for a national roundtable to identify priorities for action and plans for implementation.

2. This roundtable and subsequent ongoing networking within the sector should identify programs which have applicability in other locations and jurisdictions. Issues of evaluation and quality control should also be considered, as well as other matters relating to program design and delivery.

3. As a first step, LGAs and councils should consider interim adoption of the WALGA Diploma of Local Government (Elected Members) competencies as the starting point for a suite of nationally recognised accredited training for councillors.

4. New entrants to the field of councillor development also offer promise, and their emerging activities warrant monitoring and further investigation in considering opportunities in the future. This would include RTOs that are currently providing or considering providing programs for councillors, particularly in-house programs; and also new positions such as 'Governance Officer' being created within councils to (amongst other things) design or commission training programs for their own councillors.

5. Expanded pre-election 'training' opportunities to increase awareness of the role of councillors, and post-election engagement of elected members in programs to ensure their effectiveness in the role, both require attention.

6. Factors influencing the take-up of training need further investigation and wider consideration amongst training providers to ensure that this intelligence informs program design. The use of online learning would be potential area for expansion, given the promise it holds in transcending issues of cost and access for councillors.

7. Additional potential areas for professional development identified in the councillor survey included Strategy and Vision, Community Engagement, and Service Delivery options, particularly in those states where consideration of these issues is now mandated in local government legislation.

8. Further testing of levels of support for mandating councillor training in each of the jurisdictions is suggested, with leadership at a national level potentially strengthening moves in this direction. Further examining the benefits of the South Australian model of mandating councillor training and development plans is also warranted.

9. The Industry Advisory Committee could be strengthened to play a significantly enhanced role in identifying and responding to current gaps, arranging funding to promote solutions, and improving co-ordination and responsiveness to sector requirements.

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Background

This scoping study was initiated in response to results of the Learning in Local Government Survey undertaken by the University of Technology Sydney (UTS) Centre for Local Government (CLG) on behalf of the Australian Centre of Excellence for Local Government (ACELG). The survey results were presented to a workshop session at the 4th National Local Government Workforce Development Forum (April 2011), where it was agreed that a national review of current councillor training programs was a priority to inform future training developments, identify possible gaps in councillor training, and share information about good practice.

ACELG provided funding through the UTS CLG to undertake the study. It aimed to identify and review:

- Existing local and national providers offering councillor training programs
- State run programs that could be applied on a national level
- How available training programs are currently networked
- The types of training (both in mode and content) councillors require
- The programs that work best for councillors from different regions/backgrounds
- Gaps in training programs based on an assessment of need

Based on data gathered through this research and the results of the Learning in Local Government Survey, the scoping study was also intended to inform possible next steps including:

- How to measure the success of current training programs
- How current successful training programs can be better networked nationally
- How training programs can be tailored according to differences in region/background
- What further training programs could be developed that complement and fill the gaps in existing packages
- Recommendations on further research and action based on feedback from stakeholders.

Methodology

Data were gathered using semi-structured interviews and through a review of relevant policy, regulatory and training documents and reports of relevance available online. Semi-structured interviews were undertaken with:

- Senior personnel of each state and NT local government association
- A sample of mayors and councillors across state/territory councils
- A sample of CEOs across state/territory councils
- A sample of state and territory training providers (Registered Training Organisations [RTOs] and private providers)
- Representatives of state and territory local government departments.

Questions for the semi-structured interviews centred on the following six areas:

- What does state and territory legislation say about training for councillors?
- What knowledge and skills are currently regarded as required of councillors?
- What training is currently available to councillors, including content, methods of delivery, accreditation status, training providers, collaborations and partnerships?
- What is the uptake of training offered? What are the successes and barriers?
- What gaps in training currently exist?

Online searches identified:

- Current RTOs and tertiary institutions with accredited courses available for councillors in local government
- Training information reports, on-line resources and policy documents from:
  - local government associations
  - professional associations
  - state and territory local government departments
  - a range of individual council websites.

The Learning in Local Government project has undertaken previous sector consultations, including an online survey of practitioners to canvass their experiences and opinions. Thirty-three councillors from states across Australia and from a range of different types of councils completed this survey, and although this is a relatively small sample the comments support the findings described in this report. Where appropriate the survey results and the perspectives of the councillors who completed it have also been included.

The current operating environment in Australian local government

Currently, there are 560 local government councils with statutory responsibilities in Australia. These councils are accountable to diverse metropolitan, regional, rural, remote and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. There are about 6,600 elected councillors in Australia with an average of just under 10 councillors per council.

Local government in Australia is undergoing rapid change and continues to deal with challenges that have significant implications for the role of councillor.

Particularly relevant to this review are:

- Increased complexity and responsibilities of local government
- Diversity among councils
- Councillor remuneration
- State and territory legislation
- Councillor turnover.

Increased complexity and responsibilities of local government

It is important to acknowledge the growth in the responsibilities and complexities of the local government sector and how this has impacted on councillors and their preparedness for the role. For example, recent amalgamations in Queensland and the Northern Territory, have resulted in funds pooling, greater economies of scale, and larger service centres with the capacity to attract and retain qualified staff. This has created larger and more complex organisations. What were once small councils with relatively small budgets and small, defined constituencies are now multi-million dollar businesses, often with a very large and diverse community base spread across a large geographic area.

Increasingly, changing agendas in local government necessitate a higher level of skill and knowledge from councillors. For example a scan of local government association newsletters indicates councils are currently confronting the following issues:

- Constitutional recognition
- Responding to climate change and the carbon tax
- The Henry Review for Australia's future tax system
- Emergency management
- Water management and treatment
- Managing leisure facilities
- Regional Development Australia funding and projects
- National Broadband Network roll out
- Strategic planning and its relationship with population growth and the environment
- Significant reviews of Local Government structures.

Councils also face major ongoing challenges in:

- Ensuring the long-term sustainability of local government. The pressures that produced major amalgamation programs have not eased and there is increasing impetus for collaboration and resource sharing amongst councils.
- Identifying and building own-source funding streams which will require innovation.
- Increased expectations of service level provision from the community.

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- Changes in technology and demographics.
- Ongoing reliance on Federal Government grant funding and the associated increased accountability demands, particularly in small rural-remote councils.
- Attracting and retaining staff in a competitive environment.

Two reports commissioned by the Australian Local Government Association (ALGA) emphasise the complexity of the current local government environment and indicate the level of expertise required by elected members to deal with the issues.

A 2006 report[1] on the national financial sustainability study of local government found:

- Up to 35% of Australian councils may not be financially sustainable in the longer term.
- The national infrastructure renewal backlog was estimated at $14.6 billion.
- To clear the backlog and cover maintenance underspends would require an additional $3.1 million per council per annum.

In 2010, an ALGA-commissioned report on roads funding[2] found:

- The gap between road costs and available expenditure widened from $788 million per year in 2005 to $860 million in 2010.
- Expenditure on local roads will need to increase by an average of $1.2 billion per year for the next 15 years to prevent further service level deterioration.

Diversity amongst councils and councillors
Local government in Australia is a dynamic and extremely diverse sector. Councils vary markedly in size, scope and capacity, from the Brisbane City Council (population about 1.0 million and annual expenditure of approximately $2.0 billion) to Jerilderie Shire (population 1,908 and annual expenditure about $7 million)[3]. Large municipal councils have access to greater own-source income, more extensive existing infrastructure, far greater human resources and have different challenges (for example, renewal of ageing infrastructure) when compared to their smaller regional counterparts. Councils that cover large areas of remote Australia are likely to have the least established infrastructure, and the least potential income from ratepayers because of their small number of geographically dispersed ratepayers.

Many interviewed for this study noted that diversity amongst councils has an influence on those who will be attracted to stand for council. They reported that capital city municipals and larger cities will generally have a greater base of potential candidates with higher levels of education and experience (often with tertiary qualifications), although this is not to say that smaller regional and semi-remote councils necessarily lack citizens with business experience and other required skills. On the other hand, across all councils individuals may nominate for election who could face significant challenges in fulfilling their roles – those with little business experience, limited formal education or possibly insufficient literacy and numeracy skills.

