

STATE OF WOMEN IN URBAN LOCAL GOVERNMENT AUSTRALIA

1. BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE COUNTRY

1.1 Socio-economic profile

Demography

Geography and climate

Australia is an island continent with a land area of about 7,692,030 sq. kms stretching 4,000 kms from its most easterly to its most westerly point, and 3,680 kms from its most northerly to its most southerly point. It is the lowest, flattest and, apart from Antarctica, the driest of the continents, with a wide range of climatic zones from the tropical regions of the north, through the arid expanses of the interior, to the temperate regions of the south. 80 per cent of the landmass of Australia has a median rainfall less than 600 mm per year and 50 per cent less than 300 mm with the average being 450 mm. Depending on the season, temperatures range from above 50°C to well below zero. However extreme minimum temperatures are not as low as those in other continents, probably due to the absence of extensive mountain masses and the large expanse of relatively warm surrounding oceans. Australia experiences many of nature's more extreme phenomena, particularly droughts, floods, tropical cyclones, severe storms and bushfires. Prolonged droughts combined with the arid nature of much of the continent have had a significant impact on the economy from time to time, particularly in regard to agricultural industries.¹

Economic development

Australia's economic development has been one of contrast and change. Traditionally its economy relied heavily on agricultural activities and manufacturing including mining, however the past 20 years have seen a decline in goods-producing industries and a rise in service industries. This has been largely as a result of macro-economic reform, which has seen, amongst other factors, out-sourcing of activities, which were previously carried out in-house. Australia's economy is growing strongly and it has a per capita Gross Domestic Product of \$29, 883.²

Population

At the most recent census (1996), Australia's population was 18.3 million, with women comprising 50.26 per cent, and since the census the population is estimated to have risen to 19.02 million. Australia's population is aging, due largely to low and declining fertility, and population projections are for a declining population growth due both to low fertility and a consequent increase in deaths in a rapidly aging population.

Table 1: Australia's resident population data – 1999

Population Dec 1999 ¹		Level of Urbanization (As % of total population)	GDP per capita
Female	Male		
9526.3	9498.1	88%	29,883 (1998) ²

Source: ¹ Estimated Resident Population, December, 1999. Australian Bureau of Statistics

² Australian Bureau of Statistics, Australian National Accounts, 5204.0

Whilst in 1911 43 per cent of Australians lived in rural areas, Australians are now highly urbanized with 88 per cent living in cities and towns. Most people live in the east and southeast coastal regions or in a smaller coastal region in the southwest of the continent.³ 40 per cent of the total population live in Sydney and Melbourne and population growth in the five State capital cities reflects the growing urbanization of the people. The population of each city has grown significantly since 1971, however the growth of Perth (74.3 per cent) and Brisbane (63.6 per cent) in that period has far outstripped that of the other cities.

Table 2: Growth of population in Australia's State capital cities

Year	Population of Five Largest Cities				
	Sydney	Melbourne	Brisbane	Perth	Adelaide
1971	2 935.4	2 503.0	869,579	703,199	842,693
1981	3 279.5	2 806.3	1 096.2	922,040	954,300
1990	3 656.5	3 080.9	1 301.7	1 193.1	1 049.8
1996	3 500.0	3 000.0	1 300.0	1 100.0	1 000.0
1998	3 986.7	3 197.9	1 422.8	1 225.6	1 068.6

Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics, Australian Bureau of Statistics; estimated resident population

Cultural diversity

A significant feature of Australia's population is its cultural diversity, reflecting the indigenous people who lived here prior to settlement, the British colonists and early migrants, and strong post-war immigration programs. At the 1996 Census, 3.9 million people had been born overseas in one of over 200 countries. A further 3.8 million had one or both parents born overseas. While English is the major language, 282 major languages are spoken, including 170 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages, with 2.6 million people speaking a language other than English at home. 92 religious denominations were also identified in the Census, reflecting the cultural diversity of the people.

The First Australians

Estimates of the Aboriginal population when European settlers first arrived on Australian soil range from 300,000 to 1,400,000 divided into hundreds of tribes spread around the coast and across the vast Centre. Whatever the size of the indigenous population before European settlement, it declined dramatically under the impact of new diseases, repressive and often brutal treatment, dispossession, and social and cultural disruption and disintegration.⁴ The decline of the indigenous population continued well into the twentieth century. However over the past 20 years the number of people identifying as being of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander⁵

origin has increased, with 352,970 recorded in the 1996 census. This has been a result of many factors such as changing social attitudes, political developments, a broader definition of indigenous origin and improved statistical coverage. Despite improvements, Indigenous people in Australia are still bearing the legacy of 200 years of settlement and dispossession, and issues of Indigenous health, poverty, education, employment, land rights and reconciliation are unresolved.

Queensland has the highest number of indigenous people, closely followed by New South Wales. Contrary to the national trends, the indigenous population is very young with 40% aged under 15, and 3% aged over 65. This is due largely to high fertility rates and high death rates. In 1996, life expectancy for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people at birth was about 57 years for males and 66 years for females compared to 75.6 for men and 81.3 for women for the total population. While most of the population is concentrated along the east, a southeast and southwest coast, the indigenous population is much more widely spread. About 90% live in areas covering 25% of the continent, with 3.1% living in the very remote areas.

Mortality and Fertility

Since the first half of this century, Australians have been having smaller families. In 1924 the total fertility rate was 3.0 and falling and despite an increase during and after World War 2, it fell rapidly to 2.9 babies per woman by 1966, and by 1997 was well below replacement level at 1.78.⁶ This trend has been facilitated by a range of factors including: changing social attitudes; women's participation in education and the work force; and the availability of the contraceptive pill and abortions. In addition, women are starting child bearing later in life. In 1977, women aged 26 years had the most births, with 8.2 per cent of all births occurring at this age. By 1997 29-year-old women had the most births, with 7.1 per cent of all births. Over the same period the proportion of children born to teenage mothers decreased from 9.0 per cent in 1977 to 4.9 per cent in 1997 whilst the proportion born to women aged 40 years and above increased from 0.9 per cent to 2.1 per cent.

Table 3: Data on mortality and fertility

Year	Infant Mortality	Under 5 Mortality	Maternal Mortality	Number of Children per Woman (Total Fertility Rate)
1960	20.2	5638	121	3.45
1970	17.9	5619	40	2.86
1980	10.7		*	1.9
1994	5.9	1843	*	1.85

Source: Official yearbook of the Commonwealth of Australia 1960, 1973, 1983. 1994

*No statistics taken as maternal rates have fallen so low.

Life expectancy has been increasing for both women and men since the 1970s, and in 1997 was estimated to be 81.3 for women and 75.6 for men at birth.⁷ Whilst women on average experience a life expectancy about five to six years longer than males, this is substantially lower than the 7 years experienced in the 1970s. The increases in life expectancy for both genders and the narrowing of the gap between women's and men's life expectancy are due to a combination of factors including lower infant mortality, fewer deaths among young adult men from motor vehicle accidents and fewer deaths among older men from heart disease due to

behavioural changes. Infant and child mortality has decreased steadily over the past 20 years.

Women's participation in education

School attendance is compulsory throughout Australia between the ages of 6 and 15 years (16 years in Tasmania) and most children start primary school at about five years of age. States and Territories have 13 years of schooling (except Queensland and Western Australia, which have 12). While the final two years of schooling are not compulsory, in 1998 some 85 per cent of students remained at school until Year 11 and 72 per cent remained until Year 12. Girls are more likely to complete their schooling than boys, and the 1998 Year 12 retention rate comprised a 78 per cent rate for girls and a 66 per cent rate for boys. This difference appears to reflect the greater opportunities and tendency for boys to enter trade apprenticeships and traineeships before Year 12.⁸

In 1998, overall more men than women had attained a post-school qualification. However in the 15-24 age group the situation was reversed with 24 per cent of younger women compared to 20 per cent of younger men doing so. In regard to undergraduate degrees and associate diplomas, in all age groups more women had attained qualifications than men, and women in the 15-24 (8 per cent) and 25-34 (21 per cent) age groups were more likely than men (5 per cent and 18 per cent respectively) to have attained a bachelor degree or higher.⁹

Table 4: Australian women in education

	Levels of Education Enrolment Levels							
	Primary		Secondary		TAFE ¹		Tertiary	
	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male
1986	820,558	868,100	639,370	650,087	415,560	471,119	190,120	199,848
1990	858,275	907,226	634,870	641,286	n.a.	n.a.	255,655	229,420
1998	909,801	960,051	661,631	667,172	n.a.	n.a.	367,479	304,374

Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics, Australian Year Books 1986, 1990 and 1998

¹ The technical education system changed significantly in the 1980s and the data collected does not enable analysis of TAFE enrolments.

Women's participation in the labour force

Women's participation in the labour force has increased steadily over the past 20 years, increasing from 2.34 million in 1980 to 3.9 million or 45 per cent of the labour force in 2000.¹⁰ The participation rate of women varies with age, reflecting in part women's caring responsibilities.¹¹ Average weekly earnings for women have increased from 81 per cent of male average weekly earnings in 1980 to 84 per cent in 2000, however these figures probably overstate the position for women. They include overtime payments and they reflect the earnings of people covered by award, workplace or enterprise bargaining agreements, not those who operate outside these agreements and awards. Out-workers, who receive piece rates for work, are predominantly women from non-English speaking backgrounds, and are excluded from these figures. In addition, about 48 per cent of women in the labour force in 2000 were employed part-time, compared to 12 per cent of men. Part-time employment may well suit many women, but as employment growth is largely in part-time jobs and in service industries this may well not reflect the work aspirations of

women. Anecdotal evidence suggests that the gap between women's and men's earnings is now growing wider with changes effected by labour market and industrial relations reforms introduced since 1996. Similarly the high cost of child-care is considered by many to be increasingly a deterrent to women entering the labour force. The next few years may well clarify whether the past improvements for women in this aspect of their lives continue to be sustained.

Table 5: Australian women in the labour force

	Percentage of Labour Force	Participation Rate of Women in Labour Force	Women's share of male average weekly earnings
1980	36.7%	42.9%	81%
1990	41%	51.8%	83%
2000	43.5%	54.9%	84%

Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics, 6291.0.40 Participation rate - Australia

1.2 Politics and governance¹²

Australia is a constitutional monarchy with a monarch, represented by a governor general, as its head of state. It is a federation of six States, each of which retains its own constitution, government and laws. The six States, together with two territories, cover the entire continent. Australia currently has 1 national government, 8 state/territory governments and 683 local governments (253 urban local governments), the members of which are all elected. It has a parliamentary, not a presidential, form of government.

