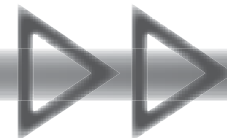


Australian Local Government Women's Association Inc.



Review of the National Framework for Women in Local Government

▶▶ The Way Forward



The Australian Local Government Women's Association Inc
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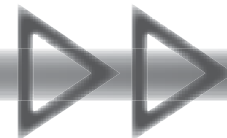
May 2007

The UTS Centre for Local Government was commissioned to undertake research for the Review of the National Framework for Women in Local Government and drafted this report.

Printed by Maroondah Printing P/L, Unit 16, 42 New St, Ringwood, Ph: 9879 1555 Fax: 9879 1799 info@maroondahprinting.com.au

The "Review of the National Framework for Women in Local Government - The Way Forward" has been funded by the Australian Government through the Women's Leadership and Development Programme.

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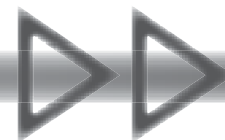
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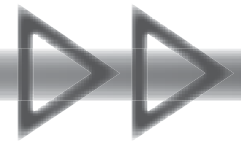
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Foreword

I am delighted to introduce the *Review of the National Framework for Women in Local Government – The Way Forward* by the Australian Local Government Women's Association (ALGWA).

As Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for Women's Issues, one of my primary goals is to build the leadership capabilities of women across a wide range of roles and responsibilities, to ensure women's issues are on the national agenda, and to contribute to better outcomes for all Australians.

Women play an active role in all areas of Australian society – community, business, industry and politics. It is important that women actively engage at all levels of leadership and decision making, particularly within government.

Women in government make valuable contributions to the development of public policy and contribute significantly to the wellbeing of the community.

Diversity in government makes good sense, as it does in all areas of Australian society. Governments whose composition reflects the diversity of the community have an enhanced understanding of the different needs of the community, which in turn leads to enhanced service provision and greater prosperity.

While there are policies and practices in place to promote equal representation of women in high level, decision-making roles across the public sector, women continue to be under-represented in all tiers of government.

The Australian Government Office for Women, through the Women's Leadership and Development Programme, is working to build women's capacity to become leaders, ensure Australia-wide communication and consultation with women, and fund research on issues relevant to women.

I am pleased that through this Programme, the Australian Government Office for Women has supported the Australian Local Government Women's Association (ALGWA) with the significant task of revising and publishing its *Review of the National Framework for Women in Local Government – The Way Forward*.

This document builds on the foundations laid by the *National Framework for Women in Local Government*, developed by ALGWA in 2001, and is the culmination of extensive consultation and research.

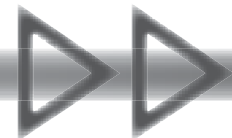
The Review of the National Framework for Women in Local Government – The Way Forward tracks the progress of the 2001 Framework and proposes a number of key strategies and actions to achieve greater representation of women in Australian local government.

I commend ALGWA on the development of this important initiative and encourage all levels of government to work towards a greater representation of women in government and broader aspects of Australian life.

The Hon Julie Bishop MP

Minister for Education, Science and Training

Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for Women's Issues



I am pleased there is an association devoted to the cause of ensuring that women are well represented and supported in local government. The Australian Local Government Women's Association (ALGWA) has been at the forefront of promoting the interests of women in local government since 1951 - a time when society did not expect women to have careers and roles outside the home. It gave me great pleasure to open the ALGWA Biennial National Conference in October 2006 in Melbourne, to help celebrate the 55th anniversary of ALGWA.

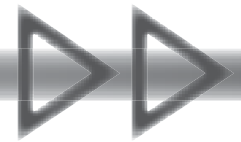
The Australian Government believes it is important that women be involved in decision-making at all levels in our society, and it is particularly the case for local government which is the closest level of government to the community. While women still account for less than 30 per cent of representatives in local government, I trust that through this review of the *National Framework for Women in Local Government*, and other work being undertaken by ALGWA, this percentage will grow. The Government has shown a strong commitment to promoting the participation of women in local government through its activities over the last few years including:

- holding the 'Women in Local Government' roundtable in 2001;
- publishing the *National Framework for Women in Local Government* in conjunction with ALGWA, the Office of the Status of Women and the Australian Local Government Association, and distributing it to all local governments throughout Australia;
- forming the Regional Women's Advisory Council to advise the Government on issues of concern to women in regional Australia;
- holding an inquiry into women's representation on regional and rural bodies of influence;
- sponsoring a category in the National Awards for Local Government to increase women's participation in local government;

This review of the *National Framework for Women in Local Government* builds on the aims of the original Framework and will re-invigorate interest in the issues that inhibit the full and equal participation of women in local government. It is important in providing a new direction and guidance for a way forward to increase the level of women representatives and professionals in the local government sector and their effectiveness in carrying out their roles. It will ensure that the Framework continues to be relevant and effective into the future.

The Hon Jim Lloyd MP

Minister for Local Government, Territories and Roads



The Australian Local Government Women's Association's mandate is to ensure that women are well represented in Local Government across Australia.

The Australian Local Government Women's Association of which I have been National President since 2004, has established Branches in South Australia and the Northern Territory in the past 12 months, and combined with Branches in New South Wales, Western Australia, Victoria, Tasmania and Queensland, the Association continues its important role as the peak body representing women's interests in Local Government. The Association represents elected members and women

officers in Local Government across Australia and this has been ALGWA's modus operandi since its inception in 1951.

The Australian Local Government Women's Association in conjunction with the Federal Office of the Status of Women produced the National Framework for Women in Local Government in 2001, following extensive consultation to identify the issues confronting both employed and elected women in the sector.

Since the publication of the National Framework for Women in Local Government five years ago, some progress has been made in overcoming the challenges associated with increasing women's participation and their position in Local Government. However, these changes have not substantially increased the numbers of women in decision making positions in Local Government at either the elected or senior management level.

