

In forming an opinion, conclusion and way forward to the question 'Local Government – Are Women the Answer?', the 2009 Local Government Managers Australia Emerging Leaders have aimed to identify how women may participate in decision-making roles within Local Government.

The report conceptualises a range of barriers, perceptions and gender based constraints using an underlying framework that identifies how women are currently represented, informed and participate in decision-making roles. The framework also focuses on what initiatives have been identified are being undertaken or can be undertaken to empower women to participate in such roles. It concentrates on the barriers and impacts of identified actions in relation to opportunities in career progression, implications for family structures, social and generational impacts.

Local Government: Are women the answer? Executive Summary

This report identifies methods to empower and encourage women to participate in 'spaces of production', despite the perception that they are best suited to 'spaces of consumption'.

Initiatives such as paid maternity leave, child care, flexible working hours, job sharing and training programs encourage women from traditional stereotypical roles into the paid workforce. They have also brought about significant positive changes in the working conditions of all employees. More importantly, greater gender diversity has brought Local Government closer to the community.

Whilst current research relating to the participation rate of women in Local Government suggests that participation is at an all time high as it approaches the 50 per cent target (as mentioned in the State Strategic Plan), only 20 percent of women are working in senior management roles. In South Australia, this is reduced to 16 percent across the 68 Councils with only four women in the position of Chief Executive Officer. Representing the community, less than 27 percent of Elected Members are female, raising the question of equitable representation of the resident base.

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Executive Summary cont.

The low female participation rates within the State are being addressed however, through the fostering of relationships and a commitment to initiatives and programs. Local Councils are encouraging women to take career opportunities, with some coordinating 'female only' initiatives. The Local Government Association (LGA) and the Local Government Managers Australia (LGMA) are implementing specific programs such as personal and career development programs to aid the advancement of women. However, despite 300 women successfully participating in these programs, the under representation of women in decision making roles within Local Government draws their effectiveness into question and lead us to conclude that alternative measures are required.

To move forward, raising the profile of women in Local Government may have a positive impact upon the workforce and change general perceptions of women's roles in society. The LGMA's promotion of 2010 as the Year of Women in Local Government will aid and complement current female orientated programs and initiatives. Raising the profile of women in Local Government and increasing their leadership opportunities through career progression is one way forward. However, it would appear that these may not be the only barrier for women in fulfilling leadership roles within the Local Government sector.

The report raises many questions – does increasing the participation of women in paid work threaten the social fabric of society by encouraging neglect of families and communities? What are the costs of

this damage with regard to personal health, relationships, children, the extended family and community life? Moreover, and with greater reference to the roles and responsibilities of Government agencies, what are economic costs in relation to the provision of health and community services that are required to compensate for the absence of women and mothers in the community and with unpaid spaces?

The framework is primarily concerned with identifying three core components; the development of a community within the paid workforce (in particular Local Government); the empowerment of women within these communities to realise potential, and the transformation of gendered identities within the workplace.

This framework does not advocate for equality, but for a 'politics of equity' that caters for the needs of people that others do not necessarily have (by virtue of their biological make-up or gendered identity). It aims to empower women within Local Government and recognises the difference and equity within the Local Government community which allows women to determine how they are perceived.

A full copy of the report may be downloaded from the LGMA SA website: www.lgmasa.org.au

Local Government ARE WOMEN THE ANSWER?



LOCAL
GOVERNMENT
MANAGERS
AUSTRALIA

Taking the Lead
EMERGING LEADERS PROGRAM

EMERGING LEADERS PROGRAM 2009

The Local Government Managers Australia SA (LGMA SA) Emerging Leaders Program provides professional development opportunities for Local Government staff. It is designed specifically to focus on leadership within Local Government, and to support emerging leaders across Local Government to network, develop, and become great leaders!

Objectives of the program are to:

- > Develop people who will lead Local Government in South Australia in the future;
- > Develop people who will lead at all levels in their Councils;
- > Provide an opportunity for participants to network with emerging leaders from different professions to build stronger links and understanding between professions;
- > Increase appreciation of the wider issues in Local Government in South Australia;
- > Utilise the resources of the Local Government sector to provide practical experiences of leadership within the Local Government context;
- > Provide training for emerging leaders that is not necessarily "management" focused; and
- > Retain emerging leaders within the Local Government sector.
- > The Emerging Leaders Program (ELP) 2009 began in May, and brought together 22 individuals from South Australian rural and metropolitan Councils.
- > As part of the program, participants were asked to explore the following: **Local Government; Are Women the Answer?**

Course Participants



"The two day residential was a personally challenging and rich learning experience."

Joanne Agar
Animal Management Officer



"The greatest challenge for me was the nine hour minibus trip to Mt Gambier."

Wayne Cook
Senior Compliance Officer



"Working with a diverse group of people aspiring to reach an agreed outcome."

Sam Higgins
Strategic Planner
- Recreation and Sport



"Being part of a working group that put together The Great Super-Council Debate. It enabled me to expose myself to experiences outside of my normal comfort zone."

Belinda Portelli
Senior Environmental Management Officer



"The course highlight was working with a dynamic group of people and broadening my local government insight."

Shane Bolton
Risk Analyst



"The highlight was meeting and networking with a diverse range of people from all aspects of Local Government."

Cathy Fulton
Coordinator Goodwood Community Centre



"The course highlight was working with the research group in tackling the question."

Darren Hurst
Team Leader
Inspectorial Services



"The course highlight was all the laughter. As we got to know each other, peoples sense of humour were highlighted."

Lee Prestwood
Team Leader Community Development



"The challenge for me was balancing your own work load to meet the challenges of the course."

Richard Boscence
Information Systems Coordinator



"Personally, the opportunity to evaluate my personal leadership style has been a beneficial experience which will prove valuable for my future career development."

Elissa Graves
Marketing Officer - Events



"The relationship I have developed with my mentor is one that will help me for years to come."

Valli Morphet
Community Engagement Officer



"Ongoing highlight is the relationships and connections formed."

Matt Romaine
Development Assessment Officer - Planning



"Learning how to get my points heard in such a strong minded group."

Jennifer Brewis
Development Officer
- Planning



"The highlight was interacting with other Local Government employees from all levels who I would never ordinarily meet."

Rob Gregory
Manager, Environmental & Coastal Assets



"The course has opened my eyes to a range of different ideas, ways of working and possibilities to develop."

Laura Ortner
Records Project Officer



"Meeting some great leaders and hearing them speak about their experiences and views on life and work."

Gillian Sheldon
Risk Management Officer



"Seeing first hand the diversity of issues facing rural councils, the every day dealings where they are similar to the metropolitan councils and the aspects that set them apart like airports."

Murray Conahan
Asset Planner



"This is an ongoing one - to realise I have made many new and influential friends within Local Government across the State."

Clive Harrington
Infrastructure and Traffic Officer



"Developing a sense to know when it is important to persist with your approach and when to be flexible and willing to adapt."

Patrice Pearson
Community Engagement Officer



"Networking with like-minded people, making some great friends and receiving useful advice from my mentor."

Lorraine Williams
Senior Communications Officer



"The most enlightening thing for me was seeing how other councils work, in relation to my own. And access to a mentor I otherwise never would have had."

Dominic Perre
Asset Management Coordinator



"Understanding Myers-Briggs personality types, and then applying understanding to how different people work/function."

Eion Williamson
CPA Accountant