

National Framework for  
Women in Local Government

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Australian Local Government Women's Association  
(ALGWA)

November 2001

**Australian Local Government Women's Association (ALGWA)  
Founded at Canberra, 1951**

In March of this year, the Minister for Regional Services, Territories and Local Government supported a "Women in Local Government Roundtable" for elected and senior officer representatives from across Australia. The agenda of the meeting was to consider the issues, which contribute to a low rate of participation in decision making in Local Government by women, both in the elected sphere and within Local Government administrations.

Following this Roundtable the Australian Local Government Women's Association (ALGWA) commissioned a project to develop a national approach to improving women's participation, and to build upon the actions already being undertaken by some States and individual Councils. This project has produced the National Strategy for Women in Local Government.

A critical stage in the development of the Framework was to ask people from across the Australian Local Government community - elected and appointed - to add their contribution to the articulation of both the issues and the proposed action. More than 250 responses were received, and we greatly appreciate these contributions. The enthusiastic level of response from all parts of the country, Councils large and small, and representative bodies, has affirmed our decision to raise these issues and look for solutions. ALGWA is confident that Australia can make significant improvements in women's participation in Local Government.

We would like to thank our Project Officer, Anne Dunn for the preparation of this Framework and for her negotiation with key stakeholders to gain support for progression to the next stage.

We acknowledge funding support and ongoing assistance from the National Office of Local Government and the Commonwealth Office of the Status of Women.

We particularly thank the CEO and staff of the Australian Local Government Association for advice and assistance and look forward to a productive continuing relationship with the Association in the implementation phase.

We acknowledge that the Chief Executive Officer of Local Government Managers Australia has agreed to support the implementation of this Framework.

ALGWA recognises that women are not the only group within the community who are under represented in Local Government, and do not intend to be exclusive or insensitive to the needs of other groups. It is also true that some issues addressed in this paper are relevant to men as well as women, although we believe that women suffer particular disadvantage with these issues because of historical and behavioural factors. ALGWA requests respectful consideration at this time of the current issues for women.

Cr Yvonne Barlow  
ALGWA National President

November 2001

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# 1 Introduction

This Framework has been developed following a national consultation, in recognition that more needs to be done to increase women's participation in Local Government decision-making. Recent State and national initiatives in this area have substantially informed the Framework.

Despite considerable change over recent time, women are still significantly under-represented in elected member and senior management positions in Australian Local Government. If Australia is to realise its full potential as a nation, we need to ensure that we have the systems and capacity to access all the available resources. Currently we are failing to fully utilise the skills and attributes offered by the 51% of the population who are women.

Since women first began participating in Local Government we have seen many with high levels of skill, commitment and vision. It is also acknowledged that there have been many people, male and female, who have supported these women and have encouraged them to contribute to serving local communities in both elected and officer roles. However, despite this long history women still make up less than 30% of all elected members, 15% of mayors and 10% of senior executives. The number of women nationally with disabilities and indigenous or culturally and linguistically diverse women is currently unknown, but is thought to be extremely low. Obviously these overall statistics show that the number of women in decision-making positions in Local Government is not reflective of the communities they serve.

The past decade has seen considerable change in Local Government. Greater responsibility for service delivery has been devolved from the State to local municipalities, there has been an increase in the level of accountability and the community has a growing expectation that they will be consulted and involved in decision making. As a result of community demands, there has been a broadening of services delivered by Local Government to include an increasing focus on community development, environmental management and longer term strategic planning. These changes have resulted in new skills and attributes being required and women can contribute significantly to these in the future.

While Local Government has been changing, so has the society in which we live. Many more women are participating in tertiary institutions, which will significantly affect the skilled labour pool in the future. Men are increasingly playing a role in the care of children and people are generally working longer and harder. Women now make up almost half of the workforce in Australia, although they are more likely to have part time positions. The increasing reliance on technology for service delivery and the community demand for services to be available beyond the traditional business hours will result in changes to the time, place and manner in which we service the community. These changes will offer opportunities for flexibility of working hours and will also bring new issues and challenges for managing the participation of women while they are balancing home, family and careers.

The issues raised and the strategies to address them are proposed to assist women to reach their full potential as decision-makers. Progress made to date is acknowledged and some States and individual Councils are implementing specific plans to improve the position. However, it is imperative that the Local Government community acts together across Australia as agents for the substantial changes that are necessary for women to fully capitalise on their strengths and resources. Only then can we realise the vision of full and effective participation of women in Local Government decision-making, reflecting and representing the communities they serve.