Spheres of government

The **National government** is drawn from the national Parliament, from members of the political party or parties which hold the majority of seats after an election. It consists of a Prime Minister, Ministers, and government members of the bi-cameral Parliament. A cabinet of government Ministers is responsible for executive decision-making and for the public service departments, numerous statutory authorities, boards and commissions. **State governments** are similar. They consist of a Premier, Ministers and government members of Parliaments, some of whom form a Cabinet. Each State has a bi-cameral Parliament with the exception of Queensland, Northern Territory and the Australian Capital Territory, which are unicameral. Their administrative systems reflect the national structure. **Local government** in Australia is not recognized in the national constitution and local governments are creatures of their respective State Parliaments. They are headed up by a Mayor or President, who may be elected either directly by the people or by the other elected representatives. A popularly elected Mayor or President normally serves for the full term of the council whilst councillor elections of a Mayor or President occur annually. A Chief Executive Officer (CEO) or General Manager is appointed by, and answerable to, the Council and is responsible for the administrative operations of the councils.

Australians elect 224 national politicians, 596 state/territory politicians and 6,637 local politicians. Politicians in the lower houses in the national and state/territory parliaments represent geographic electorates, while those in upper houses represent a whole-of-state constituency. Communities elect their own local government representatives. Elections take place every three years for the

Commonwealth Government, although this term is not fixed and they can be held more frequently at the government's whim. Generally State elections are held every four years at a fixed date. Elections for local government vary between states but are generally held every 3 or 4 years and on a fixed date, although in Tasmania, for example, the term is four years with elections for half of the representatives every 2 years. Voting is compulsory in all Commonwealth and State elections, however in regard to local government elections, it is compulsory in some states such as New South Wales but not in others such as Western Australia, where voting is optional and also by postal ballot.

Commonwealth and State Department employees are generally employed through a process of open competition between suitably qualified people, although the heads of Departments are generally appointed by the Government and are directly responsible to it. Members of the judiciary and heads of statutory authorities, boards and commissions are appointed by the government. Local government staff are also generally employed through a process of open competition.

Political parties

Australia has many political parties, however only four have any real prospect of regularly gaining parliamentary places. The Australian Labour Party and the Liberal Party dominate politics. Each has a small membership base, however people generally identify strongly with one or other of these parties and this pattern of party representation is entrenched in the national and state/territory spheres. Of the smaller parties, the Australian Democrats and National Party each command a relatively small following, although the latter has been fairly successful in participating in government through coalition with the Liberals. To date the Democrats have been successful in winning seats in the Senate. A sign of some disaffection with the major parties was the emergence in the late 1990s of Pauline Hanson's One Nation Party, which gained 11 seats in the Queensland parliament and 1 seat in the upper house of both the New South Wales and the Commonwealth parliaments.

While political parties do operate in local government, independent politicians play a much stronger role. In the major metropolitan areas such as Brisbane City and some large Regional cities, political parties do field candidates with, normally, one party or the other in power. However many candidates stand and are elected as independents, and many people consider that party politics are inappropriate in local government

Electoral systems

There are no term or age limits for elected representatives in Australia. All Australian citizens aged 18 years or over are eligible to vote at all elections, however the electoral systems under which they vote vary. In the Federal and State spheres election for lower house seats is generally by a preferential system, and upper house seats by proportional representation which attempts to relate the allocation of seats as closely as possible to the distribution of votes, but this is not always the case.

Local government electoral systems vary. In some local governments election is by a ward-based system and in others a single electorate system. The

election of councillors is by a range of systems, including first past the post, preferential and proportional preferential.

1.3 Participation and representation of women in politics

Women as voters

The vote for women occurred at different times across Australia. The first State to grant women the right to vote was South Australia in 1895, and the last was Victoria in 1908. In 1902 the new Commonwealth parliament granted the right to vote in federal elections, and the right to stand for election to parliament, to male and female British subjects over 21 years of age. Australia was the first country to grant both these rights to women nationally. This did not include Aboriginal women who, with Aboriginal men, were only granted the right to vote in 1962 and even then enrolling to vote, for Aboriginal people, was voluntary although if they enrolled, it was compulsory to vote. The right to vote for local government elections was consequential to the right to vote in State elections. The right to stand for election was granted later than the right to vote, state by state, and was effective in all states by the early 1920s.¹³

In Australia it is no longer compulsory to indicate your gender on the electoral roll¹⁴ so data on voting patterns by gender are not available. However voting itself is compulsory for all citizens over the age of 18 years in most elections, and consequently Australia has a very high voter turn out. It hovers between 93 per cent and 95 per cent for Federal and State/Territory elections and at the last Federal election in 1998 it was 95 per cent.¹⁵ There is no reason to assume that the voter turn out of women would be different to that of men.

Women as elected representatives

Since the 1970s women have been increasing their representation in our parliaments, however this representation is still small and disproportionate to the representation of women in the population. In local government, by 1960 only 100 women were councillors, but by 1994 20.5 per cent of councillors were women.¹⁶

In 2000 there are more women than ever before in all our governments, as is clear from Table 6. Women are also nominating for parliament in increasing numbers. For example, in the 1993 federal election, 84 women nominated for the Senate and 182 for the House of Representatives, whereas at the most recent election in 1998 the number had increased to 101 and 228 respectively.¹⁷ Nevertheless men who nominate for either house are much more likely to be elected than women, largely as a result of the candidate endorsement decisions of the political parties and, in the case of the lower house, the single member electoral system. This system is widely considered to be a major impediment to adequate representation by women, and a form of indirect discrimination against women in public life.¹⁸

During the 1990s there were various proposals to impose more equitable 'quotas', both within political party structures and parliaments, however with one exception¹⁹ these have not been taken any further. Women are often the most vocal opponents of what some see as a move away from a traditional 'merit-based' system, yet it is clear that political and electoral systems in Australia are inherently

inequitable delivering governments which are not representative of their electorates.²⁰

Table 6: Women elected representatives in government in Australia

Year	National Parliament ¹				State/Provincial Parliaments ²				Local Government ³	
	Upper House		Lower House		Upper House		Lower House		Representatives	
	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male
1960	5	55	0	124	2	161	1	361	100	n.a
1970	3	57	0	125	8	157	4	374	250	n.a
1980	6	58	3	122	20	159	16	402	798	n.a
1990	18	58	10	138	29	116	45	422	n.a	n.a
2000	22 (28.9%)	54	34 (23%)	114	37 (23.6%)	120	94 (21.4%)	345	1745 (26.3%)	4992

Source: ¹ and ² unpublished data collected by the Australian Parliamentary Library - Composition of Australian Parliaments by Party and Gender as at 18 April 2000

³ Unpublished data collected from each State's Local Government Association

Women in federal and state government leadership positions

Women's progress into leadership positions in government is poorly documented at the local government level and has been slow at the federal and state level. The situation is better in 2000 than in the past, with 29 women in the ministries of the federal and state governments. However women still hold significantly fewer ministerial positions than their proportion of seats would warrant at the federal level.

Women on federal and state government boards and committees

Women's representation in federal and state government committees and boards has increased, and both the Commonwealth and most State and Territory Governments actively promote increased representation by maintaining registers of women who are interested in participating. As a result, women filled 30.9 per cent of Commonwealth board positions in 1999 compared to 30.5 per cent in 1995²¹. The situation at the State level varies. For example, in 2000 28.6 per cent of NSW government board and committee members are women, and in 1999, on average 35 per cent of new appointments were women.²² In Western Australia, in March 2000, 27.6 per cent are women compared to 18.4 per cent in 1996.²³ The trend is towards increased participation, however the increase is slow. The effectiveness of the registers is questionable as according to Burton²⁴ they are rarely used because the women self-register and are not considered to have gone through the correct 'screening process'. Whilst public sector representation is increasing, in contrast, in 2000 across Australia, only 8.3 per cent of private sector board members are women. 10.3 per cent of non-executive directors are women and the number of executive directors remains unchanged from 1998 at 1.3 per cent.²⁵ Whilst these figures are low, Burton's paper points out that the number of women participating on boards is actually much lower, because a small number of women occupy a high number of board seats, sitting on more than one board.

Table 7: Women in executive positions in government in Australia

Year	Number and Percent of Women in the Federal Ministry ^{1,2}		Number and Percent of Women in State Ministries ²		Number and Percent of Women Mayors ³	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
1960	0		1	1.5%	n.a.	n.a.
1970	1	3.7%	1	1.3%*	n.a.	
1980	1	3.7%	3	3%	n.a.	n.a.
1990	2	6.7%	18	15.8%	n.a.	n.a.
2000	4	13.3%	25	22.3 %	122	15%

¹Includes 2 Assistant Ministers

Source:² Department of the Parliamentary Library, Information and Research Services, Canberra, Unpublished data

³ Statistics supplied by state Local Government Associations and/or Departments of Local Government

Women in leadership positions in local government

A national survey of local government in 1997²⁶ found that 15 per cent of Mayors across Australia were women as is still the case in 2000. Whilst there are many more women in leadership positions in local government than in the federal and state government, it is still significantly lower than their representation in local government. The Purdon report concluded that women were more likely to be Mayors in the metropolitan areas and least likely in rural areas, and in areas with larger populations rather than medium or smaller populations. Women were also more likely to be Mayors in a single electorate rather than in a ward-based electorate.

Some local governments do not have a committee system whereas others have a substantial number of committees, however no data is currently available in an aggregated form on either the number of committees or their composition. The Purdon Report (1997) found that 41 per cent of the local governments participating in the survey did not have committees, however the remaining 329 had 1750 or an average of 5.5 per local government. 18 per cent of those committees were chaired by women, however it is of note that 55 per cent of the local governments with a committee system had no committees chaired by a woman.²⁷

Women in the public service

Public sector employment has declined significantly in the past decade with the corporatization and privatization of many public sector organizations and services. In 1999 there were 976,148 people in the federal and state public services, of which 55 per cent were women. The highest rate of women's employment was in Tasmania with 66.2 per cent and the lowest in the Australian Public Service (Federal) with 48.3 per cent. There were 29,215 senior employees in the public service in 1999 and 17 per cent of those, or 5,022 were women. Again, this varied across the 7 services and the Australian Capital Territory had the highest proportion (34 per cent) followed by the Australian Public Service (30.1 per cent), with Queensland having the lowest proportion (18 per cent). Notably, women's

representation in senior positions is increasing proportionately at the same time as the sector is decreasing, however women are still over-represented at the lower levels and under-represented at the professional and senior levels.

