



LOCAL GOVERNMENT
MANAGERS AUSTRALIA
QUEENSLAND INC.

the journal

OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT MANAGERS AUSTRALIA, QUEENSLAND

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Opening
DOORS IN 2021



FROM THE PRESIDENT'S DESK

WELCOME TO 2021!

Before I make some observations about the upcoming year, I thought I might reflect on 2020. That's a year we won't forget in a hurry but I am going to make a rather unusual observation about 2020. In hindsight, it was a good year! Now before you think that Brett has finally lost his marbles, let me explain.

2020 presented one of the most significant crises that our country, state, regions and indeed our local government sector has faced for many years. And like natural disasters which Queensland is used to, you see the best of people in a crisis. That was certainly the case for our sector in 2020. It was undoubtedly a tough year dealing with many unexpected challenges but as individuals and as a collective sector, we did really well.

A crisis gives you two things – a very clear sense of purpose about what needs to be done and also a sense of urgency to do it. A crisis cuts through the “BS” and requires quick and decisive action. When talking to councils around the State last year, it was clear that most councils had a similar sense of purpose – to look after their staff and their community and to keep providing great services to their shires. And of course, the other thing that a crisis does is to provide you with confidence if you respond well.

Now, imagine if we approached all of our day-to-day management challenges in the same way that we deal with a crisis – a clear sense of purpose and a sense of urgency. We could do amazing things. So as we launch into 2021, let's take a moment to reflect on those lessons from 2020.

I got asked the other day by one of my staff what 2021 will be like. The reality is that the COVID pandemic is not over and 2021 will be, in many ways, similar to what we faced in 2020 except that we are better prepared. There will be unexpected challenges, considerable uncertainty and ongoing impacts from the COVID pandemic. The key word for 2021 should be “adaptability”. We need to be adaptive to whatever comes up and roll with the punches as the year unfolds. The sudden lockdown for the greater Brisbane region early in 2021 is a good example of what could happen at any time. If we are impacted, we will do the same as we did in 2020 – deal with it well, look after our staff and get on with providing services to our community.

I also read a good article the other day by McKinseys, the international management consultancy firm. They made the point that following a major crisis, leadership becomes doubly critical. Leaders provide the energy for an organisation and set the tone. They need to exhibit “bounded optimism”. This is different to “boundless optimism” which is blindly saying “everything is great and we will get through this together”. Bounded optimism is focused on – “Things are going to be uncertain but based on our experience in 2020, we will work through the challenges together and do well”. Be realistic and don't over-promise that things will be back to normal soon – whatever normal now means. That leads to false hope and our staff and communities will see through it. Be honest that we don't know all of the answers and it will be another challenging year but better times are ahead. That is a good message to take into 2021.

If you would like to read more, see –

<https://www.mckinsey.com/business-functions/organization/our-insights/overcoming-pandemic-fatigue-how-to-reenergize-organizations-for-the-long-run>

And so to finish with a quote. “What you do has a far greater impact than what you say” – Stephen Covey. Let's remember that as we model our leadership behaviours in the coming year.

Until next time...

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PRESIDENT

Brett de Chastel
FLGMA



UPDATE FROM THE DEPUTY PREMIER

I KNOW WE'RE MORE THAN A MONTH INTO 2021, BUT HAPPY NEW YEAR.

Last year was filled with unprecedented challenges and although 2021 is already presenting its own unique challenges I think it's important that we take the opportunity to look ahead with hope for a year of good health and strong economic recovery.

The way in which Queensland has successfully dealt with COVID-19 so far, by putting the safety of our communities first, is in no small part due to the outstanding leadership shown by our local governments.

In my previous role as Health Minister, I worked with councils to respond to the pandemic, and now as Minister for State Development, Infrastructure, Local Government and Planning, I'm looking forward to working with you on Queensland's economic recovery.

I know that Assistant Minister for Local Government, Nikki Boyd, will also play a key role in working with you to ensure the relationship between our two levels of government is stronger than ever.

Nikki is passionate, hard-working, and an excellent choice for the position. She will represent the Government extremely well as we work together for the benefit of every Queensland community.

Damien Walker has also hit the ground running as the Director-General of the Department of State Development, Infrastructure, Local Government and Planning. I have every confidence that under his leadership, the future will be enormously productive.

The Department is there to support you and will continue to work closely

with all councils on the opportunities and challenges that lie ahead. This will include continuing to deliver training and capability development activities, providing governance advice and overseeing the rollout of grant funding programs, such as Works for Queensland, that are an essential part of supporting jobs and economic activity in our local communities.

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Tropical Workshops will again be conducted for Local Government Finance Officers, to assist with capacity building. Starting next month, there will be face-to-face and virtual sessions in Brisbane, Cairns, Townsville, Rockhampton,

Toowoomba and Longreach.

Information for councillors and council officers will be kept up-to-date through the Department's website.

I would also like to acknowledge everyone who has played a role in conducting the recent and upcoming local government by-elections across the state. I can't overstate the importance of electing people who properly represent their communities.

As an elected official, I know that leadership is about listening and understanding the needs of those you serve, and then acting to ensure the right decisions are made for their good.

If the last 12 months has taught us anything, it's that the right leadership and collaboration can see us through any challenge.

Indeed, working together, our two levels of government have already done extremely well in the face of the pandemic.

I'm looking forward to continuing this partnership as we aim to grow even more sustainable and liveable communities throughout Queensland.

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DEPUTY PREMIER
AND MINISTER
FOR STATE
DEVELOPMENT,
INFRASTRUCTURE,
LOCAL
GOVERNMENT
AND PLANNING

Steven
Miles MP



CEO SNAPSHOT

HERE WE ARE IN 2021, DELIGHTED TO SEE WE ALL MADE IT!

If we learnt anything last year, it is that we should not try to predict the coming year.

There were plenty of good things to come out of the year. Some at an organisational level – we learnt how quickly we can mobilise a workforce to work from home, we made inroads into managing a virtual workforce and flexibility, we found out that some people who weren't performers in 2019 we actually awesome – they just needed a different environment to shine. And at an individual level, we all had different experiences and learnings – for many there were positive changes made despite the sometimes tough environment. We learnt we are resilient – certainly as organisations and as a sector.

For LGMA, 2020 offered lots of change but, at the same time, the more things change, sometimes the more they stay the same. We had a big load on the advocacy front: legislation change galore, a state government election and all of the COVID overlay meant for plenty of liaison with State Government.

With programmes on hold, we were able to reconnect with many members via phone and that was an absolute pleasure – something we will keep doing. COVID restrictions also freed up the time to build our Villages to the place we always wanted them to be: an interactive, constant network operating across most councils for many areas of business. Fiona has detailed the framework in an article published in this edition of *The Journal*.

We worked out that many things can be done online and, while they are not exactly the same, in some cases they deliver on the core purpose, maybe even more effectively than face-to-face. One of the biggest benefits is that many more people can access the services offered online. So those for whom travel is expensive, time out of the office extensive and/or other responsibilities prohibitive, may find the online option allows them to participate in activities they could not have in the past.

While we know that COVID is not over and restrictions will continue, I think that what the snap lock-down of the greater Brisbane area showed us is that when issues arise, we now know what to do and can act quickly and with little fanfare.

LGMA's 2021 offering will be a mixture of face-to-face and online as suits the purpose of the activity. The Awards for Excellence and Management Challenge will be online (Management Challenge is planned to be virtual so we can provide certainty for teams and tier preparation without the risk of last minute change. At

LIKE MANY COUNCILS, WE EMBARK ON 2021 WITH CAUTIOUS OPTIMISM AND AN EAGER AND MOTIVATED TEAM, KEEN TO PROGRESS THE PLANNED ROLL OUT OF PROGRAMMES.

the Board's business planning session in January, the decision was made to hold a face-to-face local government conference in Cairns in September. We have fingers crossed that we can hold the event in one of the harder hit areas of the state to support community there.

Financially, the 2020-21 year is the one where the pandemic impacts will most heavily affect LGMA. With government support and a great start to the financial

year, the 2019-20 one ended up being a positive one with most of the COVID related impacts being felt in the 2020-21 financial year. We are aware that many councils are doing it tough due to the range of measures put in place to support their communities and we expect this to impact training and event attendance. LGMA will draw on its reserves to ensure it can continue to undertake the advocacy work that supports the sector.

There are still some items on LGMA's advocacy agenda to work through with the government and ongoing work on capacity building initiatives, seeking to pool expertise and resources to better support councils. Our research project was put on hold – because it is a chunk of money that we weren't prepared to spend in the uncertainty of current budgets. However, as things become clearer, the Board will review research options and may seek alternative funding support.