## **2 Issues for Elected Women**

### **A. General Issues of Context**

- a) Responses from women across Australia varied from woman to woman, State to State and between metropolitan and rural/small regional Councils. The comments, perceptions and proposals articulated represent the most common feedback.
- b) Many of the issues raised apply to men equally as to women. They are not issues of gender as such, but women are particularly disadvantaged in that they rarely have the networks and avenues of support available to men, and so need particular attention paid as to how the issues apply to women and how they might overcome them.
- c) Having a diversity of Councillors in terms of age, gender and ethnicity improves the quality of debate and enhances respect among all Councillors.
- d) The issues are complex and any initiatives must take into account the community context for particular groups of women. In addition, as each Council is within its local community, the issues for women are bound up with broader questions of the representation of the diverse views of that community.
- e) Regional/rural women experience particular disadvantage because of distance, being in Councils with small budgets, and often in more traditional communities with particular views of the role of women.
- f) There are significant differences between the States in terms of remuneration, party political involvement, level of reimbursements (e.g. childcare) and acceptance of the importance of gender issues. The Framework therefore places heavy emphasis on State based leadership for implementation and proposed actions will need to be applied as appropriate in each State.
- g) There is no national information available concerning the participation of indigenous women, women with disabilities and women of culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, although some States produce very helpful statistics. This Framework seeks to progress this topic, but offers no direct remedial strategies until after specific consultation.
- h) Being a Councillor requires a resilient personality prepared to take verbal confrontation. Many female Councillors experience the line between robust debate and harassment being often crossed and an unwillingness by their colleagues to take this matter seriously.
- i) Many women struggle to meet the demands of public life while still having primary responsibility as carers and nurturers. Those women who enjoy the support of their families in their elected roles find ways to manage this, however Councils and staff need to be alert to actions they can take which would assist these women.
- j) The time demands on all Councillors for little remuneration (in most States) is reported to be the most inhibiting factor for effective performance in Local Government.
- k) There are strongly held and divergent views about the need for "women only" organisations, training, strategies, namely: (1) that gender 'apartheid' is not healthy for the sector, a Council or its community, and (2) that women learn more openly together, and need the support of each other to become the Councillors they aspire to be. In this Framework both positions have been accepted and respected.

## **B. Summary of Major Issues**

(in no particular order)

### **Financial considerations**

Including: inadequate remuneration, taxation status as employees with no superannuation, the need for significant travel allowances in rural/regional areas, the provision of child care allowances as a non-negotiable right.

### **Time demands**

Including: the balancing of public life with family life; the need to be extensively available to the community (sometimes with little administrative support), the reading and committee requirements, inflexible meeting times.

### **Lack of information and support**

Including: how to run a campaign and be successfully elected, the cost of the campaign, developing the skills of self promotion without seeming arrogant or out of touch, dealing with voting procedures, preferences etc., use of networks.

### **Need for training and confidence building**

Including: media training, public speaking, assertiveness, effectively using meeting and formal procedures, roles and responsibilities, financial management, governance matters, managing conflict.

### **Importance of CEO and senior staff support**

Including: out of meeting time for briefings, access to staff, administrative assistance, management of staff attitudes, training of Councillors in matters of protocol.

### **Essential requirement for Councils to address gender matters**

Including: harassment and bullying, sexist remarks in meetings, informal decision making occurring out of meetings, the essential requirement for child care allowances being approved by Councils.

## **3 Issues for Women Staff/Managers**

### **A. General Issues of Context**

- a) Women's individual experiences differ and this is often as a result of the interest in and acceptance by the CEO/General Manager of difficulties women may have in the organisation.
- b) Many women experience being under-valued in the workplace, and excluded from the main decision-making arena.
- c) Although in some instances traditional power holders are seen to have become more responsive towards women, the culture of the organisation has often remained one that marginalises and excludes women. Change in the position of women will be dependent upon a change in organisational culture.
- d) The nature of the culture within administrations is seen to be competitive. For a significant group of women, attempts to insert the values of consensus, inclusion and consultation meet with incomprehension or rebuff. This is a serious disincentive to seeking senior positions for some women.
- e) Family responsibilities are important for both men and women, although women feel particularly disadvantaged in the senior ranks because of the family requirements on their time as they are most often the primary carers, and they feel that this important role is not taken into account. Rather, they feel faced with choosing between family and career.

- f) Small and rural Councils often have difficulties in offering mentors and providing career paths. Individuals are not necessarily free to leave the geographic location to find opportunities elsewhere.
- g) Some areas of work are still regarded as "male prerogatives". Women sometimes lack confidence in presenting their skills and work experience as credible in the "male world".
- h) The issues for women cannot just be addressed within individual Councils - they are seen as an industry/sector problem as many staff build their careers completely within Local Government by moving from Council to Council. It is also unlikely that the issues can be successfully addressed by individual women.
- i) Some Councils are implementing strong programs to encourage women in their careers. Others do not believe that either the Councillors or senior managements take this issue seriously.
- j) Women managers and aspiring managers are divided on the need for "women only" training and networks. Many feel that the issues will be best addressed via mainstream programs of LGMA, Industry Training groups and Council based training. Others feel that they do not have the knowledge of processes and organisations that can provide them with regular contact with other women, access to mentoring and support, and positive consideration of their issues. These women seek the formal establishment and recognition of women's networks.

## **B. Summary of Major Issues**

(in no particular order)

### **Job Selection and Promotion**

Including: support for the preparation of job applications and presentation of skills and experience in a constructive way; lack of female representation on panels, biased job descriptions unnecessary job requirements; lack of acknowledgement of prior and different experience as appropriate for management; tendency towards appointment of younger people; lack of career structures for human/community services; tenure problems with funded positions, the process and content of performance appraisal.