This range of operating environments and skill levels means that a 'one size fits all' model of councillor development is inappropriate for the local government context. Instead, training must be

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[1] Price Waterhouse Coopers, *National financial sustainability study of local government - Overview: Working for a sustainable future*, Commissioned by Australian Local Government Association, 2006.
[2] Jeff Roorda and Associates, *The local roads funding gap: Study of local roads funding in Australia 1999 –2000 to 2019 –2020*, Commissioned by Australian Local Government Association, Canberra, October 2010.
[3] Price Waterhouse Coopers, *National financial sustainability study of local government - Overview: Working for a sustainable future*, Commissioned by Australian Local Government Association, 2006.

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tailored to suit the context of the council and the capacity of the elected member for it to be relevant and successful.

Relevant state and territory legislation

Current state and territory legislation does not mandate training for councillors. However some local government Acts and policy documents include references to a council's responsibility to support councillors in undertaking their role. Examples include:

South Australia Local Government Act 1999, Section 80A on training and development states:

1. A council must prepare and adopt a training and development policy for its members.
2. The policy must be aimed at assisting members in the performance and discharge of their functions and duties.

This is the strongest legislative provision amongst the states addressing the need to organise and formalise training for elected members, and further analysis of the benefits of this provision may lead to broader take-up in other states.

NT Local Government Act, section 101 – Role of CEO includes: 'c) to provide or obtain for the council the information and advice the council reasonably requires for effectively carrying out its functions'. Ministerial guidelines within the Act provide for a professional development allowance for:

'council members to attend appropriate and relevant conferences or training courses which sustain a member's professional competence by keeping the member informed of, and able to comply with, development in professional standards applicable to their role as a council member. Any such course or conference must have approval and be consistent with council policy in order to attract this allowance.'

NSW Division of Local Government, October 2009 'Guidelines for the payment of expenses and the provision of facilities for Mayors and Councillors in NSW', section 2.3.2 states:

'Councils should provide for training and development in their policies and make separate provision in their budgets for the payment of training and development expenses for councillors. This is in accordance with NSW Government policy, which aims to ensure that councillors have adequate training and skills development to ensure they carry out their functions effectively. The Division of Local Government is currently implementing a Councillor Development Strategy to ensure that councillors have access to the training and resources needed to understand and undertake their role effectively and to facilitate continuing professional development opportunities. Councils are also being encouraged to develop, fund and implement a councillor training and development program based on a systematic skills analysis and assessment of professional development needs of their councillors. The nature of this program will vary from council to council depending on resources and need.'

Table 3: Reference to councillor training as found in current state/territory legislation

State / Territory	Reference in Current Local Government Legislation
Queensland	There is no legislative requirement for councillor training in Queensland.
New South Wales	The Local Government Act is silent on councillor training, but there are relevant guidelines and resources**.**

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Victoria	The Victorian Local Government Act 1989 is silent on this matter.
South Australia	**South Australian Local Government Act 1999** **Part 6—Training and development** **80A—Training and development** • A council must prepare and adopt a training and development policy for its members. • The policy must be aimed at assisting members in the performance and discharge of their functions and duties. • A council may from time to time alter its policy, or substitute a new policy.
Tasmania	There is no reference in the Tasmanian legislation to training for councillors.
Northern Territory	**The Northern Territory Local Government Act, section 101 – Role of CEO** includes: c) to provide or obtain for the council the information and advice the council reasonably requires for effectively carrying out its functions'. **Ministerial Guidelines within the Act** provide for a professional development allowance for 'council members to attend appropriate and relevant conferences or training courses which sustain a member's professional competence by keeping the member informed of, and able to comply with, development in professional standards applicable to their role as a council member. Any such course or conference must have approval and be consistent with council policy in order to attract this allowance.'
Western Australia	There is no legislated/regulatory provision for training of elected members in Western Australia.

Guidelines for Councillors

State government departments and local government associations sometimes provide written material or on-line resources for councillors to guide them on their role and various topics and legislative issues. The following lists a sample of the guidelines for councillors across the various states:

State / Territory	Publications or Guidelines
Queensland	• LGAQ : Mayor's handbook 2010 - Link to handbook... • LGAQ: Councillor's Handbook and Good Governance Guide 2010 - Link to guide... • Councillor conduct guide (Queensland Crime and Misconduct commission) October 2011 - Link to guide...
New South Wales	• DLG and LGSA: Councillor Guide - Link to guide... • DLG and LGSA: Becoming a Councillor (2011) - Link to guide...
Victoria	• VLGA Good Governance Guide (2004) – updated version due April 2012 - Link to guide... • LGPRO Draft councilor induction program - Link to induction program...

State / Territory	Publications or Guidelines
South Australia	• LGASA Induction and Training Guide for New Councils - Link to guide...
Tasmania	LGAT Councillor Resource Kit (2011) - Link to kit...
Western Australia	Elected Member induction Guidelines (2011) - Link to guidelines...

Practical Constraints to Attending Training

A 2009 survey carried out by the UTS CLG on behalf of the Australian Local Government Women's Association (ALGWA)[4] found women councillors identified the following difficulties in the role:

- Time demands
- Lack of training and confidence building
- Financial considerations
- CEO and senior staff support
- Lack of information and support about elections.

These issues are not, however, gender specific and were confirmed by comments from those interviewed as part of the current review. They may also be exacerbated for councillors who work in councils with more limited resources, for example smaller or more remote councils. For example, the following comment was made by one woman councillor in the online survey:

I have been immensely disappointed at the lack of opportunities that I can afford to attend to assist me in my councillor role. Our council is not in a position to support my development, which I feel is detrimental… I pay for most of the costs myself, and the cost to me personally is at times prohibitive and difficult to manage financially as my council role has (also) adversely affected my finances.

Feedback from LGA training managers and other providers indicates they regard high councillor turnover as one of the significant issues impacting on the ability to deliver quality training programs over a sustained longer term.

In Victoria, those interviewed for this study anticipated there will be a 50% turnover of the state's 630 councillors at the next election, with some returnees and some new. Similarly in Queensland, those interviewed anticipated a 50-60% turnover at the next 2012 elections. Tasmania has a staggered four-year electoral cycle with 50% of councillors needing to stand down or re-nominate every two years.

Councillor remuneration

With only mayors/presidents ever receiving a full-time salary, remuneration for councillors is most often not sufficient to enable the councillor to leave his/her paid employment. Remuneration for councillor roles in most jurisdictions does not compensate for periods of leave without pay and or absenting from paid employment. This is seen by many as a major deterrent to stand for civic office. With councillor remuneration at the current levels, and many councillors involved in other paid work, additional time commitments for training can be difficult. This is reflected in the fluctuations

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[4] Centre for Local Government, What women are saying, On-line survey commissioned by Australian Local Government Women's Association, 2009.

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of councillor attendance at training and in the cancellation rates of planned workshops, as reported by training providers. During interviews for this research, most associations or departments indicated that many councillors exhibit a general enthusiasm for attending training at the beginning of the electoral cycle, and that this drops off as the cycle progresses.

A 2010 comparison of state and territory councillor remuneration[5] found wide variation between the rates of payment provided to mayors/presidents and councillors across Australia. The method of determining councillor remuneration varies from jurisdiction to jurisdiction. Table 1 notes that the minister for local government is responsible for this determination in three jurisdictions; a Local Government Remuneration Tribunal is in place in a further three jurisdictions; and an Independent Review Process is undertaken in one state.