The ALGWA has maintained its support of the analysis and recommendations of the 2001 National Framework and members of the Association supported a review of the document to ensure its status as an accurate and relevant resource.

We are most grateful for the support received from the Australian Government through the Women's Leadership and Development Programme to ensure this project was carried out with extensive consultation and research.

The review has provided an update on the current standing of women in local government and has identified some achievements and advancements supporting women's participation in the sector and provides potential strategies for the future.

Women are still significantly under-represented in elected member and senior management positions in Australian Local Government and this review provides strategies that can be applied by state and local authorities to ensure women achieve their full potential within the local government sector.

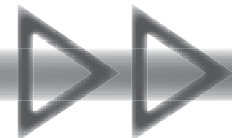
It is imperative that this review becomes reality and the findings implemented across all levels of government - Federal, State, Local Government and the associated organisations such as ALGA (Australian Local Government Association), LGMA (Local Government Managers' Association) and Local Government Associations in all the States and the Territory.

The Australian Local Government Women's Association (ALGWA) presents the 2007 Review of the National Framework for Women in Local Government as "The Way Forward".

Mrs Kaele Way JP

National President

Australian Local Government Women's Association.



1. Introduction

The National Framework for Women in Local Government was prepared and adopted by the Australian Local Government Women's Association (ALGWA) in November 2001. Since then it has been disseminated widely across Australia and a broad range of stakeholders have played their part in pursuing its implementation. Some significant advances have been achieved in strengthening the role of women in local government, but much more needs to be done. This review was undertaken to update the Framework, confirm its status as an accurate and relevant reference and resource, and promote further initiatives to ensure effective implementation.

In many ways, local government is a microcosm of Australian life. As Elisabeth Sexton¹ recently put it: "Australia is run by men. Our political, corporate, cultural, educational, media, scientific and sporting institutions are overwhelmingly male-led." Some forty years after the social movements of the 1960s and 70s, women's participation in education and in the workforce equals that of men (although many women work only part-time), but when it comes to positions of power, progress has been much slower.

The recent report of an inquiry into Women's Representation on Regional and Rural Bodies of Influence² confirmed the need to do more. It stated that: "The women who have responded to this Inquiry are frustrated at the slow pace of change over almost two decades." And speaking at the 2006 ALGWA National Women's Breakfast, Senator Judith Troeth, who chaired the inquiry, commented that: "If the proportion of regional and rural women on government bodies has not

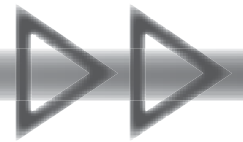
If you are a woman councillor in Australian local government, obtaining adequate information and support at elections is usually no longer a major issue for you.

However, it is still not unusual to:

- Have far too little time to meet all your council, family and employment obligations
- Receive a minimal allowance (sometimes less than the maximum the council could provide), and have to meet a number of essential expenses, such as child care, from your own pocket
- Have decisions made without you outside formal council meetings
- Have sexist remarks directed at you during meetings
- Be bullied during or outside meetings
- Lack adequate training in local government legislation, financial management, media, meeting procedures etc and have the council refuse to provide such training.

¹ Sexton, E. 'Where have our female firebrands gone?' *Sydney Morning Herald*, October 29, 2006, pp 27-33

² Department of Transport and Regional Services. *At the table: Getting the best people and making the right decisions for regional and rural Australia*, Department of Transport and Regional Services, Canberra, 2007.



increased significantly by 2010, governments should consider introducing quotas or targets for government appointments.”

Of course, these concerns are not confined to Australia. In the United Kingdom, for example, the evidence has shown that where equal opportunity for women is seen as optional, it doesn't happen. As a result, a legislated 'Gender Equality Duty' has been introduced that requires public authorities to take action to eliminate sex discrimination and harassment and to promote equality for men and women.

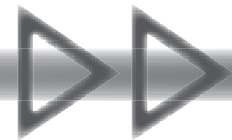
Thus the challenge to increase the participation and position of women in local government in Australia remains both real and demanding. Many of the issues identified in the 2001 Framework have been addressed to some extent, and things generally do seem to be 'getting better'. However, it is far from certain that these improvements and actions will be translated into substantially increased numbers of women in decision-making positions in local government, either at the elected level or in senior management. A flow-on effect from recent advances may still be coming through, hopefully to be realised over the next decade, but without fresh initiatives any impetus gained might be lost.

Feedback from women in local government received through the focus groups and Internet survey conducted for this review shows that there is considerable frustration about the limited progress made. But it also suggests that the time is right to move forward, build on what has been achieved so far, and turn that lingering sense of frustration into positive action.

If you are a woman officer in Australian local government, you will probably no longer need help with job applications, and find that job descriptions are not greatly biased against women, that most interview panels have women on them, and that most councils have policies which are in theory at least family friendly.

However, it is still not unusual to:

- Have restricted opportunities for promotion and career advancement generally
- Experience some bias in job selection processes
- Think the workplace culture of your council needs to change, particularly decision-making styles
- Feel undervalued in the workplace
- Want to be able to work from home but find the scope to do so very limited
- Need more training and confidence building but find suitable courses and support difficult to access.



2. Progress since 2001

The review began with an overview of progress made in implementing the 2001 Framework. This was undertaken using a programme of structured telephone interviews; a review of documentation from various state departments of local government and local government peak bodies, and an update of the statistical data on women in local government.

2.1 Key findings

In summary, the preliminary evaluation found that:

- The National Framework for Women in Local Government is widely acknowledged but in many cases not actively pursued.
- Whilst many policies and other initiatives have been put in place, these steps are yet to be translated into an increased number of women in local government, both at the elected level and in professional positions.
- The percentage of women elected representatives nationally is around 29%.
- 20% of women working in local government are in a professional capacity and this proportion has not changed since 1996.
- The need for diversity and encouraging women to participate in local government is fully acknowledged and supported across all levels of government.
- There is far more information available today than in 2001 to support women in local government and much is available electronically.
- There are many training and information programmes run by State Departments and Associations to assist both elected members and officers.
- The strengthening of Codes of Conduct for councils has created a better environment for women, but codes need to be more actively enforced.
- There have been some improvements in payment of expenses to assist elected members (eg childcare and mobile phones).
- Time constraints are one of the biggest barriers to full participation by women.
- There is a strong need for more encouragement and opportunities for networking amongst women in local government.