Table 7: Women in Executive positions in the public service

Position	Federal Public Service ¹		State/Territory Public Services ²		Local Government ³	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
CEO			44	13.3%	35	5.1%
Senior management	358	24.1%	4,664	16.8%	n.a.	n.a.

Source: ¹ Public Service Merit Protection Agency, 1999 Annual Report

² State Government Departments responsible for equity issues in the public service.

³ Collected from a variety of sources including Local Government and Shires Association, Departments of Local Government, Departments of Women and the Australian Local Government Guide, July-November 2000.

2. WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION IN URBAN LOCAL GOVERNANCE

2.1 Women's participation in urban local government

Legislative impacts on women's participation in urban local government

There are no Commonwealth or state laws, which actively promote the participation of women in urban local government. The Australian Government is a signatory to the United Nations Convention for the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women, however a matter of concern in Australia is that it has not signed the optional protocol which would enable women to appeal to the United Nations for infringements of that Convention. The federal Affirmative Action (Equal Employment Opportunity for Women) Act of 1986 and similar state legislation prohibits discrimination against women in the workplace, and EEO legislation applies to employees of all local governments, and to elected representatives in carrying out their duties. One limitation is that taking action can be difficult and costly.

With reform of the various state Local Government Acts in the 1990s local governments are now required to produce draft annual management plans, which are advertised for public comment, and to consider any submissions from members of the public in approving the final plans. There are statutory requirements for consultation with the community over a variety of issues, however apart from placing various documents on public display, soliciting submissions and taking community comments into consideration, the method of consultation is determined by each local government and varies from state to state and within states. Some local governments have well-defined consultation policies which encourage community participation through a wide range of methods. For example, some local governments have public access sessions at local government meetings²⁸, public question time²⁹, precinct committees, policy juries, on-site meetings with developers and members of the community on specific developments which may have significant objections from community members, community forums, public meetings, referenda or polls and so on. Local governments are generally required to produce

social plans which take into account the needs of all people within their communities, and in this process are expected to work and consult with women and other groups.

There is little evidence to suggest that local government as an entity takes special measures to solicit women's opinions, concerns or views or consider them in planning and development. Individual local governments may well institute policies and practices to ensure that women can participate equally in both formal and informal meetings and forums, however if so, these are not documented in a way which is readily accessible. In Victoria a women's charter has been developed and circulated to all local governments, however no information is yet available on the number of local governments which have adopted the charter³⁰. As each local government determines its own policies beyond the statutory requirements, ascertaining this information was not possible within the constraints of the project. Whilst there is no legislation specifically promoting women's participation, on the other hand there are no legal constraints that prevent women from participating in urban local government either formally or informally at meetings, committees and forums.

Informal constraints on women's participation

A number of factors in Australia can be a deterrent to women seeking to participate in, or voice their opinions at, local government committees, meetings and forums. Timing can be a deterrent, particularly in the context of women with dependent children. Unless local governments make provision for child care, the cost of baby sitting can be a disincentive, particularly for sole parents, who in 1998 comprised 21.6 per cent of families with children. This is significant for women, as 90 per cent of sole parents with dependent children in 1999 were women.³¹

If the meetings and forums are in the evenings they often conflict with women's domestic responsibilities. Distance and the lack of public transport can be a disincentive for some women, particularly in country towns. Anecdotal evidence suggests that evening meetings are often a disincentive for older women who can be fearful of going out in the evenings alone. The structure of meetings and forums, and their facilitation, can either encourage or discourage participation by women. Men can often dominate these meetings and forums, and anecdotal evidence again suggests that when women attend some can either defer to the men present or lack the confidence to stand up and speak out.

There is evidence to suggest that members of the community are more likely to participate in local government issues now than twenty years ago, however generally only a small proportion of community members do so. When they do, it is often on specific issues, which are directly relevant to the people concerned. The evidence suggests that participation can be seen as tokenistic and that involvement in decision-making is both wanted and required if more people, including women, are to become involved in local government issues.

Initiatives to increase women's participation

The only organization in the past 30 years, which has had as its aim increasing the participation of women in politics and providing information to voters, is the Women's Electoral Lobby (WEL). WEL is a feminist political organization founded in 1972 as a non-sectarian and non-party-political women's political lobby. It

has branches in every State and Territory, as well as in many regions. When it was founded WEL members surveyed all candidates for the 1972 federal election on their attitudes to feminist issues. They then published the results so that everyone, and in particular women, could assess their candidates. However since then it has developed into a lobby organization for all Australian women with the stated aims of achieving social, economic, educational, political, and sexual equality for women. WEL lobbies politicians, unions, employers, educationalists, and others on behalf of women, and seeks to change social attitudes, and practices, which discriminate against women³². It has not repeated a national survey such as that carried out in 1972, although in some locations women do try to carry out interviews with local candidates. Federal government funding for this organization was suspended in 1999, however the organization is resourced by volunteers. WEL has not been formally involved in either campaigns to increase women's participation in local government or informing women voters in local government elections except through their annual conferences. No political parties, NGOs or women's associations are known to have provided information to women voters recently, however women voters are now a major target for information in federal and state election campaigns. This has not carried through systematically to local government elections.

Anecdotal information demonstrates that individual women, groups of local women and women councillors have encouraged women to participate in local government committees, meetings and forums, however there is no recorded information on these initiatives.

2.2 Gender sensitizing of urban local government

The federal Affirmative Action (Equal Employment Opportunity for Women) Act was passed in 1986, State EEO legislation generally followed with this legislation applying to staff in local government. Local government reform in the 1990s means that local governments are required to have an EEO policy in place, however there is no real mechanism for monitoring either the quality or the effectiveness of these policies. Many women see EEO legislation as ineffective and in the case of some local governments, either ignored or given lip service.

Where local governments are required to prepare a Social Plan, gender disaggregated data is used and it may well be that individual local governments use disaggregated data for policy or program formulation. This is more likely to be the case in larger local governments, which have more staff resources, however there is no public record of this information. No doubt local governments have become more aware of women's needs and issues over the past 20 years. Comments from women involved in local government at the elected, staff and participant level, however, suggest that things are changing slowly and local government is still predominantly male and very much a 'boy's club'.

3. WOMEN'S REPRESENTATION IN URBAN LOCAL GOVERNMENT

3.1 Legal and political initiatives

There is no legislation in Australia that mandates, or provides a quota for, women's representation in local government.

Political initiatives to increase women's representation

It is only within the past ten years that political parties have actively encouraged women to stand for elections. The only political party that has set a target, as opposed to a quota, for women in government is the Australian Labor Party. This target is for women to be endorsed by the Party in 35 per cent of the winnable seats by 2001, however this applies only in the federal and state spheres. The impact of this seems to be slow and some women in the party feel that the quota won't be met by the time stated. However they feel that the fact that they can quote this target at pre selection is of some value. Labor Party women have established Emily's List³³, which raises money to help women financially to run for seats. Again, this is targeted at women standing for state and federal elections for the Labor Party, not women in local government.

The Liberal Party has a Liberal Women's Forum, which has been running for approximately 6 years. This organization advertises in newspapers seeking women who are interested in politics and running for the Liberal Party. Seminars are then conducted on how to be elected. This applies to the 3 spheres of government. Liberal women believe that this has had a significant impact on the numbers of women standing for election. There are some within the party who would like to see a quota system in place, but the policy is that women are elected 'on merit'.

The Australian Democrats has the largest representation of women in decision making and senior positions (40 per cent), however their numbers are small. In the year 2000 both the Leader and the Deputy Leader are women, and the Deputy Leader, Natasha Stott-Despoja, was the youngest woman to be elected to parliament (26 when elected and now 31). Until recently there was no need for a women's group within the Democrats however they are finding that women are not joining or putting themselves forward in the same numbers as in the past so they have started a women's group. The Democrats do not contest many local government elections.

Many of the smaller parties, such as the Greens and some single-issue parties, have affirmative action policies in their constitutions and some have been very successful in encouraging women to run in local government elections. The No Aircraft Noise Party³⁴ in NSW, for example, had 9 candidates elected to local governments. 3 were women and 2 of those were elected subsequently as Mayors.

Non-political initiatives to encourage women candidates

Initiatives that actively seek to increase women's election to local government differ from state to state. There is no public record of these initiatives and information about them was difficult to find and confirm in some instances.

With few exceptions, State local government departments have taken no initiatives to encourage women to stand for election. The Tasmanian Office of Local Government had a joint initiative in 2000 for the first time with Women Tasmania³⁵ and ALGWA Tasmania to encourage women into local government. Seminars were held in three different parts of the state, consisting of two separate days, weeks apart. The first day was an introduction to local government and the second day focused on running a campaign. A kit called ***Women into Local Government*** was produced, containing a range of useful literature. There is also an informal group of women in Launceston in Tasmania who for the last 5 years have been actively

supporting women into local government or other positions. The type of help they give is handing out pamphlets and door knocking. Women Tasmania has an excellent Internet site with a range of data and information specifically for women in local government³⁶. It appears to be the only government women's agency, which has made local government and women in it a high focus.

The federal Office of the Status of Women (OSW) and some state departments for women have been more active with initiatives to encourage women into local government. OSW produced a booklet called *Every woman's guide to getting into politics*, and this is used widely by other organizations and is available for anyone who wants a copy. Tasmanian Women's initiatives have already been mentioned. The NSW Department of Women is currently developing a mentoring project for women councillors.

The Australian Local Government Association (ALGA) and the state Local Government Associations (with the exception of the Municipal Association of Victoria) do not appear to have taken any independent or formal initiatives to increase women's representation in local government. The state Associations generally report on the outcome of elections and comment on the achievements of women, however they appear to take no other action. ALGA was unable to provide any statistics or other information on women in local government and there is no national database on women in local government.

The Australian Local Government Women's Association (ALGWA) has been involved in a number of initiatives, although it now does not have branches in Western Australia or South Australia. The Queensland branch of ALGWA has recently formulated a mentoring program for women. In the last elections it also targeted local governments where women were either not represented or under represented. They advertised in local papers for women candidates and then helped them in their elections. Some of these women were elected however there is no data available on just how many. The NSW branch of ALGWA has been conducting pre election seminars for women for some years. Members of the association and its executive, who are all councillors themselves, conduct the seminars. The seminars are usually of a very high quality and men have attended some. They are held in both urban and rural areas and the one criticism has been that those running them find that the seminars can distract them from their own campaigns. This initiative is seen as successful, and although no data has been collected, the fact that women's representation in local government in NSW increased from 23 per cent in 1995 to 26 per cent after the 1999 elections would suggest that this may well be the case.