### **Need for acknowledgement of family responsibilities**

Including: the balancing of work with family life; the need to allow flexible working hours for managers, provision for home working for people in promotion positions, job sharing for managers and team leaders, child care provisions particularly for night work, acknowledgement of caring responsibilities for elderly relatives.

### **Cultural Change**

Including: need for elected Councils and administrations to consider the workplace culture and decision-making styles, language and communication patterns, and to undertake climate surveys and organisational development programs to make the work situation constructive for all employees; ensure the existence of anti-harassment policies and the understanding of responsibility by all managers; provision of leadership by the CEO/General Manager in the development of skilled women into decision-making positions both formal management positions, and in positions of influence.

### **Training and Development**

Including: targeted training in public speaking, assertiveness, financial management, managing conflict, running effective meetings; working with elected members, encouragement to undertake credentialed study, access to sector conferences, specific provisions for emerging leaders including mentoring, networking and acting opportunities.

### **Regional Requirements**

Including: the tyranny of distance and the need to make training and networking opportunities available at the regional level, encouraging groups of neighbouring Councils to provide acting positions to enable skill development, and to consider joint mentoring schemes.

## **4 The Way Forward**

Increasing the participation of women in decision making in Local Government requires leadership at the national, State and local levels.

The autonomy of each individual Council must be preserved, and only each Council can assess the appropriate action required in its community. Many actions are appropriately initiated at the local level.

Local Government exists under State legislation and factors and conditions are different in each State. The Local Government sector is organised on a State basis, with the States having peak body associations and branches of Local Government Managers Australia. Each State has an "office of Local Government", and other potential government strategic partners are State based, such as school and further education, universities, offices of women's affairs, EEO offices etc. Most non government and community organisations that may be prepared to support this direction are also organised on a State basis. A large number of initiatives are therefore appropriately implemented on a State by State basis.

At the national level there are significant partners who can provide overall leadership, give enhanced credibility and gain external support. These include The Office of Local Government, the Commonwealth Office of the Status of Women (both of which support and give advice to Commonwealth Ministers), the Australian Local Government Association (the peak body for Local Government), the Australian Local Government Women's Association, and the Local Government Managers Australia.

It is therefore proposed to establish a National Framework for the advancement of women in Local Government decision-making, with the following features:

1. A commitment by each sphere of government and all strategic partners to the Framework.
2. The establishment of a National Steering Committee by agreement between the Australian Local Government Women's Association, the Australian Local Government Association, Local Government Managers Australia, the Commonwealth Office of Local Government, the Commonwealth Office of the Status of Women; to operate during the calendar years 2002 - 2005 and provide national leadership for the implementation of the Framework.
3. An invitation to each State association and State Government to form a coalition of appropriate strategic partners OLG (where not already established) to prepare an action and implementation plan for each State and to provide support and coordinated resources to Councils.
4. An invitation to each Council to commit to the Framework, within the context of current State activities and its own current initiatives.
5. The development of local action plans by each Council (if not existing).

## **5 The Framework**

All major stakeholders are invited to endorse this framework:

- Each local Council.
- State Ministers of Local Government.
- The Commonwealth Minister for Local Government.
- State Local Government representative bodies.
- National and State LGMAs.

### **A. Statement of Commitment**

1. We acknowledge that in Local Government women are under represented both as elected members and as senior members of administrations and that their increased participation in both of these arenas should be encouraged.
2. We agree to review our own policies and practices to ensure that no discrimination or impediment exists, and will take action to ensure that barriers to women's full participation in Local Government are removed.
3. We will work to create and support an environment in Local Government which is harassment-free and that encourages the expression of and respect for a wide range of views.

## **B. Goals**

1. To increase the number of and participation of women in Local Government so that Councils more clearly represent and/or reflect the communities they serve, by
  - a) increasing the number of women as elected members and Mayors, and
  - b) increasing the number of women as CEO/General Managers, second and third level managers

## **C. Objectives**

1. To create Councils and communities where women feel able to fully participate and share their skills, knowledge and experience
2. To work towards harassment-free, participative Councils where opinions and differences are respected
3. To develop a climate of understanding among Councillors, CEOs/General Managers and senior staff of the need for the initiatives in this Framework and to enlist their support
4. Where women choose women-only training and networking, to gain acceptance and support of their participation in these activities

## **6 Potential Strategies at the Local Level**

(for development into Local Action Plans as appropriate to each Council)

### **A. Proposed Actions for Councils to Support Elected Members**

#### **Education about Local Government**

- Support young people through specific programs and consultations to participate in decision making with Councils, including the establishment of youth Councils.
- Arrange discussions with local school career advisors to promote Local Government as a career option.

#### **Pre election support**

- Establish local systems of support for women candidates, to provide advice on dealing with the media and promoting themselves, campaigning and local voting patterns.
- Run preparatory sessions for aspiring new members including specific sessions for women
- Issue personal invitations and encourage women to stand for Council.