Like many councils, we embark on 2021 with cautious optimism and an eager and motivated team, keen to progress the planned roll out of programmes. This is especially true of the new Village network offerings which we hope will create real value for officers.

To all our members, we hope to talk to you soon and, better yet, see you somewhere around this state.

CHIEF
EXECUTIVE
OFFICER

Peta Irvine
MLGMA





IN-HOUSE TRAINING PROGRAMMES AND FORUMS

LGMA QUEENSLAND OFFERS A HOST OF SHORT AND EXTENDED COURSES THAT ARE AIMED AT INCREASING THE SKILLS AND CAPABILITIES OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT OFFICERS.

As with all LGMA programmes, these workshops offer practical, hands-on learning within the local government context in order to maximise application to officers' roles.

Sessions can be provided for an individual council at their location or, alternatively groups can be formed from officers of neighbouring councils to reduce costs and share knowledge and experience. This joint-council format is great for preventing reinforcement of 'the way we do things around here' and also showing new ways of doing things.

Topics offered are diverse and can be tailored to align with specific policies and procedures. Depending the desired learning outcomes, the programmes offered can range from 2 hours to 5 days.

TRAINING TOPICS INCLUDE:

- Code of Conduct (including Employee Responsibilities and Ethics)
- Communication Skills
- Community Engagement
- Work Life Satisfaction

- Leadership Development
- Management Bootcamp
- Legislation Training
- Mentor Training
- Reporting to Council
- Team Building
- Performance Management
- Managing Time
- Conflict Resolution
- Coaching

Council Subscribers receive a 25% discount on in-house training. We are happy to provide itemised quotations based on your needs, ready to include in council's budgeting processes.

VILLAGES / FORUMS / WEBINARS

LGMA also offers a range of Forums targeted to specific areas of interest within Council:

- Compliance
- Customer Service
- Governance
- Human Resources
- Communications and Media
- Community Services
- Tourism and Economic Development
- Libraries
- Procurement
- Investigations

These forums are generally 1-day face-to-face workshops. The Forums are networks that connect officers across the state who are undertaking similar roles. The forums provide an opportunity to hear from a range of speakers; look at case studies and discuss current and emerging issues and trends. The forums are offered throughout the year by LGMA and are held in both Brisbane and regional centres. Alternatively, webinars can also be considered for these topics.

BUSINESS SERVICES AVAILABLE

- Reviews
- Business Planning
- Corporate Services

OTHER SERVICES

- Secondment
- Locum Register
- Advocacy

**Don't hesitate to contact
LGMA Queensland for further
information or assistance.**

T: 07 3174 5006

E: admin@lgmaqlld.org.au

W: www.lgmaqlld.org.au





DEFAMATION ON SOCIAL MEDIA

By Mark Williams¹

'A lie will fly around the whole world while the truth is still pulling on its boots'²

Increased use of social media has seen a proliferation of defamatory material. But when does legitimate discussion cross the line into defamation, and what can you do about it?

What is Defamation?

The term "defamation" merges old concepts of slander (oral) and libel (written). Defamation law in Queensland is governed by the common law and the Defamation Act 2005 (Qld).³ However, defamation occurs wherever the material is published, so there are complex jurisdictional issues, made all the more complex by the spread to other jurisdictions by technology. Generally, defamation in its simplest form is any published imputation which is disparaging, or damaging to reputation

(either personal or business reputation).⁴ It's worth noting that while a Council can't be defamed, its staff can be.

To be "published" online, it must be seen by someone other than you (or your agent). Someone who re-publishes the slur, for example by "sharing" the original post, can be liable as a publisher, as can, in certain circumstances, the administrator of the group in which the post is made.

First Steps

After discovering a publication online which you believe is defamatory, what should you do?

As a number of defences are available to a publisher, a good starting point is to analyse the publication a little

closer. Even if you don't like or agree with the publication, ask yourself:

- What are the imputations that are carried, when read in the full context?
- Is the imputation true, or substantially true?
- Has it been published to someone with a specific interest in that information, and is the conduct of the publisher reasonable?
- Is it the publisher's honest opinion, based on proper material and related to a matter of public interest?
- Is it made the context of discussion concerning government and political matters?
- Is it trivial?⁵



If defamatory imputations are carried and you feel that the harm caused by the publication is substantial, there is benefit in obtaining legal advice from a defamation lawyer in relation to the prospects of a defamation claim, and what exactly is involved.

However, even if a publication is defamatory, that doesn't necessarily mean it's worth pursuing with litigation, which can be long and costly. Decisions driving this will depend on issues such as the seriousness of the slurs (for example, inference of criminal conduct is more egregious than other types of conduct or attributes), the extent of publication (for example publication to a small group versus the world at large), the ability of the publication to become viral (termed the 'grapevine effect') and the conduct of the publisher after publication (including refusals to retract the publication and apologise, or continuing to publish defamatory material).

Those who discover an online slur are often so aggrieved that they wish to remedy the injustice by demanding a retraction. However, in the online world of keyboard warriors, trolls and gargantuan social media companies that put profits above all else, taking public steps to protect your reputation can backfire spectacularly, doing more harm than good.⁶ Careful consideration therefore needs to be given to not only whether a publication constitutes actionable defamation, whether defences may be available, and whether the publisher can be identified, but also whether taking action will produce the desired outcome of vindication, or will instead further propagate the publication.

The best option is generally dependent on the circumstances, and seeking advice is important.

Workplace Health and Safety obligations

If someone is defamed because of decisions they have made in their employment position, your organisation may owe Workplace Health and Safety obligations to them.⁷ It is common for such publications to cause emotional distress, particularly when decisions are made, or actions taken, in good faith. Whether the publication is pursued or not, there may be other steps you will need to consider to ensure the mental wellbeing of employees is protected.

Remedies

Typically, the only remedies for defamation are damages. In achieving that result, however, the defamed party also receives vindication – sometimes as powerful an outcome as the award of damages itself (although the degree of vindication may depend on the amount of damages awarded). In certain circumstances, it is also possible to obtain an injunction preventing further similar publications.

Time limits

Finally, there are time limits imposed for commencing action for defamation.⁸ These may be able to be extended by a Court in limited circumstances, and as Queensland law presently stands, a new cause of action occurs each time the slur is re-published (which, in an online world, may be indefinite). Even so, as a general rule, unexplained delays in taking steps about a publication may result in a lower award of damages than would otherwise be appropriate, and of course the slur

has further opportunity to insidiously spread, so acting promptly is advised.

Conclusion

Governments are struggling to take necessary steps to regulate the internet, and the application of the law of defamation by the courts is, generally, even further behind. If you feel an online publication is defamatory of you, your business or one of your employees and you feel taking some action is necessary, obtain legal advice first. You may discover that legal action is not available, or if it is, is not necessarily the best option. Further, as defamation law is constantly evolving, you will be fully informed of options and possible outcomes early, and will be guided through the maze that is responsibility for comments posted online.

If you need help with a defamation matter, call Mark Williams at King & Company Solicitors on (07) 3243 0000, or email mark.williams@kingandcompany.com.au.

¹ Mark is a Partner of King & Company Solicitors, and has practised law for over 25 years. The views expressed in this article are of a general nature only, and as the particular facts and circumstances can change the nature of advice markedly, they are not intended to be relied upon for individual circumstances.

² Attributed to Mark Twain.

³ The Queensland Defamation Act is part of a national model that has recently been updated in certain states. It is expected that those amendments will be adopted in Queensland in the future.

⁴ There are, however, certain entities that are unable to be defamed, but other causes of action may be available, such as injurious falsehood.

⁵ This is a non-comprehensive list of common reasons defamation actions fail, and there are many complexities as to how those issues are dealt with by the courts. Further, the existence of malice may exclude many such defences.

⁶ Known as the 'Streisand effect'.

⁷ See, for example, section 19 of the Work Health and Safety Act 2011 (Qld)

⁸ In Queensland, there is a limitation period of one year from the date of publication for commencing litigation for defamation.



RURAL MANAGEMENT *Challenge*

THE CHALLENGER EXPERIENCE

When our Interim Chief Executive Officer, David Keenan, asked if I wanted to be on a team for the LGMA Rural Management Challenge (only 2 weeks out mind you), I wasn't quite sure what it even was. Some quick research and reading of testimonials from previous participants, I quickly realised the opportunity that had been presented to us.

Our team, later named the 'Red Desert Destroyers', was made up of a cross-section of staff from different parts of our organisation: Waste Management; Customer Service; Local Laws; and Executive Services. We had very little to do with each other in our day-to-day roles and had never worked together on any projects. We were told that this diversity of experience and skill sets could only work to our benefit and we hoped this was the case.