Best practice in increasing women's representation

Victoria has by far the most comprehensive and well-funded program to encourage women into local government. A coalition was formed in 1997 with the overall objective of strengthening local communities, democratic local government and good governance by increasing the political participation of women and achieving representation in equal numbers to men in Victorian Local Government. It set as a target having 200 women in local government by 2000. A number of organizations were involved in the project over the last three years. They are the Municipal Association of Victoria (MAV), Victorian Local Governance Association, Australian Local Government Women's Association, Women's Planning Network

(Vic) Inc., Women's Electoral Lobby (Vic), Stegley Foundation,³⁷ and LOCAL (Ladies of the City Action League) The program was developed in three stages.

Stage 1 involved activities developed to give practical assistance to women candidates. A *Victorian Local Government Women's Charter* was developed and given to all local governments in Victoria. An information kit called *A Gender Agenda* was developed and produced. This kit contains practical advice, information and case studies for women considering standing for election in local government, and for those who want to help others to stand.

Stage 2 saw the appointment of a project officer. This involved: conducting 12 workshops throughout Victoria; mentoring programs for female candidates; media and publicity campaigns; collection of data bases of candidates; establishing councillor's mentor and support groups; a Lord Mayor's Reception for female candidates and a woman's tally room and website to monitor the March 2000 local government election results. 50 of the 150 women who attended workshops stood for election and 25 were elected, increasing women's representation in local government across Victoria by 4.5 per cent.

Stage 3 of this project has not started yet but its aim is to encourage and enhance the confidence and skills of the women in local government. It is also aimed at increasing women's willingness and ability to undertake leadership positions in other forums such as land care groups.

Initiatives to recruit women into local government staff positions

Apart from Equal Employment Legislation, neither the federal government nor any state government has introduced special measures to either recruit women into local government staff positions or to increase the number of women decision-makers in urban local government. Local government reforms, which separated management of local governments from governance, mean that each local government is required to prepare and implement a personnel policy that includes an equal employment opportunity program. Whilst EEO is important for women, it is intended to ensure that women are treated fairly in the workplace and to remove processes or practices which discriminate unfairly against them either at work or in the recruitment process which is based on the merit principle. There is anecdotal evidence to suggest that, depending on the Chief Executive Officer, there have been successes in recruiting women into senior management positions in some local governments. Nevertheless women's representation is much lower as CEOs than as elected representatives. In 1997 6 per cent of local governments had a woman as CEO, and currently 5.1 per cent do, however this varies between the states, with Victoria having the highest at 17 per cent.³⁸ There are reported instances of women CEOs experiencing significant difficulties both within the organization and with the elected local government. The National Institute of Municipal Management (IMM) has no data on female CEOs or women in senior positions, nor does it have particular programs to encourage women to pursue higher positions

3.2 Training and support mechanisms for women in urban local government

Training and support mechanisms provided for women in urban local government are generally the same as those available for all people in urban local

government. Local Government Associations generally provide seminars, workshops and conferences on specific local government issues which people can attend. It should be noted, however, that in many cases the nomination may require the support of the local government, and this is not always forthcoming. Some of the Local Government Associations run more intensive training programs subsequent to elections to assist newly elected representatives to understand their responsibilities. With few exceptions, the Associations could not identify specific training for elected women, and indeed in several cases the comment was made that all elected representatives are treated equally. The Associations can also assist employees and elected representatives if they have any problems by referring them to the appropriate agencies.

The NSW Local Government and Shires Association and local government associations in some other states run a **Springboard Program** for women employees in local government. The program matches mentors and mentees in each organization and a Springboard Workbook is provided to each mentee. The program aims to empower women to set and achieve personal goals, establish what one wants from life, focus on priorities, and build confidence needed to reach one's potential. It includes 3 one-day workshops for participants and sets up a mentoring relationship. Currently 17 women are undertaking the course in NSW, and it costs about Aus\$565. This is a useful program however it is run in Sydney and the cost of 3 trips to Sydney plus the fee make it expensive for country women who are often the most isolated. It also has limited capacity as the numbers indicate and there is no requirement for local governments to allow their employees to participate.

This year the Municipal Association of Victoria ran a **Women and Power** workshop, which saw the production of a toolkit for women. This was adapted for women in local government. It contains scenarios of how to deal with the Mayor, councillors, staff and members of the community. There has been no evaluation of this program to date however it would appear to be a useful document for women.

Departments of Local Government provide information on a range of issues, which all elected representatives and employees can access. The NSW Department of Local Government, for example, provides information on its Internet site on anti-discrimination guidelines for people in local government, including elected representatives. These Departments would generally also assist any person in local government with advice on how to handle particular problems they might encounter. They keep a watching brief on what is happening in local governments and have responded to consistent complaints or problems by at times sacking the local government and appointing an administrator. None of the Departments identified specific training or support mechanisms for women.

The most common support mechanism for women in local government is through the Australian Local Government Women's Association (ALGWA). Their annual conferences have useful information sessions on topical issues and workshops, as well as providing many opportunities for women to network and establish contacts with other women. ALGWA is there for all women in local government, however it seems to be mostly elected representatives who attend the conferences. The cost of attendance, and the fact that permission of the local government is often required, limits the usefulness of these conferences particularly for country women. ALGWA has an Internet site however more needs to be done to make the site an effective resource for women.

4. QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS OF THE EXPERIENCE OF WOMEN IN URBAN LOCAL GOVERNMENT

4.1 Background studies

There have been 2 comprehensive Australia-wide studies of women in local government in Australia in 1982 and 1993. In an analysis of previous literature and these surveys on the changing characteristics of women in local government, Whip and Fletcher³⁹ found that the traditional perception of women elected representatives as homemakers with adult children was no longer necessarily accurate. Both the studies indicated that many contemporary women councillors were young professionals with extensive educational backgrounds. Whip and Fletcher also discussed five categories of women councillors identified in a study of women in local government in Victoria in 1987. The five categories were the maternal feminist, the committee woman, the party woman, the modern or super mother and the career activist. The 2 latter categories had emerged during the preceding decade and for these women, 'education, a career or serious job have been important influences, producing in these women greater awareness and rising aspirations about the sort of roles they want to occupy in their lives' (1997:56)⁴⁰ Elements of all these five categories of councillors are certainly evident in the women participating in this study.

4.2 Participant selection

Locating women to survey was complicated by the existence of five separate State and 1 Territory local government systems. Although there is an Australian Local Government Association (ALGA), it has no record of either women currently in local government or statistics on women in local government, apart from information available through its 'Local governments On-line' Internet site⁴¹. The Australian Local Government Women's Association (ALGWA) was able to provide initial contacts in most states, however there is now no Local Government Women's Association in either Western Australia or South Australia (the members voted to disband them several years ago). ALGWA commissioned a study on women in local government in Australia in 1997.⁴² This was a comprehensive and useful study, which surveyed all Local governments in Australia and had a surprising 81 per cent response rate. However its focus was the number of women Councillors and their position, demographic details of the Local government areas, and the number of women CEOs. The only personal information collected about the women was their age.

In NSW and Queensland the women selected for surveying were nominated by other women in local government and selected by a snowballing method. However in the other States names were either recommended by people from a variety of organizations or chosen at random from 'Councils On-line' at the ALGA Internet site.

Altogether nearly 100 women were sent surveys, and a number were contacted again to seek clarification of ambiguous information or to encourage return of the survey, only 35 responded and a number were from rural local governments and therefore excluded from the study. 29 were included in the analysis. The group of women cannot be seen as a statistically representative⁴³ sample of either women

Councillors or women staff in local government. Attempts were made to ensure that each State was at least proportionately represented, and to identify women who met the criteria of transformative leaders. However, the short lead time, distance and cost, the constraints of six different local government systems and the low return of surveys, which was in itself a form of self-selection, made this impossible. Another major weakness is that the questionnaire, and the study, did not actively seek to include information in regard to race and culture which is an oversight in a multicultural country like Australia. The women included in the analysis are simply 29 women, some from each State, who hold different positions in urban Local governments across Australia. However as on some issues they held a unanimous opinion, it may well suggest that their opinions – and indeed some of their experiences - are representative at least of a substantial body of women in local government.

4.3 Profile of the participants

Location, position and political affiliation

The 29 women come from different backgrounds and have had a range of experiences in urban local government. 8 are from New South Wales (NSW), 4 from South Australia (SA), 5 from Western Australia (WA), 4 from Queensland (QLD). 3 each from the Northern Territory (NT) and Victoria, and 2 from Tasmania (TAS). 7 are Councillors, 5 Deputy Mayors, 10 Mayors or equivalent⁴⁴, 2 senior local government Managers and 4 Chief Executive Officers.

As can be seen from the following table, the only categories of urban local government not covered by the participants are the very large regional towns/cities and the fringe towns where more than 99 per cent of the population is urban.

Table 8: Urban local government category of participants⁴⁵

State	Capital City	Metro Developed				Regional Town/City				Fringe			
		1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
New South Wales			2	1	1	2	2						
Victoria				1	2								
Queensland	1						2				1		
Western Australia		2	1								2		
South Australia		1		2								1	
Tasmania	1					1							
Northern Territory						2				1			
Total	2	3	3	4	3	5	2	2		1	3	1	

1: Small 2: Medium 3: Large 4: Very Large

Political affiliation

As reported earlier, the role of political parties in local government in Australia is distinctly different to that in the state and federal governments. Whilst some metropolitan and larger regional local governments are dominated by political partisanship, many are not. Elected representatives can be, as many are, endorsed members of political parties, which generally follow a lengthy period as a loyal party worker. Others may be members of political parties, however they do not seek party endorsement and stand as independents as do many other people who are not

members of any political party. In state and federal elections there are clear constituencies for the political parties, however in local government elections the constituencies are less clear and being an endorsed candidate may not be advantageous as local government issues are seen generally as outside party politics. Being endorsed as a representative of a political party generally means that a candidate will have the physical, and often financial, support of that party when she is campaigning for election, whereas independent candidates have to find their own support and financial resources. Of the 23 women representatives, all except 5 are independents, representing no political party. 8 of the independents are Mayors, 4 Deputy Mayors and 7 are councillors. The remaining 5 are endorsed representatives of the Australian Labor Party, 3 from NSW, and 1 each from Queensland and Victoria. 3 of the ALP participants are Mayors, 1 is a Deputy Mayor and the other is a Councillor.

Well-educated older women

The Purdon Report (1997) showed that the age profile of women councillors in Australia was younger than that of their male counterparts; nevertheless they were not statistically representative of the adult Australian female population. There are very few women under 30 in local government, and this is reflected in the 29 survey participants. The only woman under 41 is an employee in local government.