Table 1: Methods by which remuneration of councillors are determined, by state/territory

State	Method
New South Wales	Set by the Local Government Tribunal. Currently under review with the Local Government Shires Association (NSW) supporting councillors remuneration being determined as a percentage of a Member of Parliament.
Northern Territory	Minister for Local Government sets the maximum allowable remuneration which is calculated as a percentage of allowances payable to a member of the Northern Territory Legislative Assembly. Councils may choose to pay less than the maximum.
Queensland	Set by the Local Government Remuneration and Disciple Tribunal every four years. The rate is a percentage of the salary of a Queensland MLA.
South Australia	Determined every four years by the independent Remuneration Tribunal and set by categories of councils. Except for the City of Adelaide, an annular remuneration allowance is set for councillors, Mayors and Presidents are entitled to four times that rate, with Deputies entitled to one and a quarter times the rate of the councillor. Specific factors must be taken into account when setting the categories. Some travel allowances are paid.
Tasmania	Set by an independent review process agreed upon by the Local Government Association of Tasmania and the state government.
Victoria	Set by the Minister for Local Government. Must consider revenue and population.
Western Australia	Levels prescribed by the Local Government Act (1995) and councils have discretion to pay per meetings attended or annual fees. Mayors or presidents attract an additional allowance.

[b] Queensland councillors of recently amalgamated local government shires are also entitled to an amalgamation loading of up to $13,050 per annum for a Category 2 Mayor if paid annually.

Source: T Lane, Elected Member Remuneration – Interstate comparison, Western Australian Local Government Association, October 2010.

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[5] T Lane, Elected member remuneration – Interstate comparison, Western Australian Local Government Association, October 2010.

Councils are typically categorised according to population, revenue and responsibilities. The number of bands or categories varies from three in Victoria to nine in Queensland. Minimum and maximum payment ranges apply to each council category. Table 3 below indicates the remuneration allowances paid by state/territory as of October 2010.

Table 2: Remuneration allowances by state/territory, October 2010

State/territory	Mayor/President		Councillor	
	$ Min	*$ Max*	*$ Min*	*$ Max*
New South Wales	14,950	207,180	7,250	31,930
Northern Territory	21,212[a]	106,058	3,815[a]	19,074
Queensland (excludes City of Brisbane)[b]	45,690	208,860	13,050	124,010
South Australia	20,000	67,200	5,000	16,800
Tasmania	25,554	99,578	7,301	28,451
Victoria	48,400	77,300	6,800	24,200
Western Australia	6,000[c]	74,000	2,400[c]	7,000

[a] Councils may choose to pay less than the prescribed minimum.

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Current available training

There is already a range of relevant training available to councillors in all states and territories, and a description of a number of existing courses is included in Appendix One. Training currently available falls into the following categories:

- Pre-election information and training
- Training provided by local government associations
- In-house training
- Collaborations
- Partnerships
- VET sector/Higher education

Pre- election information and training
Each state and territory currently offers information sessions for prospective councillors through a range of providers and delivery methods. Some states deliver these sessions using state and territory local government department employees and/or the Electoral Commission, some use private providers or the LGA, and others use a combination. In most cases LGAs work in collaboration with providers to design the program content and delivery.

Many examples of this work can be found, including:

a.   Face-to-face workshops for intending councillors.

> **Example:** NSW Pre-election Workshop 'What it means to be a local government councillor', Local Government Training Institute, a division of Hunter Councils Inc (NSW). The broad aim of the information session is to provide information to persons interested in Local Government and considering nominating for the Local Government election. The information session reviews the roles and responsibilities of a Local Government Councillor and covers: What is Local Government? Why do I want to become a Councillor? A Council's Charter; Council services and functions; The Elected Representative - the responsibilities; Undertaking a community leadership role - the challenge; The General Manager and staff relationships; Making decisions - Council meetings; Remuneration allowances for Councillors; and Nomination - how do I stand for election to become a Councillor? (http://www.huntercouncils.com.au/)

b.   Web-based information on state government websites, some council websites and LGA websites. These invite candidates to nominate and explain the responsibilities of the role.

> **Example:** A message to intending councillors can be found on the Local Government Association of Tasmania (LGAT) website. 'Being a councillor', by former LGAT President Lynn Mason, 2005; plus additional information in the July 2005 issue of LGAT News, 'Checklist skills for new councillors', adapted from a South Australian resource. (http://www.lgat.tas.gov.au/)

c.   Self-paced learning modules.

> **Example:** The Queensland Department of Local Government and Planning has prepared a resource for the 2012 election 'So you want to be a councillor? A resource for prospective candidates in Queensland local government elections.' This is a sophisticated six-module resource, designed to be self-paced. (http://dlgp.qld.gov.au/so-you-want-to-be-a-councillor/)

d.   Hard copy brochures or pamphlets, distributed to councils and providers for use in-house, information sessions for their electorate. Such information sessions are generally run by council staff.

Examples: A hard copy resource, targeted to intending nominees with low literacy skills, is 'So You Want to be on Council', produced by the Local Government Association of the NT (LGANT). (http://www.lgant.asn.au/about-lgant/publications/shire-council)

Information kits distributed by the Electoral Commissions in each state and territory.

The New South Wales Department of Local Government publication 'Becoming a councillor', developed in co-operation with the NSW LGSA (http://www.dlg.nsw.gov.au/)

Some interviewed for this study criticised the content of these resources. While there is accurate information about election processes and generic roles and responsibilities, some questioned whether this information is of sufficient depth and breadth to accurately portray the extent of the work of a councillor. A balance is required between the information needed to attract community members to nominate for council (there is often a shortage of candidates) and the reality of the time commitment, skills and experience required. Some of these resources do not paint an accurate picture of the workload, high level decision-making and often difficult community engagement required of a councillor. This could be addressed by identifying the challenges upfront and indicating the induction and support available to the candidate if elected.

Training provided by Local Government Associations (LGAs)

LGAs continue to be the key players in councillor training program development and delivery. They also provide a critical conduit between state and territory government policy directions and the operational needs of councils and councillors.

Comprehensive yearly training calendars are developed by each of the LGAs (except in NT) based on input from their member councils. This approach remains necessary due to the logistics of delivery, accessing providers and venues, and the need for an organisation to plan at least six months ahead. However, this training calendar approach is increasingly complemented (in all states and the NT by an as-needed, in-house programs.

Some associations have introduced initiatives to encourage councils to plan ahead to secure attendees at training including offering councils a system of 'pay in advance training credits'. When councils pay their LGA membership, they can purchase training vouchers. The positive uptake by the councils to this initiative shows a supportive attitude to councillor training by the council, however there still appears to be a reluctance on behalf of councillors to actually attend the training as not all vouchers are used each year.

This review found that all LGAs across Australia work with individual councils, councillors and the sector as a whole to design as-needs training that is relevant to the individual council and/or councillor needs. Feedback from the sector indicates the LGAs' ability to respond to needs is valued as an extremely positive and important role.

By using the 'one size does not fit all' approach, workshops are customised to suit each context and delivered in the council region/cluster. This suits the individual's training needs relative to their skills and context. However, the content of programs and workshops are predictably similar across all states and territories even if delivery methods vary considerably.

Findings from this review confirmed that the most common and frequently delivered training topics are those that deal with basic elements of a councillor's role and responsibilities, such as:

- Understanding legislation, especially planning legislation
- Roles and responsibilities of councillors
- Understanding the role of council staff and 'separation of powers'
- Understanding financial processes and reading the budget
- Handling the media
- Handling difficult people
- Conflict of Interest
- Effective meeting procedures
- Effective planning
- Policy development
- Strategic and business planning
- Asset management
- Transitions as legislation changes
- Understanding relationships of local government, state/territory and federal laws.

The complexity of the content delivered varies with the expertise of the councillor group and their context. Delivering 'handling difficult people' to a councillor group from a large municipal council differs significantly to that designed for councillors in a remote, predominantly Aboriginal shire in the Northern Territory. Feedback from stakeholders indicates local government associations are viewed as highly competent at delivering a topic to a range of audiences with different needs and levels of understanding.

Topics that further enhance the quality of the councillors' contributions are also available through the LGAs in each state/territory. For example:

- Connecting with the community
- Lobbying for success
- Councillors as change agents
- Community leadership
- Understanding leadership and leadership styles.

In addition to workshop sessions, some LGAs offer:

- Longer term training plans to cover the electoral cycle, for example:
  Year 1: Generic program addressing roles and responsibilities of councillors
  Year 2: Councillor recall to address current issues, relationships and current priorities
  Year 3: Councillor update on current strategic and government initiatives
- Mayors and Presidents forums
- Residential workshops (usually weekends) for senior council staff and/or Mayors
- Local government conferences.