We were unable to secure a mentor within our organisation on such short notice but thankfully Liza Perret, Governance and Corporate Services Manager at Isaac Regional Council stepped in to assist us. I cannot stress enough just how important the mentor role is in this setting. Having absolutely no experience with a challenge such as this, our mentor was not only able to explain the unique format of the day but provided us with valuable insight on the best ways to tackle tasks, organise our time and communicate with each other.

Liza asked us to identify what we wanted to get out of the day – did we want to win at all costs? Did we want to be friends at the end of the day? It was suggested we create a 'safe word' for the day, so if a team member was feeling overwhelmed it could be easily and quickly communicated to the group. A great tip but this did not quell our nerves in any way.

We dove into our pre-challenge tasks. With a total of 9 days together as a complete team, we did our best to carve out time to work on our introduction piece, team vision, report and presentation. As a group that had not worked together before, we left ego at



Red Desert Destroyers: Sam Wylie, Kirsty Osborne, Carrie Baxter, Lani Vincent

the door and a truly collaborative effort ensued. We identified individual skill sets and celebrated them, utilising our strengths for the benefit of the team.

We flew into Moranbah at 7am on the day of the Challenge after a late flight from Mount Isa to Brisbane the night before and a very, very, early start. We already felt like we were on the back foot, not being able to participate in the networking function the night prior, so arriving at the venue to see teams in matching embroidered shirts with tubs of resources, we felt quite out of our depth.

Our fears were momentarily calmed as we were introduced to the facilitators, mentors, observers and other teams. Everyone was so welcoming and did all they could to assist us in setting up. Teams all performed their introduction skits and it was a great ice breaker. We were so impressed by everyone's creativity and it was a real laugh.

Once back in our space, our fears quickly returned as the first task hit our in-tray. We each took a deep breath and came together as a team to evaluate the task at hand.

Read task, discuss and brainstorm, identify skill sets, map-out course of action – and go! We dove in, feeling slightly more confident than before. Then the next task came in...and the next task. Officers reports, briefing notes, presentations, media releases, sound bites, role plays... sometimes it felt like the tasks were all coming in at once. Feeling confident or not became irrelevant as adrenaline kicked in, we just gave it our all.

Our routine of coming together to read a task, brainstorm, identify skill sets and map out our course of action, paying attention to deliverables and due time, is something we did repeatedly. This process peppered with 'time checks' (where we would stop and quickly come together to update the group on where we were each at and to review our task and time boards if needed) is possibly what I am most proud of when reflecting on the day. Because of this open communication and continuously coming together to debrief and update each other, we had no need for our 'safe word'. We would identify immediately if someone was feeling overwhelmed or if they were disappointed in how a role play task went



I WOULD HIGHLY RECOMMEND THAT COUNCILS, ESPECIALLY THOSE IN RURAL COMMUNITIES WHO MAY HAVE LIMITED OPPORTUNITIES, CONSIDER NOMINATING A TEAM IN THE LGMA RURAL MANAGEMENT CHALLENGE.

and we would instantly band together again to build that person back up.

Identifying what we wanted from the day very early was important. We wanted to be proud of our efforts, to feel like we deserved to be there and to walk out as friends.

The day itself was an absolute non-stop whirlwind that pushed us all out of our comfort zones. We leaned into this. Some identified that report writing, or role plays were not our strong suits, but everyone had a go at everything and were encouraged to do so by the other members of the team. We each learned a lot about ourselves. We identified things we wanted to improve on and were also quietly surprised (and proud) of our local government knowledge in a broader context.

We achieved our goal – we are proud of our efforts, we felt like we belonged amongst a high calibre of local government professionals and we walked out as friends.

I would highly recommend that Councils, especially those in rural communities who may have limited opportunities, consider nominating a team in the LGMA Rural Management Challenge. It is an experience like no other; not only in a strategic thinking and problem-solving context but as a true team building exercise. It develops participants both professionally and personally, while really getting you out of your comfort zone and I am thankful I was given this opportunity.

Carrie Baxter

Senior Executive Assistant,
Executive Services

Mount Isa City Council

THE CHALLENGE UNFOLDS

It was both serendipitous and fortuitous that Isaac Regional Council played host to the 2020 combined Northern Queensland and Central Queensland Rural Management Challenge. Isaac Regional Council CEO, Gary Stevenson PSM, was instrumental in creating and running the first Rural Management Challenge some 20 years ago. He saw the need for a challenge that was accessible to smaller and remote councils and worked with the National body to develop a version of the national challenge that met that need.

So, with Gary's recent announcement of his retirement from the CEO role, it was a bittersweet moment when LGMA CEO, Peta Irvine, presented Gary with a small token of our appreciation to acknowledge the incredible contribution that Gary has made to the professional development of people in local government across Queensland. We estimate that close to 2,000 people have been involved in the Rural Challenges over that time – that is a significant impact across participating councils! Thank you, Gary, on behalf of the thousands who have benefited directly and indirectly from your efforts all those years ago.

One of the benefit of the teams coming together the night before for a meet and greet is for everyone to get the lay of the land and size up the "competition". Some friendly banter ensued and there were a few teams up late practising their introductory presentations.

Challenge Day kicked off at 7:45am with teams setting up their workstations complete with mythical council vision and values and their four Council Executive personas.

With COVID impacting, five committed teams participated this year:

- Rockhampton Regional Council - Rocky Rascals
- Cassowary Coast Regional Council - Sugar Bananas
- Isaac Regional Council - WISACCS
- Mount Isa city Council - Red Desert Destroyers
- Department of Local Government - DLGRMA No More

As the day progressed and the teams were exposed to a variety of issues, tasks, presentations and problem-solving processes, participants got a feel for the challenges facing officers across Council.

Rachel from DLG's North Queensland office explained her experience.

"We are responsible for the legislative frameworks that Councillors and Officers operate under, so it was a real eye opener to be on the other side, working through scenarios of how to actually apply the policies in real life circumstances and often whilst dealing with more than one issue at a time!"

By the end of the day, all participants expressed both exhaustion and exhilaration as they reflected on the day. Some of the standout moments of the day that got lots of discussion over dinner included:

- Gary Stevenson's heart-breaking role play depiction of Damian, the seemingly unreliable Aquatic Centre staff member who had been calling in sick or showing up late but who, when questioned about his behaviour, revealed he'd been the victim of horrible bullying and harassment by another staff member.
- Gary Murphy's elaborate role play depiction of Nathan, a seasoned outdoor worker who had an elaborate array of reasons for not wearing the new uniform which included getting sunburn from the reflective strip, a gap between shirt numbers and access to a washing machine and unsightly rashes on his arms from friction caused when mowing. Oh, and don't forget the ragging he got from his mates at the pub when he turned up in a bright, shiny shirt of an afternoon!

Both men deserved Oscar nominations for their portrayals of the characters and really brought them to life, putting the council officers charged with addressing the situation to the test.

As for winners on the day, well, in a strange twist, there was a dead heat between Isaac Regional Councils' WISAACS and Cassowary Coast Regional Councils' Sugar Bananas. Try as they might, the two teams could not be separated! Congratulations to both.

All in all, another successful challenge, highlighting the wide range of matters dealt with by local government officers and the incredible mix of skills that councils need to access across their workforces.

ONLINE + EXECUTIVE MANAGEMENT PROGRAMME = SUCCESS

IT WAS MY ABSOLUTE PLEASURE TO FACILITATE THE 2020 DELIVERY OF THE LEADING LOCAL GOVERNMENT EXECUTIVE MANAGEMENT IN QUEENSLAND LOCAL GOVERNMENT PROGRAMME - EMP AS IT IS GENERALLY REFERRED TO, ONLINE FOR THE FIRST TIME.

This year, 15 local government professionals from a diverse range of Queensland councils made up the dedicated cohort. The cities were represented, along with the bush, the Gulf, the coast and the hinterlands. The award for most attendees from one council went to Isaac Regional Council, long-time supporters of the programme. Isaac's three musketeers, as they became affectionately known, were a wonderful addition to the group and provided valuable shared insights and real-world examples of the best of local government.

The EMP is structured over six modules to provide genuine insight into the depth and breadth of the role of a local government CEO. In addition to receiving a volume of written material, course participants benefit from six sessions with currently serving CEOs and highly experienced, best of the best local government professionals from a variety of backgrounds. Although they do change each year, in 2020 the presenters included Brett de Chastel, Ian Church, Bernard Smith, Gary Kellar, Evan Pardon and Tim Fynes-Clinton – offering combined experience of more years than they wanted to own up to. The case-study sessions they present impart a sense of the reality of life for a local government CEO. In a 'no topic off limits' setting we cover the good, the bad and the ugly of executive leadership in the current local government environment.