Table 9: Age distribution of participants

Position	Age Group			
	31-40	41-50	51-60	61+
Councillor	1	4	1	2
Deputy Mayor		5		
Mayor		6	1	3
Senior manager	1	1		
Chief Executive Officer		1	3	

These women are generally highly educated. Over half of the elected representatives (13) and all except 3 of the Mayors have tertiary qualifications. Not surprisingly given their senior positions, the six employees also have tertiary education qualifications.

Busy lives, wearing different hats and juggling multiple responsibilities

Family responsibilities

The women who participated in this survey are busy women who clearly juggle a range of responsibilities. All are married; except for 3 who are single, 1 who is separated, 1 divorced and 1 a widow. Whereas the traditional profile of women councillors was of women who entered local government when their responsibilities to their children had ended, over the past 20 years the profile has changed, and the changes are evident in this group of women. 13 have dependent children, although no more than 2, and 3 of those women also have other dependents such as elderly parents or partners. Clearly maternal responsibilities have not deterred women from seeking further leadership positions as 5 of the Mayors have dependent children.

Other local government positions

One of the consequences of being in local government is that it provides access to a range of other positions such as membership of state and federal government, and non-government, boards and committees. Other positions for elected representatives can be if their colleagues elect them as executive members of their local government associations and committees or a regional organization of local governments or other regional bodies. All except 7 of the women in this group held a range of significant other positions on regional and state local government associations as executive members, and state and federal boards and committees related to their local government responsibilities. One woman, who is a Deputy Mayor, chose deliberately not to hold other positions as she wanted to concentrate on her local community. Each woman generally holds a number of other positions as local government representatives. As one would expect, given their higher profile and leadership position in their own communities, the Mayors hold more positions than the other women, however the number and range of positions they hold would be daunting for most people in terms of commitment of time and energy.

Paid employment

In addition to their Council and other local government responsibilities, 11 of the elected representatives are in paid employment in a diverse range of positions. Four are employed in education either as teachers or Careers Counsellors. There are a Community Development Manager, a part-time journalist, a part owner in an herbal and homeopathic dispensary, a Marine Biologist, a hairdresser, a consultant, an ALP Electorate Officer and several women who are self-employed. 4 of the 10 Mayors are in paid employment, and 2 gave up paid employment when they became Mayor. 2 of the Mayors have paid employment and dependent children. If Mayors are elected on an annual basis⁴⁶ it is often unwise to resign from paid employment, particularly where it is a major income generator for the family. Similarly, if the allowances paid to a Mayor are too low⁴⁷, it is almost essential to have other income. Nevertheless trying to wear a number of 'hats' and balance the demands of family, employment and local government is not easy, yet these women do it. As Whip and Fletcher found,⁴⁸ most of the women in the two earlier surveys had a long history of paid employment. Few identified their occupation as housewife, and most continued in employment after election.

In Australia councillor allowances range from as little as Aus\$50-\$100 in some instances in Western Australia to annual allowances from Aus\$5,000 to \$21,000 with Mayors generally having a much higher allowance. In Queensland councillors determine their own pay, and their allowances are much higher and in many cases councillors work full time at their responsibilities⁴⁹. Generally local government elected representatives would find it difficult to survive financially on their councillor allowances if that were their only source of income. Whip and Fletcher (1998) found that the women surveyed in 1982 and 1993 were predominantly middle-class, and it would seem that the women in this study are also if education levels and income are indicators. Only 3 of the women indicated that their income is low relative to income levels in their local communities, and one of those is not in paid employment and is a member of a Western Australian local government. Eight indicated that their income levels are high, including the four CEOs and one of the two senior managers. The two elected representatives who indicated that their income is high are both Mayors. The remainder of the women indicated that their income is in the middle range of incomes in their communities.

Other community positions

As well as their family, employment and local government responsibilities all except 3 of these women are involved heavily in community organizations in positions not related to their being in local government. Indeed for a number of them, it was their involvement in these organizations that led to pursuing positions in local government. The interests of these women, reflected in the organizations of which they are members, is as diverse as is their paid employment. Resident's groups, children's centres, community housing, bushfire brigades, sporting clubs, arts organizations, community centres, heritage groups, environmental groups, unions, service clubs, P&C associations⁵⁰, meals on wheels and other seniors organizations, industry groups and musical groups are just some of the organizations to which these women belong.

4.4 Entering Local Politics

Reasons for entering local government

A question often asked of women in local government in Australia is what motivated them to become involved, as if the thought of taking such a step is surprising. There is no earlier data on this issue, and it would be an interesting focus for future research. The reasons for the women in this group fall into 7 categories, although a number of women gave several reasons.

Table 10: Reasons for entering Local government

Reason	No.
Actions of previous council	11
Community/people commitment	10
Representation	4
Influence local community	4
Political involvement	4
Challenge after family responsibilities	3
Gain broader experience	1

Actions speak louder than promises

Perhaps surprisingly, factors about the local government of the day when they decided to nominate seem to have been a strong motivator. This was through either the decisions the local governments made, actions they took or failed to take, or how well they were assessed as representing their communities. The most significant single reason for these women was the actions of the local government of the day. Some identified poor decision-making, either in general or on a specific issue affecting either them or their local community with which they disagreed. Others cited the failure to consult with, or listen to, the community, again either generally or in regard to a specific issue. Yet others felt that the local government had an agenda, such as a 'pro-development' agenda or a lack of concern for the environment, which seemed to be inappropriate for their community. This suggests that a number of the women had taken a keen interest in their local government prior to nominating and were aware of some decisions the local government made.

Apart from the candidates' own assessments of the local government, it's also clear that sitting councillors can influence the decision to run as four of the women

who cited previous local government decisions as their reason were encouraged to run by sitting councillors including a Mayor and Deputy Mayor. This suggests that councillors look to extend their influence by actively encouraging people who they see as having similar interests and values.

Local government an 'old boys club'?

The other contributing factor in regard to the previous local government was a perception of inequitable representation, which was cited by 4 women as a motivating factor. Given the low representation of women, of young people and in particular young women, and of women from low-income families in local government in Australia this is hardly surprising. It raises a number of questions about representative government, some of which have been raised in other studies and are not the subject of this study.

Time for them and their own aspirations

Apart from the local government of the day, the other major set of contributing factors for women in this group nominating for, or entering, local government was related to their own aspirations and interests. For some, the interest was simply grounded in their own communities and a desire to influence them. For others, their child-raising responsibilities had ended and they were looking for a new challenge. For others it was also political in nature. One of the councillors had been involved previously in supporting other independent candidates, for local, state and federal elections, and this had motivated her to nominate herself. Others were members of a political party and for several of them, a desire to progress their own party political careers at the same time as influencing their local communities was important. In Australia local government is seen as a stepping stone into the other spheres of government, particularly for people who are elected as endorsed members of a political party. However independent mayors are also successful in elections to the lower houses of either state or federal governments. Apart from the valuable experience they gain of the elected representative role, their high local profile can establish a strong local constituency essential if a person wants to stand for state and federal elections.

Role models may be important

The degree to which having family relatives in politics influence a decision to enter local government is a rich topic for future research. 11 of the women in this group, including 1 of the employees, have relatives who have been or are involved in politics at some level – a husband, 4 fathers, 2 brothers, 1 sister, 2 uncles, and 3 great grandfathers. Another woman identified a godfather. Most of the relatives have been or are involved in state and federal governments, holding positions as members of either lower or upper houses (6). 3 of the relatives were or are employees in local government, either here or in England. One relative (husband) is the Chief Minister of the Northern Territory and 6 were elected representatives in local government as either councillors (4), Deputy Mayor (1) or mayor (1). The father of one woman was the Minister for Local Government in Victoria and a local government councillor for 27 years, and her husband was a councillor for 4 years.

In some cases with this group of women the links appear to be tenuous. It is difficult to see how great-grandfathers could have a direct influence (apart from genetic). Similarly, the influence of uncles and godfathers seems to be unlikely to have a strong influence. The experience of direct family members being involved in

politics and local government may well be reflected in an ethos of public service or an interest in political involvement in the family which has had some influence on the decision to enter local government. However only one of the women mentioned her father's role model as possibly having had an influence on her decision. On the other hand, anecdotal evidence suggests that direct members of a woman councillor's or Mayor's family may well be deterred from themselves entering local government because of the effect they have observed on their relatives and their families.

Apart from any influence from the women's families, other people had an influence on the decision in the case of most of the women in the group. Five had been encouraged to nominate by sitting councillors, and one had been approached by staff of the council who were having difficulty with their employment. Several were encouraged by their neighbours, several by members of the business community and a number by members of the community generally. It may well be that others who are either not prepared, or not confident, to nominate themselves will encourage others who they feel have the capacity to be an elected representative. Being involved in community or other organizations, as most of these women had, was clearly a way of becoming known and building the support base needed to be successful.

Challenges on the way

Getting into local government isn't necessarily easy, particularly as an elected representative. Although most of the women were successful at their first attempt (17), three nominated twice and two nominated three times before being elected. This suggests both determination and the importance of not giving up if the first attempt is not successful, particularly given the statistics that show that men are more likely to be elected and the small proportion of candidates that succeed at any election. Several of the women commented that they had learnt a lot in the earlier unsuccessful attempts, which had helped them to be elected later.

Apart from having to nominate several times before being elected, thirteen of the elected representatives had experienced some obstacles in the electoral process, whereas the remaining women, including the five ALP councillors, had experienced none. Indeed several felt that being a woman had advantaged them because of a perceived disaffection with male politicians. For those who had experienced obstacles, some were minor, generally in the form of unpleasant or stereotypical comments such as 'what would a woman know about building roads?'. Others were significant. One woman, for instance, spoke of an active campaign by an incumbent Mayor to discredit her and political influence being brought to bear through various associations trying to retain their traditional areas of power. Some were, in their opinion, directly related to being a woman and others were not necessarily so, as in the case of one single parent who, with limited income, found that lack of finance was an obstacle although one that she eventually overcame. There were some general comments about the conservative nature of some areas, the 'misogyny' or bias of the media and about the expectations of some people that women have to 'prove themselves'. Specific examples of obstacles directly related to being a woman were few, however, but the fact that they occur at all must be very unpleasant for the women experiencing them.

