

Research and Policy Foresight Program



Overview of ACELG

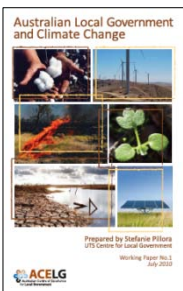
The Australian Centre of Excellence for Local Government (ACELG) was established in mid 2009 to encourage the adoption of innovative practices and solutions, from the way services are delivered through to advancing the interests of local communities in national policy discussions. ACELG's activities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

Why is the research program a priority for ACELG?

Research is a priority for ACELG because it believes that without sound evidence local government is vulnerable to poor public policy making. The contribution by local government to the national research and development effort is currently considered to be minimal¹ and ACELG believes this situation should be challenged.

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

What are the current research activities?



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

The first paper in the series, *Local Government and Climate Change*, is available on the ACELG website. Other working papers due for completion in early 2011 include:

Options for Consolidation in Local Government: A Fresh Look

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

Local Government Reviews and Inquiries

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

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

Implications of the Henry Review of Taxation for Local Government

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

Roles and Relationships between Mayors and Chief Executives

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

Working papers due for completion in mid 2011 include:

Approaches to Community Engagement

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

Evolution in Community Governance: Building on What Works

Led by AUT University this paper is designed to provide an overview of current developments in community governance through reviewing local and international literature and conducting 'on ground' case studies of two different approaches to community governance. The research is being funded by ACELG, the Local Government Managers Association (National) and the Municipal Association of Victoria.

How is the research program being managed?

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

Where will the research be disseminated?

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

How can councils get involved?

Australian Councils are invited to provide feedback on completed papers, provide suggestions for further research topics and request assistance in undertaking their own research. The ACELG Research Partnership Program currently being established can provide matching funding for council initiated research. Guidelines will be available on the ACELG website by mid February 2011.

Further information

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