



LOCAL GOVERNMENT RESEARCH FORUM

30 April 2014
Melbourne, Australia

In partnership with



LOCAL
GOVERNMENT
MANAGERS
AUSTRALIA

Welcome



Welcome to the 2014 Local Government Research Forum. This national forum is an annual event run as part of the Australian Centre of Excellence for Local Government's (ACELG) Research and Policy Foresight program.

The aims of the Forum are to provide a platform for the latest local government research and to facilitate discussion and debate on how that research translates to policy and practice. The Forum is designed to support the broader aims of the Centre which are to contribute to building the capacity of local government, inform debate on current and emerging challenges for local government and strengthen the positioning of local government as a voice for local communities.

ACELG is uniquely placed to bring together councils, universities, government agencies and professional associations with an interest in local government research in Australia.

I wish to thank LGMA National for partnering with ACELG to host this event, and I look forward to participating in the discussions over the day.

Roberta Ryan

Associate Professor and Director

Australian Centre of Excellence for Local Government

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Forum program

8.30am	Registration	
9.00am	Welcome by Cr Bill McArthur, President Municipal Association of Victoria Opening remarks by John Ravlic, CEO LGMA National	
9.15am	Keynote (Lake Room 1/2) Why local government matters? <i>Assoc. Prof Roberta Ryan</i>	
	STREAM 1 (Lake Room 1/2)	STREAM 2 (Lake Room 3/4)
9.45am	Local Representation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Under the radar... ... does voter apathy contribute to dysfunctional councils? The journey from citizen to councillor Think women for local government – what works for local political equity 	Governance and Workforce <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Good governance and ethical practice – beyond everything! Risky business: CEO recruitment in local government Future proofing local government: strategies to address language, literacy and numeracy skills in the local government workforce
11am	Morning tea	
11.20am	Keynote (Lake Room 1/2) Local governance, local autonomy and decentralization in the Philippines: Issues, concerns, directions and implications for reform <i>Professor Alex Brillantes</i>	
11.50am	Creative Communities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> How are NSW councils engaged in arts and culture? Are these roles changing over time? “The obstacle is the path” – Why council didn’t take the easy road when it came to parkour Public value evaluation of the arts 	Regional Economies <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Local government leading the development of regional Australia Regional economies - Different pathways, different strategies
12.40pm	Lunch	
1.15pm	Federated data access for local governments across Australia (Lake Room 1/2) <i>Presented by the Australian Urban Research Infrastructure Network (AURIN)</i>	
1.45pm	Research Practice <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Roads, rates, rubbish and random sampling: Using research skills in local government Understanding community to engage community: using qualitative research techniques in local government community engagement Practitioner contribution to the local government knowledge base (ACELG) 	Reform and Innovation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Social research and reform: Assessing the impacts Local government assets: A case for excellence in their management To be or not to be amalgamated! An overview of two similar sized local authorities facing the amalgamation debate in New Zealand
3pm	Short break	
3.20pm	Productive Communities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enhancing productive communities through the use of community indicators Achieving more by embedding technology in community consultation: Insights from Living Kingston 2035 	Regulation and Planning <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maximising impact by understanding the food business context Old law, new policy and Old Bar
4.10pm	Plenary (Lake Room 1/2) Prof Lawrence Pratchett, Melissa Gibbs	
4.45pm	Close	

Keynotes

Why local government matters?

Associate Professor Roberta Ryan

Lake Room 1/2, 9.15 am

The Australian Centre of Excellence for Local Government (ACELG) has undertaken a major piece of research to identify what communities value about local government.

Whilst federalism has buttressed the role of both central and state governments, local government has been viewed as the least capable arm of government and can often find it difficult to move beyond the charge of being a 'creature of statute', attending to rudimentary service functions ('roads, rates, rubbish'). *A priori* arguments about the value of local representation and measures of service delivery satisfaction aside, little empirical research has been done to determine why (or if) local government matters to communities.

Some government agencies have been undertaking research to elucidate how and why their activities, and their role in society, are valued by communities, beyond counting service activity data or attendance. ACELG's current sector-influencing research draws on the successful examples of these major research projects that have been used to articulate the value of largely intangible outcomes across diverse policy fields such as the arts, disability and the environment.

Our research into 'why government matters' has been informed by an extensive review of literature on key elements of local government and analyses linkages between: attachment elements of place, including aesthetic, instrumental and experiential elements; service delivery preferences, including service priorities and levels, willingness to pay, and delivery models; governance, including decision-making standards, the role of government, and public value creation; community participation, including decision-making processes and involvement in society; broadly held social values; and respondent demographics.

This presentation will highlight the purpose, rationale, conceptual framework and methodology for this research and present the first tranche of headline findings from the research. The session will invite attendees to offer their views about the findings and contribute to subsequent development of this significant and timely sector-influencing research.

Associate Professor Roberta Ryan is a leading social policy, program evaluation and stakeholder engagement practitioner and researcher with over 30 years' experience in academia and consulting across Australia and internationally. Roberta has designed and undertaken a range of complex government and non-government policy advisory and applied policy projects. She is well known for developing new approaches to the application of research to policy, social policy, evaluation, community engagement, stakeholder management, social sustainability, social and strategic planning. Roberta is the Director of ACELG and the Centre for Local Government within the University of Technology, Sydney.

Roberta has completed over 300 social research and evaluation projects, including major national reviews and evaluations, methodologically complex projects using outcome and process evaluation approaches, program logic and many service reviews and evaluations. Roberta has particular expertise in the development of innovative methodologies that deliver key strategic outcomes for clients. Roberta has an established reputation for consultative and expert facilitation of processes that assist government clients to arrive at constructive and mutually acceptable policy and program outcomes.

Local governance, local autonomy and decentralization in the Philippines: Issues, concerns, directions and implications for reform

Professor Alex Brillantes

Lake Room 1/2, 11.20 am

The implementation of devolution in the Philippines through a massive decentralization strategy has been recognized as a major turning point in the politico-administrative history of the Philippines. It fundamentally transformed the nature of power relations between the central government and the thousands of sub-national governments - local governments - and institutions in the Philippines. It also laid the groundwork for the active engagement of business and civil society in the process of local governance.

It was in 1991 with the enactment of the Local Government Code through Republic Act 6710 that a massive process of devolution process begun. Among other things, the responsibility for the delivery of certain basic services in the health, agriculture, social welfare and environmental sectors was devolved to local governments. Certain regulatory functions were also transferred. Financial transfers to local governments were likewise increased with 40% of internally generated taxes allocated to local governments through the Internal Revenue Allotment (IRA). Local governments were encouraged to explore alternative sources of revenue by exercising their corporate powers in partnership with the business sector. Finally, the Code laid the foundation for active citizen engagement in local governance by harnessing the energies of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and civil society.

The Code unleashed the potentials in the countryside encouraging frontline local government units (LGUs) to take the lead in local development processes in partnership with other key stakeholders including the national government agencies, local businesses and civil society and NGOs. Indeed, with the implementation of decentralization, the environment of local governance will never be the same again.

Over the years, local governments have had to engage the other actors of governance – business and civil society – in addressing other imperatives in local governance: rapid urbanization, climate change and migration, together with their attendant challenges that had to be addressed at the local level.