IN CLOSING, ONE PARTICIPANT SAID "I FEEL VERY LUCKY TO HAVE HAD THE OPPORTUNITY TO TAKE THE COURSE. THERE ARE MANY ELEMENTS I WILL TAKE WITH ME AND WILL REFLECT ON IN THE FUTURE OF MY CAREER AT COUNCIL."

Obviously the decision to go online was in direct response to the COVID-19 operating environment. This meant a change of format from three face-to-face days to a 12 week, once a fortnight, three-hour online sessions. This change bought with it the opportunity to have a virtual 24/7 chat space, meaning additional stimulus material was provided on an ongoing basis to participants. The conversations that arose from this material were inclusive, meaningful and educational in their own right. It was a new take on self-paced learning, with shared experiences adding value and further context to the existing six written modules.

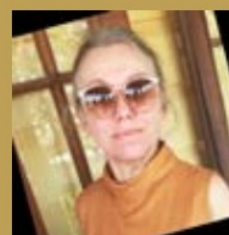
Feedback from participants was exceedingly positive. One participant said "I don't desire to single out any particular presenters. In my opinion, all presenters were outstanding in their delivery of the topics and offered a thorough understanding of the subject matter they presented. Their style was enthusiastic and they were keen to pass on knowledge and experience to the participants. The written material was complementary to the programme objectives and easy to understand. Well done to all."

EMP takes a unique, four-pronged approach to adult learning and professional development. Firstly, there is the written core material, secondly the additional stimulus material, thirdly the interactive sessions with industry stalwarts and finally, and not insignificantly, the learning from and connection with other participants.

In closing, one participant said "I feel very lucky to have had the opportunity to take the course. There are many elements I will take with me and will reflect on in the future of my career at Council."

As facilitator, I can only echo those thoughts, as I too felt privileged to spend time with such an outstanding group of humans, while broadening my own horizons. Thank you to all for your individual contributions which made for an incredible programme overall. It made for a very special learning environment.

Leanne E Mash
EMP 2020 Facilitator



LGMA is currently taking expressions of interest for the 2021 Leading Local Government Executive Management Programme.

To advise your interest, please email admin@lgmaqlld.org.au

It is envisaged that the 2021 will be delivered online.



A COVID Perspective

THERE IS AN OLD SAYING "MAY YOU LIVE IN INTERESTING TIMES", WELL, THESE TIMES ARE DEFINITELY INTERESTING, CHALLENGING AND PROFESSIONALLY EXHILARATING IN MANY WAYS.

I always believe that our role in local government is to provide leadership and stewardship in any way we can, given our resources and talent. COVID has meant that many of us have had to think outside the box to try to help our communities. Almost every community has had a different set of circumstances. The following article reflects some of the things my team has seen in the Fraser Coast Community during the pandemic and how we worked through.

Like most councils, when the first stage of the pandemic response occurred in April and May our businesses saw a dramatic fall in activity and income. You will remember that this was when we were asked to stay in our suburbs and not travel around. We have bought a product called "Spendmapp" and it shows local spending in our communities across a number of sectors. As expected, the May numbers were through the floor. What was surprising was that our area bounced back quite quickly and I think that there are a number of reasons why this may have happened.

Firstly, the tourism sector makes up around 7-8% of our Gross Regional Product (GRP) and accounts for about 7% of local jobs. Because we have a relatively modest reliance on the tourism sector, the impact of the pandemic was not as severe as for some other coastal towns and communities.

When the lock-down eased and Queenslanders could travel again, the Fraser Coast saw very strong support. Our Regional Tourism Organisation (RTO) has been reporting occupancy rates in excess of 85% since July. You

can tell how busy the region has been, there is a great 'vibe' in the streets and the beaches and Esplanade are packed (with appropriate social distancing). Some other colleagues around the state have similar experiences to the Fraser Coast Regional Council.

It is my opinion that peri-urban councils in the southeast have all benefited from the closure of the New South Wales border (despite some flipside losses of interstate tourists). In July and August some Queenslanders try to experience the colder climes; travelling to NSW and Victoria to experience skiing, cosy firesides and wineries. I know from experience that the Southern Downs' busiest tourism season is in the winter for this very reason.

With people in South East Queensland not able to travel south they were able to travel and they started to explore the areas in their own back yard. It is common now around the community to hear people say that they had not been to Hervey Bay since they were kids so they decided to come back and see it again. Thankfully we got really good reviews and our weather has been spectacular.

Much of the tourism recovery in the Fraser Coast has been a matter of being in the right place at the right time: three hours from Brisbane, affordable, beautiful and plenty to do. It was also the time that the border was closed and those people who could afford to holiday were looking for options and we gave them a compelling reason. Even though we were in a great spot, as council officers we still did a lot of work to make sure we could weather the storm.

As in most regions, the pandemic response came under the auspice of the LDMG. Council also stood up an Incident Management Team to look after business of council and this worked extremely well. I am still the Chair of the Economic

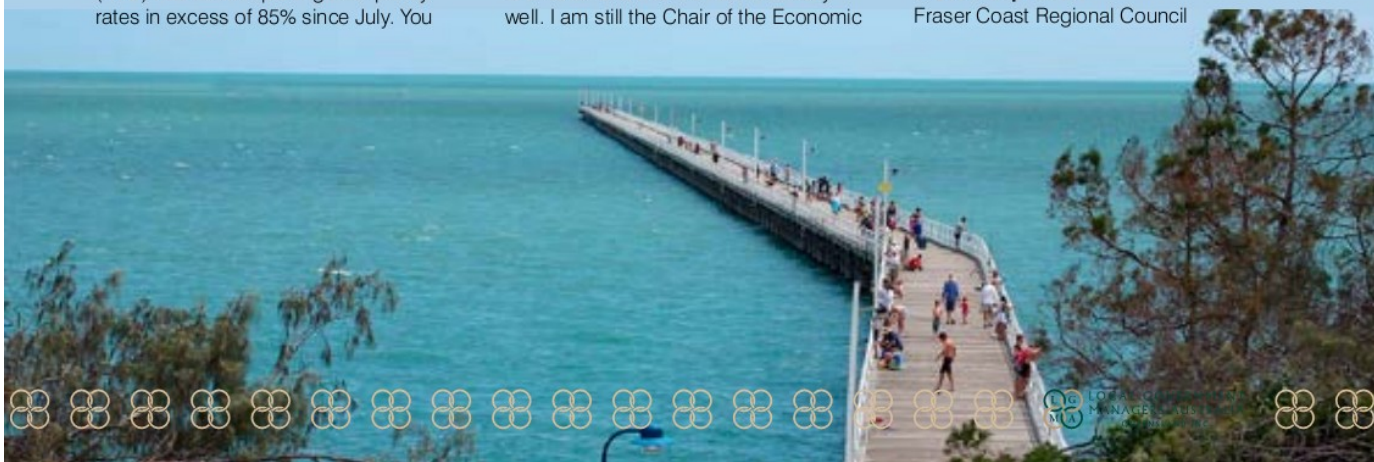
Recovery Group for the region, under the LDMG framework and we continue to meet to ensure the recovery continues.

Our group gathered all of the information that was being disseminated by other levels and agencies of government and undertook the task of de-mystifying of the volumes of data sent through. When I was working at the LGAQ, I was taught the invaluable lesson that all communication to the community needed to be pitched at a reading age of 9. My team gathered the headline information and transcribed it into very simple English that made the headlines easier to understand. We joined forces with our local business and industry groups so that we could get feedback but also send out vital messages. We also included the economic agencies from the other two levels of government.

We did a survey asked how businesses were travelling and what they needed; it showed that our residents wanted certainty, clarity and action. The needs of our business community coming from this survey shaped the way that we have delivered services in economic development and tourism. We developed a new webpage just for COVID, put on workshops and seminars, helped businesses to pivot and created a local buy campaign to help drive economic activity from within. I love being so close to our community, it means that we can do things that matter and we can do them relatively quickly.

To wrap up, our learning from COVID was that we have a very good balance in our economy, we are in a very beautiful and accessible part of the State to take advantage of new markets and we showed ourselves that positive and meaningful engagement with our business community helped us through.

Scott Templeman
Fraser Coast Regional Council



THREADING THE NEEDLE

WOMEN IN LOCAL GOVERNMENT

2010 WAS THE YEAR OF WOMEN IN LOCAL GOVERNMENT IN AUSTRALIA. AT THAT TIME, IT WAS CLEAR THAT WOMEN WERE WELL UNDERREPRESENTED IN SENIOR RANKS OF THE SECTOR DESPITE MAKING UP SLIGHTLY MORE THAN HALF OF THE WORKFORCE. DURING THE COURSE OF THE YEAR, A RANGE OF ACTIVITIES WERE UNDERTAKEN ACROSS THE COUNTRY TO ENGAGE WITH COUNCILS AND INDIVIDUALS IN AN EFFORT TO IDENTIFY BARRIERS AND OPPORTUNITIES.