The evaluation was followed up with an Internet survey and series of focus groups that together provided well over 700 responses from women across Australia. 'Headlines' from the Internet survey were as follows:

- Over 86% of women councillors identified time demands as a concern, making this the number one issue. 'Balancing public life with family life' was the main problem, experienced by 69% of women councillors.

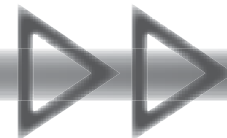
"Having a family, trying to earn an income and being a councillor leaves next to no time for anything!"

"It's not a normal 9-5 job and is very time consuming, but very rewarding at the same time"

"Residents believe everyone gets a huge salary"

"There should be superannuation provisions (for elected representatives) as women historically have little enough super as it is"

"It is really difficult to do a good job as a councillor on the remuneration that we are paid as it means that one has to be independently wealthy or retired to allocate sufficient time to the job"



"Bullying can take many forms: including rushing through 'lightweight' decisions considered soft issues, shutting down debate in an inconsistent way"

"In my council, of the 30 odd council vehicles in the car park, NOT ONE is driven by a woman!"

"EEO programmes are not supported - only tokenism - send a few women to a few women's conferences that should keep them happy. No analysis of average salaries, comparison of education levels...to uncover the discrimination"

"Informal networking is male dominated and after hours (golf, drinking at the pub)"

- The second biggest issue was financial considerations (76% of respondents), with inadequate remuneration being nominated as the number one financial issue for councillors.
- For women officers, the number one issue was the workplace culture of councils, with 65% agreeing that this needs to change.

Detailed results from both the Internet survey and focus groups are presented in Annexure A.

2.2 Examples of action taken

Governments at all levels, together with local government associations and professional institutes have taken a variety of steps to implement the 2001 Framework. Some examples are set out below.

At the federal level

- Funding has been made available through the Women's Leadership and Development Programme Grants to review the National Framework for Women in Local Government.
- The Department of Transport and Regional Services (DOTARS) has included a category for Increasing Women's Participation in the National Awards for Local Government, and also provides some information on this issue in the annual Local Government National Report.
- Local Government Managers Australia (LGMA) supports the initiatives outlined in the Framework and is seeking to encourage more women to assume senior management roles. A committee has been convened to develop a series of strategies to achieve this objective.

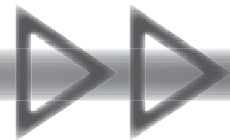
At the state level

A review of the websites of State departments associations responsible for local government showed that there are many publications and programmes available to assist and encourage increased participation by women.

- Western Australia and Queensland have Ministerial Advisory Committees for women in local government.
- Victoria has established a Women's Participation in Local Government Coalition involving nine key organisations. It also has a Victorian Local Government Women's Charter and awards.
- In New South Wales there is *Hands Up for Women in Council* – advice for newly elected women councillors – as well as an information kit on the National Framework.
- The 2004 Local Government Association of NSW conference adopted a charter for women in local government.
- In both NSW and Western Australia there are mentoring programmes for women in local government.
- Queensland has formed the Women in Local Government Strategy Group to identify impediments and strategies to overcome them. An outcome of this group is a series of discussion papers, Focus on Women.

"I have found our CEO and senior staff absolutely terrific and supportive"

"The relationship between councillors and senior staff/CEO needs more explanation"



- Local government associations generally offer a range of programmes for elected representatives, including seminars and information prior to elections and ongoing development programmes for councillors. These programmes are not aimed at women alone but are certainly tailored to encourage diversity of participation in local government.
- The Local Government Associations and LGMA also run various seminars and conferences aimed specifically at encouraging women's participation at senior levels of local government.

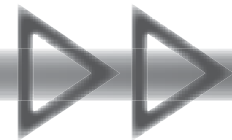
At the local level

Many Councils across Australia have undertaken programmes and activities to advance women in local government, and details can be found on the web sites of the various Local Government Associations and individual Councils.

For example, in 2003 the NSW Department of Local Government surveyed all councils in the state to ascertain awareness of the National Framework and the extent to which councils were adopting or had already implemented the proposed strategies.³

- 143 councils responding were aware of the Framework
35% had considered the Framework as a council (57% of councils in regional areas but only 35% of metropolitan councils).
- 25% had formally endorsed the Framework: 6 metropolitan councils, 18 rural towns and 11 rural shires.
- 16 councils had adopted the Action Plan (21% of the regional towns and cities that responded, 12% of the metropolitan councils 5% of rural shires).

³ Paddon, M. *Paths for women in local government: national figures and local successes*, Centre for Local Government, University of Technology, Sydney, 2005



"Decisions are made behind closed doors, creating a 'boys club' atmosphere"

"Issues are with poor behaviour by Councillors, particularly in Council meetings and in councillor / senior staff workshops. Lack of leadership by the Mayor contributes to this behaviour being unchecked"

"As the only female Executive Director (first one for this organisation) I often feel that male councillors do not take me as seriously as they do of my male colleagues"

"Children and family are a natural part of life, not a liability"

"We need a fair combination of daytime and night-time meetings and provision of child care"

"People recruit to their own image... male to male"

"Female managers are often paid less than male co-ordinators!!"

"More women need to apply for senior positions"

3. The Way Forward

3.1 Capacity, culture and governance

The results of the focus groups and Internet survey suggest that the factors inhibiting increased and more productive participation of women in Australian local government are sub-sets of three broader issues facing the sector: the interwoven strands of capacity, culture and governance. Local government needs to make improvements across the board in these areas if it is to secure a sustainable future. It should address the specific needs of women as part of that process.