A number of lessons can be drawn from the decentralization experience of the Philippines for the past two decades. One lesson is the realization that financial decentralization goes hand in hand with decentralization or devolution of services or functions

Another lesson is the need for capacity building for both the devolving agencies and the local governments. This should be a high priority in the governance agenda

On the positive side, one lesson learned is that local governments (through the various leagues of local authorities) have become more assertive and effective in articulating local concerns over the past two decades. In relation to this, another lesson that can be drawn is the fact that awards programs (e.g., Galing Pook Awards, Local Government Leadership Awards) are instrumental in disseminating good and best practices at the local level and have motivated local governments to pursue innovative governance practices at their level).

Another important lesson is the realization that governance is not the exclusive domain of government entities.

That urbanization should be increasingly addressed at the local level is another lesson gleaned from the country's decentralization experience.

Despite decentralization, poverty and economic inequity continue to exist among regions. Rapid urbanization and its associated disparities in the geographical dispersal of economic activity and population also present new governance and development management challenges. Moreover, globalization presents socio-economic opportunities and threats at local level.

Another lesson identified is that sustainable development issues are often location-specific in management and should be addressed at the appropriate level of governance.

Finally, another lesson pertains to private-public sector interface: that private sector capacity impacts on what should be delivered by LGUs, including what can be delivered more efficiently by the private sector and what level of governance can best ensure efficiency and effectiveness should be identified.

The paper suggests directions for reforming and deepening decentralization in the Philippines. These are in the areas of (1) institutions, structures and processes, and (2) values, behavior and mindsets. However, these reforms should be implemented within the context of an enabling framework provided by (3) leadership and (4) active citizen engagement.

Alex B. Brillantes, Jr, is a Commissioner of the Commission on Higher Education of the Philippines. He is Professor (on secondment) of the National College of Public Administration and Governance at University of the Philippines, and President of the Philippine Society for Public Administration.

He obtained his PhD. and MA from the University of Hawaii, and MPA and AB from the University of the Philippines. He took special courses at the Institute for Policy Studies in Washington DC and at the Kennedy School of Government in Harvard University.

Professor Brillantes served as Dean of the University of the Philippines National College of Public Administration, Secretary-General of the Association of Schools of Public Administration of the Philippines, and Deputy Secretary General of the Eastern Regional Organization for Public Administration. He was a founding member of the Network of Asia Pacific Schools of Public Administration and Governance, the Asian Association for Public Administration, and the Asian Group of Public Administration.

Brillantes was Executive Director of the Local Government Academy of the Department of Interior and Local Government, and Director of the Center of Local and Regional Governance of the UP-NCPA, Chairman of the Philippine Social Science Council and a member of the board of the Galing Pook Foundation.

He has had several publications including Innovations and Excellence in Local Governance , Dictatorship and Martial Law, and The Philippine Presidency and was the lead editor of the book Reinventing a Local Government: The Experience of Makati.

Workshop

Federated data access for local government across Australia

Jack Barton, Chris Pettit

Lake Room 1/2, 1.15 pm

This presentation introduces the Australian Urban Research Infrastructure Network (AURIN) network in the context of local government and analyses the potential for researchers, practitioners and policy-makers to publish and share data through a secure and federated online environment.

Currently, there is a wealth of individual data products and discrete repositories of data held by urban researchers and practitioners across Australia. A problem with this has been that custodians not only maintain ever-growing islands of data in isolation, but the discoverability and potential for value-adding and re-use is limited by a lack of structured pathways to share these valuable data assets which can inform decision making and lead to new innovations and efficiencies across councils.

There has been a general movement to share data through open government data initiatives such as data.gov.au. However issues of privacy, security and data quality require that protocols be put in place to best manage the deployment of this data.

AURIN is creating a federated online IT infrastructure connecting organisations engaged in urban research and evidenced based decision-making. The aim of the federated infrastructure is to keep the data as close as practically possible to the respective data custodians. This facilitates a non-centralised and scalable model for data sharing and collaboration- whilst maintaining the autonomy of the respective organisations to control the terms and conditions of data use.

We will also present the concept of data-hubs employed as an intermediate facility for data management. Once data hubs are established and connected new opportunities for collaboration and innovation, which can benefit councils are made possible. These include: cross comparative analysis between councils (and interstate), better harmonisation of data structures to enable analysis and decision making which cross jurisdictional boundaries, efficient deployment and new methods of structuring access agreements that approach real-time connectivity and support the realisation of the smart city concept.

Dr Jack Barton is the Urban Data and e-Research Facilitator for the Australian Urban Research Infrastructure Network (AURIN). Dr Barton specialises in spatial decision support systems and is currently leading the AURIN outreach initiative, running workshops and user advisory meetings to assist in the development of the AURIN portal. He is trained as an architect and progressively moved into the areas of urban design and planning support systems. His PhD was entitled 'A Spatial Decision Support System for the Management of Public Housing' outlining a three-dimensional geospatial system for assisting in the management of built environments and, importantly, the communities that live there.

Associate Professor Christopher Pettit is the Strategic Implementation Coordinator of the Australian Urban Research Infrastructure Network (AURIN), the University of Melbourne. He is on the international advisory board for the "Geo for All" initiative and chairs an international working group on Geographical Visualization and Virtual Reality. Recently along with colleagues he has established the first Open Source Geospatial Lab in Australia with a focus on sustainable cities. He has published more than 100 papers in the areas of geographical visualization, e-research, spatial planning and decision support systems. His current research interests lie in the design of user-centric participatory planning and visualisation tools, which can be applied to a myriad of spatial planning problems focused on managing the built and natural environment including climate change and population pressures.

Abstracts and presenter biographies

LOCAL REPRESENTATION

Lake Room 1/2, 9.45am-11am

Under the radar... Does voter apathy contribute to dysfunctional councils?

Nicole Campbell

Local government is frequently referred to as the tier of government 'closest to the people', but are 'the people' genuinely engaged in their local democracy? Or is it largely a passive relationship outside of voting at council elections?

This paper explores whether the proximity of local government to its constituents is reflected in the level of voter participation (and the rate of informal voting) in local government elections compared with State and Federal government elections. The paper also explores whether there is a link between the level of engagement of communities in council decision making (beyond voting) and the functionality of the Council (staff and elected representatives). Are dysfunctional councils effectively 'flying under the radar' of public scrutiny?

Examining the nature of any observed relationship between citizen participation and council functionality may assist in strategies to encourage greater involvement by citizens in local decision making. Increased participation and greater public scrutiny by local electors may strengthen opportunities for improved governance and behavior across the local government sector.

A desktop analysis examined the voting profiles of electors in six NSW local government areas prior to and following a period of formal Administration (due to dysfunctional behaviour). The voting profiles of these councils are compared with State and Federal voting results in the same geographic area over the same timeframe and also statewide averages for local government elections (where available).

The concepts of government, representative democracy, participative democracy, citizen rights and electoral participation are outlined as well as a working definition of 'dysfunction' in local government.

Nicole Campbell worked for nearly 20 years as a senior strategic policy analyst for the NSW government specializing in environmental management, sustainable design, urban renewal and Aboriginal Affairs. Nicole was a Local Government Councillor for the City of Ryde from 2004-2012 and took a lead role in championing sustainable development, affordable housing, and community infrastructure. Nicole has a strong interest in exploring different models for participative democracy, gender equity and governance in political structures. Nicole is currently completing her Masters in Local Government at the University of Technology, Sydney.