The fact that not one of the endorsed ALP women feels that she experienced any obstacles suggests that party endorsement may act as a 'buffer' to gender-

based prejudice. Nevertheless what these women have not mentioned is obstacles they may have experienced in being endorsed by their party. All the evidence suggests that there is significant bias against women in the endorsement practices of the two major parties, certainly at the state and federal level. It would be surprising if local government endorsement were different. However it may be the case as local government is not seen as particularly significant for political parties in Australia with the exception of the Australian Labor Party.

4.5 Being in local government

Making a difference

All the women in the group feel that they have made a difference by being in local government either in the way their local governments operate or in relationships with the communities they represent. They identified many achievements from extending the range of issues considered by their councils, changing council processes because of their different style, and changing community perceptions of the council through either their openness, their accountability, their breaking of the 'red tape' or their preparedness to listen and consult. There is a strong feeling that local government has now moved from the traditional 'roads, rates and rubbish' focus and that women are particularly well-suited to coping both with change itself and the diversity of issues local government is now required to consider. Most of the women feel that their approach is distinctly different to that of many of their male colleagues. They speak of being more consultative, more conciliatory and more concerned with good outcomes for the community than their own egos or wishes, as well as having a stronger focus on researching issues, communication and being more diligent in carrying out their responsibilities. They speak of being issues-based rather than personal. However they are quick to point out that these characteristics are not evident in all women in local government and are in some men.

The women identified a wide range of improvements in their communities that they have initiated, continued or supported. The range includes changes to council's policies, land-use planning instruments and new and improved infrastructure, facilities and services. Many specific projects relate to their council's community services and facilities such as art galleries, parks, aquatic and sports centres, childcare and community centres. However apart from those that involve their councils directly, these women also have a significant influence in more broadly based initiatives. They do this either through their work with community or business organizations or through their contacts and influence on state and federal committees and with state and federal politicians. Just a few examples of these projects are main street programs, revitalization of central business districts, obtaining a sexual assault counsellor for the town, community festivals, business enterprise centres, projects to build relationships between the indigenous and non-indigenous communities, crime prevention, community safety and health programs for seniors.

Clearly being involved in local government has many rewards for these women, including a strong sense of contributing to their own communities. Although many women drop out after 1 term, on average these women have been in local government for 10 years, with the longest serving, 20 years, and the newest, 2 years. This suggests an overall satisfaction with being in local government, although

some of the appointed women indicate that they may not be there for much longer. The elected representatives all indicate either a desire to continue in local government and serve their local communities directly or to progress to state or federal government representation (3). The Mayors generally want to continue as Mayors, and several of those not already Mayors would like to be. If this group of women is typical, then getting to the top position does not depend on years of service beforehand. Whilst several of the Mayors have been in local government for many years, they have also been Mayors for a long time. Four have been in local government for 6 years or less, and the woman in this group who has been in local government for the shortest period of time (2 years) is a Mayor. Overall, it seems that women do not necessarily have to 'serve an apprenticeship' to get into the top positions, which may explain some of the attractions and rewards of being in local government.

Some extra challenges

Entering local government poses many challenges for anyone. The learning curve in terms of knowledge and skills is steep for both men and women. For some of these women, being elected or appointed to local government brought additional challenges related to their sex.

Different treatment

Eleven of the elected women and five of the appointed women experienced some difficulty or discrimination from either elected representatives, council staff, members of the community or members of their own families. The type of discrimination experienced by the elected women, generally but not always from their fellow elected representatives, ranged from not being taken seriously or assumptions being made that they knew little about important issues to direct comments and attempts to belittle them. Comments such as being asked to make sandwiches for the male councillors or being told to wear a see-through top and serve drinks to the councillors are experiences that male councillors are unlikely to have. The family difficulties arose from a son who disliked the time his mother was putting into council work and from another woman's difficulty in balancing the competing needs of her family with her position as Mayor.

Some of the difficulties appear to have been temporary, as only 4 of the elected representatives indicated that they are still experiencing difficulties. Some commented that once they had proved themselves – and at a much higher level than men had to – the comments and difficulties disappeared. This contrasts with substantial anecdotal evidence from local government women's forums where women constantly talk amongst themselves about the male environment and its impact on them. No matter how strong the women are, they talk about personal attacks, bullying, being undermined or ridiculed, simply ignored or treated as a fool. They also complain strongly about the family unfriendly policies and practices of local government. One example of the type of treatment that can occur was cited at a public Inquiry into one Council in NSW in 1997. A woman councillor on that Council, who had been in local government for 23 years, said 'I have been utterly ashamed of the treatment by some that has been served out to the women councillors. It has been so bad that in my opinion it's enough for them never to want to serve on a council again and yet each one in turn has a tremendous interest in the community'.⁵¹ The women in this study weren't asked to comment about problems

they may have observed for other women in local government. However one woman, who has been in politics for many years, made an observation that is common to other women in local government. She said that 'men seem to have a different language for themselves and for women e.g. men debate, women argue; men get angry, women get emotional; men question, women nag.' Another woman, who has been in local government for 9 years, said 'still excluded from the boys' club, denigration based on my sex, difficulties being heard which I believe are based on stereotypical practices and beliefs in relation to women'.

Although most of these elected representatives feel they are no longer experiencing difficulties, this is not the case for the appointed women. Four of the appointed women indicate substantial and ongoing difficulties after appointment ranging from unsupportive senior management, prejudice from their colleagues, isolation due to the small numbers of women in senior positions, or outright harassment and intimidation. In the case of one CEO harassment and intimidation came from some of her staff, councillors and members of the community. This was so serious that it led to a public inquiry and subsequent dismissal of the council. The commissioner found that 'a lot of the hostility to, and prejudice against her [had], as one of its principal causes or roots, the fact that she is not only a woman, but a forceful and successful one at that'⁵². Unfortunately one such incident can follow a person in their future career. It is only now, after a change of Mayor in the subsequent local government to which she was appointed and removal of a number of the senior managers that her work life is returning to some equilibrium. Whilst elected representatives may experience difficulties, they are not working with them eight hours a day, so in some ways the experiences of staff can be even more damaging. If the views that these appointed women have expressed are at all representative of appointed women in local government in Australia – and there is anecdotal evidence to suggest that they are – there is much to be done if local government is to attract and retain qualified professional women.

The positive aspect for appointed women is that two of the CEOs speak of very different experiences and demonstrate a keen awareness of the need to encourage and support the women members of their staff. If these women are representative of the growing number of women CEOs across Australia it is likely that where women are appointed as CEOs the future for appointed women in local government may well improve.

Additional responsibilities

All the women in this study see themselves as leaders in their communities and most of them feel a sense of responsibility to other women generally and particularly in regard to their political and local government responsibilities. They recognize that as a local government representative their responsibilities are to their whole community, however as women they also realize that women are disadvantaged in many areas of life in Australia and poorly represented in politics in all spheres. Those who feel responsible see their prime responsibility as being a role model for both other women and the community in general. As a woman they speak of leading by example, not being bullies, focussing on issues not personalities, being assertive, sharing and supporting other women. There is a strong sense of wanting to demonstrate a different way of 'doing' politics, not being women who simply operate in the same way as many male politicians and local government elected representatives. These qualities, if possessed by significant numbers of people, have

the capacity to transform the local government political arena. Anecdotal evidence suggests that already some male local government elected representatives and appointed staff have observed and learnt from the examples that have been set by women colleagues who have set a different standard.

Apart from their responsibilities as role models, a number of the women also believe that they have a responsibility to encourage other women into local government. The most common way in which they have done this is by being a guest speaker at meetings, seminars and conferences and mentoring individual women either privately or in a more public way through mentoring programs. Some have been involved in programs run by ALGWA, local government associations or various women's departments of state and federal governments. As mentioned before, anecdotal comment from some women involved in a pre-election program intended to encourage women into local government suggests that the timing of these programs needs to be well thought out. Otherwise, sitting women elected representatives who are trying to assist and encourage other women may well be doing themselves a disservice as it can distract them from their own campaigns.

Surmounting barriers

Barriers limiting women's representation

Although most of the women did not indicate any particular difficulty or discrimination being in local government, 23 of them felt that there were significant barriers, which might restrict or prevent women from entering local government. The barriers generally fall into four broad categories – attitudinal, financial, competing responsibilities and personal characteristics – with attitudinal factors being the barrier mentioned most frequently. Personal characteristics include being young and therefore taken less seriously, lack of experience in local government and politics, and being from a disadvantaged group such as people with disabilities, Aboriginal women or people from non-English speaking backgrounds. All these groups are even more under-represented in local government than women.

Attitudinal barriers were of two types: (1) the attitudes of others, especially some males in local government, and (2) women's own attitudes, including lack of confidence. 15 of the women identified barriers such as traditional attitudes of people in local government and the community, the male-oriented environment of local government, being seen and treated as less than equal with and by male councillors, male domination of council meetings and gender bias. These are seen as potentially discouraging women either from entering local government in the first place or from deciding to stay.

Finances are clearly a significant barrier. Apart from comments about the low income levels in local government, others identified child-care and the need to provide baby-sitters as a barrier. Most of the women feel that child-care costs should be provided separately from the allowances paid to local government representatives.⁵³ The time commitment, family unfriendly practices such as the timing and duration of meetings, as well as the conflicting responsibilities of women, particularly family responsibilities, are also seen as significant barriers. The women appointed to local government echo many of the sentiments of the elected representatives, and identified other factors such as the limited career path for women employees, the isolation of being a senior woman, and the lack of role models.

Comments are often made in Australia about women as '1 term wonders'. No research has been carried out with women who have not stood for re-election, or of those appointed women who leave local government. The degree to which factors such as these contribute to that decision is unknown, however anecdotal information indicates that unless some of these barriers are removed, local government will continue to fail to either attract or retain women in the same proportions as it does men.

Lowering the barriers

The women would like to see a number of changes to encourage other women entering or remaining in local government, however none of them suggest setting quotas for women. Indeed several speak strongly against what they describe as 'positive discrimination', and they want to see changes within the existing system rather than changing the system itself. Increasing the number of women in local government is seen as desirable by most of these women, as sheer numbers are seen as a path to more equitable representation of the women in our communities. All except one of these women feel that there has been a change for the better in community perceptions about women in local government. Although women might still have to perform at a higher standard to get the same recognition, generally they feel that women's contribution is understood and appreciated in the community. They see this largely as both a cause and effect of the increasing numbers of women nominating and being elected.

The women believe that providing childcare costs as a claimable item in addition to the allowances for councillors would enable women to afford adequate care for their dependent children whilst carrying out their council responsibilities. This would not remove the pressure of balancing their need to be with their children with their desire to carry out their responsibilities. However it would be a significant recognition that equitable representation comes at a cost and that parents should be supported when taking on representative roles.