Capacity

It is now well documented that local government across Australia faces severe financial problems as well as skills shortages. This applies particularly to smaller rural and regional councils, which are heavily dependent on Federal and/or State grants.

A significant number of the problems facing women in local government flow from this lack of capacity. For example, councillor training has to compete with other funding priorities; many councils simply could not afford adequate councillor allowances; smaller councils have difficulty competing for highly qualified and experienced staff; and so on.

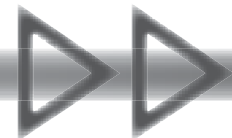
Whilst a detailed examination of the issues involved in local government finance is well beyond the scope of this review, policy makers must understand that additional funding is required not only for infrastructure and service delivery, but also to support other essential improvements in the way councils operate, including increased participation of women. Legislative and policy initiatives are meaningless unless the necessary resources are available.

Culture

As discussed in the introduction, Australian local government is but a microcosm of Australian culture, and is probably no more male dominated than most parts of Australian society. Individual councils as organisations appear to range across a spectrum of being 'women' or 'family' friendly as do other organisations within Australia.

That knowledge should not serve to excuse local government from making changes, but rather should lead us to question the broader nature of Australian society, and to try to place local government at the 'leading edge' of improvements in increasing the participation of women, as this would bring many benefits to both councils and the communities they serve.

For example, making local government an 'employer of choice' for qualified and experienced women could assist greatly in addressing the skills shortages facing many councils. Similarly, the different skills women bring to decision-making and leadership are likely to be of great value in tackling the challenges of long term planning and allocating scarce resources amongst competing priorities. There is little doubt that



many of the features commonly observed in traditional male-dominated politics and decision-making can prove counter-productive in dealing with complex and subtle issues.

Culture also reflects capacity. Historically, Australian local government has operated with shoestring budgets, reflecting the reluctance of colonial property owners and their successors to pay higher rates and charges. This has contributed to elements of local government culture such as poorly remunerated, part-time councillors, and a reluctance to invest in training and 'peripheral' activities such as equal opportunity programmes.

Governance

To address the challenges it faces, local government needs much better governance, and especially strategic leadership. A problem with the current legislation in many jurisdictions in Australia is that it is too managerial and fails to make elected members – and particularly Mayors – responsible for effective leadership and consistent application of the policies they have adopted. Often chief executives and senior managers fail to provide councillors with a full range of clearly articulated policy options, or to exercise necessary leadership within the administration.

Lack of good governance is especially evident in poor enforcement of codes of conduct, equal opportunity plans and anti-discrimination legislation, as evidenced from the focus group and survey results. It seems likely that in several States stronger legislation will be required to bring about improvements in these areas. It seems clear that simply requiring plans to be prepared and codes to be adopted is insufficient.

Tackling the issue of underpaid and inadequately trained and supported councillors is also central to improving governance. Contrary to much of the rhetoric on this issue, by international standards Australia has relatively few elected councillors. Moreover, there have been widespread moves in recent years to amalgamate small (in population) councils, and to cut the number of elected members in larger councils. In metropolitan areas and larger regional centres each councillor may represent 10,000 or more people – and councillors are nearly all part-time and receive little or no administrative or research support. This impacts significantly on their capacity to engage effectively with constituents and to contribute to sound decision-making. Unless resources are available to ensure that councillors can do their job properly, and that suitable candidates are not deterred by excessive costs in money and time, then current policies on councillor numbers are likely to prove highly damaging to the quality of local government – and most definitely to women's participation.

3.2 Compulsory or voluntary?

As indicated above, the evidence collected during this review suggests that, in some areas at least, stronger legislation may prove essential if

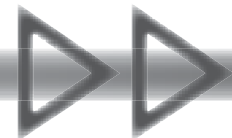
"Distance is by far the most difficult aspect of my involvement in local government"

"Access to any meaningful training is limited by the cost in terms of time and as I am in a small council travel and accommodation costs are an issue"

"I cannot rate mentoring highly enough"

"Every new councillor needs all the above (types of training) and every councillor needs continuing education"

"What I really need is learning how to deal with the 'politics' and 'personalities' of mayors and councillors"



further progress on women's participation is to be achieved. That would be regarded in some quarters as regrettable.

Consideration needs to be given to a range of options for implementing an updated National Framework. These could include:

- Stronger framework legislation (along the lines of the UK Gender Equality Duty)
- Preparation by councils of gender equity action plans (either under legislation or by agreement)
- Reporting implementation of such plans against either agreed or imposed benchmarks
- Published annual reports by councils and State local government departments on progress measured against the National Framework
- A voluntary scheme for councils to measure progress by self-assessment and/or peer review, with formal recognition of achievements and an awards programme.

While there are global trends towards legislation and tighter regulation (such as the Gender Equality Duty), it would seem preferable that councils demonstrate leadership and develop their own methods for changing the culture within their organisations – provided progress can be measured and verified. An outline for a voluntary 'Gender Matters' programme are put forward in section 5.

3.3 National Steering Committee

One of the proposals from the 2001 Framework that has yet to be implemented is the establishment of a National Steering Committee for the advancement of women in local government.

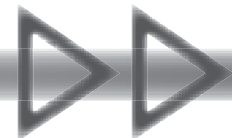
Clearly, many women believe that this strategy is crucial for effective implementation of the National Framework, and will complement a more concerted lobbying effort.

It is envisaged that core members of a steering committee would include:

- ALGWA
- Representatives of the Federal Ministers for Local Government and Women's Issues.
- One or more representatives of the relevant State Ministers
- Australian Local Government Association
- Local Government Managers Association.

The role of the committee would include:

- Providing national leadership for implementation of the National Framework for Women in Local Government
- Monitoring and evaluating implementation of the Framework
- Collecting and reviewing national data on women's participation in local government
- Ensuring that all relevant federal, state and local government organisations are regularly updated on achievements, examples of best practice and issues requiring further attention.