The journey from citizen to councillor

Sarah Ewing

Like many other jurisdictions, Victorian local government elections yield significant turnover among elected representatives. In the October 2012 Victorian local government elections, 299 new councillors were elected compared to 332 incumbents returned, a total of 631 councillors.

Anecdotal evidence suggests new councillors experience significant difficulties managing the learning and time demands of their new position. Drawing on a survey and interviews with new councillors, the paper explores the experiences of new councillors in their first year of office. Key research questions include:

- What motivates people to stand for local government?
- What are their expectations of their role as councillor ?
- Has their 'identity' now changed ?
- What are the 'ups and downs' of experience as a new councillor ?
- How do new councillors learn to work in a political environment?

This paper will also provide a brief overview of existing literature and identify opportunities to support new councillors in their role.

Dr Sarah Ewing has recently joined the policy group at the Victorian Local Governance Association. Prior to joining the VLGA, she worked in roles in the education sector and in natural resource management where she sought to strengthen the links between researchers, policy-makers and practitioners, building a shared, strategic approach to knowledge. Partnerships with community have characterised much of her work and she is motivated by a concern for effective and meaningful community participation in decision-making.

Think women for local government – what works for local political equity

Linda Bennett

Examining the question of women's participation in local politics, the Think women for local government 2012 Project aimed to build the numbers and diversity of women candidates in Victoria's 78 local government elections held in October 2012.

At a time when the context for national politics was seen as unattractive and arguably even toxic for women, the numbers of women candidates and elected women in the Victorian local government elections reached an all-time high.

The project yielded significant results including a 7.8 per cent increase in the number of women candidates and a 14.3 per cent increase in the number of women councillors elected at the 2012 elections compared to the previous elections in 2008.

The unfair barriers and structural impediments to equity for women in formal political participation at the local level were evident but women persisted in nominating and running as candidates regardless. This paper will address key questions including: Who were the women who nominated? What were the factors which encouraged them? What did we learn? Can the lesson from local politics be applied to achieving gender equity and the opportunity to use citizenship rights in other contexts?

Linda Bennett is Women's Policy Officer with the Victorian Local Governance Association. She has over 10 years' experience encouraging more women candidates. After 20 years in local government roles Linda completed a Masters in Social Work in 2000, on the topic of child care and the role of local governments. A logical next step was to join those who were challenging the gender inequities visible in local government chambers across the State.

Lake Room 3/4, 9.45am-11am

Good governance and ethical practice – beyond everything!

Tim Robinson and Petra Tinkler

The debate around good governance and ethical practice in the public sector is characterised by a range of paradigmatic tensions. Empirical research has only added to the very mixed picture about the efficacy of codified regimes such as codes of conduct leaving, at best, a need to improve our understanding of the success or otherwise of integrity systems. This mixed picture is consistent with a theme of analysis and investigation in the literature, especially from integrity agencies, which conclude that formal regimes of rules, policies and plans are a necessary but by no means sufficient holding to ensure ethical practice. In the midst of this highly contested terrain, local councils are expected to understand, design and implement arrangements which lead to good governance and ethical practice.

This paper aims to make a contribution to the navigation of the potentially confounding terrain in two respects. First it will propose a pragmatic strategic governance framework that is capable of integrating into the strategic management framework of local councils in Australia. It will be argued that this integration provides a way of incorporating good governance and its on-going review and improvement into the strategic and operational engine of the council, ensuring it becomes part of the organisation's fabric. Secondly the paper will respond to the need to extend the notion of good governance beyond structural solutions and formal rules by embracing some innovative approaches to make ethical practice the lived experience of the organisation.

Tim Robinson joined CLG in October, 2013 as a Director. Tim held senior positions in the Federal and NSW State Government before joining Fairfield City Council as a director in 2005. During his career he has worked for the Australian Federal Police, the NSW Independent Commission Against Corruption, the Environment Protection Authority and the Department of Environment and Conservation. Tim has degrees in management and public sector management including a PhD in the area of strategic management in local government. He is a Fellow of the Australian Institute of Management. His research interests include local government reform, ethical practice and strategic leadership.

Petra Tinker is the Group Manager Information Management & Services at Fairfield City Council. Petra has previously held a number of senior management positions with Case Corporation, the Australian Quality Council and Standards Australia – SAI Global. Petra is a Company Secretary, Accountant and General Manager by background and has extensive experience in areas covering Operations, Logistics, Sales, Customer Relations, Strategic Planning, Call Centre Management, Communications, Finance, Franchising and Quality Systems Management. Petra has a Masters degree in Business and Technology.

Risky business: CEO recruitment in local government

Dr Jacquie Hutchinson and Dr Beth Walker

The role of CEO is critical to all organisations whether public or private sector. The investment by these sectors in the recruitment of senior leaders indicates the significance of the role to organisational success. However, the priority given to CEO leadership across other sectors, appears to have been ignored to a large extent in the local government sector. Instead, despite the rapid shift of the local government role beyond the traditional 'roads, rates and rubbish' to the delivery of a wide range of social and economic products, services and outcomes, the leadership needed in this more sophisticated and complex environment remains unexplored. Yet, there is a growing set of indicators that point to leadership frailty at both the senior management and elected officer levels. Some of these indicators include a lack of diversity within CEO ranks, a series of sudden CEO departures, dissolution and suspensions of councils and an apparent decline in the pool of CEO candidates.

This paper presents the findings of a recent qualitative study into West Australian local government that has begun to explore leadership within the sector by focussing on how councils identify and appoint the CEO. Through interviews with CEOs and Mayors/Shire Presidents from a wide range of council contexts, the researchers first sought to explore the qualities, experiences and attributes interviewees believed were important to an effective CEO. The second area for investigation was the recruitment policy and processes - formal and informal - used to appoint the CEO.

This paper will address two of the key findings from the study that individually might explain problems for quality leadership and when considered in tandem represent a serious flaw. First, the sector lacks a coherent leadership framework that integrates leadership capabilities and levels of performance necessary in the contemporary local government context. The absence of such a framework contributes to the lack of clarity and inconsistency around the language, processes, development and practice of leadership. Second, the capacity of elected councils to make informed recruitment choices is compromised by a lack of well-designed and implemented search policies and processes.

Dr Jacquie Hutchinson joined the UWA Business School in 2003 after a career in senior leadership roles in the areas of employment relations and human resources. Her main areas of research interest are in the areas of employment relations, leadership and workplace diversity. Her doctoral thesis was on the relationship between organisational restructuring and workplace bullying in the public sector. Jacquie's recent projects include leadership in local government, workplace bullying, career progression in the public sector, sustainable employment for women in the mining and resources sector and small business owners and retirement planning.

Dr Beth Walker is a Senior Honorary Research Fellow at the University of Western Australia and an Honorary Professor at Deakin University. She has been involved in numerous research projects including 3 ARC Linkage grants, a Grape & Wine Research and Development Corporation grant and a Sustainable Tourism CRC grant. She published extensively in several business areas and is currently researching aspects of leadership in local government.

Lake Room 3/4, 9.45am-11am

Future proofing local government: Strategies to address language, literacy and numeracy skills in the local government workforce

Alex Kats, John Martin and Angela Zivkovic

In August 2013, Local Government Managers Australia (LGMA) released 'Future-Proofing Local Government: The National Workforce Strategy 2013-2020'. The aim of the strategy is to ensure that local government moves towards a more sustainable workforce through effective retention, attraction and development strategies. Successful implementation of the Strategy will help ensure a workforce that has the capacity and the capability to meet the needs and aspirations of Australian communities.

