

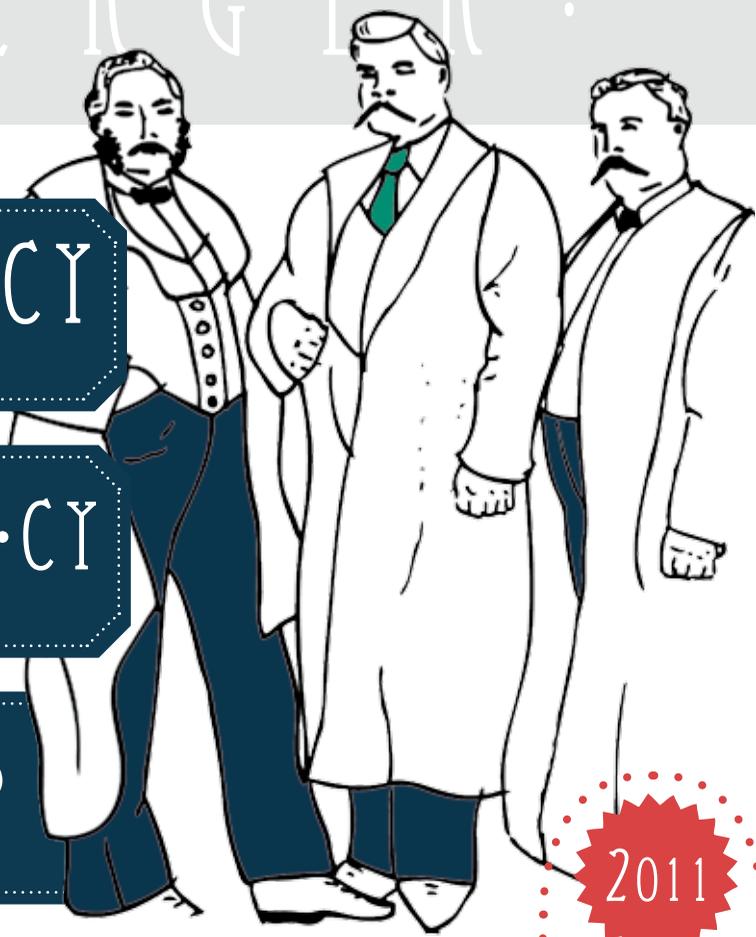
· · · THE · · ·  
· E M E R G E R ·

is local  
government

DE·MO·CRA·CY  
{dih-mok-ruh-see} noun, plural -cies.

BU·REAUC·RA·CY  
{byoo-rok-ruh-see} noun, plural -cies.

O·R· . . . . ?



2011

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## EDITORS NOTE

A room full of enthusiastic strangers was quickly turned into a room full of stunned faces, the question we had been collectively asked looming larger than life in the room around us.

It was May 2011, and we had completed our first Emerging Leaders workshop; beginning the two day retreat as strangers and committing to working our way towards an eventual close knit team over the coming months.

But the question, at first eagerly anticipated and then impatiently longed for, created deafening silence...

### “Local Government: Democracy, bureaucracy, or...?”

And so it began. Should we analyse what these words mean for us in local government? Who should we interview? How long should our investigations take? Should we present a formal report and reflect it in our presentation word for word? Should we take a risk, think outside the box, challenge our own perceptions?

This magazine publication is the result of many hours of deliberations - sometimes calm, constructive conversations and sometimes heated, intense, passionate debates.

Together our Emerging Leaders wanted to produce a written document and presentation that reflected our question. We wanted to challenge what we in the sector all understand by local government. We wanted this publication to reflect the myriad of different opinions, the dichotomous ways to examine local government and the variety of techniques we used to fulfil this task.

Wouldn't it be a dry old world if we were all the same, and all councils did the same things?

Enjoy the thought provoking articles, laugh at the very serious job ads, question the status quo when discovering our opinions, and all the while question:

What do you think of local government – is it democratic, bureaucratic, or... something else?



## YOUTH REPORT

## COMPULSORY VOTING FOR YOUTH S

On Thursday 25 August 2011, nine Youth Action Volunteers took part in a Parliamentary style debate to discover the pros and cons of making voting in local government elections compulsory.

They also designed a 'mock' Bill - Local Government Voting Act 2011.

The scenario:

The State Government was introducing a 'mock' Bill to make voting in local government elections compulsory. The Bill included conditions that:

- local government education be supported through the education system
- promotional strategies to raise awareness of local government be undertaken by councils
- a new compulsory voting requirement be introduced.

It was the Opposition's job to dispute the Bill. Eight youths were divided into two teams (four formed the Government and four formed the Opposition) with the ninth person becoming the Speaker for the debate.

Each member was able to voice their own opinions on the Bill before the mock parliament. Government members stated:

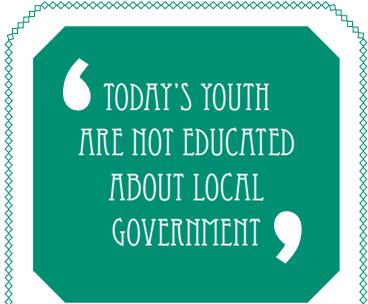
- "It's about ensuring that people have a say in their council."
- "It's educating students about the society in which they live."
- "Making a class for students where it's not a pass or fail but until the teacher is satisfied the students have a sound understanding"
- "It will increase participation in local government elections and place increased emphasis on elected bodies to represent all not a small minority"

The Opposition stated:

- "Making students learn about local government puts more strain on the student."
- "Does this mean we will have federal type elections for councils?"
- "Teachers have enough to deal with anyway"
- "People move in and out of local government areas, how do you know you will have even and consistent representation of the current population?"

Throughout the debate, it became clear that all young people participating agreed that voting in local government elections should be made compulsory in the real world. They collectively raised the issue that today's youth are not educated about local government through the education system, media or otherwise and felt this may negatively impact on its significance in the community. They also felt that a general lack of awareness of local government and its functions affected the number of people interested in voting in local government elections.

When it came time to vote in the mock Parliament, some of the young people didn't vote in favour of the Bill simply because they did not agree with the penalties associated with not voting. However all were in favour of a similar Bill being introduced without the penalties.



TODAY'S YOUTH  
ARE NOT EDUCATED  
ABOUT LOCAL  
GOVERNMENT

## SPECIAL REPORT

WOULD YOU LIKE  
FRIES WITH THAT?

In the 21st Century, we are accustomed to the 'side orders' that claim to improve our lot in life.

From the hand held beater to the mix master. From an open fire to a six burner barbeque. Let's not forget George Foreman's grill and Betty Crocker's cakes - all wonderful examples of the delectable advances that the world has welcomed to make modern life more convenient.

But there's a catch. Each new delicious advancement has created a different set of calorie filled issues that we have come to tolerate as a by-product of our chosen way of life.

We might not specifically ask for it, but when offered a deep fried extra, we tend to accept these 'side orders' as part of the deal.

And when we look at our political context and the way we are governed in Australia, and South Australia, it seems bureaucracy has become the irresistible side order of 'fries' that accompany our satisfying democratic 'burger'.

Coincidentally, bureaucracy (our side order of fries) comes from the French word 'bureau' which means desk. Bureaucracy is a mandate or rule developed from the 'office' or desk. We

follow these rules like a recipe to avoid mistakes and achieve the optimal form of government. A democratic government often employs starchy bureaucratic means to achieve its aim - some may say a necessary (salty) evil to satisfy our hunger for democracy.

Local government is formed on democratic principles. **“We value the right to nominate and elect representatives, we believe in the ‘one vote / one value’ ethos.”**

We agree on common goals and the governance structures which help us achieve them. As public officers we uphold the legislation which helps our society function. Without our

bureaucratic rules, each decision made by our government would be a gamble, with our elected leaders holding the (hot) chips in the palm of their hand.

Local government could not be an effective and successful democracy without the support of bureaucratic practices.

So can we do without our side order? Not likely. We are reliant on the convenience of bureaucratic fries to complete our democratic value meal.

Disclaimer - the popularity of side orders may change. Heston, Ramsey and even ‘home made’ Nigella urge us to think outside our McSquare.





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Local government has long held a desire to be included in the Australian Constitution. In 1974 and 1988, the Commonwealth governments proposed referenda and local government had little choice but to support the proposals. The desire to be included was given new momentum by the Federal Labor Government's election promise in 2007 to consult with local government on the process for achieving constitutional recognition. Since the election, the government has placed the issue on the agenda of the Australian Council of Local Governments and the Australian Local Government Association (ALGA) has raised the issue at the Local Government and Planning Ministers' Council.

So why does local government want constitutional recognition? Well, it's all about the money!

The Local Government Association of South Australia (LGA) has announced that every South Australian council has passed formal resolutions backing the ALGA's objective of clarifying once and for all the Commonwealth's power to fund councils directly. So this time, local government's position is clear. This power has been further confused by the High Court decision in *Pape v. Commissioner of Taxation*.

The LGA has stressed that Commonwealth funding programs are vital for communities across the nation, for example, the Australia's Roads to Recovery (R2R) Program. The program delivers more than \$28 million a year to SA local

roads. Local roads make up 80% of the nation's road length but is due to expire in 2013-14. Every three years local government is forced to go cap in hand back to the Commonwealth Government to seek an extension of the program. On top of that, a recent judgement in the High Court has raised concerns about the Commonwealth's powers to provide this funding.