#### **Meeting times**

- Ensure that meeting times for Council meetings and other meetings involving elected members are flexible and are timed to avoid clashes with family responsibilities.

#### **Elected Members Training**

- Support women attending specific women's training opportunities if desired.
- Ensure that women have equal access to training opportunities.

#### **Mentoring and Support**

- Link and match elected members with more experienced elected members for the first few months of office.
- Arrange team-building with other elected members, working with the CEO/General Manager and senior staff, developing positive group dynamics.
- Develop a Council harassment prevention policy.

#### **Entitlements**

- Review entitlements for elected members including allowances and childcare and ensure adequate provision is made for all Councillors for those entitlements under Council control.

#### **Administration**

- Ensure CEO/GMs and senior staff are aware of the needs of female Councillors for support and assistance.
- Ensure good meeting preparation including briefings for all elected members.
- Ensure that all Councillors understand EEO and anti-discrimination legislation.

## **Equal Opportunity Issues**

- Consult with and investigate the particular local issues for Indigenous women, women of culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, and women with disabilities.
- Develop specific action plans that include these groups of women.
- Develop cultural awareness training for all elected members.

## **B. Proposed Actions for CEOs/General Managers (and where appropriate, Councils) to support Council Staff**

### **Mentoring**

- Introduce mentoring programs for emerging leaders and young women.
- Introduce recognition programs for the achievements of women.
- Introduce leadership scholarships for emerging leaders.

### **Training**

- Ensure equal participation of women in current training opportunities.
- Encourage participation in targeted women's training where desired by female staff.
- Ensure women's participation in management training regardless of their professional backgrounds.
- Arrange training for all staff that considers EEO, harassment, stereotyping.

### **Selection and Promotion**

- Ensure that appropriate and senior women are included on all selection panels.
- Ensure job description and selection criteria recognise management skills and experience and are not solely related to technical expertise.
- Consider selection criteria which recognises different management paths.
- Ensure age discrimination does not occur.
- Review acting and development opportunities, and the existence of career paths for all staff.

### **Equal Opportunity**

- Council and CEO/GM prepare a Plan to increase the participation of women staff in decision making.
- CEO/GM report to Council annually on percentage of women in senior positions with trend information to be included in the Annual Report.
- Council to review staff appraisal systems and processes to ensure the absence of bias.
- CEO/GM identify the particular issues for Indigenous women, women of non-English speaking background and women with disabilities and take action to address any difficulties.
- Run cultural awareness training for all staff.

### **Development of Women's Networks**

- Encourage interested women to participate in women's networks and provide travel subsidy for attendance at meetings and training.

### **Cultural Change**

- Review the organisational culture and undertake a climate survey.
- Ensure harassment policies are operational and understood.
- Include support for senior women staff in the CEO/GM performance indicators.

### **Family Responsibilities**

- Ensure family friendly human resources policies for all staff.
- Consider part-time, job share and work-at-home (sometimes) positions for managers and team leaders.
- Consider child care provisions for staff at required evening Council meetings.

## **7 Potential Strategies at the State Level**

Proposed actions for a coalition of strategic partners, including State-based Local Government representative bodies (elected and staff) and relevant State Government Officers, to be developed as appropriate in each State

### **A. General Actions**

#### **Organisational Support**

- Establish a formal coalition of partners at the State level with agreed reporting arrangements to relevant bodies.
- Provide a place and a focus for the implementation of the Framework over the next three years through (where possible) the establishment of a secretariat, a broadly representative committee and publicly available records of the business of the coalition.
- Resolve that the coalition/committee will deal jointly with issues for elected members and staff, or establish separate mechanisms.
- That funding be sought from the Federal, State and Northern Territory governments for time-limited positions as Women's Policy Advisers in each State and for the support of the secretariat.

#### **Development of Women's Networks**

- Develop State and Regional women's networks (where they do not currently exist) to encourage open discussion about problems, and develop confidence to resolve issues at the Council level.
- Consider the desirability of separate or coordinated mechanisms for elected women and staff and establish as appropriate.
- Explore the existence of women's networks outside of Local Government and make information available generally to female staff and Councillors.

#### **Education about Local Government**

- Negotiate with education departments to ensure that Local Government studies gain a higher profile in education.
- Develop materials promoting a career path in Local government for young women, with an emphasis on the range of positions available, including nontraditional roles.
- Encourage the development of materials by education departments which accurately describes the role and importance of Local Government in governance studies.

#### **Equal Opportunity Issues**

- Ensure information about cultural awareness training is available to all elected members.
- Consult with and investigate the particular issues for identified groups of women in conjunction with State based peak bodies, including:
  - a) indigenous women
  - b) culturally & linguistically diverse women
  - c) women with disabilities.
- Develop specific advice for Councils that will encourage greater participation by these groups of women both as elected members and staff.
- Ensure all relevant information on State and Commonwealth legislation is known to all Councils.