Local government is a significant employer in local communities. In this capacity, it has a responsibility to play its part in addressing the language, literacy and numeracy (LLN) challenge. Amongst other things, the Strategy cites the Industry Skills Council's (ISCs) research which notes that 'some sections of the workforce, such as outdoor personnel in local government, experience significant LLN issues... more than half of workers in these occupations require some form of LLN development' (p. 65). LGMA is currently in the process of developing a national LLN strategy funding proposal. While some councils have implemented specific LLN programs for their employees, they are few in number and much more needs to be done.

In this paper we report on survey-based research based on the reasoned action model of Fishbein and Ajzen (2010) into council intentions towards the development and implementation of local LLN programs as reported by council human resource managers. Our aim is to identify how such programs are being implemented, and what factors would encourage those councils that do not have an LLN strategy to develop and implement one.

The research conducted by this study, through the targeted survey and analytical report, will help address LLN issues in the Australian local government workforce, and will positively impact the productivity of our nation's future.

Alex Kats works in the Local Government Practice Unit in ACELG's Workforce Development Program. He was previously Program Manager at the Australian office of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC), and prior to that he was advisor and electorate officer to a federal MP, where he advised on foreign affairs, immigration and cultural matters. He has also spent stints in Sydney, London, New York and Jerusalem working for government departments and for various film and writer's festivals. Alex has a BA in history and management from Monash University.

Professor John Martin of La Trobe University is ACELG's inaugural Visiting Professor. John has been involved variously with ACELG since its inception. He is a member of its Research Advisory Committee and independent Chairperson of the National Workforce Development Reference Group. Professor Martin was from 2005-14 Director of the Centre for Sustainable Regional Communities, La Trobe University, Bendigo.

Angela Zivkovic is Program Manager for the Local Government Practice Unit in ACELG's Workforce Development Program, a national capacity building program for the local government workforce. Before that she ran a professional development and training program for NZ screenwriters. Her work experience covers a variety of roles in a number of different industries in Australia, New York and New Zealand, including publishing, new media and film and television. Tertiary qualifications include a community cultural development postgraduate diploma at University of Melbourne.

Roads, rates, rubbish and random sampling: Using research skills in local government

Paula Wright

Traditionally, local government research staff have dealt with demographic data and community indicators and perhaps guided audits or evaluation of programs and the collection of primary data from local communities. Researchers can employ a much wider range of techniques and expertise, and these specialist skills can support high quality and efficient practice in a much broader range of local government activities. This paper describes three of these areas.

Firstly, certain service delivery problems can be addressed using research on the underlying causes of these problems. For example, recent research which explores why some parents refuse immunisation and what sorts of conversations are likely to lead to immunisation acceptance can support the development of training for maternal and child health nurses.

Secondly, community consultation can be improved by applying techniques derived from survey question design research to improve response rates and the quality of data collected.

Finally, random sampling can be employed to design compliance inspection programs, and a case study describes the use of random sampling to develop an economical program of animal registration checks.

There are some barriers to taking full advantage of research techniques within councils, including inadequate appropriate professional development opportunities and weak links with the University sector and these will also be discussed.

Paula Wright holds a PhD from La Trobe University and is a researcher in public policy and social life. After a time working in the academic sector and as a researcher on democratic reform, she took a position in local government at Wyndham City Council. She is the author of several papers on survey methodology and co-author, with Ken Coghill, of Hear Our Voice: The Democracy Australians Want for the Australian Collaboration.

Understanding community to engage community: Using qualitative research techniques in local government community engagement

Dr Andrew Hickey, Paul Reynolds and Dr Lisa McDonald

The act of 'engaging community' draws on a number of assumptions around who and what the community *is* and how engagement initiatives might be enacted. In order to connect engagement practice to the actual goings-on of community, local government departments charged with the responsibility of engaging with their communities require a codified evidence-base for designing and delivering engagement initiatives. This is vital if the engagement initiative is to effectively take into account the often multifarious and divergent needs that present within the community. This was the case for the Community Development and Facilities Branch of the Toowoomba Regional Council, and in partnership with social researchers based in an Australian regional university, a sequenced professional development program that up-skilled council staff in field-based qualitative research approaches was developed. While the Branch had a strong stock of demographic and statistical data at its disposal, it lacked insight into the affective and relational aspects of the experience of community; of what it meant to *be* in the community. This up-skilling enabled staff of the Branch to more effectively determine community needs *through evidence*, and subsequently, design engagement initiatives that met community expectations. This paper will report on findings of a project undertaken with staff at Toowoomba Regional Council that introduced community engagement practitioners to contemporary interpretivist ethnographic research techniques, as well as detail a new project that explores more broadly the role of social research in local government community engagement practice. At its core, a concern for how the views, perceptions, beliefs and attitudes of community might be gathered through qualitative social research to inform engagement initiatives forms the focus of this paper.

Dr Andrew Hickey is Senior Lecturer in Cultural Studies and Social Theory at the University of Southern Queensland, and member of the Australian Centre for Sustainable Business and Development.

Paul Reynolds is Manager of the Community Development & Facilities Branch at Toowoomba Regional Council.

Dr Lisa McDonald is Mid-Career Researcher with the Digital Futures Collaborative Research Network at the University of Southern Queensland.

Practitioner contribution to the local government knowledge base

Stefanie Pillora

The purpose of the paper is to share what has been learned by the Australian Centre of Local Government (ACELG) about local government practitioner research.

This paper first canvasses the literature which highlights the unique attributes of practitioner/insider research with particular reference to local government. It explores factors which encourage practitioners to view their own practice and the documentation they generate in the course of their work as data sources, and use these to contribute to building new knowledge.

It then presents findings from an internal review of ACELG activities over a four year period aimed at strengthening research capacity in the sector. It draws on the views and experiences of participants in a series of forums run by ACELG over that period, in particular from participants in the workshop, Producing Research – Improving Practice held in November 2013. Their responses to questions about the practitioner contribution to the local government knowledge base, and about the barriers and enablers to producing research, provide valuable insights from an ‘insider’ perspective. The findings provide a starting point for the further exploration of this topic.

Finally the paper poses a series of questions: Do we need to re-think the meaning of ‘research’ for a local government audience? How can councils and the sector more generally encourage and value ongoing learning and work based research? What is the role for organisations like ACELG in providing resources in how to carry out research?

As Manager of the ACELG Research and Policy Foresight Program, Stefanie is responsible for commissioned research on important issues facing local government, the ACELG research partnership scheme, holding regular forums to explore the policy implications of research findings and providing support for practitioner research.

Stefanie has over 30 years’ experience in local and State Government, the community sector and in higher education. Her public policy and research experience covers the fields of community development, social policy, environmental sustainability, and collaborative governance. She holds a Bachelor of Social Work and Masters in Environmental Studies from UNSW and is currently undertaking a PhD at UTS.

To be or not to be amalgamated! An overview of two similar sized local authorities facing the amalgamation debate in New Zealand.

Marion Smith

In light of the changes (or 'reform') that are underway to New Zealand's *Local Government Act 2002*, this research compares the thinking and positions taken by two Mayors in the Waikato Region of New Zealand. These Mayors are from councils facing the challenges that are being forced through Central Government's thrust for local government efficiencies.