Some LGAs are also exploring alternative models to support councils in delivering 'as needed' training tailored to their individual requirements. The NT has developed a Train the Trainer program whereby councils identify on-site trainers to undertake a Certificate IV in Training and Assessment, focusing on elected member roles and responsibilities. They then become available 'on-site' and 'as-needed' for councillor development activities. The program has had mixed success, due mainly to the identified council 'trainer' having other workplace responsibilities within the council and training consequently becoming secondary to other operational demands (for example, a number of participants were also Human Resources Managers or even CEOs). A South Australian model appears more successful, where councils employ a Governance Officer who networks with the training arm of LGASA and rolls out relevant training to councillors with support from the Association. This model

may have broader applicability, and warrants further investigation.

In-house Training

There is an increasing shift to holding training in-house at councils. Factors influencing that shift include:

- Costs and loss of revenue when councils and councillors identify their needs early in the electoral cycle so that they can be rolled up to form a year long, sector-wide training program, but then cancel at the last minute when the training is offered.
- Numerous workshops being cancelled at the last minute because of withdrawals can result in negativity towards the LGAs from those keen to participate
- Ad hoc and emerging issues that are additional to the planned calendar and difficult to include.

Councils use a range of strategies to ensure 'as needs' in-house training is cost-effective. These include:

- When appropriate, training a combination of councillors plus senior council employees to generate economies of scale. Senior council staff attending alongside councillors for relevant topics also contributes to team building, collaboration, understanding of roles and shared learning. This form of training is usually short workshops of 1-2 days only.

- Training being delivered to clusters of councils, again to increase participant numbers. Feedback indicates that council staff and councillors enjoy the opportunity to meet and work with their neighbouring counterparts.

- Training run in conjunction with formal council meetings. This approach works particularly well in remote shires or where travel for councillors is an issue. In one shire, for example, road travel, charters from communities, travel allowances, meals, accommodation and flights for Darwin-based staff to attend, brings the average cost of holding a council meeting to $20,000, even before including any additional costs for training provider fees and resources. Workshopping the agenda immediately prior to the council meeting and holding a training session or 'information day' on the day after can thus be very cost effective.

Councils can struggle to find suitably qualified local trainers, particularly in remote areas. LGAs continue to play an active role in sourcing suitably qualified trainers or providing training delivery themselves. In addition some medium sized or larger councils also source other trainers who can provide tailored in-house packages.

Collaborations and Partnerships

Training collaborations are most often between state and territory government agencies, the LGAs, and when appropriate, a topic specialist. Typically, the presenters form a 'panel of experts' to deliver the training. A training session might thus incorporate:

- A government representative addressing political and legislative issues of a topic and answering questions
- A LGA representative contributing to the design and organisation of the event, ensuring the sector contextual issues/implications are addressed and ensuring good adult learning techniques are used in the delivery
- An industry expert (lawyer, town planning authority, waste management industry expert, accountant) to provide the most up-to-date information.

This approach often works best when the topic is pressing, directly relevant to an important issue

and allows senior council staff to attend alongside the councillors, for example:

- Changes to state local government legislation and introduction of new requirements
- Significant government initiatives that impact on local government (eg tax reforms)
- Code of conduct issues
- Interpretations of new laws
- Financial management issues.

In NSW, for example, the local government sector has drawn on the support of the Ombudsman and the Independent Commission Against Corruption (ICAC) in delivering training about probity, corruption prevention and risk management.

There are also a number of cases where formal partnerships between the local government sector and other bodies are proving to be valuable in the provision of training.

> **Example:** The Australian Institute of Company Directors has formal arrangements with some states and individual councils. A successful Victorian example is a five-day Company Directors course modified to reflect the nuances of local government. Topics include Governance Essentials (such as leadership, their roles and financial management). MAV retains ownership of the intellectual property of a number of topics and ensures relevance of content and accuracy with Victorian local government legislation.

> **Example:** A formal arrangement is in place between LGANT and WALGA for the NT to access units of competency in the Diploma of Local Government (Elected Members) and use WA training expertise when necessary.

In addition, there are successful partnerships between local government associations and professional associations.

> **Example:** Local Government Managers Australia (LGMA) has developed a range of professional development and training activities mainly targeted at council staff but accessible to councillors. Amongst these is an example of a partnership with a professional association, in this case the Charter of Practicing Accountants (CPA). This collaboration has produced a national manual to help local government achieve best practice in governance. The manual is designed for mayors, councillors and senior management to assist decision-making processes, financial management and accountability to the local community. It also features a self-assessment tool to assess current governance performance and assist with the development of plans to build on existing work-place practice.

> **Example:** Local Government Managers Australia (LGMA) has developed a range of professional development and training activities mainly targeted at council staff but accessible to councillors. Amongst these is an example of a partnership with a professional association, in this case the Charter of Practicing Accountants (CPA). This collaboration has produced a national manual to help local government achieve best practice in governance. The manual is designed for mayors, councillors and senior management to assist decision-making processes, financial management and accountability to the local community. It also features a self-assessment tool to assess current governance performance and assist with the development of plans to build on existing work-place practice.

Finally, a number of partnership arrangements are in place between the local government sector, the tertiary education sector and training providers with RTO status. These allow for the provision of sector specific accredited training. The majority of this accredited training is for council staff, however pathways have been established to allow councillors to access the courses and gain accreditation if they wish (see below).

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Accredited Courses for Councillors

There was widespread agreement amongst those interviewed that training available for councillors should be accredited, cost effective, accessible and relevant. There is frustration that there are few easily articulated pathways for councillors to access accreditation for the training they undertake, as well as a lack of councillor-specific accredited programs. All states and the NT are currently working to address this (with some successes), however their efforts appear to be largely uncoordinated with considerable duplication.

At present WALGA offers the only accredited course targeted specifically to councillors, and this has been tailored to the needs of the NT in developing the Certificate IV mentioned earlier. The WALGA Diploma of Local Government (Elected Member) consists of ten units of competency:

- Councillor Roles and Responsibilities
- Ethics and Conduct of an Elected Member
- Strategic Planning
- Financial Reports and Budgets
- Change Management
- Policy Development
- Land Use Planning
- Sustainable Asset Management for Elected Members in Local Government
- CEO Performance Appraisals
- Managing Conflict.

The Diploma includes a number of flexible training pathway options for councillors, who can choose to:

- Undertake all ten units and submit all assignments tasks required to gain the full Diploma credential
- Participate in individual units as professional development, with assignments optional – this option will only gain accreditation for those units for which assignments are completed
- Apply to have the councillor's prior training, skills, knowledge and experience as an elected member accepted for Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) and hence completion of the unit of competency.

Feedback indicates the content of this Diploma is not overly academic and is focused on real-life council responsibilities, and that its delivery is relevant to councillor needs and learning abilities. A respondent from the Councillor survey said:

The WALGA Dip of Local Government (was the most valuable training I have undertaken. It was) extremely relevant and assisted (me) greatly as a new councillor to understand the roles, responsibilities, legal implications, finances, etc, etc of the job.

The WALGA Diploma is the only accredited training specifically tailored for councillors identified by this review. A second accredited option will soon be available as the MAV is finalising a course at Certificate IV level with options for undertaking additional research components to reach Diploma level. It will have eight councillor-specific modules with a strong focus on RPL availability.

There is, however, a wide range of accredited programs available of a more generic nature, focused on governance and management. These are predominantly tailored for public sector senior management staff or council employees, although councillors may access them if they wish. State and territory LGAs have partnership arrangements with tertiary institutions and RTOs to establish options for councillor access to accredited training on topics of relevance. In most cases, the flexible

training pathways mentioned above apply and a councillor may attend some or all of the modules as professional development only, or can gain credit by undertaking the required assessment tasks. Examples of this kind of training include:

- Swinburne University in Victoria offers a Graduate Management Degree course of 12 accredited modules. Currently sixteen councillors form the second cohort of Victorian councillors going through the program. It is not a specific local government qualification but does cover governance, leadership and entrepreneurial skills applicable for their current role and 'life after council'.