### **B. Elected Members**

#### **Pre Election Support**

- On a State or regional basis, run preparatory sessions for aspiring female elected members.
- Distribute useful materials to Chief Executive Officer and General Managers to provide to aspiring female Councillors.
- Work with partner organisations to run campaigns to encourage women and young people to stand for Council.
- Support State based ALGWAs to target communities with female members, to advertise for candidates and provide support.
- Run courses (with the Electoral Commissioner) which teach candidates (especially women) about voting patterns and how to read them; explain voting and preference systems.

- Ensure training for CEO/GMs and senior administrative staff dealing with potential candidates, to improve the information and support provided for aspiring elected members.
- Target campaigns at women and young people to increase number of voters.

### **Elected Member Training**

- Arrange training for women, on a regional basis, accessible to all female elected members, covering topics such as:
  - \* Meeting procedures
  - \* Time management
  - \* Code of conduct and protocol
  - \* Conflict of interest
  - \* Media and public relations training
  - \* How to be an effective chair
  - \* Public speaking
  - \* Conflict resolution/mediation

### **Entitlements**

- Ensure all legislated entitlements for elected members include prescribed allowances for childcare.
- Advise Councils on a range of appropriate travel allowances, and provide information to them on provisions in other Councils of a similar size and location.
- Ensure pre-election seminars and information packs include information on entitlements.
- As appropriate, raise issues of current remuneration levels with relevant State Ministers and advocate for a review of these levels on women's participation.

### **CEOs/General Managers**

- Provide input into existing CEO/General Manager forums about possible supportive actions which could be taken at the Council level.

## **C. Support for Female Staff**

### **Mentoring and Recognition**

- Introduce cross Council mentoring programs for emerging leaders and young women.
- Introduce State-based recognition programs for the achievements of women.
- Introduce leadership scholarships for emerging leaders to higher education programs.
- Provide information for CEOs/General Managers on successful models of succession planning which support women.
- Create a State network of senior women in Local Government and support their ongoing communication via email and face-to-face meetings.

### **Training**

- Arrange training for women staff, on a regional basis, accessible to all senior staff and emerging leaders, to cover topics such as:
  - \* Meeting procedures
  - \* Chairing and facilitation skills
  - \* Public speaking
  - \* Mediation
  - \* Conflict resolution
  - \* Career path planning
  - \* Being on Selection Panels
- Ensure all CEOs/General Managers are aware of the wide range of credentialled and less formal management training available for female staff, and encourage them to provide the time and resources required for participation by potential senior managers and CEOs.
- Provide State wide/regional opportunities for women to visit and observe areas outside of their immediate (and often limited) experience including site visits, discussions groups, seminars and presentations.
- Provide periodic seminars for women returning to the work force post child rearing, to up date their knowledge and understanding of current Local Government issues and developments.

## **Equal Opportunity**

- Provide Councils with up-to-date information on EEO practices in the public sector, in particular as they relate to recruitment and selection, promotion, discrimination, harassment, staff appraisal.
- Encourage Councils to report annually on percentage of women in senior positions with trend information, and prepare a State-wide report based on that information.

## **Family Responsibilities**

- Provide Councils with a range of examples from other spheres of government, community and commercial organisations which have successful models of family friendly human resource policies.

# **8 Potential Strategies at the National Level**

## Actions for the National Steering Committee

### **A. The National Steering Committee**

- Convene the National Steering Committee, set targets and develop a timetable for the life of the project.
- Resolve regular reporting arrangements.
- Establish arrangements for a secretariat to support the project implementation over its three year life.
- Seek joint funding from strategic partners to staff the secretariat.

### **B. Seek Political Support**

- Request the Commonwealth Minister of Local Government have the issue of women's participation placed on the agenda of the Local Government and Planning Ministers' Conference to enlist each State's support for further action.
- Request the Commonwealth Minister of Local Government circulate the Framework to every Council seeking their support by acceptance of the Statement of Commitment, Goals and Objectives of the Framework, by formal decision of Council.
- Seek State/Territory government support for time-limited positions as Local Government Women's Policy Advisers/Project Officers in each State.

### **C. Promote the Framework**

- Seek to have the Framework and its implementation placed on the agenda of appropriate national and State conferences.
- Present material for publication in Local Government journals, newsletters etc.
- Circulate the Framework widely with an accompanying State by State letter which acknowledges current achievements in each State.

### **D. Collect data and publish**

- Establish a national database on the position of women as:
  - a) elected members, and
  - b) senior staff
- Negotiate with the ABS to ensure that data collected is published in a way which facilitates research on women and gender issues.
- Carry out an Australia-wide survey to establish what has been done to advance gender equity in Local Government.
- Collect and publish case studies of diverse practice covering both elected women and staff.

### **E. Specific Provisions**

- Seek a review of elected members entitlements relating to taxation and superannuation.
- Convene a national forum for women senior managers to progress this agenda.

## 9 Existing Models and Arrangements

### National

The Australian Local Government Women's Association is a national body which aims, within the Local Government sphere, to further women's knowledge and understanding, protect and enhance the interests and rights of women in Local Government, take action on subjects of interest to women affecting local governing bodies and /or legislation, act in an advisory capacity to intending women candidates for elections and encourage women into professional careers.