Some of the women believe that the low level of allowances is a deterrent in itself, particularly as in some cases women resign paid employment to carry out their responsibilities. The degree to which this is relevant varies as in Queensland the councils determine their own salaries and they are generally seen as adequate. Nevertheless both men and women in other states complain that the income level compared to the time commitment deters people, not just women, from entering local government.

Family friendly meeting times and work places are another area the women believe could do with examination. Some council meetings, for example, extend into the late hours of the night or early morning, and other council activities such as on-site inspections and forums are often held at times that are inconvenient for families and children. The appointed staff consider family friendly policies and practices are most important although the women also see a need for education of senior managers on non-discriminatory and effective human resource management practices in a diverse community.

Most of the women feel that education can make a significant contribution towards lowering the barriers. They want to see better education of the community and particularly women about the role women play in local government. They also want programs to address the attitudes of some staff and male councillors who have

traditional attitudes towards the role of women. Some see a need for change within the education system itself, starting at primary school level and focusing on the responsibilities of people within a civil society and the roles and challenges for women in representative positions. Others feel strongly that there is a need for specific programs to encourage women into local government and to support women when they are there.

Doing it well and there for the long haul

The women in this study believe significant changes are necessary if local government is to attract and retain more women, nevertheless women are now represented more equitably in local government than in the other spheres of government. From this study, it seems as though much of that is to do with the local and community focus of local government, and the fact that women can contribute without having to spend long periods of time away from their homes. For this group of women at least, the rewards and satisfaction of being in local government outweigh the difficulties they may face. None of these elected representatives appear to be 'one-term wonders'. They clearly pull their weight, put in time and energy, and are sufficiently committed to either remain as appointed employees or to nominate, campaign and be elected at several elections at least. In doing so, by facing challenges and still being there, they are providing worthy role models for the women who will follow them.

5. ANNOTATED LIST OF ORGANISATIONS AND INDIVIDUALS

5.1 Annotated list of organizations

Australian Local Government Women's Association is a national association with branches in all States, with the exception of Western Australia and South Australia, and the Northern Territory. Its purpose is to further women's knowledge and understanding of local government, to protect and enhance the interests and rights of women in local government, to take action on any subject or activity of particular interest to women affecting local governing bodies and / or local government legislation, to act in an advisory capacity to intending women candidates for local government elections and to encourage women into professional careers in local government. Contact: Toll-Free Phone 1800 62 1951

Women's Electoral Lobby, WEL Australia Office, PO Box 191, Civic Square ACT. 2608 Phone: 02 6247 6679 Fax: 02 6247 4669 Email: wel@wel.org.au : www.wel.org.au Email lists: [wel-members](#) - for all WEL members across Australia. WEL is a national lobby group for women, which has as its aims creating a society where women's participation and potential are unrestricted, acknowledged and respected and where women and men share equally in society's responsibilities and rewards. WEL is a feminist political organization, which is non-sectarian and non-party-political. It lobbies politicians, unions, employers, educationalists, and others on behalf of women, and seeks to change social attitudes and practices, which discriminate against women. It offers regular meetings, dinners, special functions, a national conference every two years on issues of importance to women, training in lobbying local and federal politicians and access to information. Contact: This position is vacant at present.

Office of the Status of Women, Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, 3-5 National Circuit, BARTON, ACT 2600. Telephone: (02) 6271 5732 email: women@dpmc.gov.au. This organization provides policy advice to the federal government on issues affecting women in Australia. Its role is to develop policy and influence Cabinet and Budget decision-making to ensure women's interests are considered. OSW staff consult with women from a wide range of non-government organizations. Contacts: Ms Rosemary Calder, First Assistant Secretary, Telephone: (02) 6271 5716 Fax: (02) 6271 5745. Acting Executive Assistant: Louise Blyton

State Government Departments with responsibility for women

The following State Departments and agencies have women as a focus and generally are there to improve the economic and social well being of women. The range of services they provide differs from state to state however they are useful contact points for women generally. It should be noted that Tasmania's Internet site provides both statistics and relevant information on women in local government. The Western Australian Department provides useful information on its site about women in politics and women in local government. And the NSW site provides information about the mentoring program it is developing for women in local government.

Department for Women, Level 11, 100 William Street, KINGS CROSS, NSW 2011. Telephone: (02) 9334 1160 Fax: (02) 9334 1023 Email: dfw@women.nsw.gov.au. Contact: Director General, Ms Robyn Henderson.

Office of Women's Policy, Department of Premier and Cabinet, Level 3, 1 Treasury Place, MELBOURNE, VIC 3002. Telephone (03) 9651 0530 Fax: (03) 9651 0533 Email: owa@dpc.vic.gov.au Web: www.women.vic.gov.au. Contact: Ms Debbie King, Director

Office for the Status of Women, 12th Flr, Roma Mitchell House, 136 North Terrace, ADELAIDE, SA 5000 or PO Box 8020, Station Arcade, Adelaide. SA 5000 Telephone: (08) 8303 0961 Fax: (08) 8303 0963 Email: osw@dove.mtx.net.au Contact: Ms Carmel O'Loughlin Director

Women's Policy Office, 1st Flr, Westralia Square, 141 St George's Terrace, PERTH. WA 6000 Telephone: (08) 9264 1920 Fax: (08) 9264 1925 Email: wpo@fcs.wa.gov.au Web: www.wa.gov.au/wpdo Contact: Ms Sandie Van Soelen, A/g Executive Director.

Office of Women's Policy, Department of Equity & Fair Trading, Level 17, Mineral House, 41 George Street, BRISBANE. QLD 4000 or PO Box 390 Albert Street, BRISBANE. QLD 4002 Telephone: (07) 3224 4062 Fax: (07) 3224 4272 Email: infolink@deft.qld.gov.au Contact: Ms Stephanie Belfrage Executive Director.

Women Tasmania, 1st Flr, Franklin Square Building, Macquarie Street, HOBART. TAS 7000 or GPO Box 1854 HOBART TAS 7001 Telephone: (03) 6233 2208 Fax: (03) 6223 8807 Email: osw.admin@dpac.tas.gov.au Contact: Ms Elizabeth Little, Director.

Office of Women's Policy, 14th Flr, NT House, Cnr Bennett & Mitchell Streets, DARWIN. NT 0800 GPO Box 4396 DARWIN NT 0801 Telephone: (08) 8999 6304 Fax: (08) 8999 7523 Email: owp@nt.gov.au Contact: Ms Pam Griffiths, A/g Director.

5.2 List of individuals who participated in the survey

Kristina Barnett, Mayor, City of Prospect, PO Box 171, Prospect, South Australia, 5082. Tel: 61 8 8269 5366. Fax: 61 8 8269 5834.

Rhonda Bignell, CEO, Kuring-gai Council, PO Box 15, Gordon, New South Wales, 2072. Tel: 61 2 9424 0888. Fax: 61 2 9424 0880.

Mary Binks, Mayor, Devonport City Council, PO Box 604, Devonport, Tasmania, 7310. Tel: 61 3 6424 0511. Fax: 61 3 6424 9649.

Marion Blair, Deputy Mayor, City of Belmont, PO Box 379, Cloverdale, Western Australia, 6105. Tel: 61 8 9477 7222. Fax: 61 8 9478 1473.

Liz Bok, Director of Community Services, City of Salisbury, PO Box 8, Salisbury, South Australia, 5108. Tel: 61 8 8406 8222. Fax: 61 8 8281 5466.

Pru Bonham, Deputy Lord Mayor, Hobart City Council, GPO Box 503E, Hobart, Tasmania, 7001. Tel: 61 3 6238 2176, Fax: 61 3 6224 4344.

Julie Boyd, Mayor, Mackay City Council, PO Box 41 Mackay, Queensland, 4740. Tel: 61 7 4968 4444. Fax: 61 7 4951 4489.

Helen Buckingham, Councillor, City of Whitehorse, Locked Bag 2, Eastern Mail Centre, Vic 3110. Tel: 61 3 9262 6333. Fax: 61 3 9262 6490.

Ann Bunnell, Deputy Mayor, Townsville Council, PO Box 1268, Townsville, Queensland, 4810. Tel: 61 7 4727 9000. Fax: 61 7 4727 9050.

Annette Burke, Palmerston Town Council, PO Box 1, Palmerston, Northern Territory, 0831. Tel: 61 8 8935 9922. Fax: 61 8 8935 9900.

Toni Tapp Coutts, Katherine Town Council, PO Box 1071, Katherine, Northern Territory, 0851. Tel: 61 8 8972 1322. Fax: 61 8 8971 0305.

Fran Erlich, Mayor, Alice Springs Town Council, PO Box 1071, Alice Springs, Northern Territory, 0871. Tel: 61 8 8950 0500. Fax: 61 8 8953 0558.

Kayee Francis Griffin, Mayor, Canterbury City Council, PO Box 77, Campsie, NSW, 2194. Tel: 61 2 9789 9300 Fax: 61 2 9789 1542.

Heather Henderson, Deputy Mayor, Subiaco City Council, PO Box 270, Subiaco, Western Australia, 6904. Tel: 61 8 9237 9222. Fax: 61 8 9237 9200.

Ann Irving, Councillor, Salisbury Council, PO Box 8, Salisbury, South Australia, 5108. Tel: 61 8 8406 8222. Fax: 61 8 8281 5466.

Liz Johnstone, Councillor, City of Port Phillip, Private Bag No. 3, PO St Kilda, Victoria, 3182. Tel: 61 3 9209 6666. Fax: 61 3 9534 9105.

Lynn Mason, Mayor, Flinders Council, PO Box 40, Whitemark, Flinders Island, Tasmania, 7255. Tel: 61 3 6359 2131. Fax: 61 3 6359 2211.

Genia McCaffery, Mayor, North Sydney Council, PO Box 12, North Sydney, New South Wales, 2059. Tel: 61 2 9936 8100. Fax: 61 2 9936 8177.

Anne Meagher, Manager of Community Services, Lismore City Council, PO Box 23A, Lismore New South Wales, 2480. Tel: 61 2 6625 0500. Fax: 61 2 6625 0400

Maria Mercurio, CEO, Moreland City Council, Locked Bag 10, Moreland, Victoria, 3058. Tel: 61 3 9240 1111. Fax: 61 3 9240 1212.

Patricia Morris, Mayor, City of Gosnells, PO Box 662, Gosnells, Western Australia, 6990. Tel: 61 8 9391 3222. Fax: 61 8 9398 2922.

Jude Munro, CEO, City of Brisbane, GPO Box 1434, Brisbane, Queensland, 4001. Tel: 61 7 3403 8888. Fax: 61 7 3403 9944.