There were mixed views expressed about what the problem was and what contributing factors may be at play, and even the extent to which a problem existed. Was it a glass ceiling or a sticky floor? Are women their own worst enemies and the 'fault' lies with them? Are leaders 'threatened' by women's mysterious ways and deliberately sabotaging their careers? Is it all unconscious bias where you promote people who are familiar?

A majority view at the time amongst senior officers was that the issue was one of nascency – i.e. the hard yards had been done, barriers removed and it was just a matter of time before the women who benefited from those changes moved through the ranks into senior roles. Similarly, the tipping point theory was espoused which says that once you reach 30% of women on council in the elected body or in the senior management group, more will follow at greater rates.

Ten years on and not much has changed – neither theory has panned out.

Yes, there are pockets of improvement; there are councils who have made it their mission to ensure women are

supported and encouraged into senior roles and have done so successfully. But across the state, there continues to a discrepancy in percentage of women moving up the line.

Partly, this is because there is no silver bullet. There are many factors at play and any change takes sustained effort. Like the diet pill, we tend to look for the quick fix and our processes demand 'evidence' of impact in order to support continued investment. If the impacts are cumulative over time, good initiatives can be dropped because they do not show immediate success.

IT WAS CLEAR THAT WOMEN WERE WELL UNDERREPRESENTED IN SENIOR RANKS OF THE SECTOR DESPITE MAKING UP SLIGHTLY MORE THAN HALF OF THE WORKFORCE.

In speaking to women across local government there are, as you would expect, mixed views and positions.

Of course, in order to talk about this matter in a short article, generalisations and simplifications must be made. That is not to stereotype positions or people and it is not to suggest anyone should hold a particular view; it is merely to illuminate some of the factors at play in order to generate thought discussion and, potentially, action.

Some senior women are keen not to 'buy in' to the discussion – they will agree that they have experienced some challenges but that they

were confident in themselves and pushed through. They are adamant that they not be 'handed anything' on the basis of gender.

Others talk about not 'having what it takes' to be a senior leader in local government. When questioned further, this is based on the fact that they do not see anyone around who leads in a manner which they feel they could emulate. The lack of role models who offer diverse leadership styles is at the crux of this issue. This continues to be a key impediment across the sector.

Also at play is a different exposure to council business and politics. Women tend to approach work in a different manner than their male counterparts. *[Generalisation alert! Ed.]* There is less time spent on networking or self-promotion (the debate about the extent to which this is nature or nurture is a topic for another publication) and accordingly tend to be highly focussed on their own roles and less visible outside their area of expertise, and often even within their area.

And this is exacerbated in councils where the dynamic around the council chamber is sub-optimal. In these cases, many CEOs will seek to 'protect' their less experienced staff from the vagaries of council discussion which, whilst well intentioned, can limit exposure and confidence.

Confidence is another challenge and links to both of the above points (role models and exposure). Importantly, it is also a factor of the unconscious bias that occurs across our workplaces. While terms like 'mansplaining' (Macquarie Dictionary's Aussie word of the year in 2014) and maninterrupting, are now common parlance and most officers understand the concepts they



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seek to convey, old habits die hard and change is difficult. For an individual, changing your approach in meetings, the way you speak and put forward ideas, is neither simple nor quick. It can be supported by a meeting chair who directs conversation flow deliberately to ensure that quieter members (male or female) are not talked over. (It should be noted that the benefits of shifting these dynamics is not just of benefit to those women who struggle to get a word in but to any of the more introverted members of the group).

**THE CHALLENGE IS THAT
THE BARRIERS HAVE BEEN
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Statistics tell us that women continue to bear the majority of the caring load at home and although this is not the responsibility of our workplaces (except when it comes to flexibility and pay gap), it does mean that women can struggle to put in those extra activities that make them visible. Most women interviewed try to hide their working late or taking stuff home rather than promoting it, as if it is a dirty secret that somehow makes them lesser as parents, workers or partners.

Probably the most prevalent reason given for women not making it into senior ranks in council that was provided by senior leaders during 2010 was that “they just won’t apply for the roles. But when they do, they are more likely to be appointed” (more likely than the male candidates). This is the

case, on a percentage basis, fewer females apply but a higher proportion of female applicants than male are actually appointed¹. The challenge is that the barriers have been in place long before a woman reaches the point where she feels she can apply. These include access to education (while working), flexibility in the workplace (which the 2020 experience may have debunked to some extent), access to a professional network, exposure to the wider organisation and the politics, lack of role models and gender biased activities.

In case it is not clear, all of this does matter. Diversity of gender has been clearly shown to lead to better decision making by organisations – and this is especially true of financial management and leadership during a crisis. In the case of local governments, a council which lacks gender diversity in its leadership team is not representative of the community and will struggle to assess all community needs when making decisions.

Different players in the sector have been picking away at this for the last decade. In some states, the issue is

front of mind and many councils are actively undertaking a range of long-term initiatives to create change. In Queensland, the issue is much less front of mind, perhaps on the back of an influx of female elected members at the 2016 election, high turnover of CEOs and a generally disrupted sector. This dearth of action is evident in the Awards for Excellence whereby the Women in Local Government award was amended to a diversity award after three years of almost no nominations. The diversity award went the same way after two unsuccessful years. (That is not to say no councils are active, but they are certainly not in the majority).

The great thing about seeking to tackle this issue in 2021, is that so much work has been done across other sectors. Local government does not need to reinvent the wheel, when it comes to impacting factors. Local government experiences exactly the same challenges as other sectors and organisations and can therefore learn from what others have done. A work in progress for sure but it is the progress that matters.

In 2021, LGMA awarded scholarships to 20 women to be part of a Women in Local Government network which will provide support, tools and information. In so doing, LGMA seeks to identify the continuing barriers to senior leadership representation. It also hopes to identify a mechanism to create networks across the state that can be accessed and maintained by women in all councils.

The scholarship recipients will attend the Women in Local Government Conference in March 2021.

¹. Statistics across Australian business sectors rather than local government specific

CATEGORY	BUILDERS	BABY BOOMERS	GENERATION X	GENERATION Y	GENERATION Z	GEN ALPHA
	 We prefer proper English if you please! Born: ~ 1944 Age: 75+	 Record Player, Goody, Heyland Born: 1946-1964 Age: 54-72	 Dial, Ace, Red, A/F, Wicked Born: 1965-1979 Age: 39-53	 Bling, Funky, Dab, Finshtz, Whosup? Born: 1980-1994 Age: 24-38	 Mk, Logit, Steam, Etern, Whosup? Born: 1995-2009 Age: 9-23	 LE, Form, Hundo, YN, AN, Lil Born: from 2010 Age: under 9
Social markers	World War II 1939-1945	Moon landing 1969	Stock market crash 1987	September 11 2001	GFC 2008	Trump / Brexit 2016
Iconic cars	Model T Ford 1908, 1927	Ford Mustang 1964	Holden Commodore 1978	Toyota Prius 1997	Tesla Model S 2012	Autonomous cars 2020s
Iconic toys	Roller skates	Frisbee	Rubik's cube	BMX bike	Folding scooter	Fidget spinner
Music devices	Record player LP, 1948	Audio cassette 1963	Walkman 1979	iPod 2001	Spotify 2008	Smart speakers Now
Leadership style	 Controlling	 Directing	 Coordinating	 Guiding	 Empowering	 Inspiring
Ideal leader	Commander	Thinker	Doer	Supporter	Collaborator	Co-creator
Learning style	Formal	Structured	Participative	Interactive	Multi-modal	Virtual
Influence/advice	Officials	Experts	Practitioners	Peers	Forums	Robo-advice
Marketing	Print (traditional)	Broadcast (mass)	Direct (targeted)	Online (linkact)	Digital (social)	In situ (real-time)

Image courtesy of mccrindle | www.mccrindle.com.au

Generations IN THE WORKFORCE

Is LG an employer of choice for coming generations?

When I hear or read about 'next generation' I assume it is referencing a new technological release such as an updated Apple iPad or Samsung's smart phones. For the purpose of this article, I am referring to the children of the X and Y Generations.

Are Queensland councils ready for the next generations - Gen Z and Alpha?

In four years, Gen Alpha will start to enter the workforce. This means that we will potentially have five generations in the workforce all at one time – a new scenario for all employers to consider.

According to McCrindle, as of 2019, there are now more Australians born since 1980 than before it. This means that Gen Y (27-41 years old), Gen Z (26-12 years old) and Gen Alpha (born since 2010 – 11 years old) comprise of more than half the population. Generations Y and Z now make up the majority of the workforce, outnumbering Generation X

and Baby Boomers for the first time.