History has demonstrated that achieving constitutional change is an enormous challenge, and local government is keenly aware of the hurdle it faces. To achieve a change to the constitution a majority of voters must support the change, in a majority of the States (four out of six - the two territories do not count for this purpose).

So why have the previous two attempts failed? Well, research undertaken by the ALGA sheds some light on the issue:

- 25 % of Australians either do not know or believe we do not have a Constitution. The figure is higher among younger Australians
- Only 22% know we need a majority of voters in a majority of states to change the constitution.
- While 60% think local government is not recognized in the Constitution, 48% think the state governments are not recognized.
- Questions regarding attitudes to changing the Constitution indicate that there is no really strong prejudice against changing it – nor is there a burning desire for reform. Almost 70% say it would depend on the issue.

So next for the next trip around, education and information may just be the key to getting local government recognition over the line.



## A FRANK ELECTED MEMBER PERSPECTIVE

On the question of Local Government: Democracy, Bureaucracy or...? Councillor John Angas from Barossa Council says:

'Did you really need to ask'?

I have been involved with local government as an elected member since 2000. I have been a member of council committees of one sort or another for probably 30 years.

My entry wasn't through a burning ambition or desire to rip the Council into gear. No, I was tapped gently on the shoulder when a by-election occurred and it was suggested that I give it a go. I had been far too long farming and raising a family to even think about local government. I was elected to Council at the by-election with a comfortable margin. I'm not sure why, I didn't electioneer or campaign more than making a dozen or so phone calls. I have to say it was a gratifying experience to find so much support. I'm still not sure why.

As an elected member, the learning curve is steep. A farmer one minute and then expected to know all the ins and outs of Council the next. Let me assure you, the Local Government Act is not my bedtime reading! That's why we have council staff and then people like me with the good ideas, projects, policies and more ideas, and almost none of them see the light of day.

Now I don't want you to think I'm a jaundiced old or middle aged grump, however I have had the privilege of making my own decisions and taking

responsibility for them most of my working life. Life in Council doesn't always afford quite the same satisfaction. Remember the Act I talked about earlier and the regulations and the policies and the development plan and a whole host of documents and people, seemingly essential for our orderly development and existence.

So the challenge to me as an elected member has been to balance all the interests in an unbiased manner. Personally, I've had to toughen up. In my first term of Council I wanted to please everybody who had a concern. I didn't want to fine people for misdemeanours, I found some of the enforcement notices very direct, almost rude – couldn't we be more polite?

I guess back on the farm I am isolated to a degree from some of the less well intentioned people of the community. I found that our staff were often the people taking the heat from cranky rate payers. I have found though that some of these people – not all, but most just want to be listened to and I think if I have one skill as an elected member, it is to listen more than talk.

I sometimes think of local government as the bastard child of Mr Federal and Miss State Government. Neither state nor federal government really want to acknowledge our existence, but we are incredibly useful for the provision of services which they don't want to know about.

We don't constitutionally exist so I believe we are not entitled to tax residents. We can raise rates and have to rely on handouts from our higher tiers of government. Yet, we are totally

subservient to the state government through the Act. Our systems from top to bottom must be almost crystal clear, everything we do is subject to public scrutiny, we can't declare a budget/financial plan and implement it. No, it has to undergo public scrutiny – criticism and praise, adjustment and fine tuning, and hopefully adoption.

pretty obvious. The thing is to make it work.

I often receive phone calls to the effect that 'We can't hire the local hall, there's a 40 page risk assessment document required'. My sympathies go out to these people; bonds, insurance and a half day negotiating the terms and conditions of hire.

DEMOCRACY, BUREAUCRACY OR...?  
'DID YOU REALLY NEED TO ASK?'

Try that on the state and feds. Our financial position at any point in time must be able to be determined and rightly so. Try that on the state and feds. Anyway enough about our parents.

Local Government: Democracy, Bureaucracy or what? I don't know, but keep a few things in mind. I have said to our CEO on more than one occasion, elected members lack relevance. Our Council agendas contain more and more (in my opinion), irrelevant policies which are not generated by us, but from state government requiring us to report this or that or the other. It all gets a bit beyond the pale (sic) when you look at all the rules and regulations which accompany the good ship local government. Just look at the Act,

Council's development plan and policy manuals for a start. I'm still wondering who posed this question – Democracy or Bureaucracy – it's

I know we can't turn back the hands of time to a less complicated, less litigious, easier time just to satisfy community, but as potential managers the local government emerging leaders can enable elected members to streamline procedures, soften the brick walls and above all, keep an open mind. My experience with local government is that councillors rely too heavily on officer opinion because that's the easy option.

If you encounter elected members who challenge your thinking, don't automatically dismiss him or her as a nutter, they may have something that you haven't thought of. No one likes change for the sake of it but its going to happen whether we like it or not. Entrenched ideas, habits and practices will only lead to an inward looking local government.

Fresh ideas need to be enthusiastically explored. Be the one to identify a new or innovative suggestion whether it stems from staff, elected members or peer groups. Take a risk occasionally, put something out there and see how it is reacted to, you may be surprised."

(edited version of a presentation to the 2011 Emerging Leaders Rural Retreat by Councillor John Angas, Barossa Council)



BUSINESS  
REPORT



LOCAL GOVERNMENT:  
THE NEXT BIG THING

Has local government in South Australia lost its way? Are we happy to just keep producing a 'scrambled egg' of nuts and bolts services? Are we just waiting for the next big thing to materialize? Jeff Tate, former Chief Executive Officer of the City of Onkaparinga, posed this question to a group of local government emerging leaders.

Jeff highlighted local government's focus throughout history, saying that in this current decade, local government has no sense of great reform, unlike the past few decades where a decisive direction emerged in each decade's infancy. In the 1980's local government created and centralised essential services such as the local superannuation scheme, risk services and the worker's compensation scheme.

He went on to explain that the 1990's was the 'amalgamation' era, which reduced the number of councils in South Australia from 119 to 68, with management reform and financial sustainability leading the charge in the 2000's.

So what is the reform agenda for the next decade? According to Jeff:

"Local government needs to keep itself relevant and must be a leader in change and contemporary issues for local societies. Justifying its existence solely on the provision of basic services is limited. Libraries, waste management, public health, parks maintenance, community development and planning could all be managed by state government, or brokered to the private and not for profit sector. What is our point of difference? Why is local any better than state delivered initiatives?"

"Keeping it local brings real meaning to the word 'democracy' by giving control to the local dimension and giving local meaning to local lives. Unlike the federal and state governments, local

government is able to undertake community engagement in its purest form. You can just step out the door and you are right there, in the thick of it, raw community opinion is never far away.

So is the current push for local government reform in 2010, specifically for constitutional recognition, going to work? Jeff thinks that it's probably not the silver bullet in terms of stitching up local government's future relevance; it's more likely to be about innovative leadership initiated at a local level.

IT'S GOT TO BE ABOUT  
DEMOCRACY, BUT  
BUREAUCRACY DELIVERS  
SERVICE, AND SERVICE  
SHOULD NEVER BE  
POLITICISED.

For instance:

- Energy – local production and distribution
- Water – local storage, reuse and transfer
- Production – local government should be leading this discussion.

The emerging leaders then put to Jeff the ever elusive question - 'Local government: democracy, bureaucracy or?'

"It's got to be about democracy, but bureaucracy delivers service, and service should never be politicised. As for the '?'..... maybe that stands for partner, enabler, official structure or localism," Jeff said.

Jeff Tate resigned from his position as the inaugural Chief Executive Officer at the City of Onkaparinga in October 2011. Jeff has given over 30 years service in local government and is well known for his great vision and strategic thinking. He is now directing his career into the world of consultancy and is available to offer his services to in local government. He will be truly missed at the City of Onkaparinga, but his footprint remains.

The District Council of Resident's Utopia

# CAREER OPPORTUNITY

You will be responsible for a huge budget, assets in the billions, managing the competing interests within the community and the management of hundreds of staff. A key outcome of the role will be to increase services while decreasing rates.

Applications from senior officers in local government are welcome as well as applications from CEOs with transferable skills from outside the sector.

A salary package that is neither attractive nor competitive is being offered as we believe you should be paid similarly, or less than the average wage in our community. The satisfaction of assisting our community should be payment enough!



J O B  
NOTICES

## Top Local Government Staff

(Multiple positions available)

# POSITIONS AVAILABLE

If you have a strong focus on future directions are passionate about Community engagement and consultation processes and have a clear understanding of the needs of the community we need you!

With your clear direction through business and strategic planning and your highly sought after skilful and personable approach you will assist council through sustainable growth.

Essential to this role, you must have sound interpersonal and communication skills and a willingness to have FUN!

Supreme applications ONLY.

\*Those without personality, no sense of humour, drive or tolerance need not apply.

## LOCAL GOVERNMENT IS DEMOCRATIC BY DESIGN

### BUT IS IT BUREAUCRATIC BY NATURE?

By intent, local government is a democracy – power is vested in the people and exercised directly by them through their elected representatives.

If only life was that simple. Is it possible there are factors which push local government off its democratically-elected track and into bureaucracy? Bureaucracy, where decisions are made by government officials as opposed to the peoples' elected representatives, can be a dirty word often bandied about by the press.