The research reviews the actions and policies that Thames Coromandel District Council (TCDC) has taken, and whether those actions and policies will maintain community sovereignty and representative democracy for this peninsula. I compare this with the partnership walk of South Waikato District Council (SWDC) with other local authorities in the Waikato region to amalgamate.

After a short profile of TCDC and SWDC, I will define the concept of community sovereignty for the citizens and Maori connected to the Coromandel. This concept of 'community sovereignty' is considered a shallow concept by some academics in that literature is not as prevalent as it is in the concept of 'localism'. The former is one of empowerment to the community and fits with the democratic representation that both New Zealand and Australia adhere to. The latter 'localism' strikes the senses of parochial thinking and subservient decision making.

Amalgamation or another form of governance i.e. unitary authority may achieve efficiency but at what cost to the community's Mana, honour and identity. Which model of local governance best fits the concept of community sovereignty will I hope be developed or demonstrated by the end of the research.

Marion Smith is currently Group Manager Community Environment with Thames Coromandel District Council (NZ) and has formally worked as Economic Development Manager for South Waikato District Council. She is currently completing the Masters in Local Government programme at UTS. Her past work experience include corporate, central and local government as well as a short period as consul for Australia in New Zealand for Department of Immigration and Multicultural affairs in the late 90's. From mergers and takeovers of the corporate world to amalgamations or other of public administration there is at least one key to success and that is how we consider the identity of those involved.

Social research and reform: Assessing the impacts

Alex Lawrie

There are two dominant conceptions of evidence-based public policy. The first understands evidence in terms of its ultimate use and suggests research is one form of knowledge that assists policy makers with conceptualizing the world, challenging assumptions and understanding the decision-making terrain. The second conception suggests research is used to inform development of a range of policy options and that objective decisions are made to pursue a particular option based on evidence as to which option best fulfils policy objectives.

Since John Snow's survey of cholera outbreaks in London in 1854, the continued use of quantitative and qualitative data has led to refinement in collection methods and increasing sophistication in how research outcomes are used to inform public policy. This continued use has led to better understanding of the underlying concepts and models; technical collection methods; and collector, respondent and user characteristics.

Whilst significant progress has been made in understanding these more technical aspects, growing interest in the field of evidence-based public policy has seen more recent attention directed toward better understanding the way in which institutional, organisational and socio-political contexts challenge the use and impact of research in addressing multi-dimensional policy problems.

This paper presents a case study of a significant social research program undertaken to inform a major reform package in NSW. Based on the case study, the paper will highlight the institutional, organisational and socio-political challenges of using research to inform major policy reforms. The practice-based insights of this paper will also outline a range of ways in which research may impact reform programs and offer useful insights on potential strategies to maximise research impact.

Alex Lawrie, Researcher at the Centre for Local Government, University of Technology, Sydney, is an emerging leader in the fields of urban planning, community participation and government policy research and practice. Alex has experience in both academia and private consulting and is known for producing high quality research across diverse policy fields. He has designed and delivered a wide range of quantitative and qualitative research methods to inform major reform packages. He has expertise in identifying and analysing key quantitative and qualitative research outcomes and is an astute observer of organisational and institutional responses to research findings.

Local government assets: A case for excellence in their management

Trevor Seymour-Jones

Local governments have an absolute dependence upon assets to manage themselves and to provide services to their communities. These assets include major infrastructure, buildings, sport and recreation facilities, parks and ovals, plant and equipment and information, communication and technology systems. Growing concern over the financial sustainability of local governments in the last decade has seen the federal, state and Northern Territory governments embark on a policy of local government reform in the area of Integrated Planning and Reporting (IPR). These reforms are an attempt to improve financial and service sustainability through community consultation and a series of frameworks that seek to promote long-term corporate and financial planning, and the effective long-term strategic management of assets. These reforms have contributed to the Australian public sector's international reputation for the adoption of good practices in strategic asset management. However, despite this reputation, local governments rarely implement these practices with any degree of effectiveness. This paper analyses the need for asset management to be recognised as a strategic resource management function, its role in local government sustainability, the reasons behind the lack of an integrated strategic approach to asset management, the clear and present dangers of maintaining the current status quo, and the case for promoting excellence in their management through awareness, education, further research and practical experimentation.

Trevor Seymour-Jones is a Fellow of the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors. He specialises in the management of public sector assets, having advised state and local governments on strategic asset management frameworks. He has also advised national governments in the Asia Pacific region. Trevor is a member of the Integrated Planning Network Committee, LGMA WA. He is a past member of the Committee for Perth Reform Working Group and speaks regularly at industry conferences. He has undertaken research on behalf of the University of Sydney into the management of public sector assets internationally and in Australia. He is currently completing his PhD thesis in this field.

‘The obstacle is the path’ – Why Council didn’t take the easy road when it came to parkour

Tiffany Lee-Shoy

Fairfield LGA is home to Team 9 Lives, a group of 12 young traceurs (parkour practitioners). Described as ‘skateboarding without a skateboard’, parkour is considered a dangerous recreational activity. For some years, 9 Lives was auspiced by Powerhouse Youth Theatre who covered the public liability insurance; and Fairfield City Council engaged them to perform at festivals and provided grants to run workshops. Over this time 9 Lives grew, expanded their interests and skills, and started holding regular classes for newcomers.

2013 was a turning point. When Council extended the opening hours of its car parks, it became aware that 9 Lives ran classes in a multistory car park. With no approvals to use the carpark for recreation, and now no insurance and cars using the decks at all hours, Council served them notice to cease parkour activity.

For many Councils that would be the end of the story. But 9 Lives earned a different approach: they attract a demographic that is difficult to engage in physical activity – young people aged 12-18 – encouraging a healthy mind, active lifestyle, good eating, and sense of community.

So a Council multidisciplinary team – youth, health, crime prevention, cultural development, place management, assets, open space, design and risk management – came together to explore our role in supporting positive elements of parkour, whilst doing our due diligence to manage the risks.

It’s been seven months since we served notice. What’s happening now? With Council help and partnerships, 9 Lives are developing a business structure, preparing a training manual of safe work method statements and are on their way to securing public liability insurance.

This story is still unfolding, but so far, it’s an example of Council staff refusing to take the easy road and instead pulling together to debate and overcome the obstacles.

Tiffany Lee-Shoy is the Manager of Cultural Development, a newly created team at Fairfield City Council, which focuses on Fairfield’s multicultural, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities; and includes the Fairfield City Museum and Gallery, arts, social history and cultural development. While with WSROC (Western Sydney Regional Organisation of Councils) Tiffany wrote the first Regional Cultural Strategy for Greater Western Sydney. Tiffany has served as a member on numerous professional committees and boards, including Information and Cultural Exchange (2002-09), Australia Council for the Arts – Community Partnerships (2005-09); and from 2009-11 was a Trustee of Powerhouse Museum and Sydney Observatory.

How are NSW councils engaged in arts and culture? Are these roles changing over time?

Chloe Beevers

NSW councils are leaders in the arts and culture of local communities, managing over 4000 cultural sites, delivering services, programs and local cultural planning. In 2011-12 councils invested \$421.8 million into cultural services (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2013, '4183.0 - Cultural Funding by Government, Australia, 2011-12').

Councils face increasing community demands within an environment of tight financial and political constraints. Therefore the capacity of councils to sustain their support to arts and culture is not guaranteed into the future. Local Government NSW (LGNSW) is hearing cases of councils changing their approach to arts and culture across the state. This research will determine the extent and nature of the shift, explore implications and make recommendations.