The Australian Local Government Association is a federation of associations in each State, and the Northern Territory. It has included this Framework within its National General Assembly papers, and will provide ongoing support and leadership for its implementation as part of the National Steering Committee.

Local Government Managers Australia is the leading professional association representing managers and aspiring managers throughout Australia, with Divisions in each State. It will include this Framework as a significant topic at its 2002 National Congress and will support the implementation of the Framework through membership of the National Steering Committee.

The National Office of Local Government is responsible for providing the Commonwealth Government with independent and expert advice on Local Government. It works with councils, Local Government associations and Commonwealth and State government agencies to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the Local Government sector, and to promote Local Government's contribution to the nation's overall economic and social performance.

The Commonwealth Office of the Status of Women is a policy advisory unit that aims to mainstream women's issues, experiences and perspectives. Its role is to influence policy, Cabinet and Budget decision-making to ensure women's interests are considered. The Office consults with women from a wide range of government and non-government organisations. One of the goals of OSW is to improve the participation of women in leadership roles and decision-making, and a particular focus area is women in Local Government.

### Queensland

Queensland ALGWA has an active program to assist and support women, both elected members and staff, including a mentoring program which matches women in like Councils for advice and support, information leaflets on a wide range of topics, seminars before elections to encourage women to stand, and a targeted advertising program for areas where there are no or few women. It provides a bursary award for women and men employees each year for further education. 'ALGWA News', is produced quarterly to share information from members around the State.

The Queensland Department of Local Government and Planning runs general seminars prior to elections, and produces an information pack for intending Councillors. The Department, with the assistance of ALGWA, produced and distributed in 2001 the booklet *Local Leaders Local Women* which tells the stories of 20 women in Local Government from across Queensland.

Local Government Managers Australia (Qld Division), with input from the Department, is investigating issues relating to women in senior executive positions and is proposing to undertake a Labour Market Survey to identify changes that have occurred in the Local Government labour market profile and the implications for Local Government careers.

The Local Government Association of Queensland will establish a process to address the recommendations of this Framework.

### Victoria

ALGWA Victoria produces a regular newsletter and runs forums across the State designed to empower and encourage women to become decision-makers. It initiated the promotion of women's participation in Victorian Local Government with a campaign 200 by 2000. The Association is in active partnership with the Municipal Association of Victoria (MAV) which hosts its secretariat, and the Victorian Local Governance Association (VLGA) which hosts the *Women's Participation in Local Government Coalition (WPILGC)*, of which ALGWA is a member.

WPILGC is a non-party Coalition of eight key Victorian women's and Local Government organisations. Among its other roles, it is responsible for the Strengthening Communities through Women's Participation (SCWP) Project which aims to support Victorian women to increase their participation in leadership roles in the community and to increase the diversity of women who are visible in this way. The Project is funded by the Victorian government through the Community Support Fund and the MAV and VLGA are joint signatories.

The organisations in the WPILGC currently include Australian Local Government Women's Association, Ladies of the City Action League (LOCAL), Municipal Association of Victoria, Victorian Local Governance Association, Victorian Women's Trust, Women's Electoral Lobby Victoria (WEL), Women's Planning Network, yWCA. Since 1996 the Coalition has undertaken a range of activities including the development of the Victorian Local Government Women's Charter, publication of the highly successful A Gender Agenda which is a kit for women who want to stand for Local Government and those who want to assist other to stand and a companion volume in 2001 *Now you're A Councillor*, a kit for newly elected Councillors. It has managed campaigns to facilitate and support local activities to encourage and assist women to run in elections including creation of a web-based tally room. To date it has helped to increase the numbers of women in elected positions from 21.8% in 1996/97 to 27.8% in 2001.

This year the Municipal Association of Victoria ran a *Women's Power Workshop* which resulted in the production of a toolkit adapted for women in Local Government, containing scenarios of how to deal with the Mayor, Councillors, staff and members of the community.

The Local Government Division of the Department of Infrastructure conducted a *Review of Victorian Councillor Allowances* and the resulting report highlights many of the barriers to women's participation. The Division has implemented critical recommendations of the review, namely the broadening of the former child care allowance to "family carer allowance" and contributed to the publication costs of a support kit for newly elected women Councillors. It also sponsored a celebratory dinner for past and present women Councillors in recognition of their contribution to Local Government.

## **New South Wales**

NSW ALGWA runs an Annual Conference, holds pre-election seminars, maintains archives, publishes a newsletter, provides an 1800 number and presents seminars around the State.

The NSW Department for Women hosts a project *Hands Up for Women in Council* to encourage more women Councillors to stand at elections. It produced an Issues Paper *Support Strategies for Women Councillors in NSW* which has led to the publication of the *10 Point Action Plan for Best Practice for Supporting Women Councillors in NSW* which is being piloted in five Councils.

The Premiers Department runs a *Spokeswomen Program* in which some Councils participate.