4. A Revised National Framework

The results of the focus groups and Internet survey were considered by a national roundtable convened by ALGWA in Adelaide in February 2007. Discussion at the roundtable led to the following proposals for a modified National Framework for Women in Local Government.

The following major stakeholders are invited to endorse this framework:

- Every local council
- The Federal Minister for Local Government and the Minister assisting the Prime Minister for Women's Issues
- The Australian Local Government Association
- State and Territory Ministers for Local Government
- State local government associations
- Professional institutes.

Statement of commitment

We will work towards increasing the representation of women in local government, both as elected members and as senior managers and professionals. We will undertake ongoing reviews of policies and practices to remove barriers to women's participation and to engender safe, supportive working and decision-making environments that encourage and value a wide range of views.

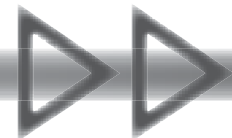
Goal

To increase the participation of women in Australian local government so that councils more accurately reflect their communities.

This will be evidenced by continuing growth in numbers of women Councillors, Mayors, Chief Executives and senior staff in all States and the Northern Territory and in all types of councils.

Objectives

- *To create councils and communities where all participate and actively share their skills, knowledge and experience.*
- *To engender inclusive councils where a full range of opinions is sought, respected and taken into account in decision-making*
- *To ensure effective leadership in pursuing agreed strategies to implement this Framework*
- *To expand training and networking opportunities that will support those strategies.*



5. Potential Strategies for Implementation

5.1 The need for leadership

The number one requirement for effective implementation of the National Framework is for strong leadership at all levels of government and in related organisations. Leaders must demonstrate real commitment to increasing women's participation at senior levels of decision-making and management.

Consistent supportive action on the part of both our female and male leaders is critical to the success of the Framework. The symbolic importance of the personal behaviour of Mayors, senior councillors, chief executives, departmental directors, and the leaders of our local government associations and professional bodies cannot be overstated. By espousing and enacting values that support equality they send powerful explicit and subliminal messages throughout local government and our communities.⁴

Specific actions can take many forms, but a starting point will be personal endorsement of the National Framework for Women in Local Government and taking steps to promote the strategies outlined below.

5.2 Priority strategies

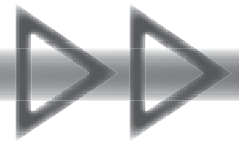
The potential strategies set out below draw on the more comprehensive list included in the 2001 Framework, and also incorporate some new ideas. They should be seen as a relatively short list of priorities, but not one that precludes further efforts to implement other proposals contained in the 2001 Framework.

ALGWA

ALGWA will continue to play a leadership role in implementing the following strategies.

- Establish a National Steering Committee of key stakeholders and enter into memoranda of understanding with those stakeholders
- Seek funding for a full time position to implement the modified National Framework for Women in Local Government
- Seek funding for introduction and ongoing implementation of the proposed 'Gender Matters' programme (see below)
- Develop a comprehensive communication strategy, including the issuing of regular media releases on progress of the National Framework
- Seek financial support for implementation of the modified National Framework and for introduction of the proposed 'Gender Matters' programme
- Continue its mentoring programme and (subject to funding) establish an interactive website with a 'Chat Room' for members to facilitate networking

⁴ Fox, P., Broussine, M. Gender Isn't An Issue! Case Studies of Exemplary Practice in Promoting Gender Equality and Diversity in Local Authorities, Bristol: Bristol Business School, UK, 2005.



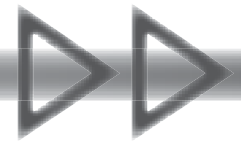
- Seek to have the National Framework and its implementation placed on the agenda of appropriate national and state conferences
- Develop a 'speakers list' of women speakers for use by other groups in planning conferences
- Present material for publication in relevant journals, newsletters and newspapers
- Undertake succession planning to keep ALGWA sustainable.

Federal Government

- Participate in the proposed National Steering Committee
- Include a section on Women in Local Government in the annual Local Government National Report prepared under the Local Government (Financial Assistance) Act 1995
- Include regular progress reports on implementation of the National Framework at meetings of the Local Government and Planning Ministers Council
- Allow tax deductibility and increased limits for local government election expenses
- Support the implementation of the reviewed Framework for Women in Local Government and give consideration of the proposed "Gender Matters" Programme.

State Governments

- Participate in the proposed National Steering Committee
- Support regular reporting on progress through the Local Government and Planning Ministers Council
- Legislate/regulate for improved governance practices in councils through:
 - Regular reviews of local government Acts to ensure they include necessary mandatory provisions
 - Requirements for councillor training in good governance and for adequate and equitable access to training opportunities for all councillors
 - A review of the representational load on councillors taking into consideration currently low levels of remuneration and the financial burden on councillors
 - Introducing 'codes of behaviour' as well as 'codes of conduct' in order to set behavioural boundaries.
- Instigate independent reviews of the remuneration of councillors taking into account the special needs of women
- Provide special financial assistance for rural/regional councils to assist with training and councillor support
- Support a wide range of courses, seminars, travelling road shows, information on websites and information kits on how to become a councillor
- Provide recognition of the service given and skills gained by being a councillor



- Sponsor ALGWA awards in each state
- Ensure that Departments of Local Government:
 - Promote the National Framework for Women in Local Government
 - Collect and publish statistics on the participation of women in local government
 - Provide support and advisory services for councillors
 - Effectively monitor implementation of equal opportunity plans and policies and provide feedback to councils.

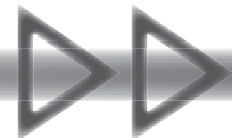
Associations and Professional Institutes

- Participate in the proposed National Steering Committee
- Provide mentoring programmes and networking opportunities for women
- Programme specific conference items on Women in Local Government
- Routinely include women speakers at seminars and conferences
- Initiate a Women Mayors and Chief Executives Forum
- Develop a 'Getting to the Top' programme, specifically for women wanting to become chief executives and directors in councils
- Introduce and promote awards for service for council officers.