How does this affect our communities and employment? Gen Y and Gen Z now dominate as workers, consumers, new household creators and hence, are a significant demographic with influence. Currently, Generation Z make up 15% of the workforce, however, within a decade, they will make up one third of the workforce.

Gen Alpha (2010-2024) will be lifelong learners who will have multiple jobs and careers. They will see traditional jobs of today fade into the distant past and they will experience careers such as app development, cryptocurrency and cyber security. Their children are likely to be Gen Beta (2025-2039). (Visit McCrindle's website for their great insights, statistics and reports.)

Recruiting, engaging and retaining skilled workers and focusing on a multi-generational workforce will be vital for thriving organisations. Managing the needs of an ageing population, AI, continual technological advances and engaging with youth are the many and varied situations keeping HR professionals awake at night. Not to mention the impacts associated with a global pandemic that taught us we can blend working from home with working in the workplace. Going forward, will council employees need to live in the shire or

community of their employment? For local government roles, can staff live out of the shire/region perhaps interstate, work from home and FIFO when needed?

Local government is a melting pot of industries – community and corporate services, communications, ICT, engineering, environment, water, waste, childcare, planning and development, tourism, administration, local laws, governance, government services, recreation facilities, parks/gardens and so on. There seems to be something for everyone. I am fairly certain my high school guidance counsellor did not mention anything to me other than nursing or teaching (mind you as my teenager continually reminds me – that was back in the dark ages). Having said that, how are Queensland councils planning to capture the 'young ones' to secure the future of the communities in this State? How can we work collaboratively to be the employers of choice for the next generations?

I have a lot of questions and seemingly not a lot of answers. We need to continue the conversation, share knowledge and resources and plan for the future.

Hence, why the LGMA Propeller group for 2021 has been tasked with these very questions as part of their group project. Watch this space. I am sure they will come up with some answers (no pressure Propellers!).



Virtual Reality

A REALITY IN BURKE SHIRE



WHAT STARTED AS A SOLUTION BORN OF NECESSITY DURING A FOUR-MONTH PANDEMIC LOCKDOWN HAS EVOLVED INTO AN INNOVATIVE TRAINING OPPORTUNITY FOR GULF-COUNTRY COUNCIL, BURKE SHIRE, LOCATED APPROXIMATELY 450 KILOMETRES NORTH OF MOUNT ISA. WITH NOBODY ALLOWED IN OR OUT OF THE REMOTE AREA DURING THE PEAK OF THE CORONAVIRUS CRISIS, BURKE SHIRE COUNCIL TURNED TO VIRTUAL REALITY AS A WAY TO ENSURE TRAINING CONTINUED TO BE DELIVERED TO STAFF.

CEO, Clare Kennan, explained that ceasing training altogether was not an option given the wide-ranging strategic and operational issues such a decision would have created for the organisation and for the close-knit community of fewer than 350 people. In her view, doing nothing was not an option. So,

rather than accepting lock-down and the associated cessation of training as a fait accompli, the executive team and work health and safety staff worked together to identify an out-of-the-box solution that would work in a remote location such as Burke.

The result was a partnership between council and VR training specialist, Next World Enterprises, to deliver training in work health and safety, materials handling and heavy lifting to staff via virtual reality technology. Instead of the COVID 'go to' of theoretical training delivered via Zoom, staff got the benefit of the visual and kinaesthetic learning they are used to through VR goggles and supporting online training modules.

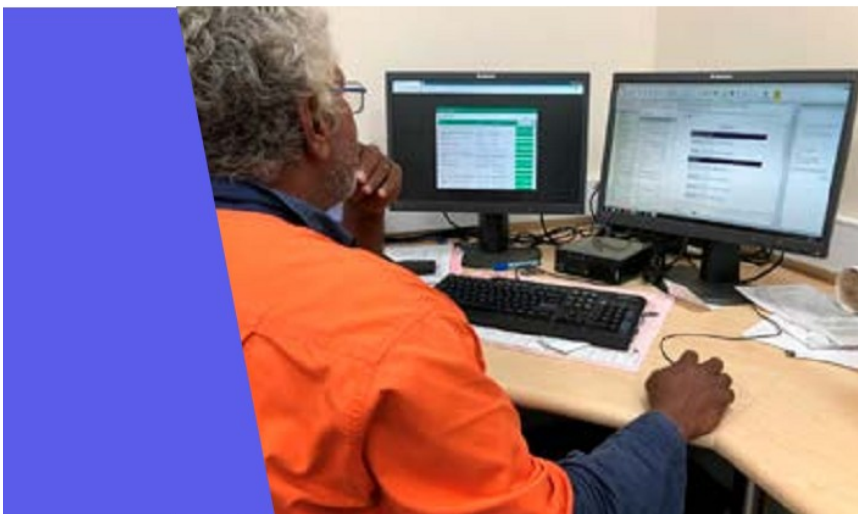
Priding itself on being an early adopter of technology after an initiative to bring high-speed, broadband internet to the region, council's adoption of the Next World Enterprise virtual

reality training solution cemented its commitment to using technological advances to overcome the costs and limitations of distance and isolation.

The project was recognised with the 2020 Butch Lenton Bush Council Innovation award at the LGAQ conference in October 2020. Further training will be developed for staff and, using the prize money, it is proposed to also develop training modules to support community, potentially involving the primary production sector.

Council says that the VR training provided a tool to keep staff safe and skills during the lockdown but its benefits were quickly realised and application beyond lockdown is now a given.

Another COVID innovation with wide-reaching, positive implications and a demonstration of Queensland councils continued commitment to innovation.



BURKE SHIRE COUNCIL WATER AND SEWERAGE SUPERVISOR, **DAVE MARSHALL** GAINS A BETTER UNDERSTANDING OF WHS SOFTWARE A PART OF THE UPSKILLING STRATEGY WHICH HAS BEEN EMBRACED BY STAFF.



NEW LOOK VILLAGES IN 2021

FOR MANY YEARS, THE LGMA VILLAGES HAVE BEEN PROVIDING QUEENSLAND LOCAL GOVERNMENT PROFESSIONALS WORKING IN SIMILAR FIELDS WITH THE OPPORTUNITY TO COME TOGETHER TO NETWORK AND SHARE EXPERIENCES. THEY OFFER OPPORTUNITIES TO LEARN FROM EACH OTHER, NETWORK, DISCUSS BEST PRACTICE AND TALK ABOUT CHANGES OR THE LATEST DEVELOPMENTS IN YOUR AREA OF EXPERTISE.

For 2021, we have expanded the networks to include more professional areas. Further, each Village network will include a full suite of activities to suit different needs, contexts and topics. These include four different professional development activities, each tailored to the area of expertise but fulfilling a slightly different need.

Village Exchanges

These informal 'chat' sessions via Zoom enable council officers to connect with their counterparts at other councils to share, learn, question and engage. These complimentary exchanges are included in the Council Subscriber Package. You can belong to as many as you like.

Village Webinars

Also held via Zoom, these sessions aim to zero-in on a specific topic of interest affecting a group and usually feature a guest presenter or panel of experts on the topic. Sessions run for approximately 90 minutes including Q&A. Registration is from \$110 per participant.