The Department of Local Government produces Statewide statistics on the gender, Aboriginality and first language spoken of Councillors. The report contains a separate chapter on women candidates and Councillors. DLG has recently completed a Review of Councillor Misbehaviour. DLG conducts an Aboriginal Mentoring Program and approximately half of the participants in this program are women. It has produced papers and brochures for Aboriginal people and communities to encourage their participation in Local Government. The Department conducted a "youth Consultation Research Project" and produced a series of reports from that study.

The Local Government and Shires Associations of NSW have conducted a Springboard Program for female employees in non-management positions, which includes workshops and mentoring by men and women. It also conducts a leadership program for both male and female managers and promotes a mentoring strategy as part of the program. LGSA sponsors a Personal and Executive Assistants' Network to provide a forum to enhance members' skills and knowledge, thereby providing a professional and quality support service to the Council and community. The Associations plan to conduct training for the Women in Business group in Bateman's Bay, NSW for prospective female Councillors for the 2003 elections.

For elected members the Associations run a women in Local Government seminar with key themes - women in Local Government, balancing work and family, gender games, networking, and strategies for career success in Local Govt. It is working with the Department for Women in developing a project for mentoring and supporting women in Local Government. A publication *Introduction to Local Government for Women* is being produced.

## **Tasmania**

ALGWA Tasmania is a small but dynamic collection of women (including elected, appointed and those interested in Local Government) who meet on at least four occasions a year to further the objectives of the branch. In addition to providing support for those directly involved, the branch in partnership with others, provide opportunities for professional development and encourages suitable candidates to stand for election.

Prior to the 2000 Local Government elections, Women Tasmania and the Local Government Division ran workshops for women interested in standing for Local Government. The workshops provided information about what it is like to be in Local Government, campaigning and information about the election process. The workshops had the support of ALGWA members and women Councillors played a major role in developing and presenting material drawn from their experience. A publication *Women Into Local Government* derived from the workshops will be launched early in 2002.

Planning for the next round of information workshops is in the early stages but it is expected that the audience will include men and women and that gender issues will be addressed within the workshop content.

In the interim period a skills development training series has been delivered through a partnership of Women Tasmania, the Local Government Division and the Local Government Association of Tasmania. Entitled *Skilling Up*, it aimed to increase Councillors' (both women and men) knowledge and capacity in the areas of policy, meeting procedures and financial reporting. The underlying assumption of these workshops was that by increasing skills Councillors are better able to manage conflict, develop strategies and achieve individual and group goals.

The Local Government Association of Tasmania is running a series of cross-cultural awareness sessions. After Local Government elections LGAT runs training for all newly elected members.

## **Western Australia**

The Western Australian Municipal Association is moving to re-establish its Women in Local Government group, which will join with National ALGWA. A Forum will be held in February 2002 for this purpose. The Annual Councillor Development Weekend addressed issues relating to women's experience in Local Government. To support women staff a mentoring program is being considered.

There is an active State Government Diversity Committee that reports to the Premier. This committee works on behalf of State and Local Government and works to increase the numbers of women in senior positions in both State and Local Government.

## **South Australia**

The Local Government Association of South Australia has taken a strong lead in encouraging women to consider becoming elected members of Councils, particularly during the Women's Centenary when a poster campaign and workshops were conducted. In more recent times promotional activities of the LGA, conducted prior to elections, has taken a broader approach with television, radio and advertisements encouraging women, persons from multicultural backgrounds, business and young persons to consider putting themselves forward for election.

A range of training programs and resource documents are offered to new and continuing elected members. A strong focus is placed on programs offered in the 18 months after an election. Materials and manuals are produced by the LGA in consultation with the Office of Local Government. Many Councils also engage consultants to conduct topic specific sessions either regionally or "in house".

To encourage female applicants for senior positions, the Local Government Training Authority (currently in the process of winding up its operations) has provided targeted career planning sessions. The LGA has recently taken on the delivery of an Education and Training Service and will be targeting programs for women in its 2002 course program. A recent workforce planning study conducted with funding support from the Local Government Research & Development Scheme in SA has identified that there are issues that need to be addressed to ensure a more equal balance of women in non-traditional areas of employment. There needs to be more research undertaken into gender issues in order to plan for appropriate responses to this issue.

Work is being undertaken to assist Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander persons consider employment in Local Government, or becoming an elected member and a report Councils Belong to Aboriginal People Too has

been published. This work has been jointly progressed by the LGA, the South Australian Government and ATSiC.

The LGA has developed an induction guide for use by CEOs with new Councillors.

## **Northern Territory**

The Northern Territory Women's Advisory Council has run workshops to encourage greater participation by women as elected members of Territory Councils. The Council has a Women and Politics Reference Group and would be able to offer advice and assistance.

Prior to the Municipal Council elections every four years the Local Government Association of the Northern Territory conduct information sessions at regional centres for potential candidates. Women's participation is encouraged and welcomed. The Association also conducts 'Have A Say' campaigns in cooperation with the Department of Local Government to encourage Aboriginal participation in the elections. Aboriginal women are strongly represented on many remote communities.

The Local Government Association is committed to and prepared to assist in encouraging greater women's involvement in Local Government. They offer to introduce women interested in nominating as an elected member or interested in a career in senior management to women currently serving in these positions with Councils in the Northern Territory.