Local government has the capacity for responsiveness through local action. It has the potential to make decisions and deliver services in ways which are sensitive to its local community, economic and social conditions. At times, this can be over shadowed by the central control of state government. This was seen when the state made changes to the planning controls of Adelaide City Council.

To be truly democratic, local authorities must possess sufficient power, independence and financial resources to govern in a way which is distinctive, meets the needs of its community and lives up to the expectations of citizens. Does

state government help or hinder this process? Do the limitations imposed on councils by state government decrease local government democracy or do they assist in providing well needed resources?

Amalgamations and shared services is another topic that raises its head from time to time. What impact does the size of a Council and its financial capacity have on its democratic design?

Compare the smallest metropolitan Council in South Australia – with a population of 7,500 and eight elected members (ratio  $\approx 1:937$ ) - to the City of Brisbane with its population of 1.06 million and 27 elected members (ratio  $\approx 1:39,259$ ). If democracy is about representation, the smaller the ratio the more democratic, right? But how many of these residents vote? Things are never as easy as they seem.

Voting in local government elections in South Australia is voluntary and prior to the introduction of postal voting in 1997; the rate of voter participation in contested elections rarely exceeded 20 per cent. Since postal voting was made an option in 2000, the rate has been consistently above 30 per cent. It peaked in its first year when 40 per cent of voters participated. Since that time, the trend has been downward, with 33 per cent in 2003, 31 per cent in 2006 and 33 per cent in 2010. So how, with a low voter turnout at elections, can local government claim to be truly representative and a symbol of democracy? Or is voluntary voting key to democracy being as it was designed to be?

## COMIC STRIP

How great would it be not to worry about parking tickets, registering your dog, no more council rates... we could be free!

Or maybe it would be smelly chaos...

# WITHOUT COUNCIL

by Gemma Neill



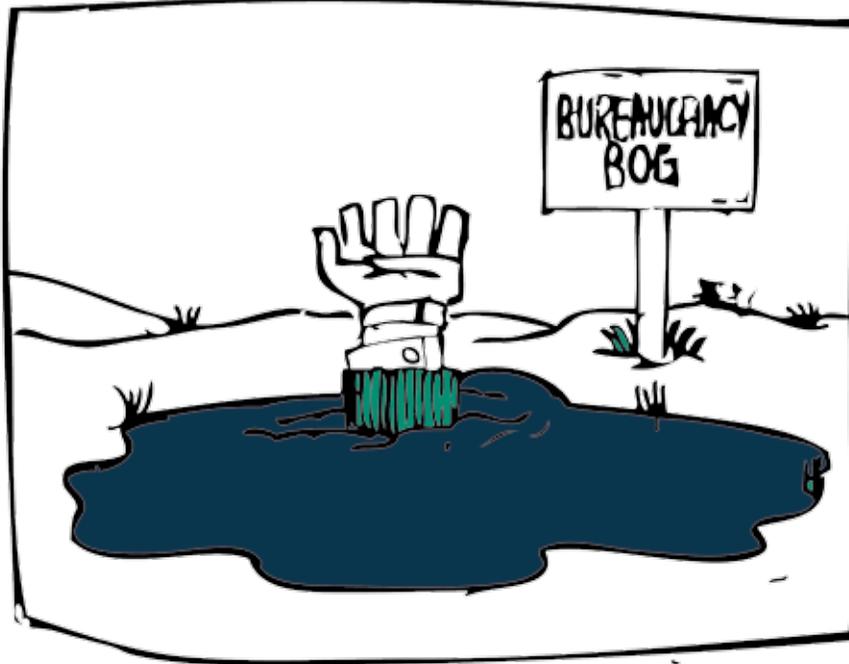
CARPARK MAYHEM



CANINE CONUNDRUM



George's Bureaucracy bear was called Borris, Borris liked forms.



To escape from the bog, please fill out a bog evacuation form. Please allow 72 hours for form to process.





## QUESTIONS

**Across**

1. They did it before the Greeks
6. Source of information
9. A point of referencs
10. Important for your targets
11. Ultimate power of one
14. Company which loves to dive deep
15. Proportional decision making power
16. Defining document
18. Control by the worst choice of citizens
21. Not just in hospitals
22. Transport Oriented Development
23. Reduce risk
24. Easily stifled
28. Transactional
30. He studied bureaucracy
32. Transformational style
33. Our style of democracy

**Down**

1. Elected
2. Effective when working well
3. Rescuers of the technologically challenged
4. Only position required by legislation
5. If only more would do it
7. IAP2
8. Common
12. Continuous improvement
13. Conceptual structure
17. Our role in decision making
19. Who we serve
20. Adds to community vitality
24. Can sometimes be token/engage
26. Legislated for all
27. Red
28. May need to use casting vote
29. Organisational Development
31. If you don't comply, you may well

**Answers****Across**

1. mesopotamia
6. network
9. baseline
10. meet
11. autocracy
14. IDEO
15. papolity
16. policy
18. kakocracy
21. ward
22. TOD
23. mitigate
25. innovation
28. manager
30. weber
32. leader
33. representative

**Down**

1. member
2. system
3. IT
4. CEO
5. vote
7. participation
8. sense
12. review
13. framework
17. advise
19. community
20. arts
24. engage
26. OHS&W
28. mayor
27. tape
29. OD
31. rue

## LOCAL GOVERNMENT A GENERATIONAL DIVIDE

### DOES IT REPRESENT EVERYONE?

We asked the questions that matter to two local government legal counsels from one of Adelaide's largest and oldest law firms. Established in the 1920's this law firm has represented local government for over four decades.

One a Special Counsel (Gen X, late 60s – 70s) and the other a Senior Associate (Gen Y the 80s) provided us with an insight of their views of local government. They both work with and have represented local government in areas such as employment and industrial relations and governance and regulatory services. We thank them for sharing their advise with us.

#### **We asked if they had voted in a local government election:**

Gen X responded that they have and felt it obligatory to exercise their democratic rights whenever they are offered.

Gen Y did not vote as it isn't compulsory and they felt that local government election campaigns can be too focussed on single issues which generally don't have a direct, or indirect, impact on their life. Gen Y went on to explain that there is very little 'big picture' analysis that seems to occur in the campaigns. In addition, it is rare that candidates are representative of demographics – in particular, they tend to be older males.

The two responses are definitely from opposing ends and it leaves local government asking 'are we getting it right'? Are we representing all of our residents and are we listening to the younger generation? It is reasonable to suggest that local government needs to focus on increasing the number of voters, more intense campaigns may be required by the Local Government Association to increase awareness in the community and Councils need to improve the ways they consult with their communities.

Both interviewees equally could not find the time to get involved in local government. Gen X could not fit in the time to address local issues and Gen Y felt that issues such as environment, transport and social matters were not broad enough to entice participation of the younger generation.

#### **What is your understanding of local government?**

The two legal counsel's responses varied from exercising delegation under State Legislation to collecting rubbish repairing roads and undertaking community development. The responses suggest a clear issue of perception and we now ask : Is local government more than a means of delivering legislation and providing services?

If Councils are only perceived as legislation enforcers, road repairers and rubbish collectors then how does local government tackle these perceptions and promote effectively the broad services it covers. Councils can tackle these

‘WHAT DO YOU THINK  
OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT?’

perceptions individually or unified through a central agency. Adequate marketing of the services provided should be an ongoing program and not something promoted during elections. Councils are uniquely placed to advocate on behalf of local communities at state and federal levels. Currently there is no level of government more capable of engaging in models of participatory democracy which might increase the engagement of an otherwise alienated and disinterested community in the political process.

Being a unique tier of government, services can be tailored around the needs of the community. Capital expenditure, capital projects, service delivery and strategic directions must be transparent and easily accessible to the community. There has to be value for money as current perceptions suggest that Council rates aren't being used effectively.

### **Do you think councils are in touch with their community?**

Gen X responded yes and Gen Y said no.

Both responses centred on Council's understanding of their demographic. Whilst it may be in touch with a small sector of the community, it is not generally aware of the broader community. The generational gap provides different views and opinions. This is based on individual needs and wants in relation to what is important to them. It is evident from the response that capturing relevant information from the community is crucial to drive future directions.

It is evident from the responses that Councils need to have effective communication plans that provide both electronic and print options to residents and businesses. Although both

## WHAT DOES LOCAL GOVERNMENT MEAN TO YOU?

interviewees responded about the importance of good communication, the way in which it should be delivered varied:

Gen X preferred written or verbal contact such as direct mail, registering on a telephone message list and messages being returned outside of office hours by trained telephonists. According to Gen X it is an accepted norm to call and seek opinions on evenings and on weekends.

Gen Y felt that the most effective form of communication with the community is via direct mail, such as letterbox drops or flyers included with rates notices; advertising in local papers and utilising the internet and social media.

In order to move forward local government must adopt comprehensive business practices that are cost effective and service delivery focussed. Amalgamations may be a solution; however more efficient methods including transparency, resourcing and being adequately funded to deliver services need to be high on the agenda.

Local Government has faced some major challenges in the last 20 years. From media scrutiny, reviews of Council decisions, community campaigns and social networking. In addition increased accountability through auditing and reporting requirements and public consultation means greater levels of checks of procedural fairness and good governance.

All should be encouraged to actively participate in influencing local government decisions.