Local Councils

It is for local councils themselves to bring about essential changes to culture and governance that will promote and underpin increased participation by women. As discussed in section 3, this can happen voluntarily or through stronger, mandatory provisions in legislation and regulations enforced by State governments. The following strategies assume a primarily voluntary approach.

- Ensure effective implementation of existing (and where necessary, strengthened) legislative provisions and voluntary codes of conduct intended to promote an inclusive organisational culture, equal opportunity and good governance
- Establish personal leadership roles for the Mayor and Chief Executive in bringing about increased women's participation and ensuring appropriate patterns of behaviour in management and decision-making
- Ask women in the organisation – both staff and councillors – what needs to be changed and develop an action plan
- Include specific strategies for increased women's participation in council strategic and corporate plans, using existing frameworks such as the Australian Business Excellence Framework
- Use the checklist at Annexure A to assess progress
- Participate in the proposed 'Gender Matters' programme.



5.3 Proposed 'Gender Matters' programme

The range of measures that local councils can employ to increase women's participation is extremely broad and the best mix will vary from place to place and time to time. It would therefore be helpful to have a 'menu' and 'checklist' of strategies that will help to make a real difference, and that councils could use to assess their progress in achieving the goal and objectives of the National Framework, taking into account local differences.

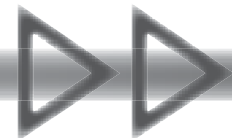
To this end, ALGWA will explore implementation of a 'Gender Matters' programme under which councils could participate in a structured self-assessment and/or peer review arrangement, linked to an awards scheme along the lines of the highly successful *Cities for Climate Protection*® programme run by the International Council for Local Environmental Initiatives (ICLEI).

A checklist of policies and procedures that councils could reasonably be expected to put in place (subject to local fine-tuning) is included as Annexure B. Many of the actions listed are easy to implement, and most councils will have already undertaken a number of the steps proposed. However, it will be important to ensure that effective action is being taken to implement policies and programmes, and that efforts do not fade over time. This is where a regular, formalised process of self-assessment or, preferably, peer review is valuable.

Therefore, subject to resources being available, it is envisaged that a 'Gender Matters' programme would comprise:

- Graded recognition for councils that have put in place some or all of the strategies in the checklist and can demonstrate effective implementation
- Visits to councils by peer review panels organised by ALGWA and/or local government associations/professional institutes to verify progress being made
- Awards for high-achieving councils, either as a separate scheme or as part of an existing awards programme (eg the National Awards for Local Government and various State awards).

A feasibility study is required to assess the viability of such a programme.



Annexure A: What women are saying

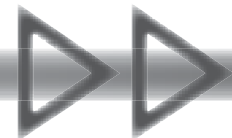
As the central element of the review, ALGWA again sought the views of a broad cross-section of women in local government on their current issues and concerns and the strategies needed to move forward. Opinions were gathered in two ways. The first was an Internet survey accessed through the ALGWA website, which resulted in 602 completed surveys. Of those, around 19% were from elected representatives, and 77% were from council officers. Some 4% were from women who had been an unsuccessful candidate in a local government election.

The second method was qualitative research through a series of focus groups. In total, 130 women attended the focus groups, including 85 councillors, 44 officers and one woman from a state government department. In addition, 6 men attended the Canberra focus group.

The summaries of major issues on pages 3 and 5 of the 2001 National Framework were used as the basis for both the survey and focus group questions, so as to ascertain if there have been any significant changes in the issues, and if there are new solutions or strategies that could be used to address concerns. Findings below are presented using the same headings as the 2001 Framework.

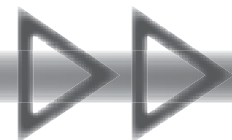
Financial considerations	
Issues raised in 2001	Councillors being treated as employees for taxation purposes, but without superannuation; the need for substantial travel allowances in rural/regional areas; and the lack of childcare allowances.
2007 focus groups	All focus groups stated that financial considerations were still a major issue. It was noted that most of the concerns raised also applied to men.
2007 Internet survey	Over 75% of elected representatives responded that financial considerations were an issue, making this the second most important issue of all those mentioned. Inadequate allowances were the key factor for women councillors.

Time demands	
Issues raised in 2001	Balancing public life with family life; the need to be available to the community so much of the time (sometimes with little administrative support); the time needed for reading and committees; and inflexible meeting times.
2007 focus groups	All focus groups stated that time demands were in fact increasing, and that this was becoming a bigger issue.
2007 Internet survey	Time demands were the number one issue, raised by some 86% of elected representatives. Balancing public life with family life was seen as the greatest time demand impacting on women councillors.



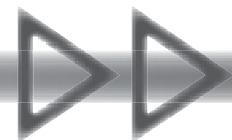
Lack of information and support	
Issues raised in 2001	How to run a campaign and be successfully elected; the cost of the campaign; developing the skills of self promotion without seeming arrogant or out of touch; dealing with voting procedures, preferences etc; and use of networks.
2007 focus groups	The weight given to lack of information and support varied between focus groups. Some took the view that it was no longer an issue as adequate information was now accessible, while others considered that it remained one of the main concerns.
2007 Internet survey	Lack of information and support was only an issue for 27% of elected representatives. For those for whom it was an issue, 'how to run an election campaign' and 'the cost of the election campaign' were the main information and support needs identified.