## **Australian Capital Territory**

The ACT has recently joined the Australian Local Government Association and has an interest in the issues faced by local governments. With its local and municipal responsibilities, many of the issues are similar to those in the ACT.

In 2000, the ACT Government released a *Women's Action Plan* and the implementation has resulted in the following changes in Urban Services:

- An increase in the representation of women on Boards & Committees (now 39%).
- A commitment to ensure that client input into customer service surveys reflect the gender profile of the community.
- The provision of gender aggregated information in annual and other reports.
- The introduction of monitoring of the gender mix in applications for employment, and the active encouragement of applications from suitably qualified people where there is a significant imbalance.

The ACT Government has also recently released a *Work and Life Balance Policy*, which aims to assist all employees to this balance.

## 10. Contributors

Contributions have been received from elected members and staff from the following Councils, authorities and organizations

### Councils

Alexandrina Council	Gatton Shire	Newcastle City
Auburn Council	Geelong City	Nillumbik Shire
Ballina Shire	Geraldton City	North Sydney Council
Barossa Council	Gingin Shire	Northern Grampians Shire
Bassendean Town Council	Gold Coast City	Onkaparinga City
Bathurst City	Gosford City	Orange City
Beautesert Shire	Greater Bendigo City	Palmerston City
Bellingen Shire	Greater Dandenong City	Parramatta City
Blacktown City	Gunnedah Shire	Peak Downs Shire
Boonah Shire	Hastings Council	Penrith City
Booroondara City	Hervey Bay City	Perth City
Bridgetown-Greenbushes Shire	Hinchinbrook Shire	Pine Rivers Shire
Brighton Council	Hobart City	Pormpuraaw Council
Brisbane City	Holdfast Bay City	Port Lincoln City
Broadsound Shire	Hornsby Shire	Port Phillip City
Broken Hill City	Indigo Shire	Port Stephens Council
Bunbury City	Inverell Council	Pristine Waters Council
Burnett Shire	Katherine Town Council	Prospect City
Byron Shire	Kiama Municipal Council	Queanbeyan City
Caboolture Shire	Kingston City	Redland Shire
Cairns City	Kuringygai Municipal Council	Renmark Paringa District Council
Cambooya Shire	Lake Macquarie City	Richmond Valley Council
Campaspe Shire	Lane Cove Council	Rockhampton City
Campbelltown City	Launceston City	Ryde City
Canterbury Council	Lismore City	Salisbury City
Cardinia Shire	Lithgow City	Shellharbour City
Cardwell Shire	Logan City	Shoalhaven City
Central Highlands	Macedon Ranges Shire	Snowy River Shire
Chittering Shire	Mackay City Council	Stonnington City
Coffs Harbour City	Mandurah City	Swan City
Cooloola Shire	Manjimup Shire	Temora Shire
Cooma-Monaro Shire	Manningham City	Thuringowa City
Coonamble Shire	Maribyrnong City	Tumut Shire
Copmanhurst Shire	Marion City	Tweed Shire
Corangamite Shire	Maroondah City	Victoria Plains Shire
Crows Nest Shire	Melbourne City	Warringah Council
Darwin City	Mildura City	Whitehorse City
Deniliquin Council	Minjilang Council	Whittlesea City
Derby/West Kimberley Shire	Moreland City	Wickepin Shire
Devonport City	Mosman Municipal Council	Wollondilly Shire

East Pilbara Shire  
Esperance Shire  
Eurobodalla Shire  
Flinders Shire  
Frankston City  
Fremantle City

Mount Alexander Shire  
Moyne Shire  
Murrindidi Shire  
Murweh Shire  
Nambucca Shire  
Narromine Shire

Wollongong City  
Wyndham/East Kimberley Shire  
Wyong Shire  
Yarra City  
Yarra Ranges Shire  
Yuendumu CGC

## **Other Government Departments**

ACT Urban Services Department  
Commonwealth Office of the Status of Women  
Department of Internal Affairs New Zealand  
National Office of Local Government  
New South Wales Department of Local Government  
Queensland Department of Local Government & Planning  
Queensland Premiers Department  
Victorian Local Government Division (Infrastructure Department)

## **Local Government Representative Bodies**

Australian Local Government Association  
Australian Local Government Women's Association New South Wales  
Australian Local Government Women's Association Queensland  
Australian Local Government Women's Association Tasmania  
Australian Local Government Women's Association Victoria  
Local Government Association of the Northern Territory  
Local Government Association of Queensland  
Local Government Association of South Australia  
Local Government Association of Tasmania  
Local Government Managers Association National Council  
Lord Mayor of Brisbane's Women's Advisory Committee  
Municipal Association of Victoria  
New South Wales Local Government and Shires Association  
Victorian Local Governance Association  
Western Australian Municipal Association  
Women's Participation in Local Government Coalition

## **Interested Organisations**

Australian Pensioners and Superannuation League Qld Inc  
Margaret River Business Development Centre  
SOLGM OPUS Business School New Zealand  
Results Unlimited Pty Ltd

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