## HITCHHIKERS GUIDE TO THE BUREAUCRATIC HIGHWAY

**D**ilemma: you know exactly where you want to go - to a happy home in the perfect Council area. But how do you get there? The answer - hitchhike of course!

The 2011 Emerging Leaders can help find the right democratic vehicle for you!

Safety conscious? This one's for you. ABS brakes, passenger side air bags and traction control are just a few of the features that the cautious council provides, carefully getting their residents from A to B.

Are you a cut above the rest? You may prefer the superiority of a solid mahogany dash, smooth leather interior and electric sliding sunroof. This one makes a statement. Status, luxury and prestige make this council the epitome of motoring perfection - or so it seems.....

Feeling adventurous? Look no further than the loud metallic paint job and 'phat exhaust' of the out there council. There is no chance of fading into the background when the 'fully sick' subwoofers are pumping.

What about those hybrids - it may take you longer to get there (and you will have to factor in the time to recharge the batteries), but just think of how proud you will feel to be part of the clean conscience council - contributing to the greater good.

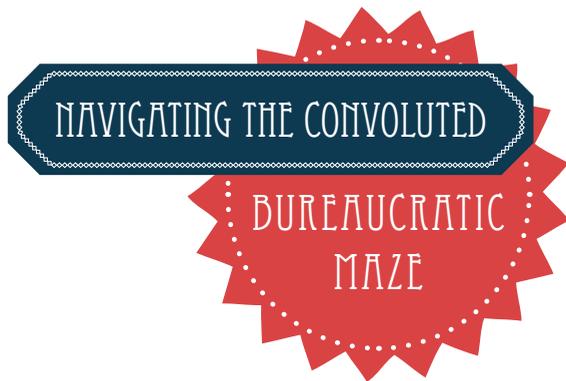
Appreciate a classic? Look no further than the council of the old faithfuls, quietly and peacefully outliving all the rest. Carefully maintained and restored by loving owners, enjoying every moment being in its presence and give back as much as they can.

Like to live large? The roar of a monster truck council awaits. This bad boy will take on anything, anytime, anywhere. Move over practicality, step aside functionality this council waits for no one.

But what about the children? If you are looking for space, the people mover council is the way to go. Plenty of room for the kids and all that comes with them. Sturdy and reliable, this one will last you for years to come.

They may look different but they all have the same purpose. Choose the democratic vehicle that suits you best and you will be ready to hit the bureaucratic highway.





## NAVIGATING THE CONVOLUTED BUREAUCRATIC MAZE

Local Government has historically been a convoluted bureaucratic maze. Difficult to navigate from the outside, unable to provide relevant answers from the inside, and entrenched in layers of unnecessary decision making. Councils have long been considered regulatory authorities; better at enforcing compliance with a set of rules rather than creating the vision for a community.

Many council staff spend much of their time writing policies, action plans and strategies to guide the operation of administration and inform future directions for the council. These documents are endorsed by executive teams and elected members, only to be disregarded by these very people when decisions are made. Policies end up being instruments for articulating what can't be done, rather than being enablers for achievement.

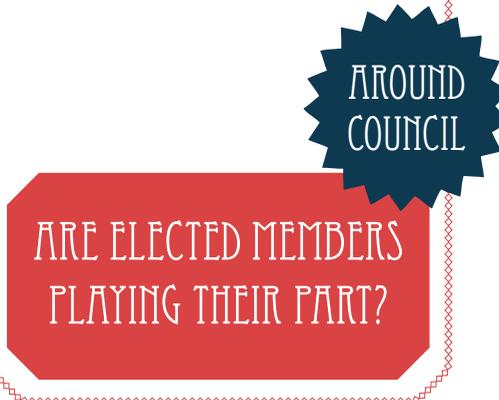
There is often confusion and the blurring of lines in the role of the council CEO and the council Mayor. The Local Government Act outlines that the elected members employ the CEO to run the administration, with the CEO responsible for carrying out the decisions of the elected members. The vision should be set by the Mayor and elected members, with the CEO left to work with their staff to enact this vision. But both

parties often overstep the imaginary line that exists between the CEO and Mayor. The CEO has too much responsibility for developing the vision, and the Mayor often inhibits the staff's work to deliver the vision.

There is, however, light at the end of the tunnel with councils everywhere waking up to the fact they are seen to lack transparency and are renowned for tying everything up in red tape, stifling progress on a variety of fronts across the community.

Whilst there will always be a place for processes and guidelines within all tiers of government, many councils are seeking to remove this unnecessary bureaucracy by streamlining processes, therefore encouraging community participation. Slowly but surely, local government is changing its stereotypical image of being five guys standing on the roadside drinking iced coffee, to being a sector focused on engaging with the community and delivering what they actually want. Whilst there is still a long way to go, the perception is slowly changing.

As a result of the focus on engagement, the removal of barriers and the reduction in red tape, local government is well placed to take advantage of the move back to community focussed activities across the country. Councils will need to continue to make it easier for the community to interact with them and inform the vision, in a bid to meet the ever increasing expectations of our communities into the future.



## AROUND COUNCIL

### ARE ELECTED MEMBERS PLAYING THEIR PART?

The role of elected members, as part of the governing body of a council, is spelled out in section 59 of the Local Government Act. It is to:

- take an active part in reviewing matters before their council and debating issues and in councils' decision making processes
- review councils' objectives and policies to ensure that they are appropriate for the local area
- review councils' resource allocation, expenditure and activities, and the efficiency and effectiveness of its service delivery.

Elected members play a very important policy making role, identifying community needs, setting objectives, establishing priorities between competing demands and allocating resources. They need to have a good understanding of local government and the work that their council conducts on a daily basis.

The implementation of programs, ongoing management and administration of council affairs is the responsibility of the Chief Executive Officer and their staff. Elected members have no direct authority over council staff and no role in employing staff, except for the Chief Executive Officer.

Elected members can make decisions and act only through a majority vote decision of the council or a council committee. An individual elected member does not have the authority to act or make any decision, on behalf of the council, unless the council has delegated such authority to the councillor. For example, a council may delegate to the Mayor the authority to act on behalf of the council.

The role of an elected member is to represent the interests of residents and ratepayers. This role requires community leadership, guidance, and the facilitation of ideas and expectations between the community and the council. It is therefore expected that each elected member will attend council meetings and consider the agenda and reports before council meetings to be able to make informed decisions.

Is this what is happening in our councils? What would an examination of our councils find in regards to who is doing what?

## ELECTED MEMBERS GET PAID PEANUTS

Should local government elected members be paid more?

“Elected Members working for local councils don’t get paid enough and therefore councils don’t attract high profile, empowered decision makers,” states a local community member in a southern council area.

Elected members are not employed by councils and don’t receive wages, but they are paid an allowance. The allowance is set, once every four years, by the Remuneration Tribunal (different rates apply to different councils). The amounts are indexed by CPI in the following three years. But currently the highest rate per year for a Councillor is \$16,800 (peanuts for a whole year of work).

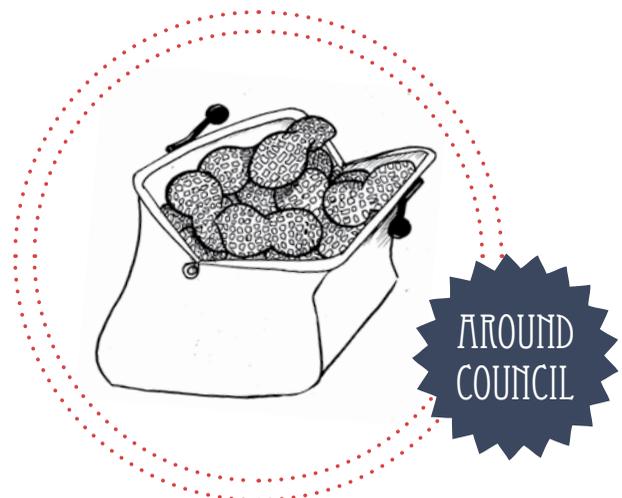
Councils are also able to reimburse expenses and provide support and facilities that are incurred by elected members in the course of carrying out their duties.

Most councils in South Australia have a large number of elected members, with some having in excess of 21 members. Having so many members can make decision making a difficult and long winded process.

Councils with large numbers of elected members should be astute when next reviewing their representation and reduce their numbers by half. With less members, a larger allowance could be paid. By paying elected members a larger allowance it would attract a new raft of candidates and encourage more accountability. It would also allow for more cost efficient professional training in the areas of policy, legislation and management.

It is no surprise to find that most people never vote in local government elections. By attracting educated, trained and efficient decision makers for local government, residents may be more interested in voting.

Could it be time for the state government to step up and set a reasonable reward for local government elected members? Could compulsory voting in local government elections be the answer? Would this be enough to improve the actions of your local council? Maybe its time for a change!



Interview with,

## AMANDA RISHWORTH MP

Federal Member for Kingston.

Local government has an important role in our local communities, it's really about grass roots community building, not about tinkering around the edges of the roles of the state and federal governments,' said Amanda Rishworth MP, who is currently serving her second term as the Federal Member for Kingston.

Amanda went on to explain;

"Local government builds a real sense of identity for individual communities who all have very different needs. Social infrastructure, economic resources and sustainable strengths can all be identified and addressed with a localised response. Without this 'inside local knowledge' these individually tailored community requirements may not get addressed," she said.