- LGAT has an intensive town planning course in conjunction with the University of Tasmania that offers credit for individual units if assessment components are completed.

- UTS has developed a *Graduate Certificate in Local Government Leadership* offered in NSW and available nationally in a variety of modes in conjunction with local government and university partners. Again, individual subjects can be taken as professional development.

- The Australia and New Zealand School of Government (ANZSOG) has an *Excellence in Local Government Leadership Program* for senior executives, mayors and leading elected members.

- The LGA of SA has developed a two-day general introduction course for councillors about roles and responsibilities, and collaborated with Flinders University to design assessment components. If councillors complete the assessment tasks after the workshop, they gain credit for this work and it can be counted toward a range of Flinders University graduate programs.

- Hunter Councils Inc. in NSW offers accredited courses from the Local Government Training Package. These are for council staff, however councillors can participate if topics are relevant.

- The University of Tasmania (Cradle Coast) offers a Graduate Certificate in Business which several councillors have completed.

Online learning

Online learning is increasingly being investigated as a means to cost effectively deliver resources and information to councillors and engage them in more formal training.

LGAs and most state and territory departments have established the infrastructure to provide on-line information resources and self-paced learning modules, and in some cases have made large financial commitments to be able to deliver interactive on-line learning. However, this method of delivery and engagement appears to be in its infancy as the sector is yet to fully embrace this use of technology. Feedback indicates councillors generally prefer face-to-face training delivery and a low percentage choose to take up the option of on-line learning.

A reason for this may be the limited IT skills of the current cohorts of councillors and hence difficulty in working in on-line environments. Whilst most if not all councils now communicate with councillors via email, and councillors generally have access to council documentation, reports and information, it appears the sector has some work to do before on-line learning becomes acceptable for councillors. Many councils do provide IT training for councillors, but generally it focuses on basics such as using email, accessing the web, managing on-line documents etc. However, Randwick Council is one that has developed an on-line learning program for councillor induction, and this capacity could be adapted for various other purposes.

Aspirations for Future Training

The ACELG *Learning in Local Government* online survey which was completed by 33 councillors tested some topic ideas, and respondents were given a number of subjects and asked whether they would be useful. The following table charts the responses from the councillors who completed the survey:

	Extremely useful	Quite Useful	Total
Strategy and vision	68.8%	28.1%	96.9%
Community engagement	66.7%	26.7%	93.4%
Governance and probity	58.1%	32.3%	90.4%
Financial management	51.6%	38.7%	90.3%
Service delivery options	30.0%	60.0%	90.0%
Asset infrastructure management	60.0%	26.7%	86.7%
Economic development	46.7%	40.0%	86.7%
Risk management	32.3%	51.6%	83.9%
Councillor manager relations	46.7%	36.7%	83.4%
Local government law	48.4%	32.3%	80.7%
Access and equity issues	33.3%	46.7%	80.0%
Intergovernment relations	38.7%	38.7%	77.4%
Change management	36.7%	40.0%	76.7%

The topics on this list include those that are included in many of the councillor training programs described previously and in Appendix One, however there are also some that are not currently available. These include Strategy and Vision, Community Engagement and Service Delivery options, and these are perhaps worthy of further exploration to test whether courses in these areas might be viable and appreciated by councillors, particularly in those states in which consideration of these issues has been newly mandated in strategic planning legislation.

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Key issues

There are major challenges in bridging the gap between the role councillors are required to fulfil in the 21st century, and the skills and knowledge they bring to the job. It appears that there is a range of good quality training and professional development on offer, but there is uneven provision and some concerns with access to programs. This review identified key issues in relation to councillor training as:

- Improving understanding of the role amongst intending councillors
- Ensuring councillors have the capacity to fulfil their role
- Engagement of councillors in training
- Accredited training for councillors.

Improving understanding of the role amongst intending councillors

While some form of training available about the role of councillor is available in all states and the NT, the clear message from interviews was that most first-time councillors did not fully understand the implications of what they were entering into when nominating for election. They then found the process of understanding their role, and the time commitment required, extremely daunting.

Feedback from councillors included:

- A general feeling of surprise and unpreparedness for the workload
- The difficulty of balancing time to manage all facets of their life
- A feeling of not being able to devote the amount of time they felt was required to the role (reading, community engagement activities, representation at community functions, attending council meetings, participation on council committees etc), when they still had their business to manage or a '9 to5' job and/or family commitments to meet
- The often conflicting demands of holding a leadership role within the community (which supported them being elected) and the requirements of participation on community committees and activities and their need to attend to council business.

Media coverage indicates there is public interest too in attracting more suitable candidates. The Brisbane Valley Sun, July 2011, reported that an Independent Electoral Commission would be appointed to run streamlined council elections (in Queensland)under the headline: '$250 to throw your hat in the ring.' The article referred to a suggestion from the Local Government Association of Queensland that an increase in the application fee for would-be candidates from $150 to $250 would 'reduce the number of frivolous nominations'.

Similarly, an article in the Illawarra Mercury, June 2011, about the re-introduction of councillors for Wollongong and Shellharbour councils, called for an on-line debate in the community regarding the process and qualities required to be a councillor: 'The job description for wannabe councillors and mayors ought to include qualities befitting a professional board of directors – integrity, leadership, experience for the job, team play and strategic thinking.'

Community responses to this call for on-line debate emphasised both skills and moral values:

> It would be nice if people who are educated, experienced, committed to the positive growth of the community were actually enticed into being part of the council ... you may not have to be a professor to know what is good for the community but it helps if you can actually provide some sort of intelligence to the team or even just have an understanding of basic ethics ... Instead we get stuck with the bottom feeders trying to build their little empire.

Most prospective councillors enter this arena with the right intentions, they are however waylaid in their journey by other outside influences and human greed for money and power are huge incentives to take the path of least resistance. We can set the ground rules and a good start is 1) No political affiliations; 2) Be financially secure to run a campaign independently; 3) Have a track record of working for the community, but not only on a single issue; 4) Union organisers etc are excluded; 5) Have demonstrated skills at Director level; 6) Honesty beyond reproach.

http://www.illawarramercury.com.au/article.aspx?id=2191911

A key challenge is to ensure intending councillors understand the implications of the role, without unnecessarily discouraging them from standing. There is often a shortage of candidates in some areas, so education programs should both highlight the positives in seeking election to council, and provide a realistic picture of the depth and breadth of councillor responsibilities.

Ensuring councillors have the capacity to fulfil their role
It appears from feedback received that there is a lack of fit between the skills and knowledge councillors bring to the role when first elected and those which the role requires in the 21st century. Even when councillors are well-educated, or have expertise in one or more of the many specialist areas councils must deal with (such as town planning, finance, engineering etc), they are unlikely to have the full range of skills and knowledge they need when they first become a councillor. For example, immediately understanding and putting into practice effective meeting protocol, sound policy decision-making and adherence to codes of conduct. In a comparable role, a Cabinet Minister in state, territory or federal government will have their own staff to provide independent advice on matters put before them by the public service. In local government, councillors have only their own knowledge, or that of their fellow councillors to rely on. One of the key differences between MPs and councillors is that there is usually little or no dedicated staff support for councillors, and addressing this issue may reduce the need for training.

Councils approach the management of the gap between skills and requirements of councillors in a number of ways:

- Endeavouring to upskill councillors by having a policy and strategy to support their training and making professional development opportunities available to them.
- Providing scaffolding to support the engagement of councillors in council business. This is an approach often adopted in councils or shires in the Northern Territory where English may not be the first language of the majority Aboriginal councillors. It has usually involved holding half or full day 'briefing' sessions to provide background information and clarification about issues in the upcoming council meeting.
- Supplying all councillors with up-to-date IT (mobile phones, laptops etc) and ready access to council resources and documentation on the local computer network.

However, feedback from stakeholders indicates that none of these approaches alone is resulting in councillors with the range of skills and knowledge needed to make well-informed decisions in today's complex environment. Making informed decisions lies at the heart of good democratic governance, but given the rapid turnover of elected members – estimated in two states at least as 50% at the end of each term – complete upskilling is simply not feasible.