The research will:

- Identify roles of local government in arts and culture and how they have changed over time.
- Measure local government investment/s in arts and culture.
- Measure investment by State and Federal governments to councils for delivering arts and culture.
- Identify challenges and aspirations of councils.
- Identify case studies of good practice.
- Identify how councils plan for arts and culture in the context of an integrated planning framework.
- Identify good practice and approaches for alignment with state and federal cultural planning.
- Identify current and preferred cultural indicators for councils. Where there is alignment there may be opportunities to negotiate for better data collection at state and national levels.
- Evaluate effectiveness of the Fourth Cultural Accord between state and local government while inform development of the Fifth Cultural Accord.

As Project Manager Arts & Culture for Local Government NSW, Chloe advises the 152 NSW councils. She represents their arts & cultural policy interests to peak bodies & government.

- *She has worked in the Local Government sector for ten years in a range of strategic roles with various councils, including:*
- *Community Planner Cultural Development, Port Stephens Council*
- *Integrated Planning Coordinator, Great Lakes Council*
- *Community Development Coordinator, Great Lakes Council*
- *Consultant, Port Macquarie Hastings Council*

Having completed her Post Graduate Diploma in Local Government Management in 2013, this research completes her Masters.

Public value evaluation of the arts

Roberta Ryan

Over the last 50 years local governments in Australia have supported the practices of cultural development within their communities. These activities are diverse in nature and subject to increasing requirements for evaluation. Evaluation practice has largely viewed the arts instrumentally, i.e. as a means to an end, which leaves discussion of the intrinsic value of the arts relatively unresolved and certainly challenging.

Rather than the more limited effectiveness and efficiency evaluation of the arts, some recent approaches have focused on assessing the potential impact of the arts through a public value lens.

This paper presents an attempt at an applied framework for conceptualizing the value of the arts in Australia across six impact areas. The paper will outline the rationale and dimensions of each of the impact areas and the trial indicators used in the test phase of the evaluation framework. The paper highlights how the framework may lead to greater organizational understanding of the public value of the arts in local government.

The paper draws out lessons for local government cultural development practitioners on how they might assess their work through a public value lens by evaluating the impact of this work on their local communities.

Associate Professor Roberta Ryan is a leading social policy, program evaluation and stakeholder engagement practitioner and researcher with over 30 years' experience in academia and consulting across Australia and internationally. Roberta has designed and undertaken a range of complex government and non-government policy advisory and applied policy projects. She is well known for developing new approaches to the application of research to policy, social policy, evaluation, community engagement, stakeholder management, social sustainability, social and strategic planning. Roberta is the Director of ACELG and the Centre for Local Government within the University of Technology, Sydney.

Roberta has completed over 300 social research and evaluation projects, including major national reviews and evaluations, methodologically complex projects using outcome and process evaluation approaches, program logic and many service reviews and evaluations. Roberta has particular expertise in the development of innovative methodologies that deliver key strategic outcomes for clients. Roberta has an established reputation for consultative and expert facilitation of processes that assist government clients to arrive at constructive and mutually acceptable policy and program outcomes.

Local government growing regional Australia

Dr Robyn Morris and Alex Gooding

Regional development has long been an interest of many researchers, policy makers and local government practitioners. Worldwide there is growing recognition that cities are engines of economic growth and that having vital regional cities and regions is important to state and national economies (CEDA & RDV, 2013; DRALGAS, 2013; Kidokoro, 2008; McDonald et al, 2013; OECD, 2009). Nonetheless, in Australia regional cities and regions largely remain under-recognised in economic development debate, planning and policy formulation (Beer, 2007; Budge & Butt, 2009; Duncan, 2011; McDonald et al, 2013). Also, regional cities and regions remain the least studied and least understood elements of urban systems nationally and internationally (Bell, 2009; Regional Australia Institute, 2013). In the regional development policy space it is often left up to local government to play a central role in regional visioning, priority setting, planning, engagement and budgeting for local/regional development initiatives. Despite this requirement the success factors for creating strong regional capitals is little understood.

In 2013 ACELG partnered with the Regional Capitals Australia group under its Research Partnership Scheme to examine what factors contribute to building strong sustainable regional capitals and regions, with particular attention given to rigorous governance and effective leadership. This is a work in progress. The presentation will provide an overview of what is meant by a strong sustainable regional capital and region, and how governance and leadership can drive or inhibit sustainable regional economic development. The preliminary findings on what local government leadership and governance characteristics involved in building strong sustainable regional capitals that are emerging from a series of Australian case studies will be outlined. This evidence-based research will culminate in the development of a framework of key local government leadership and governance ingredients that make up strong sustainable regional capitals and regions.

Dr Robyn Morris is an Adjunct Academic at Edith Cowan University in WA and she has her own independent consultancy. She has 21 years' consulting experience in the private and public sectors with a focus on local government. She has previously worked as a Research Consultant for Postgraduate students, Senior Researcher undertaking collaborative projects on Rural-remote and Indigenous Local Government with ACELG, and as a Senior Lecturer and Head of the Business Program at ECU's regional campus in Bunbury WA. Robyn has tertiary teaching and research experience in Australia and the USA. She was a founding member of the Bunbury Wellington Economic Alliance, a WA regional alliance of local government, business and industry and served as a Board Member for 7 years and Chair for 2 years. Dr Morris is currently a member of ACELG's Research Advisory Committee and Rural-remote and Indigenous Local Government reference group.

Alex Gooding has extensive experience in policy research and development relating to local and metropolitan governance, planning, transport and infrastructure, including 12 years as Executive Director of the Western Sydney Regional Organisation of Councils Ltd (WSROC). In 2008 he established his own independent consultancy. In recent years he has undertaken research in conjunction with a number of organisations including the ACELG and the local government review panels in NSW and South Australia.

REGIONAL ECONOMIES

Lake Room 3/4, 11.50am-12.40pm

Regional economies - Different pathways, different strategies

Jack Archer

Every day we blinker ourselves. By looking at the world through a certain framework we often miss opportunities that lie outside of this perspective. The consequence of this for the regions can be very damaging. The economic development models that we apply to regional Australia often reflect current trends or centrally mandated approaches and are not necessarily well suited to the regions.

Regions are often vastly different to capital cities and to each other. Recognising diversity and understanding that every region has its own unique development pathway is central to moving past the uniform development goals and techniques that have been pursued over recent decades.

By drawing on data from the RAI's [In]Sight we can start to identify the different ways that regions draw on their unique advantages to grow their local economy and Australia as a whole. This will allow us to broaden our perspective of the world and ensure that regions can identify the best development strategies that will enable them to achieve their full potential.

Jack leads the Regional Australia Institute's research program and policy development work, building on his previous work on major regional reforms related to water, climate change and industry development. Originally from Paterson in the lower Hunter Valley of NSW, Jack now lives in the hills west of Canberra and has farming interests in Northern NSW.

Enhancing productive communities through the use of community indicators

Catherine Hastings and Roberta Ryan

Community Indicators (CIs) are widely used by local and some state governments in Australia as a framework for measuring community wellbeing and progress. CI frameworks in Australia were originally developed following the example of projects established by community-driven, non-government organisations in the United States and Canada. However key features of the potential of CIs have been lost in the translation across countries and from non-government to government administration.