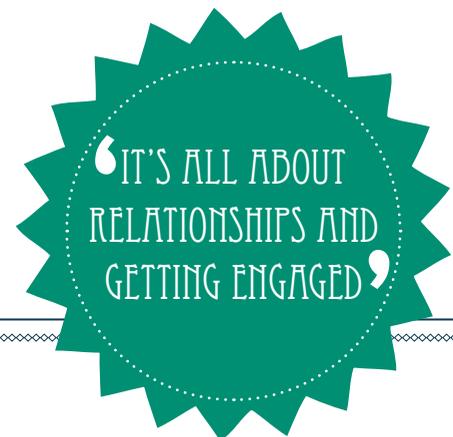
Local communities know how they want to look. Amanda discussed that the formal community engagement undertaken by council administrations must be balanced and strengthened by local elected members informally engaging with their communities. Elected members achieve this by getting out amongst their communities, listening, talking, sharing ideas and fact finding. This may be their greatest responsibility - to ensure that their

community representation is true and their decision making is well informed.

"All elected members - including local, state and federal - must act as an advocate for their community and a member of a governing body," Amanda said.

In closing Amanda said the most successful local government bodies display a great balance between the democratically elected body and a strong administrative leadership.

"Both arms are critical; they must have a cohesive respectful relationship and importantly understand the boundaries of their differing roles."



## FASHION REPORT

The first thing to walk into a room are your shoes! I know, I know, Mum always said don't judge a book by its cover but in today's professional world appearance is still as important as ever. So apart from working on your smile how do you make a good impression without breaking the bank?

Working together seems to be the key. Local Buy has worked collaboratively with Local Government Corporate Services (LGCS) and the Local Government Association to provide a corporate wardrobe Preferred Supplier Arrangement (PSA). It's comprehensive, value adding and can be used by all councils in South Australia and Queensland along with other government authorities.

The corporate wardrobe covers everything from off the shelf items, made to measure and alterations. What more could you possibly need for ladies and gentleman in your office? They also haven't forgotten that everyone's still looking at you shoes, the corporate wardrobe has a footwear range to make certain that you're covered from head to toe.

No tendering and no need for multiple quotes, purchasing your corporate wardrobe is easy and efficient. You can use an integrated online ordering system or even have your stock automatically replenished.

Rest assured no animals were harmed during the making your new wardrobe! In this self aware world it's important we know where our products come from. All accredited suppliers for the corporate wardrobe (Australian and international) are required to tick that all important box that ensures they are "sweatshop free". So feel comfortable and fashionable knowing you are looking after the little guy too.



MAKE AN  
IMPRESSION  
THAT LASTS



‘THEY PAY WHAT THEY NEED TO ATTRACT THE BEST CANDIDATES FOR THE JOB,’

The South Australian Federation of Residents and Ratepayers Associations says that councils do a number of things well particularly community services and libraries, but these are not often promoted well to the community.

They also believe that councils are losing touch with their communities as residents and community members are increasingly losing time to engage with councils on key issues. Residents say key issue engagement could be improved through the use of online and electronic technology, particularly to communicate with youth, as well as more direct community contact through workshops and letter drops on issues affecting the community.

One of the biggest issues the residents groups have is the value for money that councils provide. Kevin Keading, President of the Federation suggests shared purchasing to increase buying power, and sharing of resources and staff across local government boundaries to improve the cost effectiveness of local government. A number of larger councils already do this through alliances such as the G6 purchasing group and the ERA group of councils.

Another key factor influencing value for money according to Mr Keading is the pay of council staff, in particular management and CEOs within councils which he says are higher than commercial rates. "The actual payment of CEOs and the administration is very excessive. A lot of the council staff are sitting on a higher wage and salary than the open market." He suggests that higher than market wages are the norm from top to bottom within local government organisations with CEOs, blue collar, clerical and middle management positions all getting higher than market value pay.

This seems to be a common complaint in a number of communities with an increasing number of articles relating to CEO wage increases appearing within the local Messenger Press throughout Adelaide, as well in the Advertiser.

The LGA indicates that "Council CEO salaries are set by Councils in relation to the market place - that is, they pay what they need to attract the best candidates for the job". An independent survey conducted by recruitment firm AME indicated that Local Government CEO salaries are generally less than comparable State Government and private sector CEO salaries.

## OPINION

IS IT TIME TO MAKE  
LOCAL GOVERNMENT  
PROFITABLE?

Local government is seen as the third tier of government and only exists because of the local rate paying dollar. Everybody working within a local council is therefore there to serve the community, and services should be taken out to the community instead of making the community come to them – especially those relating to elderly residents.

As a part of this process, local government should be asking more of its community, what it is that they want and need instead of providing services “because they have always done it!” Local government should be out and about in local shopping centres and malls spreading the message and asking its residents what they like about their local council.

It is time for councils to direct their dollars into value for money projects and services that the community actually want. Councils need to cut the ‘red’ tape and run all services as a business and look at other ways in which to make money. Local government needs to cost out the services that it provides and then realise where it is making money for the community and where it is not.

Communities need local government, but they also need it to be more accountable, transparent, cost effective and represent good value for money for its rate payers. As a business, councils would have the potential to be profitable and in turn provide bigger and better services to its community.





Local government is the sphere of government closest to the community and is responsible for the care and protection of local communities from youth through to the aged. Whilst administration and politics play a vital part in the success of local government, the bureaucracy that comes with it is inescapable.

Whilst bureaucracy brings structure and consistency, it can limit the personal freedom of the community and residents. When speaking with a staff member, Jane\*, who works in the area of Community Development in the Western suburbs, it became clear that in some areas of local government, there is a need to recognise the general public are more important as individuals, not collectively. The youth through to the aged have differing needs and expectations and according to Jane, who has worked in the sector for 18 years, local government will always struggle to do things well because of bureaucracy, they will never meet the needs of everyone.

Although bureaucracy can be viewed as an efficient way of conducting administration, it is not only Jane who believes local government is bureaucratic. Sam,\* who has worked in the aged care and disabilities sector for the past 26 years, believes bureaucracy is out of control.

"Gone are the times that you used to just do it. Council's now are very quick to say 'that has never been done. No, we can't do that'. This has been identified across all generations, and the red-tape is extremely annoying for residents. Local government should not be scared to do something differently, be realistic and be real," Sam says.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT  
NEEDS TO SUPPORT  
OUR YOUNG PEOPLE SO  
THEY STAY COMMITTED  
TO THE FUTURE OF  
THE COMMUNITY.

When asked what improvements could be applied across local government, Sam said there was no single approach that can be applied across local government.

"Diverse people make it hard to please all, but these people are the backbone for local

community services. We have a responsibility to ensure all residents receive the best possible service with the least formalities.”

Jane believes local government waste a lot of money with procedure and policy and ‘old hat

‘ YOUNG PEOPLE ARE  
THE VOICE; THEY  
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DON'T LIKE IT THEY  
WILL CHANGE IT. ’

stuff’, they don’t see the value in good practice models, they spend too much time on compliance.

“Local government needs to support our young people so they stay committed to the future of the community. Young people are a voice in the community; they should be listened to because when they grow up if they don’t like it they will change it,” Jane says.

Sam agrees and believes “our residents want everything for nothing. Local government needs to move away from promoting: roads, rates and rubbish. We need to promote our positives like libraries and community services. If every person in the community could access all of the services provided then it would be value for money and the community would love local government.

Going forward, Jane believes local government needs to become “less stuffy, more flexible, more approachable and councils must be open and honest. Each age group has a different interest in council and they need to ensure they are meeting community needs with the least amount of red-tape. We need to ‘support our young people’ so they stay committed to the future of local government”.

As you can see, the bureaucracy of local government is felt across all generations. The red-tape that local government imposes on the community and residents is contributing to the miserable experiences that impact its reputation. They have an opportunity to become flexible and approachable so the community and residents will be committed to their council. Councils must consider all generations, as these people are the future of local government.

\* Names have been changed.



Print, scan, copy, fax?

What is this? 1997?

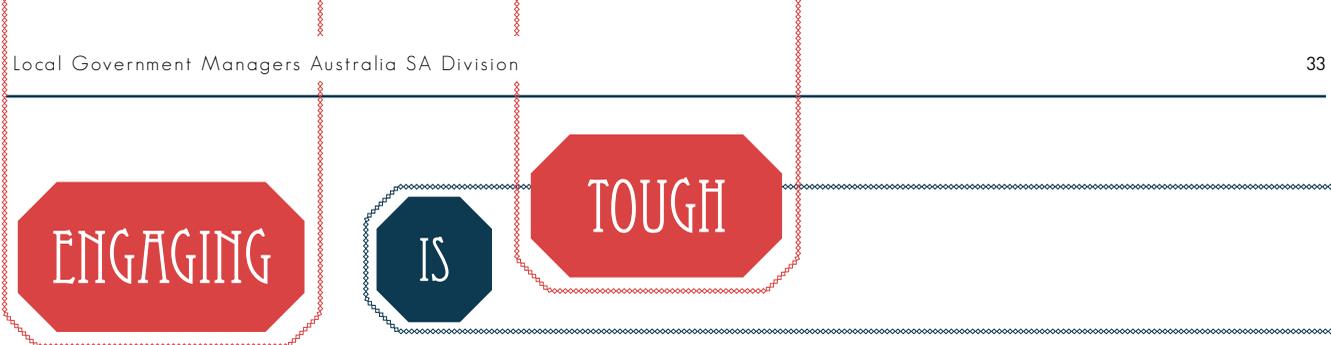
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ENGAGING

IS

TOUGH

**H**ow can local government truly understand what the community wants, and then work hard to actually deliver?

Local government is one of the most diverse sectors in the world – responsible for managing billions of dollars of assets, delivering a myriad of community services, dealing with other levels of government and ultimately prioritising community needs. Local government is also often expected to be a one-stop shop for everyone.