One of the fundamentals of ensuring that councillors have the capacity to fulfil their role is an individual assessment of each councillor's skills, knowledge and learning preferences. In this way the most effective training and/or scaffolding can be designed to help ensure each is able to do their job.

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As noted earlier, some councils have created a Governance Officer or equivalent position to establish and facilitate a training and development strategy for new and ongoing councillors – this commitment of resources appropriately reflects the importance of having well-informed and highly functioning elected members.

Council self-assessment processes and state/department 'status of council' reports are being introduced in a number of states. Handled in a positive manner, these processes can assist councils to develop self-accreditation and quality improvement approaches to enhance the quality of their service delivery and governance, in addition to helping them to continue to improve. It would be a waste to use these externally imposed processes only as compliance report cards, rather than an opportunity for the sector to establish its own improvement strategies.

> **Example:** The LGA of SA initiative 'Local Excellence: Councils Working together for Communities', includes work on Assessing Performance of the Elected Body and Benchmarking/Performance Measurement. The LGASA has also developed a self-assessment tool for councillors to identify training gaps.

> **Example:** The Skills Checklist in the LGAT Councillor Resource Kit provides another self-assessment initiative.

Engaging councillors in training

The availability of relevant and good quality training for councillors does not necessarily translate into participation. Clearly the pressures of work and family commitments compete for time. Councillors interviewed reported:

- While acknowledging the importance of being fully informed and skilled in the areas of council decision making in order to participate effectively, attending training activities becomes a lower priority than work and family commitments.

- A general reluctance to participate in on-line learning with a clear preference for face-to-face training delivery.

- While acknowledging the wide range of council and sector wide information and resources available to support them in their role, many still require support in learning the basics of using IT and reading on-line.

A survey of elected members undertaken in 2009 by LGAT training personnel found the following reasons why training was not undertaken, in order of priority:

- Cannot get time off paid employment
- Too far away – travel and transport is an issue
- Cost of training is prohibitive
- Lack of support from council
- Cannot get childcare
- Learning difficulties.

These results were supported by feedback during this review from all states/territories. Another common issue noted by each state/territory is a view expressed by long-standing councillors: "Why do I need training; I have been doing this for 20 years?"

Councils and training providers are continually responding to the changing needs of the councillor. Moves such as the shift to in-house delivery, training delivered preceding and following council meetings, training provided off-site with creative program formats, providing councillors with IT such as laptops and smart phones, and providing access to training that will serve the councillor in good

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stead for when they leave the sector, could all serve to encourage participation in upskilling.

Attitudes towards training delivery and uptake vary markedly with 'name-and-shame' practices creeping into some areas. An example was given through interviews for this report of a region which resorted to publicly listing those councillors who took part in training, identifying not only the attendees but, by default, those who did not attend. The 'name and shame' approach is rarely successful and uptake continues to be low across the sector. Further investigation should be undertaken to ascertain sector-wide responses to this issue.

The review of legislation revealed a varying level of mandate for councillor training. This option has potential for promoting increased allocation of resources within councils and also at a state level for councillor training. Further testing of levels of support for mandating councillor training in each of the jurisdictions is suggested, with leadership at a national level potentially supporting moves in this direction.

Accredited training for councillors
There is sector wide agreement that contemporary training principles mean that training should 'count for something'. Consequently there is an increasing trend to design training for councillors with the option of an assessment component that will provide credits towards a qualification.

Evaluation of the quality of existing programs has been outside the scope of this report. However, it is evident that accreditation brings with it a systematic approach to quality control, and while this review suggests that existing programs are generally of a good quality, there is often no independent process in place to ensure that.

As noted above, the only accredited, councillor-specific training programs currently available in Australia are WALGA's Diploma in Local Government (Elected Member), and an associated program in the NT. A program is under development in Victoria.

In addition, there are various higher education programs at VET and university levels which are not local government or elected member specific but can be used by councillors. There is a need for better articulation between the VET and higher education qualifications, so that councillors can access qualifications which suit their existing levels of education (which vary widely) as well as their need for additional skills to fulfil their roles.

Feedback from the sector notes the current piecemeal approach across the country to establishing (and/or accessing) accredited courses specifically for councillors. There is enthusiasm from the sector to work together rather than the current siloed approach, but this would require effective coordination and a strong central point of reference.

Government Skills Australia (GSA) is one of the eleven National Industry Skills Councils that receive funding from the Australian Government to promote nationally recognised vocational education and training. The GSA Local Government Industry Advisory Committee (IAC) consists of nominees from the principal national peak bodies for local government and the Australian Services Union and would seem the most logical place for program coordination and development to be undertaken or facilitated. However, feedback from the sector suggests a low level of confidence in the IAC's current capability to undertake this coordination role.

This suggests that a discussion is needed across the sector with regard to the role and capacity of the IAC and its parent GSA, in order to determine and define the potential for the committee to play a useful role in improving funding for and access to training and development for councillors.

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Suggestions for Action

The following suggestions are put forward for consideration to the board of the Australian Centre of Excellence for Local Government, and also for the other players in this field including the Local Government Associations, State government jurisdictions, RTOs, individual councils and training providers:

1. **Facilitating a National Round Table –** ACELG could play a facilitating role in addressing the national coordination of initiatives to accredit training for local government councillors, by bringing together key sector representatives, particularly the LGAs, and the Local Government Industry Advisory Committee for an national roundtable to identify priorities for action and plans for implementation.

2. **Ongoing National Co-ordination -** This round table and subsequent ongoing networking within the sector should identify quality programs which have applicability in other locations and jurisdictions. Issues of evaluation and quality control should also be considered, as well as issues of accessibility across states and from country to urban locations. Networking between existing courses and arrangements for recognition of prior learning can be useful in providing incentives to participate in more formal training. Collaborations and partnership could also be encouraged through this process, given the benefits which arise from this form of program design and delivery.

3. **Diploma in Local Government (Elected Members)** – As a first step, LGAs and councils should consider interim adoption of the WALGA Diploma of Local Government (Elected Members) competencies as the starting point for a suite of nationally recognised accredited training for councillors.

4. **Monitoring the Role of New Players -** The LGAs have a widely recognised and important role to play in providing councillor training. The existence of new entrants into the area also offers promise, and their emerging activities warrant monitoring and further investigation in considering opportunities in the future. This would include the RTOs that are currently providing or considering providing programs for councillors, particularly in-house programs; and also new positions such as 'Governance Officer' being created within councils to (amongst other things) design or commission training programs for their own councillors.

5. **Expanded Pre- and Post-Election Training –** Additional opportunities are required for both pre-election awareness of the role of councillor, and engagement of newly elected members in training or other strategies to ensure their effectiveness in the role.

6. **Improving Takeup –** Factors influencing the takeup of training need further investigation and wider consideration amongst training providers to ensure that this intelligence informs program design. The use of online learning would be potential area for expansion, given the promise it holds in transcending issues of cost and access for councillors.

7. **Strategy, Engagement and Service Delivery -** Additional potential areas for professional development identified in the *Learning in Local Government* survey included Strategy and Vision, Community Engagement, and Service Delivery options. These are perhaps worthy of further exploration to test whether courses in these areas might be viable and appreciated for councillors, particularly in those states where consideration of these issues is now mandated in local government legislation.

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8. **Mandate for Training -** The review of legislation revealed a varying level of mandate for councillor training, and this option has potential for guaranteeing a better level of resourcing within councils and also at a state level to allocate to councillor training. The South Australian model of legislating the provision of a Councillor Training and Development Plan warrants discussion of the benefits of this approach. Further testing of levels of support for mandating councillor training in each of the jurisdictions is suggested, with leadership at a national level potentially strengthening moves in this direction for each of the states.

9. **The Role of the Industry Advisory Committee -** The Industry Advisory Committee could be strengthened to play a significantly enhanced role in identifying and responding to current gaps, arranging funding to promote solutions, and improving co-ordination and responsiveness to sector requirements.

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Appendix One – Sample Profiles of Councillor Training

The following information has been obtained from the relevant organisations' websites, and was accessed in February 2012. This list does not presume to be exhaustive, and other programs may also be available.