Need for training and confidence building	
Issues raised in 2001	Media training; public speaking; assertiveness; effectively using meeting and formal procedures; roles and responsibilities; financial management; governance matters; and managing conflict.
2007 focus groups	While acknowledging that there is more training available, all focus groups still regarded this as an important issue. Training opportunities and attitudes to training vary from local government area to local government area, with a general lack of state government legislation around training requirements for councillors. Training opportunities for both women councillors and staff in rural, remote and regional communities are still particularly limited. Good courses are often expensive and then for country people, additional travel and accommodation costs severely limit opportunities. Also, councillor training must compete with other priorities: " Would you choose councillor training or keeping the local pool open?"
2007 Internet survey	Some 57% of women councillors highlighted the need for training and confidence building. Key topics for training were 'local government financial management', followed by 'media training' and 'using meeting and formal procedures'. About 52% of officers also identified training and confidence building as issues. 'Managing conflict' was the type of training most often required, followed by 'local government financial management' and 'governance matters'.



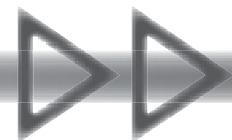
Importance of CEO and senior staff support	
Issues raised in 2001	Out-of-meeting time for briefings; access to staff; administrative assistance; management of staff attitudes; training of councillors on matters of protocol.
2007 focus groups	This remained an issue for most focus groups, but it did vary in importance, sometimes depending on the size of the council and the availability of staff. Organisational culture, and the need for senior management to act as models for positive and healthy behaviour, whilst actively and openly discouraging destructive behaviour, was a key factor. A need for the CEO to be transparent and honest at all times was identified. Lack of enforcement of codes of conduct was mentioned many times.
2007 Internet survey	43% of councillors stated that CEO and senior staff support was an issue for them. 'Training of councillors on matters of protocol' was seen as the greatest need.

Essential requirement for councils to address gender matters	
Issues raised in 2001	Harassment and bullying; sexist remarks in meetings; informal decision making occurring out of meetings; and the need for child care allowances.
2007 focus groups	<p>Focus groups confirmed that gender matters are still an issue, with the lack of enforcement of codes of conduct and lack of adequate punitive action mentioned many times. It was noted that bullying occurs, but is not necessarily gender based, and that it occurs especially in rural councils. Older men, who are seen to be the bullies, are often not aware that they are practising bullying behaviour, and are not taken to task in case those standing up to them become the next to be bullied.</p> <p>Gender issues are sometimes not overt, and vary widely between councils. Smaller local government authorities were seen as being more difficult to change, as they often can't afford training and development opportunities. Gender imbalance at senior levels was seen as an important contributing factor.</p>
2007 Internet survey	<p>Gender matters were raised by about 44% of women councillors. The issue most commonly identified concern was 'informal decision making outside of meetings'. Alarming, for those for whom gender matters are an issue, 48% had experienced harassment and bullying.</p> <p>Gender matters are less of an issue for women officers, being raised by only 35% of survey respondents. Of those, 'informal decision making outside of meetings' was the key concern, identified by 78% of respondents.</p>



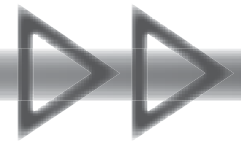
Job selection and promotion	
Issues raised in 2001	Support for the preparation of job applications; lack of female representation on panels; biased job descriptions; lack of acknowledgement of prior and different experience as appropriate for management; tendency to appoint younger people; lack of career structures for human/community services; tenure problems with funded positions; and process and content of performance appraisal.
2007 focus groups	There were varied responses from focus groups, with some saying the situation is not as bad as it was, and others saying that it is, especially at executive levels.
2007 Internet survey	46% of women said that job selection and promotion was an issue for them. 'Lack of career structures' was nominated most frequently as a concern, followed by 'lack of part time work in senior positions', and then 'lack of opportunity to work from home'.

Need for acknowledgement of family responsibilities	
Issues raised in 2001	Balancing work and family life; flexible working hours for managers; provision for home working for people in promotion positions; job sharing for managers and team leaders; child care provision, particularly for night work; and acknowledgement of caring responsibilities for elderly relatives.
2007 focus groups	<p>This was still an issue for many focus groups, although the degree of concern varied. Many councils are now implementing 'family friendly' policies and practices, and this is seen as part of being an 'employer of choice'. Most councils encourage non-gender specific policies and practices in recognition of the family responsibilities of staff, but there is no consideration of the work-life balance issues of councillors. Family friendly policies are not always equally applied across the organisation, ie not always for managers. Family responsibilities are on the rise for both genders: people are working longer and this trend is seen as set to continue. Lack of child care provision for night work and council meetings is a particular problem.</p> <p>Opportunities to work from home would be welcome but there is a perception that this is seen as too hard – there is a "you can't keep an eye on them" mentality. Inconsistency within councils is a factor: some managers don't implement policies.</p> <p>There was a suggestion to call 'family friendly' something else such as 'socially' friendly or 'life balance'.</p>
2007 Internet survey	While 66% of women responded that family friendly policies are being implemented in their workplaces, 48% said that they would like opportunities to work from home.



Cultural change	
Issues raised in 2001	Workplace culture and decision-making styles; language and communication patterns; the need to undertake climate surveys and organisational development programmes to make the work situation constructive for all employees; anti-harassment policies and understanding of their responsibilities by all managers; and leadership by the CEO/General Manager in the development and promotion of skilled women into decision-making positions (both formal management positions and positions of influence).
2007 focus groups	Cultural change was seen by most focus groups as the biggest issue, one that underpins all the others. Cultural change was seen as critical for the retention of both female staff and elected members. However, one group stated that women need to see themselves as equal and be confident in this belief. They should stop “harping on old female issues” and avoid being stereotyped. It was felt by this group that there is adequate legislation to prevent discrimination and that this should be used. It was argued that female CEOs can make a positive difference and are now much better accepted – there is evidence of this in some places. However, political culture demands that women councillors are expected to conform to prevailing male-dominated behaviour.
2007 Internet survey	This was the biggest issue for women staff members, with 65% stating that the workplace culture of their organisation needs to change to be more inclusive of women. Cultural practices which women found most problematic were ‘decision making styles’ and ‘being undervalued in the workplace’.