As Stephen Yarwood, Lord Mayor of Adelaide City Council explains;

**“Local government is in the business of life – if we don’t do it, we should be able to connect people to those that do.”**

Councils are expected to have in-depth understanding of all community issues, and then be able to provide solutions, directions and alternatives to their constituents.

It is very difficult to engage with everyone, especially those we don’t stereotypically use council services – in particular the younger generation. Many of local government’s services are seen to be irrelevant to these groups as they often don’t realise exactly what councils do. “There’s no question that we need to sell our

achievements better. Councils are constantly doing great work, but it’s just not communicated to the community. If we were able to better promote this good work it would in turn encourage the community to be more involved,” Stephen Yarwood said.

“When the Global Financial Crisis hit, and the Federal Government introduced the stimulus package, local government delivered 95% of its projects on time and on budget – but how many people know this?” he added.

So how can local government better promote its achievements and also succeed in engaging with the community better? Social media is an ever-growing trend, being well used by some individual councils and elected members. While social media forms such as Twitter and Facebook do not currently have the widespread coverage of conventional media, it is still growing rapidly and often works to connect with a group of people that mainstream media may not – the younger generation.

In the end, the next generation needs to take some responsibility for making their voice heard and influencing the decisions of government. They need to see the value and power of their vote, but local government needs to help them find this empowerment, and promote their own successes to the community.



**B**ureaucracy is defined as delivering the administration of a government chiefly through departments staffed with non-elected officials; it also implies excessively complicated administrative procedures, seen as a characteristic of such a system.

But is bureaucracy a dirty word, and are local governments bureaucratic?

Local government in its purest form exists to raise rates from the community, and then to spend this money for the provision of community services. Councils must understand the level of community expectation for these services, and adjust their rates and service provision accordingly delivering the services as effectively and efficiently as possible.

As Peter Smith, CEO, Adelaide City Council, outlines;

“Whilst being historically bureaucratic, local government also represents the purest form of democracy – there are a varying number of independent members with no formal party alignment, each representing their own thoughts and priorities. The public have elected each of

these members separately to represent them on their behalf, making decisions that they see best for the whole community.”

It is, however, this democratic system that contributes to the bureaucracy of Local Government, often leading to inefficiency.

In the context of local government, a good bureaucracy clearly differentiates the role of administration from the role of Elected Members.

“Advice provided by administration should be frank, fearless and non-politicised. The role of administration is not to enter into the politics that Elected Members must consider, but to provide expert advice essential for democracy,” said Peter Smith.

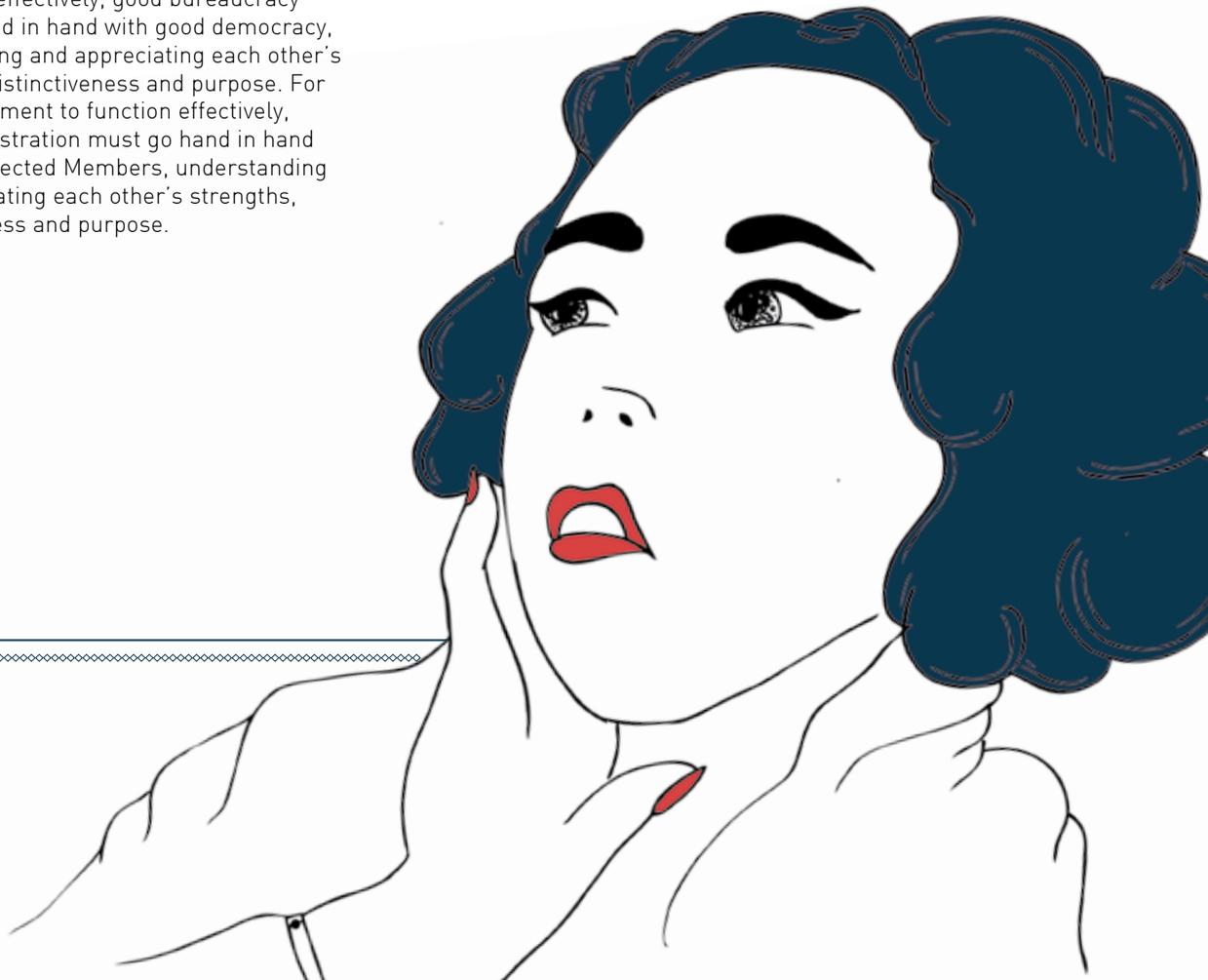
On the other side, bad bureaucracy is non-transparent and fearful. Administration feels the need to hide things from Elected Members, only telling them half the story due to a fear of the potential outcome. In doing this, administration wrongly tries to fill the role of the Elected Members, thereby unwittingly threatening to undermine the democratic system that local government is based on.

To be successful, local government must find the appropriate balance of democracy and bureaucracy. Elected Members need to take



a policy approach: administration should not absolve them of their responsibility to develop the vision for the community, but Elected Members do need to delegate the right things – the operational works to help deliver these outcomes. Local government bureaucracy should act in the way it was originally intended, not in the way it has been historically represented. The word bureaucracy originally defined a system, it now defines red tape. It once didn't evoke thoughts of wasted money and slow processes that it now does.

To function effectively, good bureaucracy must go hand in hand with good democracy, understanding and appreciating each other's strengths, distinctiveness and purpose. For local government to function effectively, good administration must go hand in hand with good Elected Members, understanding and appreciating each other's strengths, distinctiveness and purpose.





According to Mark Withers, CEO of the City of Charles Sturt in Adelaide's Western suburbs, we in South Australia are the last bastion of local government in Australia, and we have a lot of work to do if we want to stay relevant to the Federal and State governments, and to our residents around the state.

"Are we still relevant? Reform is coming, and the outcome of that reform will determine whether we are still relevant or not. Councils in SA have done a good job in preparing for reform. It will be easier for us compared to other states. If communities believe we are relevant, the state government is less likely to come in and carve Councils structurally and geographically," Mr Withers says.

"It is the cliché, but it works. We are the level of government closest to the people... it is the level that focuses most on people's quality of life."

Mr Withers, a 28 year veteran of local government, believes councils provide local services, give great value for money, focus on things that are important to people in their own

neighbourhoods and maintain people's quality of life.

But are we doing enough?

"I break out in a sweat if I think about extra services. Truly, I don't believe we can provide anything else at the moment. Over the past few years we have stretched our capacity way beyond the limits. We are almost too multi disciplinary, and its starting to show," he notes.

Not only is there increasing demand for better and more services, but a demand for better relationships with our communities. The public shift towards a different level of community involvement and engagement cannot be ignored, and will contribute to local government remaining relevant amongst levels of government and residents in councils across the state. Mr Withers, who has experienced intense community demand for better engagement in Charles Sturt, is supportive of the community's desire for more involvement in Council service and project provision. Mr Withers notes that although communities want councils to engage, it doesn't mean we aren't engaging, rather we just need to do more of it, and in a different way.