NSW Learning Solutions

Local Government Learning Solutions, the training unit of the Local Government Association of NSW and the Shires Association of NSW, advertise the following modules for Councillors which can be conducted in-house:

- Asset Management for Councillors
- Community Leadership
- Conflict of Interest
- Connecting with the Community
- Councillors as Change Initiators
- Development Approvals - The Heritage Perspective
- Dynamic Presentation Skills
- Effective and Fair Meeting procedures
- Financial Issues in Local Government
- Handling Difficult People for Councillors
- Know Your Planning Legislation
- Long Term Strategic and Financial Planning
- Managing Time and Stress
- Managing Information Overload - Speed Reading
- Media Skills (basic and advanced programs available)
- Mediation Skills for Councillors
- Pre Election prospective candidate briefings
- Preventing Bullying and Harassment Training for Councillors
- The Effective Chair in Local Government (half day)
- The Elected Life (an induction program for Councillors)

Local Government Association of Queensland

The Local Government Association of Queensland offers the following programs and courses for Council Members:

- Communicating with the Media
- Corporate Planning
- Financial Understanding for Elected Members
- Managing Council's reputation, issues and risks
- Media Release Writing
- Media Training
- Professional Development for Elected Members
- Team Management Systems
- Town Planning for Councillors

LGAQ offers the Diploma of Local Government Administration to elected members, a number of whom have successfully completed since 2005.

Other programs include a two day orientation/induction program for new and returning elected

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members following each quadrennial election as well a one day update program in the intervening years.

LGASA – Education and Training Services

The LGA Education & Training Service offered the following training and seminars for Council Members in 2011:

Post Election Council Members' Training Course

The course is designed to assist post-election Council Members to quickly gain the skills required to function well as a team. It will provide participants with a good understanding of their roles and responsibilities and where to access the information required for good decision making. The training will cover the following topics which can be tailored to meet the needs of individual Councils and/or groups of Councils:

- Legal Responsibilities
- Governance and Meetings
- Financial Management

This course is offered to all Councils on an in-house or regional delivery basis. The topics covered can be tailored to meet the needs of individual Councils and/or regions. Councils are encouraged to hold an in-house session to receive the full benefit of a session tailored to their Council's needs. Where an in-house session is not suitable, the LGA can organise regional sessions.

New Council Members' Residential Program

A New Council Member's Residential Program was held on Friday and Saturday, 25 & 26 February 2011. New Council Members are the primary target for this program, however continuing Members could consider attending as a 'refresher' on their roles and responsibilities.

The Certificate of Completion for this program is co-badged LGA and Flinders University. Participants are offered an optional post-course assignment that can lead to the issue of a further Certificate of Achievement and the opportunity to receive credit towards the Graduate Certificate in Public Sector Management at Flinders University.

Six key topic areas covered will be as follows:

- Role of Council Members
- Introduction to Meetings and Governance
- Leadership - Understanding Local Government as a Participant in Public Policy
- Risk Management
- Introduction to Financial Sustainability, Financial Management and Asset Management
- Assessing Council Performance

Council Members' Strategic Issues Residential Program

A Council Members' Strategic Issues Residential Program was held for all Council Members on 6 & 7 May 2011. This annual residential seminar is designed to raise awareness and understanding of current priority strategic issues. Topics covered in 2011 may include:

- National Local Government issues
- State/Local Government relations issues
- Climate Change initiatives
- Planning Reforms
- Asset Management

- Financial Management

The seminar provides a unique opportunity for Council Members across the State to hear from expert speakers on a range of key issues currently facing Local Government and to share views with colleagues from other Councils.

Mayors' and Chairpersons' Residential Seminar

A Mayors' and Chairpersons' Residential Seminar will be held on 29 & 30 July 2011. This residential will focus on the challenges inherent to these positions in Councils. Topics to be covered in the seminar program may include:

- Role and function of the Mayor/Chairperson
- National and State issues affecting Local Government
- Working with the media
- Role and function of the Local Government governance panel
- Working in a political environment
- Team building
- Maintaining Staff/Council Member relationships

New Online Training modules

The LGA has developed 6 online training modules to assist new Council Members to quickly gain the skills required to function well in their new roles. These modules have been designed to complement the face-to-face training programs that are also offered to new Council Members. The module titles are as follows:

- Roles and Responsibilities of Councils
- Roles and Responsibilities of Council Members
- Conflict of Interest
- Register of Interests
- Council and Committee Meeting Procedures
- Financial Management and Reporting

Municipal Association of Victoria

The MAV offers the following professional development for elected members:

Company Directors' Course

The Company Directors' Course enhances councillors' and senior local government officers' ability to contribute at a higher level and create opportunities for themselves. The five-day course is delivered by the Australian Institute of Company Directors, an organisation for directors and those seeking to become directors.

Councillor Development Weekend

The Councillor Development Weekend features high-profile keynote speakers discussing topical issues affecting the local government sector. The weekend also includes skill-development workshops.

Governance Essentials for Local Government

Governance Essentials for Local Government runs over one-and-a-half-days and includes three modules conducted by the Australian Institute of Company Directors:

- 'The role of the council and councillors'
- 'Leadership and the councillor's role'

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- 'Introduction to finance for councillors'

Graduate Diploma in Management

Councillors and officers can apply to study for a Graduate Diploma in Management. The diploma focus on leadership, governance and strategy, and provides knowledge and skills that can be in council roles. Swinburne University offers the Graduate Diploma in Management as a part-time program to be delivered face-to-face in Melbourne.

Mayoral Program

The Mayoral Program targets the special skills needed to perform the role of mayor and deputy mayor. Training is provided throughout the year to support these office holders.

Understanding Local Government

Understanding Local Government is a workshop designed for those who are new to working in the local government sector. The workshop covers:

- the broader Australian political context and framework
- local government's role, responsibility and function within Victoria
- governance
- the role and responsibilities of councillors and officers

Victorian Local Government Association

The VLGA delivers an annual **Essential Mayors' Weekend,** and in 2012 this will be anchored around four Masterclasses:

- Communication and the media in the final year
- Mayors governing, leading and surviving in the final year
- Leading the councillor team in the final year
- Leading during a crisis or disaster

There is also time built in to the program for mayors to network effectively, and mayors can avail themselves of one-on-one mentoring opportunities throughout the weekend.

The VLGA also offers tailored programs in:

- Do I want to become a Mayor?
- Media training and presentation skills
- Meeting procedures
- Influencing and working with your local government
- New Councillor Induction
- Beyond being the Mayor
- Being Deputy Mayor

Western Australian Local Government Association

Councillor Roles & Responsibilities

Councillor Roles and Responsibilities covers the behaviours and actions required of Elected Members in meeting their roles and responsibilities. Knowledge of the legislation and regulations within which councils must operate is essential in order for Elected Members to lead and support their communities.

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Ethics and Conduct of an Elected Member

This unit introduces leadership concepts and the behaviours required of Elected Members in their role as leaders of council and prominent leaders in the community. This module will provide Elected Members with an understanding of current ethical issues and principles to ensure an appropriate, professional and positive ethical framework is maintained.

Strategic Planning

Strategic Planning describes the performance outcomes, skills and knowledge required to establish the strategic direction of Council. It requires analysis and interpretation of relevant markets, capability assessment of the Council and its existing and potential competitors and allies.

Financial Reports & Budgets

This unit gives Elected Members the skills and knowledge required to analyse financial reports and budgets. The purpose of this training is to inform Elected Members of their role in monitoring and guiding the activities of their Local Government, specifically in relation to working to ensure organisational finances are appropriately allocated and accounted for. This unit requires participants to be familiar with and able to navigate comfortably around Microsoft Excel.

Change Management

This unit is about planning for and initiating organisational change. It highlights the need for a thorough planning of the change process including fully scoping the need for change, consultation with stakeholders and the evaluation of actual outcomes against those that had been planned. For Elected Members, understanding is gained in how to best cope with change through identifying its causes and utilising methods of managing its effects.