Village Forums

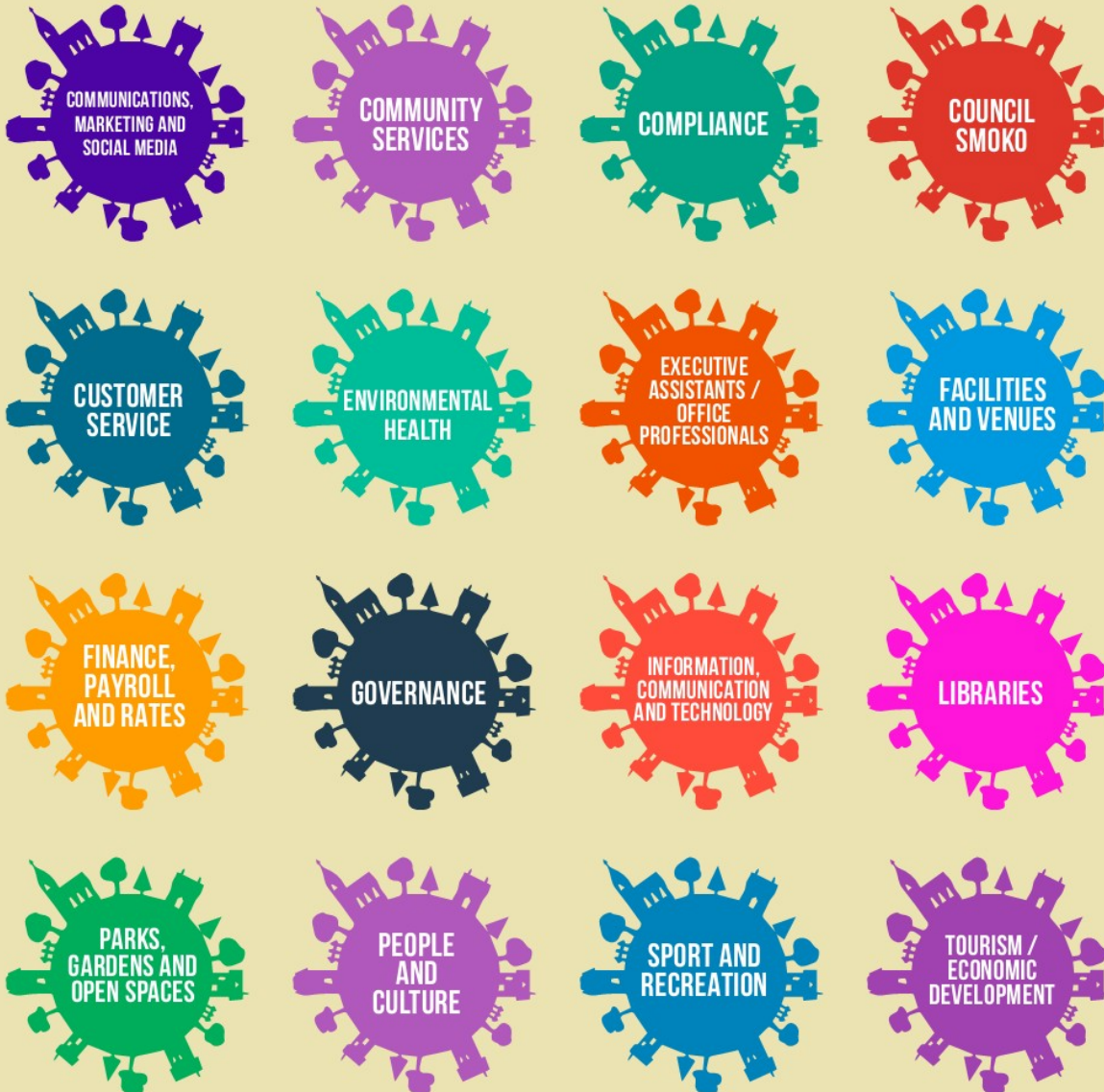
Held at various locations across Queensland, the one-day Village Forums provide valuable, face-to-face networking opportunities and usually include a range of case studies, guest speakers, project updates and workshops relating to current industry topics. Registration is from \$250 per participant.

Online Discussion Boards

The Village Hub webpages on the LGMA website enable the sharing of information, templates and ideas amongst villagers. Village members may use the Discussion Boards to post questions and ask others how they are handling particular matters or to share templates, advice and information.



VILLAGE NETWORKS INCLUDE



HOW TO JOIN A VILLAGE

To ensure you are part of the network, log in to the LGMA website and update the check box on your profile to indicate your network of interest. This will also enable you to access the Discussion Board on your Village Home Page where you can create topics, post questions and share documents with your fellow “villagers”.

You can belong to as many villages as you like. Just check the box and away you go!

COUNCIL CASE

LISA HAMILTON PROGRAMME FACILITATOR

Council Projects – A few of my favourite things....

The LGMA Queensland Awards for Excellence is a special occasion when we can gather to recognise the innovative, creative, impactful and outstanding work of our colleagues. The 2020 Awards for Excellence Gala Dinner was scheduled for late May and, due to all things COVID, the event was re-invented as a live-streamed, interactive event in late August 2020. The finalists and award winners were announced during the celebrations across 35 Queensland LG areas. Our October Journal featured the winning councils and further details regarding their submissions are outlined on the LGMA website for your review.

One of the fantastic components of my job is reading the nominations before bundling them off to the judging panel. As somebody who has never worked in local government, it never ceases to amaze me how council officers are continually focused and tireless in their effort to improve their communities. The scope and diversity of the projects submitted were second to none. However, with eight categories, only eight submissions were announced as 'winners'. Having said that, I would like to share some of the other fantastic projects (winners for their local communities) that were nominated last year:

Cairns Regional Council – Youth Summit



Council's inaugural Cairns Youth Climate Summit allowed participants to develop their ideas at the one-day workshop, which included 35 students from 15 high schools and youth representatives from Gimuy Walabura Yidinji and Yirrgandji tribes.

The Cairns Youth Climate Summit was an opportunity for Cairns youth to show leadership in participatory climate action. A participatory engagement exercise, largely led by students themselves, resulted in over 400 ideas, 36 hopes for the future and a youth aspirational statement for the climate future of Cairns. These future leaders presented their ideas to a panel of current industry leaders, the Mayor and Councillors at an event at the Cairns Performing Arts Centre. The outcomes from The Summit will inform Council's policy and planning on climate change from now until 2030.

Captured ideas included:

- Powering the region with 100% renewable energy
- Protecting and restoring the reef and rainforest
- Capturing carbon while enhancing natural areas
- Greening buildings and improving their efficiency
- Encouraging the uptake of electric vehicles
- Reducing and reusing waste
- Low carbon tourism options
- Working with the community on projects to reduce emissions



Fraser Coast Regional Council – Orchid House



The Hervey Bay Botanic Gardens Orchid House is situated in the Hervey Bay Botanic Gardens on the Fraser Coast. The Orchid collection started in 1997 when a member of the public, John Sheppard, donated his own personal collection of orchids consisting of mainly *Cattleya* and *Vanda* hybrids.

In 2019, the Orchid House was upgraded and expanded by the Fraser Coast Regional Council, in conjunction with the Queensland Government's "Works for Queensland" programme, to increase the capacity for displays and satisfy the growing public interest in the site. The collection is nurtured by Council employed horticulturists and passionate volunteers in a purpose-built orchid nursery at the Botanic Gardens. Once the orchids are in flower, they are moved into the Orchid House

to be viewed by the community and the many visitors that they attract.

Not only has the collection and the Orchid House itself grown over the years, but the volunteers have also. There are currently 35 volunteers who run the Orchid House and the collection alongside Council employees. The volunteer group takes enormous pride and ownership of the collection and undertakes all duties such as plant propagation, nursery management, plant identification, orchid displays, plant sales, sourcing plants for purchase, front of house hosting and providing information to visitors and guests. The volunteers also assist in preparing and peopling a display off site at the annual Fraser Coast Orchid Show.

The Orchid House is a prime working example of collaboration between all three levels of government, members of the public, volunteers, employees, societies and clubs. The Orchid House and the collection would not have continued to develop and expand without the collaboration of multiple parties over the past 23 years. The common driving force has been the desire to have a suitable platform to showcase these unusual and beautiful plants and a hub for the community that is both educational and inclusive.

Central Highlands Regional Council - Emerald Airport Resurfacing Project

Emerald Airport is now home to the first commercial runway in Australia with a stone mastic asphalt (SMA) surface. Commonly used for high-traffic road construction, SMA has been used on airport runways in Europe and China and only tested in Australia previously. The runway is expected to last five-plus years longer than a standard asphalt runway surface and forecast to provide significant savings for Central Highlands Regional Council, the airport owner.

Central Highlands Regional Council were looking for a solution that would fix the problems of the aging runway and also deliver a cost-effective maintenance solution for the future. Using SMA has eliminated costly processes and offers a more durable and rut resistant surface – both critical if you are the one flying in or out.

The works were part of a \$16 million capital investment in airport infrastructure by council and were jointly funded by the Australian Government and the Queensland Government through the Building our Regions programme.

Rockhampton Regional Council – Creating a Circular Economy

With a clear need for Australian communities to better manage waste and resources, Rockhampton Regional Council is stepping up to the plate. The council is taking on a leadership role, seeking to move toward a circular, regenerative economy through their Waste Management and Resource Recover strategy. The strategy drives their commitment to achieving a Zero-Waste by 2050. Initiatives already adopted include construction of their vertical expansion (piggyback) project. Through the piggyback, sand which would have

previously been taken from the natural environment, has been replaced with fine particles of crushed glass from the local materials recycling facility.

First considered in late 2018, this idea came about when Council realised there was an increasing (and surplus) volume of glass being reclaimed through the Container Refund Scheme. In fact, the increase amounted to 250 to 500 tonnes per month. Once this was project underway, Rockhampton Regional Council was also able to use other recycled materials in their

roads, again reusing waste and reducing use of new materials. Council is diverting waste from landfill by recycling materials such as concrete, asphalt and dirty fill to produce several grades of crushed concrete and gravels as well as topsoil and asphalt profiling. Having entered into a 20-year contract with Landfill Gas Management Company LMS Energy Pty Ltd earlier this year, it won't be long before they are producing electricity for the region from their landfill facility.