"People want to be involved. There has been a shift in culture and we need to adapt accordingly... I think we need different strategies



to engage communities that want and need to be heard. Traditional mechanisms aren't washing... we need to go out for consultation before we have an idea. The 'announce and defend' technique governments use isn't working," Mr Withers says.

The political context of local government cannot be underestimated either. Wedged at times comfortably, and often uncomfortably between our grassroots communities and the state and federal mechanisms, how can we in local government play in the wider political arena?

Mr Withers recommends providing deliverables that go beyond politics to ensure all levels support the vision.

"The best thing to do is to not play politics. Politics are fragile and change daily. Solid and strategic plans that communities, non governmental agencies and business support are the best way to go," he says.

How to measure support for plans and strategies is often incredibly difficult, and goes to the heart of our Emerging Leaders question for 2011. Is local government bureaucratic, democratic or something else entirely?

"Is local government really democratic? When Charles Sturt gets 30-35% of eligible voters participating in an election, and there is no pre - selection process for the Elected Member body, how does this really sit in a democratic framework? Democracy is something everyone

takes for granted, but when we vote in state and federal elections, are we really behaving in a democratic way," Mr Withers says.

"Alternatively, democracy is about free will and choice. By not having compulsory voting at the **local government level, are people exercising free will by not voting?"**

Would Mr Withers' suggestion of compulsory voting at all levels of government ensure local government is democratic? As Mr Withers states, the most personal vote we can have is voting in local government elections.

"Someone voting in the federal election, doesn't on a daily basis, affect the economy of the country or at the other extreme have control over whether we go to war. At the local level, local residents get the chance to mould our street, our park, our community. In a society that sees democracy as fundamental to our way of life, voting should be something we all involve ourselves in," he says.

Reform can come in many guises and can have multiple focal points. Will local government reform in our state focus on strengthening our democratic process? Will it be about increasing or combining our service levels to ensure we continue to be the one stop shop for residents?

Should we be making these decisions at the local level, or encouraging our communities to make them however they can?





## ACTIVATING OUR COUNCILS

The number of events around Australia is rising, from arts events to dance festivals, cultural events to car races. But what is the role of local government? Is it just to provide a license over the land to facilitate the events, or to help fund and entrench these events in the annual calendar?

As the number of events increase, there is an impact on the resource capacity of councils. Many events involve similar outcomes, both positive and negative. How do councils share information between themselves to best serve their customer, leading to better outcomes for all parties?

Sandy Verschoor, a highly respected member of the Arts community says: "When dealing with the arts and event communities, local government needs a role that is more than just checking legislative compliance. Councils need to be a facilitator, linking the customer with the right people across council and government, and also investing funds in helping these groups get off the ground."

Something simple like allocating a single point of contact can be of great benefit to community groups. This person would work to navigate the council bureaucracy on behalf of the customer, putting them in touch with the relevant people, rather than sending them on a wild goose chase.

So how can councils encourage these groups to engage with their community more, without causing undue strain, particularly on smaller councils?

There are always going to be councils that have more resources than others, for example Adelaide City Council can respond to the number of events on a different level to Unley Council. Though requirements are different between councils, there is still an expectation that what is okay in one council should be okay in the one next door. Just because you're on the other side of the road shouldn't mean there are different rules.

Sacha Sewell, Event Manager for a variety of major events around Australia, believes the answer could lie at a more global level. "Is there an opportunity for councils around Australia to integrate the best of their resources and create a single guideline and set of outcomes that standardises the governance of all events around Australia, empowering the LGA to implement these guidelines? By doing this, councils can learn from each other, they can share ideas and ultimately work to mitigate risks and maximise engagement."

With the number of competing priorities for councils rising across the board new approaches must be identified to support the development of the arts and events in our communities. This can be achieved through an openness to sharing knowledge and resources, easier navigation through bureaucracies, and the provision of seed funding to turn concepts into reality.



## CREATING AN EFFICIENT DEMOCRACY

The revised Local Government Act was introduced into South Australian Parliament in 1999, with one of the key objectives being to 'provide a legislative framework for an effective, efficient and accountable system of local government in South Australia'. But has it achieved this...?

The Act provides a useful guide to the operation of council operations – being particularly strong, and in some cases prescriptive, on transparency and good governance. On the whole, it's easy to follow, and simple for everyone to understand its application in the real world. But does this make The Act user-friendly...?

There are a number of things that councils do well. Justin Lynch, CEO of Holdfast Bay Council, highlights councils' transparency, community engagement and delivery of a wide variety of services as some of local government's strengths. But does The Act help or hinder these strengths...?

Mr Lynch outlines that "the issue with the Local Government Act is, like all policies, when it is used as a prescriptive rule book and not as a set of principles. Some issues in our world are not black and white – you need a balance of both rules and principles; working within the spirit of the law and not just the letter of the law." If continually taken literally, it could potentially have unintended consequences – turning a balanced democracy, into a dysfunctional bureaucracy.

OR

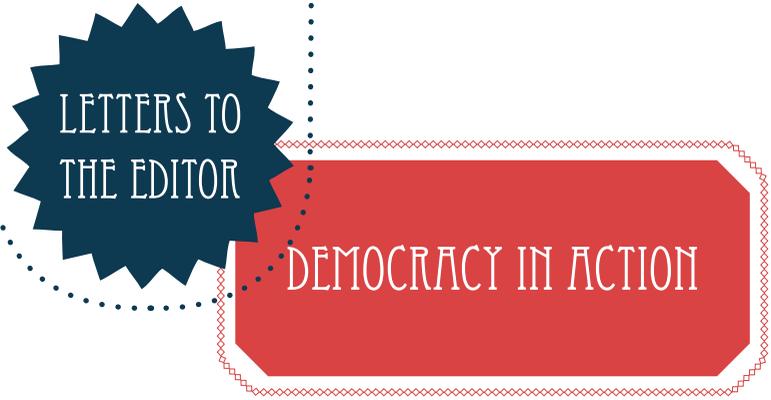
## UNNECESSARY BUREAUCRACY

Therefore, the answer is that the Local Government Act must be read and interpreted in conjunction with Code of Conduct policies, meeting procedures, representation guidelines, and most of all, common sense. Elected members should be held to account for the decisions they make on behalf of the community, and administration should be charged with the authority to implement these decisions. The Act can work to enforce this accountability for elected members and administration alike, helping to provide confidence for the community.

Is using the Local Government Act to provide governance and accountability for councils the right way to move forward, or is there a completely different system?

"All Councils should be striving towards new methods, models and guidelines to best serve the community. Councils around Australia are trying new things, and we should make sure we are learning from each other to determine what works best," said Mr Lynch.

Ultimately, local government requires a framework that helps it engage the community, make decisions in a timely manner, and ensure public funds are spent responsibly on relevant issues. But what's the best way to do this? If Councils want to move with the times, it's important they don't rest on their laurels. Whilst the Local Government Act sets out good governance principles, could it be adapted to include administrators, or is a skill-based hybrid model available?



LETTERS TO  
THE EDITOR

DEMOCRACY IN ACTION

Dear Editor

I refer to the Widget Site redevelopment which was first proposed in July 2005. Over the past six years we have endured five mammoth surveys, six independent reports, 35 focus groups, 10 public meetings, 30 requests for submissions and a regular stream of letter drops and self indulgent promotion by the council on this matter. To top this off, I note that the 'team' of 15 council staff working on this project have recently won an award for all their so called 'excellent' standards. What an absolute waste of time and rate payer's money this has been. Stop pussy footing around and get on with it! Surely any decision must be better than no decision!

**Fred Bloggs** – Chair, CVIMIABDFRCRPPLG  
(Citizens Voice for the Identification, Monitoring, and If it Aint Broke Don't Fix it Regurgitation of Convoluted Rescoped Problem Projects in Local Government)

Dear Editor

Recently, on one of my regular visits to my hairdresser, I overheard some talk about a redevelopment of the Widget site. As a local resident this is the first I have heard of any 'redevelopment'. No one has spoken to me! Shame on you council, all this rhetoric about participation and engagement – yet you haven't asked for my opinion! Perhaps the elected members might decide to do some door knocking in the near future and really do some 'representing' of their constituents.

**Gertrude Smith – Jones**

Dear Editor

Council wasting rate payers' money yet again! \$5000 for a study on widgets? Come on, widgets have been used on this site for the past 50 years, and I have seen no damage what so ever. Playing with widgets is a pleasurable pastime and we have the right to play with widgets any time we please. When I was a young lad we used to play with widgets all the time, it kept us kids off the streets. Playing with widgets never did me any harm. I may have lost my left foot and several fingers, but I certainly learned a lot about life. Now if you take away the widgets the kids will get bored and roam the streets, then what will council do with the increase in graffiti?

**Proud Widget owner and user.**

Dear Editor

I would like to draw attention to the international studies that show the original site has changed significantly since the introduction of widget playing 50 years ago. In simple terms, (and I think some local residents may need to have this quite simplified) it's like a frog in a slowly simmering pan of water. Over the past years we have got used to widgets on the site and allowed the damage to creep up on us. If we were to look back 200 years ago, you would certainly notice the difference.