In Australia, CIs have largely evolved into a simple reporting tool. Much less developed are their additional roles as a democratic tool for engaging citizens and communities in informed discussions about shared goals and priorities, and as a policy tool for guiding evidence based planning to address issues identified as important by communities. Importantly for this forum, using CIs as a democratic and policy tool in the way we will describe, offers local governments opportunities to increase their productivity and develop more productive communities through more efficient and effective resource allocation with adjusted service levels. They are also a powerful methodology for engaging and involving the community in environmental protection.

First, we will offer a broad definition of the possibilities of CIs through an examination of key example projects in Seattle, Portland and Vancouver and a review of the literature. Second, we will discuss the ways that CI frameworks have been developed within a range of Australian jurisdictions. Finally, we will outline the opportunities offered by underutilised applications of CI frameworks for fostering productive communities within the local government context. Through this paper we aim to stimulate discussion about the potential of CIs for local government and increase understanding of their power to enhance community productivity.

Catherine recently joined the UTS Centre for Local Government as a Research Officer. Previously, she ran her own business as an evaluation and social research consultant. She has developed and implemented projects incorporating qualitative and quantitative data collection and analysis for a range of government departments, social enterprises and not-for-profit organisations. Catherine has undertaken advanced statistics and survey design training with ACSPRI (Australia) and GESIS (Germany) since completing a Master of Policy and Applied Social Research. Her research interests are in social science research methodologies and the ways that evidence can influence social policy, program design and implementation.

Associate Professor Roberta Ryan is a leading social policy, program evaluation and stakeholder engagement practitioner and researcher with over 30 years' experience in academia and consulting across Australia and internationally. Roberta has designed and undertaken a range of complex government and non-government policy advisory and applied policy projects. She is well known for developing new approaches to the application of research to policy, social policy, evaluation, community engagement, stakeholder management, social sustainability, social and strategic planning. Roberta is the Director of ACELG and the Centre for Local Government within the University of Technology, Sydney.

Achieving more by embedding technology in community consultation: Insights and outcomes from Living Kingston 2035

Dr. Robyn Cochrane

Community participation is a key element to fair and representative decision-making in planning and policy reforms. The common underlying philosophy is those who are affected by a decision have a right to be involved in the decision-making process and that this contribution should influence the decision.

For local government authorities in Australia, community participation is an important and often resource intensive function. Councils consult on statutory matters, localised and specific issues and to develop plans for the entire municipality or region. Councils embrace a variety of evolving participation options and emerging consultation technologies in an attempt to engage with their communities. Yet knowledge regarding the efficiency and effectiveness of community consultation alternatives is currently limited as outcomes are not generally publicly shared. This paper aims to shed some light by outlining the consultation approach, insights and outcomes from a recent community planning initiative, 'Living Kingston 2035' undertaken by the City of Kingston in Victoria.

Five key findings were evident:

- 1) online technologies and social media can be used effectively to raise awareness and encourage participation,
- 2) offering a range of traditional and online participation options is effective in increasing and broadening participation,
- 3) using content analysis and the NVivo10 software program is an efficient way of sorting and transparently reporting the ideas gathered,
- 4) consultation data sets can be transformed into an interactive evidence-base using NVivo to generate an ongoing benefit to council, and
- 5) providing online access to all consultation reports is likely to support the decision-making capacity and sustainability of local groups and agencies.

These findings are useful for those councils revisiting their community consultation approaches and seeking to gain more from their consultation investment and efforts.

Dr Robyn Cochrane was employed to lead the City of Kingston's Living Kingston 2035 project and has extensive experience in the Victorian local government sector. Robyn is Lead Researcher for Cochrane Research Solutions, has a part-time research/teaching role with Monash University and has a background in the vocational education and training and community sectors. She has published articles in academic and practitioner journals and conducted many successful community and employee consultations with industry partners. Dr. Cochrane's interests include: qualitative and quantitative research; online and traditional community consultation approaches and employee engagement.

Old law, new policy and Old Bar

Andrew Kelly

This paper comprises three parts. The role of local government is woven throughout. Firstly, it outlines the history of coastal management and, moreover, current legislation and policy in New South Wales (NSW), Australia. The key statutes are *the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979* (NSW) and the *Coastal Protection Act 1979* (NSW), which are products of modern environmentalism in the 1960/1970s. The 'second wave' involved 'ecologically sustainable development', which challenged the reliance on traditional land-use zoning.

Secondly, it focuses on coastal erosion and damage in local government areas with growing populations. A new independent NSW Coastal Panel has been set up to provide advice to both the State Government and local councils but also as a consent authority. All coastal councils must prepare a Coastal Management Plan. In addition, there are the mandatory requirements for making local planning instruments – i.e. local environmental plans (LEPs) – that deal with development within the coastal zone. The whole system is confusing, especially to members of the community.

Thirdly, and perhaps the most interesting section, relates to Old Bar, a growing coastal town of about 3,350 persons within Greater Taree City Council on the NSW Mid Coast. It is listed as a coastal erosion 'hot spot'. Three beachside dwellings have been dismantled due to beach erosion. One citizen states that he lost 30 metres of his land, including his wife's ashes. Another example is a resort owner who was denied consent to erect a permanent sea wall. The council is currently working towards amending its coastal management plan with several options before it, such as erecting a sea wall, building an offshore reef, beach nourishment or no change at all. There is also a very active local community.

What choices are available to the council? How might it proceed?

Dr Andrew Kelly is an Associate Professor at the Faculty of Law, University of Wollongong. He is qualified in both town planning and law, and is an Associate with the UTS Centre for Local Government. Before entering academia, he worked for four rural and urban local councils across NSW. He also worked for the NSW State Government, namely at the Office of the Ombudsman and as a consultant on local government and planning matters. Andrew teaches in the interrelated areas of administrative law, environmental law and local government law. His research focuses on land-use planning, nature conservation, local government and, more recently, coastal erosion.

Maximising impact by understanding the food business context

Belinda Davies

Food safety is a core environmental health role that has a significant impact on the community. The community expects that regulators will protect them from food safety hazards, yet local governments are facing ongoing challenges associated with increasing workloads and community expectations, and limited resources. Therefore the challenge for local government is to maximise the impact of their activities to efficiently improve food safety outcomes for the community.

This research project found a complex array of factors influence food safety practices in food businesses. In this presentation three key issues that influence food safety practices will be discussed:

- *Communicating to achieve a consistent understanding of 'compliance'.*
Many participants in this study believed they were compliant if they reactively obeyed the local government Environmental Health Officer's (EHO's) instructions; whereas councils generally view regulatory compliance as ongoing adherence or conformance to the food safety laws.
- *Ensuring council systems and processes don't support unwanted behaviours.*
It was noted during this research that some local government systems and processes inadvertently reward business operators who reactively obey EHO's instructions and do not encourage business operators to take responsibility for food safety issues in their business. Long term, such systems can establish behaviours among business operators that create an increased regulatory burden and workload for the council.
- *The importance of EHO's interpersonal skills.*
EHO's interpersonal skills were noted to significantly influence how food business operators perceived the EHO, and in turn, the food safety practices the business adopted.

How these research findings can influence the food safety activities of local governments will be discussed in the context of the food safety strategy template and associated guidelines which were developed as part of the ACELG/QUT research project.