Policy Development

This unit covers establishing, coordinating and promoting policy development within the context of environmental management issues which face the Local Government sector. It examines the development of policy through discussions, policy structure and its changing nature using examples of an environmental nature.

Land Use Planning

This unit describes the performance outcomes, skills and knowledge required to make decisions in land use planning as a member of the council of a local government. Some aspects of these activities are subject to legislation, rules, regulations and/or codes of practice relevant to different job roles and jurisdictions.

Sustainable Asset Management

This unit provides the skills and knowledge necessary for Elected Members to effectively carry out their role in sustainable asset management within their communities. The need for Elected Members to develop skills which allow them to analyse sustainable long term financial planning and asset management is essential to the long term prosperity of their Local Governments.

CEO Performance Appraisals

This training provides the skills and knowledge required for Elected Members to manage the performance of their Chief Executive Officer. It covers work allocation and the methods to review performance, reward excellence and provide feedback where there is a need for improvement. The unit makes the link between performance management and performance development, and reinforces both functions as a key requirement of an effective CEO.

Managing Conflict

This unit concerns managing conflict within councils and the wider community. On completion of this training it is envisaged that Elected Members and Chief Executive Officers will be able to identify common communication roadblocks, the source of conflicts within council and develop techniques for resolving conflict situations.

Meeting Procedures

Participants are encouraged to use debating techniques that ensure they can readily contribute to robust debate. Practical examples of good chairmanship assist presiding members to run meetings in a fair and equitable way that increases the productivity of the meeting. The course covers the role of council, elected members and the officers who attend the meeting in an advisory capacity and underpinning knowledge about the legislative framework within which local government meetings are held. An opportunity to experience the proper use of Standing Orders and how this contributes to successful meetings is also provided.

Professionally Speaking

Professionally Speaking is an interactive workshop specifically designed to get participants 'battle-ready' and offers practical techniques for handling unfamiliar public speaking situations with confidence and aplomb. While the focus of the session is on demystifying the media and getting the best result from every media opportunity, these skills can also be effectively used in other business settings.

Diploma of Local Government (Elected Members)

WALGA has developed a Diploma qualification specifically to meet the needs of Elected Members in Western Australia. The Diploma content covers areas that directly relate to the roles and responsibilities of Elected Members and will provide a nationally recognised qualification specifically for Councillors, Mayors and Presidents.

Local Government Association Tasmania

Elected Members' Residential Workshop

In February 2012 LGAT will be running a two day workshop entitled 'Making the Most of Life in Local Government'. Topics for the workshop include:

- Get the Most out of your Meetings
- The Local Government Act and You
- The Fundamentals of Local Government Finance
- The Ethical Obligations of Councillors
- The ABC of Asset Management
- Land Use Planning
- The Role of LGAT and ALGA

Local Government Association of the Northern Territory

Good Governance 2012 – Induction Training for Elected Members

Good Governance 2012 will provide local government elected members in the Northern Territory with an invaluable opportunity to build on the skills and knowledge needed to be an effective elected member. The event will take place at the Darwin Convention Centre, Darwin Waterfront on Wednesday 9th and Thursday 10th May 2012.

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The six themes below will be presented at the conference in two streams. The FUNDAMENTALS for newly elected and less experienced members and UPSKILL for experienced and re-elected members.

- You The Councillor
- Leadership (As A Councillor)
- Council (Structures And Roles)
- Money
- Process (How Things Work)
- Policy And Planning

GOOD GOVERNANCE 2012 will provide training, ideas and inspiration to elected members with a mixture of open forums, presentations and discussions designed to facilitate an understanding and appreciation of the skills and knowledge needed to be an effective elected member. The program will allow delegates to choose topics of interest and at a level that is relevant to their understanding.

Australian Institute of Company Directors

Governance Essentials for Local Government

Governance Essentials for Local Government is a sector specific version of the Foundations of Directorship program. Designed to provide councillors, mayors and executive management, it provides a basic overview of their duties and responsibilities through interactive working sessions and the use of relevant case studies. Governance Essentials for Local Government consists of:

- **The Role of the Council and Councillor**
  Examines the governance role of the council.
- **Leadership: The Councillor's Role**
  Provides an understanding of a councillor's own leadership style and that of others, leading to a more effective, high performing council.
- **Risk: Issues for Councillors**
  Introduces the councillor's role in risk oversight and monitoring including the impact on councillors at a personal and organisational level.
- **Introduction to Financial Information for Councillors**
  Provides and introduction to understanding financial reports within the regulatory requirements of local government

Mode of Study
Interactive facilitated sessions
Governance Essentials for Local Government is also offered through the In-Boardroom service.

Duration
All courses – 2 full days (14 hours)
Individual courses – 1/2 day (3.5 hours)

Mosman Council

Councillor Induction Program

A comprehensive induction program for Councillors elected at the September elections was organised by Mosman Council staff, SHOROC, and the Department of Local Government. All presentations made to Councillors are available:

- 01 Councillor Induction Program (PDF 63KB)
- 02 Record of Attendance (PDF 10KB)

- 03 Introduction 02OCT2008 (PDF 1MB)
- 04 MOSPLAN & Policies 07OCT2008 (PDF 841KB)
- 05 Code of Conduct 09OCT2008 (PDF 438KB)
- 06 SHOROC Induction Seminar 19OCT2008 (PDF 1MB)
- 08 Environment & Planning Presentation 23OCT2008 (PDF 3MB)
- 09 Urban Planning Notes 23OCT2008 (PDF 88KB)
- 11 Development Services Notes 23OCT2008 (PDF 27KB)
- 12 Community Development Overview 30OCT2008 (PDF 1MB)
- 13 Community Development Community Services 30OCT2008 (PDF 1,012KB)
- 14 Community Development Library Services 30OCT2008 (PDF 2MB)
- 15 Community Development Library Resources 30OCT2008 (PDF 6MB)
- 16 Community Development Cultural Services 30OCT2008 (PDF 4MB)
- 17 DLG Councillor Information Seminar 06NOV2008 (PDF 608KB)
- 18 Corporate Services Overview 11NOV2008 (PDF 2MB)
- 19 Occupational Health & Safety 11NOV2008 (PDF 221KB)
- 20 Financing the Council 13NOV2008 (PDF 626KB)
- 21 Planning System Legislative Framework 20NOV2008 (PDF 407KB)
- 22 Planning System State Strategic Planning 20NOV2008 (PDF 637KB)
- 23 State Strategic Planning notes 20NOV2008 (PDF 24KB)
- 24 Planning System Standard Instrument & MLEP 20NOV2008 (PDF 1MB)
- 25 Standard Instrument Notes 20NOV2008 (PDF 19KB)
- 26 Draft LEP notes 20NOV2008 (PDF 64KB)
- 27 Planning System Current Mosman Planning Framework 20NOV2008 (PDF 939KB)
- 28 Current Mosman Planning Framework notes 20NOV2008 (PDF 16KB)
- 30 CEC and Infrastructure Levy 02DEC2008 (PDF 2MB)
- Balmoral Tramshed Amenities Pavilion - Concept Plan - Option 3 (PDF 5MB)

Items 7, 10 and 29 are short video presentations that will not be uploaded. One is an excerpt from ‘Mosman's Built Heritage’ – the other two are video slideshows. They do not contain additional information to that available in the presentations above.

WORLD-CLASS LOCAL GOVERNMENT TO MEET THE EMERGING CHALLENGES OF 21ST CENTURY AUSTRALIA

ABOUT ACELG

ACELG is a unique consortium of universities and professional bodies that have a strong commitment to the advancement of local government. The consortium is led by the University of Technology Sydney's Centre for Local Government, and includes the University of Canberra, the Australia and New Zealand School of Government, Local Government Managers Australia and the Institute of Public Works Engineering Australia. In addition, the Centre works with program partners to provide support in specialist areas and extend the Centre's national reach. These include Charles Darwin University and Edith Cowan University.

PROGRAM DELIVERY

ACELG's activities are grouped into six program areas:
- Research and Policy Foresight
- Innovation and Best Practice
- Governance and Strategic Leadership
- Organisation Capacity Building
- Rural-Remote and Indigenous Local Government
- Workforce Development

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