**Independent expert** (In no way associated with the No Widgets Association)

Dear Editor

A frog in a simmering pan of water – poppy cock I say! As Mark Twain once said, if one of the hardest things you have to do each day is eat a frog, make sure you eat it quickly. And by the way, if there are two frogs, eat the ugliest one first. Stop bowing to the preposterous claims on the anti – widget minority.

**Amphibious Culinary Delights Club**

Stop press

At a recent council meeting a unanimous decision was reached with regard to the redevelopment of the Widget site. Widget users can now access the site from 1 January to June 30, and the site will then revert to a 'No Widget Zone, From 1 July to December 31 each year.



THEY SAID

## KEY COMMENTS ABOUT LOCAL GOVERNMENT

“State/ Federal Government certainly plays a key role on the decisions made by local government, particularly from a funding perspective. This is often crucial in whether or not a project goes ahead.”

– Small regional business owner.

“The good intentions of council to provide services which benefit the majority are often distracted (or even derailed) by a minority.”

– Anonymous

“Aspiring LG executives – be proud of where you work and don’t forget the fabulous opportunities you have to make a difference in your communities.”

– Stephen Hains, former CEO, City of Salisbury in LGMA article.

“It’s got to be about democracy, but bureaucracy delivers service, and service should never be politicised. As for the ‘?’..... maybe that stands for partner, enabler, official structure or localism.”

– Jeff Tate, former CEO of City of Onkaparinga.

“Diverse people make it hard to please all, but these people are the backbone for local community services. We have a responsibility to ensure all residents receive the best possible service with the least formalities.”

– Anonymous

“THE GOOD INTENTIONS OF COUNCIL TO PROVIDE SERVICES WHICH BENEFIT THE MAJORITY ARE OFTEN DISTRACTED (OR EVEN DERAILED) BY A MINORITY.”

– Anonymous

“I think we need different strategies to engage communities that want and need to be heard. Traditional mechanisms aren’t washing... we need to go out for consultation before we have an idea. The ‘announce and defend’ technique governments use isn’t working.”

–Mark Withers, CEO, City of Charles Sturt.



What suggestions does a former CEO have for the future of local government? Jeff Tate, former Chief Executive Officer of the City of Onkaparinga recently gave a frank interview with members of the Emerging Leaders Program and reflected on his 30 years in local government. Jeff suggested that a local government 'Thought Leaders' program should be explored.

'We really need to start thinking about how our communities might look in the future. What will their recreational, educational and living needs be in 2020? With the rapid change that has taken place in the last few years, we might even want to consider what our local needs are going to be by 2015!' Mr Tate said.

How would a Thought Leaders program work?

A group of South Australian local government staff and elected members representing a wide range of regional and metropolitan councils could be formed to engage with key experts from around the world, to investigate and report on 21st century topical issues. This group could also partner with South Australian universities to

deliver a well rounded program. The knowledge and experience gained from participating in the program would bring benefits to all those involved.

Jeff suggests 'an unashamed program of taking ourselves away from the everyday local government problems and issues that will always be there in one form or another, to look at the bigger questions confronting society, such as climate change, water, energy, migration, social cohesiveness and our economic future in a volatile global environment'.

This program could then be extended to a national and international level!



## THE BAROSSA VALLEY ON SHOW

### OUT AND ABOUT

The 2011 Local Government Managers Australia SA Division Emerging Leaders team has spent 2011 meeting at venues all over metro Adelaide – and beyond – to learn, challenge and discuss all aspects of local government and to answer the question: local government: democracy, bureaucracy or...?

Our two day rural retreat was held in the Barossa Valley in July, 2011.

The rural retreat commenced with the Emerging Leaders (ELs) conducting a very productive workshop on their major project, deciding on the publication of an interesting and informative magazine to answer their challenging question.

The retreat was not all hard work and agonising decisions, however, with a surprise a chartered bus trip to Simpatico Winery for a wine and cheese tasting education rewarding the team for its hard work.

After buying up big, the team headed into Angaston for dinner at the Roaring 40's Cafe

where everyone enjoyed their award winning pizza. Special guests for the evening included Brian Hurn, Mayor of Barossa Council, David Morcom CEO of the Barossa Council and Cate Atkinson, President of Local Government Managers Australia SA Division and General Manager, Intergovernmental Relations at the Local Government Association. .

On Friday, the EL's workshop was held at the Barossa Council Chambers with guest speakers Sam Holmes, Elaine Ratcliffe and Councillor John Angus providing an insight into the Barossa region, local business initiatives and leadership. They also very generously shared their views on local government - is it a democracy, a bureaucracy or something else?

Another reward for the morning work was in the surprise cooking lesson at iconic Maggie Beer's Farm Shop and the pleasure of eating the food we cooked.

Our other workshop topics, held each month this year have included: mentoring, the political context of local government (with real politicians!), sustainability (complete with extreme canoeing!), managing your careers, community engagement and urban local government.

EXPOSURE TO LOCAL GOVERNMENT  
(RURAL PERSPECTIVE) - BAROSSA







Sustainability Workshop



Community Engagement Workshop



Community Engagement Workshop



Residential - Glenelg Pier Hotel



Sustainability Workshop

# THE TEAM

2011

We spent time in small teams preparing for presenting each workshop.

We also divided our large group up into an Editorial, Design and Presentation team for our final project.

**Editorial:** Kristie Johnson (Charles Sturt), Karyn Ryan (Onkaparinga), Alana Walters (Tea Tree Gully), Joanne Maiden (Onkaparinga), Helen Robins (Prospect) and Ian Wise (Campbelltown).

**Design:** Brett Steiner (Tea Tree Gully), Nicole Moore (Onkaparinga), Bobbi Atherton (Yorke), Kate Symes (LGA), Darren Humphrys (Adelaide), Bree Hislop (West Torrens)

**Presentation:** Amy Birss (Charles Sturt), Mike Foenander (Salisbury), Gavin Hean (Adelaide Hills), Rabecka Mazzeo (West Torrens/Tea Tree Gully), Ryan England (Barossa), Jack Darzanos (Mitcham).



**Alana Walters**  
City of Tea Tree Gully



**Gavin Hean**  
Adelaide Hills Council



**Jack Darzanos**  
City of Mitcham



**Karyn Ryan**  
City of Onkaparinga



**Helen Robins**  
City of Prospect



**Joanne Maiden**  
City of Onkaparinga



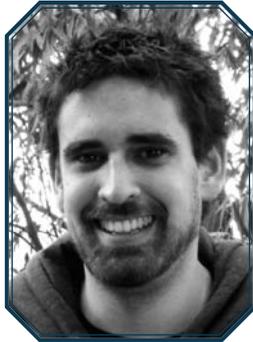
**Amy Birss**  
City of Charles Sturt1



**Bobbi Atherton**  
District Council of Yorke Peninsula



**Ian Wise**  
Campbelltown City Council



**Darren Humphrys**  
Adelaide City Council



**Brett Steiner**  
City of Tea Tree Gully



**Bree Hislop**  
City of West Torrens



**Kate Symes**  
Local Government Association



**Kristie Johnson**  
City of Charles Sturt



**Mike Foenander**  
City of Salisbury



**Ryan England**  
The Barossa Council



**Rabecka Mazzeo**  
City of West Torrens  
City of Tea Tree Gully



**Nicole Moore**  
City of Onkaparinga

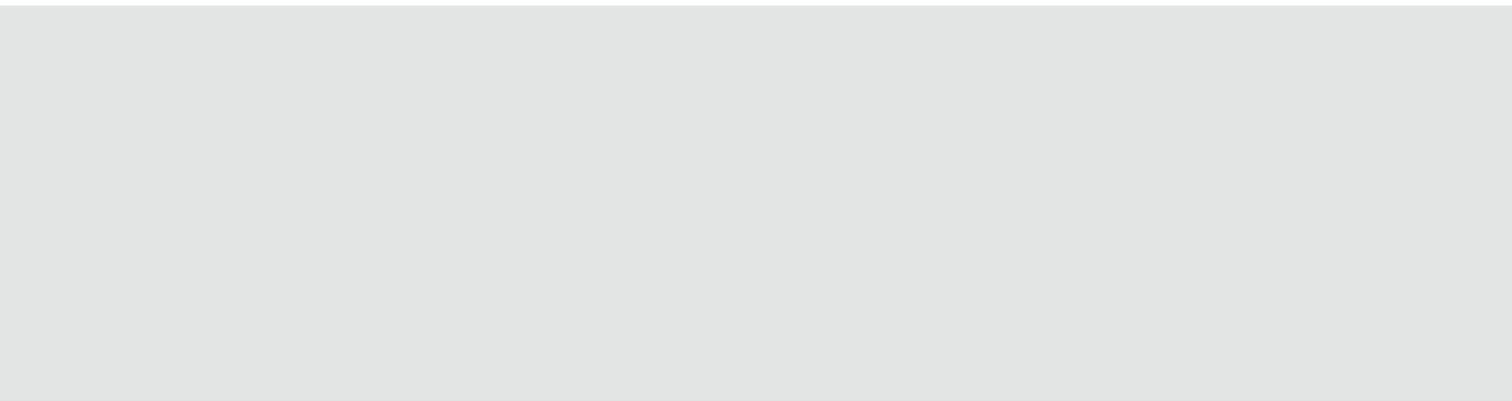
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Program please contact  
(08) 8100 9975 or go to  
[www.lgmasa.org.au](http://www.lgmasa.org.au)



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