Regional requirements	
Issues raised in 2001	The tyranny of distance and the need to make training and networking opportunities available in regional locations; and encouraging groups of neighbouring councils to provide acting positions to enable skill development, and to consider joint mentoring schemes.
2007 focus groups	This was still seen to be an issue by the focus groups, particularly in areas such as Western Australia where there are many very small and isolated councils which suffer severe financial limitations (training, travel costs, remuneration etc).
2007 Internet survey	The majority of women (59%) who work in a regional or rural area did not find distance to be an issue. Amongst those for whom it was an issue, ‘training and networking at the regional level’ and ‘joint council mentoring schemes’ were identified as strategies that would help to diminish the ‘tyranny of distance’.



Annexure B: Draft 'Gender Matters' Checklist

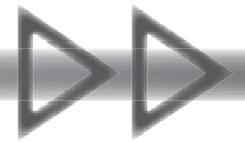
The list of questions below is presented as a starting point for discussion about what could be included in a self-assessment or peer review system that would encourage and assist councils to do more to promote gender equity. Research and surveys conducted for this review suggest that without a more rigorous approach based on such a framework progress will continue to be slower than women have a right to expect.

Strategies for both women staff members and councillors

- ☐ Has council adopted the goals and objectives of the National Framework for Women in Local Government and clearly allocated responsibilities for their implementation?
- ☐ Is a suitable Code of Conduct in place? Is it actively enforced and monitored, with disciplinary procedures in place, to bring respect and dignity to council meetings?
- ☐ Has council adopted an effective EEO action plan? Is it regularly reviewed and updated as required? Are outcomes measured and reported?
- ☐ Are mentoring programmes available for women councillors and staff?
- ☐ Do the Mayor and General Manager actively espouse and enact values of supporting equality?
- ☐ Has council taken steps to discourage informal decision making outside meetings that excludes minority views?
- ☐ Are council and other council-related meetings timed to finish by 11pm?
- ☐ Does council report on diversity at the senior officer and elected member levels?
- ☐ Is there real equal access to training opportunities for women officers and councillors?

Strategies for women councillors

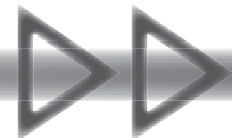
- ☐ (where applicable) Has council set the level of the elected members allowance at the top of the range?
- ☐ Does council provide the maximum possible reimbursement of councillor expenses including child care and travel allowances?
- ☐ Does council provide appropriate support for councillors, such as equipment (computers, mobile phones), administrative support to establish a home office, councillor office space at the council administration centre etc?
- ☐ Does council provide cab-charge vouchers or other adequate transport arrangements for councillors travelling at night?
- ☐ Does council's website provide information on how to become a councillor, or link to another informative website?
- ☐ Has council formulated and adopted position descriptions for councillors?



- ☐ Is there a comprehensive induction programme for all new councillors?
- ☐ Is there a 'buddy' system for new councillors to learn from more experienced colleagues?
- ☐ Is there a training plan for all councillors and is it adequately resourced?
- ☐ Is there an effective process for dealing with bullying and harassment complaints by elected members?

Strategies for women staff members

- ☐ Does council actively implement a home-based work policy? What proportion of staff at all levels regularly work from home as an agreed part of their employment conditions?
- ☐ Does council offer flexible working hours at the workplace? What proportion of staff at all levels take advantage of that system?
- ☐ Has council designated a senior staff person as holding the 'women's portfolio' within council?
- ☐ Are women included in all job selection panels?
- ☐ Are there priority childcare places for staff in council child care centres and family day care schemes?
- ☐ What support is provided for women returning from maternity leave?
- ☐ To what extent can women access higher duties opportunities?

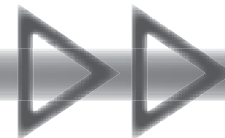


Acknowledgements

The Australian Local Government Women's Association gratefully acknowledges those who participated in the Review of the National Framework for Women in Local Government.

Mrs Kaele Way JP	National President ALGWA
Cr Janet Davidson JP	City of Perth, National Vice President ALGWA
Cr Helen Scott JP	Southern Midlands Council Tasmania, National Secretary ALGWA
Cr Jean Wise	Yarriambiack Shire Victoria, National Treasurer ALGWA
Darriea Turley	New South Wales ALGWA, National Executive.
Fiona Barr	South Australian ALGWA, National delegate
Cr Judy Peters	President ALGWA Queensland, Branch National delegate
Joan Walters	ALGWA Tasmania, Branch President
Anne McCallister	ALGWA Western Australia, Branch President
Cr Susan Page	ALGWA New South Wales, Branch President
Cr Jenny Dale	ALGWA Victoria, Branch President
Kristina Barnett	ALGWA South Australia, Branch President
Ald. Helen Galton	ALGWA Northern Territory, Branch President
Sue Davy	Local Government Association of Northern Territory
Mayor Felicity Ann Lewis	City of Marion, South Australia
Cr Ann Bennison	Brisbane City Council, Queensland
Peggy Stevenson	Latrobe City Council, Victoria
Sandi Starr	City of Charles Sturt, South Australia
Cr Mary Walsh OAM	Bundaberg City Council, Queensland
Julie Griffiths	ALGWA New South Wales
Jo Manuel	ALGWA South Australia
Mayor Miriam Smith	City of Tea Tree Gully, South Australia
Julie Kerr	Local Government Managers Association, South Australia
Wendy Campana	Local Government Association of South Australia

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 Australian Local Government Association



Local Government Association of the Northern Territory
Local Government Association of Western Australia
Local Government Managers Association
Local Government Association of South Australia
Local Government and Shires Association of New South Wales

Associate Professor Graham Sansom
Director UTS Centre for Local Government

Simone Schwarz
Program Manager UTS Centre for Local Government

Mitchell Shire Council, Victoria
City of Greater Bendigo, Victoria
Mildura Rural City Council, Victoria
City of Onkaparinga City Council, South Australia
City of Marion, South Australia



The Way Forward
The Review of the National Framework for Women in Local Government