COUNCIL CASE STUDIES

Western Downs Regional Council – GROW@Work

Western Downs Regional Council initiated a suggestion made anonymously by a staff member in the staff suggestion box and subsequently launched the GROW@Work programme. Now in its fifth year, the programme continues to expand and provide employees with opportunities to broaden their understanding of Council and how they fit into the big picture.

GROW@Work is an innovative way of providing a unique opportunity for staff to experience and understand what it is like to work in a different department, allowing for a more collaborative workplace and resulting in better relationships across the organisation. This program enables employees to share expertise, enhance professional development and expand career opportunities. This supports the development of internal talent whilst building the capability of people, along with providing for stronger inter-departmental knowledge and a healthy workforce built on a positive culture and strong employment retention.

GROW@Work participants enjoyed: on-the-job mentoring; exploration of roles tailored to their interests; potential to improve morale, retention, work life balance; and 'fresh eyes' rotating across departments. The programme continues to be a valued component of Western Downs Regional Council providing career progression, job satisfaction and the opportunity for continual business improvement.

Pormpuraaw Aboriginal Shire Council – Financial Success

Pormpuraaw, a word meaning 'grass hut', is also the name of an Aboriginal Community located 680 kilometres from Cairns on the West Coast of Cape York. The stunning coastal town is home to two tribal groups of Aboriginal people, the Thaayorre and the Munkan people and has a total resident population of around 650 people.

Since becoming a community council, the Pormpuraaw Council had a long history of heavily qualified financial audits, with the Queensland Audit Office "unable to form Audit opinion" on occasions. Since becoming the Pormpuraaw Aboriginal Shire Council, Council has enhanced the long-term sustainability of the organisation and Community through the Financial Sustainability March. This has been a long and sustained effort towards financial sustainability, starting in 2013, only 5 years after coming under the wider local government requirements, when Council received its first unqualified in 15 years. In 2015/16, Council, for the first time, met all three measures of financial sustainability.

Fast forward to 2019 and the annual external audit exit meeting confirmed that Council is to receive their 7th, consecutive, Unqualified Audit for 2018-2019. Now Pormpuraaw Aboriginal Shire Council is mentioned in Parliament for the right reasons, with their work forming a Case Study that was even mentioned in Qld Parliament in February 2020 as an example of what can be achieved. Today Council holds QTC Investments at \$25M and a healthy balance sheet at \$156M.

But the improvements don't stop just with the numbers. Elected representatives now have a clear understanding that any decisions made in a Council Meeting always have financial implications. Today, all issues are addressed with robust and honest conversation before decisions are made.

I rest my case. Queensland councils are 'winning' for their communities. To showcase the extraordinary work in your area, please nominate your projects for the 2021 LGMA Queensland Awards for Excellence. Full details are on the website – you have plenty of time for submissions – closing date is 21 April 2021. We look forward to reading and sharing your successes too. Mark your calendars for the live-streamed Awards for Excellence – Thursday 27 May 2021.





LOCAL GOVERNMENT
MANAGERS AUSTRALIA
QUEENSLAND INC.

LEADING PROFESSIONALS IN LOCAL GOVERNMENT

2021

AWARDS FOR **excellence**

**Nominations are open now
and close on 21 April 2021.
Visit the LGMA website to
nominate your project today.**

The LGMA Awards for Excellence
recognising outstanding achievement
in Queensland local government



LEISA DOWLING

CEO

Gladstone Regional Council

How long have you been CEO at Gladstone Regional Council?

Two years

What is on your bucket list?

Professionally:

- Work in a small country town.
- Eventually work part-time and volunteer part-time with community organisations.

Personally:

- Successfully navigate the year ahead as a first-time parent of a year 12 student!
- Glamping at Uluru, cruising the Greek Islands and exploring Europe.
- The Australian Open, Boxing Day test and the PGA Tournament of Champions in Hawaii.

What keeps you up at night?

- Refer above to year 12 student parent responsibilities and late-night pick-ups from social activities!

What gets you out of bed each morning?

- Our dog impatiently waiting to go for a walk!
- Working with incredible people that I am so proud of.
- The opportunity each day brings to make a difference for our community.



GURBINDAR SINGH

CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER

Cassowary Coast Regional Council

How long have you been CFO at CCRC?

I have been in my current role of CFO for almost four years now. My journey to the Cassowary Coast began in May 2016 when I decided to take up the Manager Finance position. Subsequently, following a restructure in March 2017, I secured the role of CFO.

PS – Thank you, Peta Irvine (LGMA); a conversation I had with you in Gladstone in 2015 played an important part in me considering taking up the Manager Finance role at CCRC.

What is on your bucket list?

Professionally:

- The intent is to become a CEO and an inspirational leader.
- Be seen as one of the best performers in the LG sector in Australia.
- Be a mentor to others.
- Become a director of a reputable firm.

Personally:

- Maintain the right work-life balance.
- Sky diving Mission Beach and driving all around Australia.
- Establishing a self-sustainable farm
- Travel to Europe to watch my favourite football teams – Liverpool, Barcelona, and AC Milan.

What keeps you up at night?

The thought of not being able to deliver on priorities (execution risks) and not managing critical issues impacting the community and staff in particular. A policy or strategic direction change can sometimes keep me up, especially if I have concerns around viability, particularly when I know the decision may be politically driven.

Matters involving digital transformation, cyber insecurity, and social media can be full of surprises. Having appropriate expertise, roadmaps, and response strategies mitigate the risk involved. However, convincing Councillors to invest in intangible assets with limited direct community benefit can sometimes be challenging mentally.

What gets you out of bed each morning?

The hunger to think different, being innovative, and the desire to make a difference in the community I live in is what motivates me. To change ratepayers' perception of CCRC being the most rated Council in Queensland highlights the need to understand the range, level, and cost of services that Council delivers. The above drives me in my role to focus on having strategies that minimise cost, increase efficiencies, and enable growth.

Also, knowing that you have a team with a similar mindset and willingness to dig in when required ensures that you turn up and give your best every day. Hence, the reason why I love and enjoy the challenge my role brings at a regional Council.

PS - The beautiful morning scenery along the beaches at Mission Beach is perfect. These provide me with enough motivation and encouragement every day, whether it be a simple challenge of a morning walk or an intense budget session around rate increases.



CALENDAR OF EVENTS 2021

FEBRUARY

25 ILG Chiefs Forum (Cairns)

MARCH

2 Facilities Exchange
3 Environmental Health Officers' Exchange
3 Compliance Exchange
4 Library Exchange
18 People and Culture Webinar (HR)
18 Governance Webinar
23-25 Women in Local Government Conference
26 CEO Forum

APRIL

1 Library Exchange
1 People and Culture Exchange (HR)
20 ICT Exchange
20 Governance Exchange
21 Awards for Excellence nominations close
23 Young Manager of the Year nominations close
29 Australasian Management Challenge

MAY

4 Tourism Exchange
4 Sport and Recreation Exchange
5 Parks and Gardens Exchange
6 Library Exchange
13 Executive Assistants' Exchange
13 Customer Service Exchange
19 Compliance Webinar
19 Environmental Health Webinar
27 Awards for Excellence Live Streamed Event

JUNE

1 Facilities Exchange
1 Governance Exchange
2 Environmental Health Officers' Exchange
2 Compliance Exchange
3 People and Culture Exchange (HR)
15 Library Webinar
15 Tourism Webinar

MOVERS *and* SHAKERS

Since the last edition of *The Journal*, we have welcomed to following appointments:

Cale Dendle	CEO Livingstone Shire Council
Troy Fraser	CEO Doomadgee Aboriginal Shire Council
Justin Hancock	CEO Quilpie Shire Council
David Keenan	CEO Mount Isa City Council
Dr Prins Ralston	CEO Townsville City Council
Kelvin Tytherleigh	CEO Hinchinbrook Shire Council

Have you changed jobs recently?
Let us know so we can share the news and keep our records up to date.

Contact LGMA Queensland at
admin@lgmaql.org.au or
telephone 07 3174 5006



LOCAL GOVERNMENT
MANAGERS AUSTRALIA
QUEENSLAND INC.

LGMA Queensland's mission is to lead, advocate for and support Queensland local government managers; providing relevant and quality professional development opportunities; and actively contributing to the advancement of local government in Queensland.

For more information about LGMA Queensland and *The Journal*, please contact us at admin@lgmaqld.org.au.

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The Journal welcomes contributions from its readers. If you would like to contribute to an upcoming edition of *The Journal*, contact the Editor.

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