Belinda Davies is a Senior Lecturer specialising in environmental health at the Queensland University of Technology (QUT). Prior to joining QUT, Belinda worked for local government for 18 years in various environmental health roles including several leadership positions. She has also served on the Environmental Health Australia (Queensland) Inc. board for approximately 7 years and has contributed to a number of national environmental health projects.



About ACELG

The Centre's vision highlights the pursuit of excellence:

World-class local government to meet the emerging challenges of 21st century Australia.

Background to the Centre of Excellence

At the Australian Council of Local Government (ACLG) meeting in November 2008, the then Prime Minister announced funding support for a Centre of Excellence to showcase innovation and best practice across local government and encourage the adoption of innovative practices and solutions. Following a public expression of interest process, the Australian Centre of Excellence for Local Government (ACELG) was established in mid-2009.

About the Centre and its partners

ACELG is a unique consortium of universities and professional bodies that have a strong commitment to the advancement of local government. The consortium is based at the University of Technology, Sydney (UTS) and includes the UTS Centre for Local Government, the University of Canberra, the Australia and New Zealand School of Government (ANZSOG), Local Government Managers Australia and the Institute of Public Works Engineering Australia. In addition, there are program partners to provide support in specialist areas and to extend the Centre's national reach: Charles Darwin University and Edith Cowan University.

Operating environment and challenges

There are currently around 565 local governments across Australia, ranging from small remote communities and rural shires to large, densely populated metropolitan cities. To contribute effectively to national agendas and to address its own sector challenges, local government needs to improve the way it works and to position itself effectively in a changing federal system. There is a need for reform emerging from local government's own efforts to respond to the challenges it faces. The Centre is pursuing excellence by pushing the boundaries of knowledge and practice.

Governance arrangements

ACELG has a Board of Management comprising an independent chair and representatives of the consortium, the Australian Local Government Association (ALGA) and the Department of Infrastructure and Regional Development. There are also strong reporting channels and accountability links to Local Government Associations.

ACELG Publications

ACELG produces a number of publications across its six program areas. These publications are designed to progress the objectives of each program and also increase the knowledge base of Australian local government and inform key policy debates.

To access the complete collection of ACELG publications, visit the ACELG website www.acelg.org.au

Recent publications

Guidance Manual: Embedding Resilience to Climate Risk– Case Studies, Products and Practical Guidance into Local Government (May 2014)

A resource to assist Australian local councils with climate risk assessment and planning. The Manual highlights leading local and overseas case studies and practical resources, and includes a step-by-step framework for effectively embedding climate risk into council operations. A partnership project between ACELG and councils across the country.

Leadership in Local Government: Factors Affecting the Appointment of CEOs (April 2014)

Investigates the qualities, experiences and attributes Australian councils seek from prospective CEOs, and the formal and informal policies and processes councils use to identify and recruit suitable candidates. Research partners were the University of Western Australia, Edith Cowan University with support from the Western Australian Local Government Association and Local Government Managers Australia (WA).

Food Safety: Maximising Impact by Understanding the Food Business Context (March 2014)

Explores food safety practices for Australian local governments and current attitudes and beliefs. Includes a food safety template to assist local governments deliver a holistic food safety strategy. This was a partnership project between Queensland councils, Queensland University of Technology and Environmental Health Australia (QLD).

Local Representation in Australia: A Review of the Legislation and Literature (November 2013)

A review of Australian frameworks for local representative governance as set out in state legislation and relevant guidelines issued by the local government associations and state agencies. Completed in partnership with the Victorian Local Governance Association. Issues in Local Representation - A View from Victoria is its companion volume.

The Role and Future of Citizen Committees in Australian Local Government (September 2013)

Explores the role of citizens' committees in Australian local government decision-making processes, their future as vehicles for sustained community engagement, and how they might be strengthened in view of Australian and international research. The report includes a review of current literature on the topic, case studies, and suggested avenues for further investigation. It was an ACELG Research Partnership Scheme project.

Looking Ahead: A Guide for Local Government Practitioners' Use of Demographic Data (Aug 2013)

A report that outlines how local governments can more effectively utilise demographic and other population data into planning and decision-making processes. Includes input from the Australian Bureau of Statistics, case studies outlining best practice in demographic methods, and links to a range of useful references and tools.

The ACELG Research Advisory Committee

A Research Advisory Committee comprising a mixture of local government practitioners and researchers meets bi-annually to oversee current research projects and advise on future research.



Professor Lawrence Pratchett is the Dean of Business and Government at the Australia New Zealand Institute for Governance. He was previously Professor of Local Democracy and Head of the Department of Public Policy at De Montfort University in the United Kingdom and prior to that Director and co-founder of the Local Governance Research Unit.



Professor John Martin is currently Visiting Professor at ACELG. He has a strong interest in the institutions and processes that create sustainable communities. His initial training in ecology and natural resource management, sociology and a PhD in public policy provides a multidisciplinary view on sustainable development.



Dr Robyn Morris is currently a Research Consultant to postgraduate students in the Faculty of Business and Law at Edith Cowan University and is involved in a number of collaborative research projects on rural-remote and Indigenous local government in partnership with ACELG. Robyn has extensive teaching and consulting experience in the area of business and the local government sector in Western Australia.



Professor Ian Thynne is Adjunct Professor, Australian National University and University of Canberra; University Professorial Fellow, Charles Darwin University; Honorary Associate Fellow, Centre for Civil Society and Governance, University of Hong Kong. His research addresses governance and public management, with a focus on organisational types, reform leaders and strategies, and public-private mixes.



Dr Tim Robinson held senior positions in the Federal and NSW State Government before joining Fairfield City Council as a Director in 2005. Tim has degrees in management and public sector management including a PhD in the area of strategic management in local government. His research interests include local government reform and strategic leadership.



Associate Professor Erica Bell is Deputy Director at the University of Tasmania Department of Rural Health where she is also acting director of the Primary Healthcare Evaluation and Development program. She has written over 40 academic journal and conference papers and presentations in areas of interest to rural stakeholders such as adaptation to climate change and youth crime prevention.



Marianne Di Giallonardo is currently the Director of Corporate Services at Maroondah City Council in Melbourne, and has an extensive 30 year Victorian local and state government career spanning Corporate, Community and Infrastructure Services portfolios. She holds a range of educational qualifications including Masters qualifications in Business Administration.



Greg Hoffman has worked for three Councils including as CEO of Darwin City Council. Greg was the Executive Director of the Local Government Association of Queensland for ten years, the Local Government Commissioner for Queensland for five years, and for the last 13 years he has been the Director of Policy and Representation at the Local Government Association of Queensland.



Rolf Fenner is Senior Policy Advisor at the Australian Local Government Association (ALGA). Rolf has worked for Councils in NSW, QLD and Victoria. He was a senior planner with the NSW Department of Planning for several years; a planning and local government training consultant; and part time university lecturer. He holds qualifications in public policy, business management and urban and regional planning.



Shane Sody is Project Manager, Local Government Reform, and Acting Executive Officer, Local Government Research and Development Scheme at the Local Government Association of South Australia. Shane has extensive experience in journalism, law and management, and his interests include local government rating policies, financial sustainability and governance practices.

About ACELG

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

Program Delivery

ACELG's activities are grouped into six program areas:

- Research and Policy Foresight
- Innovation and Best Practice
- Governance and Strategic Leadership
- Organisation Capacity Building
- Rural-Remote and Indigenous Local Government
- Workforce Development

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An Australian Government Initiative