Suzanne Pierce, Mayor, City of South Perth, Sandgate Street, South Perth, Western Australia, 6151. Tel: 61 8 9474 0777. Fax: 61 8 9474 2425.

Lesley Purdom, Mayor, City of Tea Tree Gully, PO Box 571, Modbury, South Australia, 5092. Tel: 61 8 8397 7444. Fax: 61 8 8396 0809.

Diana Roberts, Councillor, Lismore City Council, PO Box 23A, Lismore New South Wales, 2480. Tel: 61 2 6625 0500. Fax: 61 2 6625 0400.

Sue Sacker, Councillor, Manly Council, PO Box 82, Manly, New South Wales, 2095. Tel: 61 2 9976 1500. Fax: 61 2 9976 1400.

Elizabeth Taylor, Deputy Shire President, Kalamunda Shire Council, PO Box 42, Kalamunda, Western Australia, 6076. Tel: 61 8 9257 9999. Fax: 61 8 9293 2715.

Sue Whelan, Councillor, Queanbeyan City Council, PO Box 90, Queanbeyan, New South Wales, 2620. Tel: 61 2 6298 0211. Fax: 6299 1343.

Joyce Wheatley, Mayor, Kiama Municipal Council, PO Box 75, Kiama, New South Wales. Tel: 61 2 4232 0222. Fax: 61 2 4232 0255.

Kath White, CEO, City of Wanneroo, Locked Bag 1, Wanneroo, Western Australia,. 6946. Tel: 61 8

5.2.1 List of women Mayors and CEOs in Australia

New South Wales

Le Lam, Mayor, Auburn Council, PO Box 118 AUBURN NSW 1835
Ph.02 97351222. Fax: 02 96431120. Email: AuburnCouncil@auburn.nsw.gov.au

Eva Campbell, Mayor, Council of Camden, PO Box 183, CAMDEN, NSW 2570
Ph.02 46552455. Fax: 02 46552770

Sheridan Dudley, General Manager, Council of Camden PO Box 183, CAMDEN,
NSW 2570. Ph. 46552455. Fax: 02 46552770.

Margaret Oats, Mayor, Campbelltown City Council, PO Box 57, CAMPBELLTOWN,
NSW 2560. Ph.02 46201510. Fax: 02 46201496. Email:
ccadmin@campbelltown.nsw.gov.au

Kayee Griffin, Mayor, Canterbury City Council, PO Box 77, CAMPSIE, NSW 2194.
Ph.02 97899300. Fax: 02 97891542. Email: council@canterbury.nsw.gov.au

Jennifer Bonfield, Mayor, Coffs Harbour City Council, Locked Bag 155, COFFS
HARBOUR, NSW 2450. Ph. 02 66484000. Fax: 02 66484199. Email
coffs.council@chcc.nsw.gov.au

Shirley Adams, Mayor, Grafton City Council, PO Box24, GRAFTON, NSW 2460.
Ph. 02 66430200. Fax: 02 66427647. Email: council@graftoncity.nsw.gov.au

Helen Brayne, Mayor, Griffith City Council, PO Box 485, GRIFFITH, NSW 2680.
Ph. 02 69621277. Fax: 02 69627161. Email: admin@griffith.nsw.gov.au

Susan Hoopman, Mayor, Hunters Hill Council, PO Box 21,HUNTERS HILL 2110.
Ph.02 98161555. Fax: 02 98097338. Email: hunt@pegasus.oz.au

Joyce Wheatley, Mayor Kiama Council, PO Box 75, KIAMA, NSW 2533.
Ph. 02 42320255. Fax: 02 42320255. Email: council@kiama.nsw.gov.au

Rhonda Bignell, General Manager, Ku-ring-gai Municipal Council, PO Box 15,
GORDON, NSW 2072. Ph: 02 94240888. Fax: 02 94240880.

Maire Sheehan, Mayor, Leichhardt Council, PO Box 45, LEICHHARDT, NSW 2040.
Ph: 02 93679222. Fax: 02 93679111. Email: leichhardt@lmc.nsw.gov.au

Jean Hay, Mayor, Manly Council, PO Box 82, MANLY, NSW 1655,
Ph: 02 99761500. Fax: 02 99761400.

Patricia Harvey, Mayor, Mosman Council, PO Box 211 SPIT JUNCTION NSW 2088.
Ph: 02 9978400. Fax: 02 99784132. Email: council@mosman.nsw.gov.au

Janet Dore, General Manager, Newcastle City Council, PO Box 489, NEWCASTLE,
NSW 2300. Ph: 02 49742000. Fax: 02 49742222. Email:
officialmail@ncc.nsw.gov.au

Genia McCaffery, Mayor, North Sydney Council, PO Box 12, NORTH SYDNEY,
NSW 2059.Ph: 02 99368100. Fax: 02 99368177. Email:
genmangr@northsydney.nsw.gov.au

Patricia Giles, Mayor, Pittwater Council, PO Box 882, MONA VALE, NSW 1660.
Ph: 02 99701111. Fax: 02 99707150. Email:
pittwater_council@pittwater.nsw.gov.au

Edna Wilde, Mayor, Ryde City Council, Locked Bag 2069, NORTH RYDE, NSW 1670. Ph: 02 99528222. Fax: 02 99528222.

Gerry Brus, General Manager, Ryde City Council, Locked Bag 2069, NORTH RYDE, 1670. Ph: 02 99528222. Fax: 02 9952 8070.

Laurel O'Toole, Mayor, PO Box 120, STRATHFIELD, NSW 2135. Ph: 02 97460431. Fax: 02 9764 1034. Email: council@strathfield.nsw.gov.au

Lynnette Beck, Mayor, Tweed Shire Council, PO Box 816, MURWILLUMBAH, NSW 2484. Ph: 02 66720400. Fax: 02 66720429. Email: tsc@tweed.nsw.gov.au

Dr Sara Murray, Mayor, Wingecarribee Shire Council, PO Box 141, MOSSVALE, NSW 2577. Ph: 02 48680888. Fax: 02 4869 1203. Email: wscmail@wsc.nsw.gov.au

Helen Kuiper, Mayor, Wollondilly Shire Council, PO Box 21, PICTON, NSW 2571.

Ph: 0246771326. Fax: 02 4677 2339. Email: council@wollondilly.nsw.gov.au

Victoria

Gwenda Allgood, Mayor, Rural City of Ararat, PO Box 246, ARARAT, VIC 3377. Ph: 0353550200. Fax: 03 53524749. Email: araradc@netconnect.com.au

Marilyn Duncan, CEO, Brimbank City Council, PO Box 70, SUNSHINE, VIC, 3020. Ph: 03 92494000. Fax: 03 9249 4351. Email: info@brim.vic.gov.au

Veronica Martens, Mayor, Glen Eira City Council, PO Box 42, CAULFIELD, VIC, 3162. Ph: 03 95243333. Fax: 03 95230339. Email: mail@gleneira.vic.gov.au

Angela Long, Mayor, Greater Dandenong City Council, PO Box 200, SPRINGVALE, VIC 3171. Ph: 03 92395100. Fax: 03 92395196.

Lorraine Bartling, Mayor, La Trobe Shire Council, PO Box 345, TRARALGON, VIC 3844. Ph: 1300 367 700. Fax: 03 51745832. Email: latrobe@latrobe.vic.gov.au

Penny Holloway, CEO, La Trobe Shire Council, PO Box 345, TRARALGON, VIC 3844. Ph: 1300 367 700. Fax: 03 51745832. Email: latrobe@latrobe.vic.gov.au

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Kay Rundle, CEO, Maribyrnong City Council, PO Box 58, FOOTSCRAY, VIC 3011. Ph: 03 96880200. Fax: 03 96877793. Email: email@maribyrnong.vic.gov.au

Ann Cox, Mayor, Mildura Rural City Council. PO Box105, MILDURA, VIC 3502, Ph: 03 50222777. Fax: 03 50211899. Email: mrcc@mildura.vic.gov.au

Leonie Burrows, CEO, Mildura City Council, PO Box 105 MILDURA VIC 3502. Ph: 03 50222777. Fax: 03 50211899. Email: mrcc@mildura.vic.gov.au

Fay Ure, Mayor, Mitchell Shire Council, 113 High Street, BROADFORD, VIC 3658. Ph: 03 57346200. Fax: 03 57346222.

Stella Kariofyllidis, Mayor, Moreland City Council, Locked Bag 10, MORELAND, VIC 3058. Ph: 03 92401111. Fax: 03 92401212.

Maria Mercurio, CEO, Moreland City Council, Locked Bag 10, MORELAND, VIC 3058. Ph: 03 92401112. Fax: 03 92401212.

Margaret Jennings, Mayor, Nillumbik Shire Council, PO Box 476, GREENSBOROUGH, VIC 3088. Ph: 03 94333111. Fax: 03 94329559. Email: nillumbik@nillumbik.vic.gov.au

Catherine Dale, CEO, Nillumbik, Shire Council, PO Box 476, GREENSBOROUGH, VIC 3088. Ph: 03 94333111. Fax: 03 94329559. Email: nillumbik@nillumbik.vic.gov.au

Anne Dunn, CEO, Port Phillip City Council, PO Private Bag No.3, ST KILDA, VIC 3182. Ph: 0392096666. Fax: 03 92096435.

Jessie McCallam, Mayor, Whitehorse City Council, Locked Bag 2, EASTERN MAIL CENTRE, VIC 3100. Ph: 0392626333. Fax: 03 92626490. Email: customer.service@whitehorse.vic.gov.au

Dr Deborah Cole, CEO, Yarra City Council, PO Box 168 , RICHMOND, VIC 3121. Ph: 03 92055555. Fax: 03 92055089.

Queensland

Joy Drescher, Mayor, Beaudesert Shire Council, PO Box 25, BEAUDESERT, QLD 4285. Ph: 07 55405111. Fax: 07 55405103. Email mail@bsc.qld.gov.au

Kay McDuff, Mayor, City of Bundaberg, PO Box 538, BUNDABERG, QLD 4670. Ph: 07 41524588. Fax: 07 41529155.

Joy Leishman, Mayor, Shire of Caboolture, PO Box 159, CABOOLTURE, QLD 4510. Ph: 07 54950100. Fax: 07 54950149. Email: nobler@caboolture.qld.gov.au

Julie Boyd, Mayor, City of Mackay, PO Box 41 MACKAY, QLD 4740. Ph: 07 4968 4444. Fax: 07 49514489. Email: ceo@mackay.qld.gov.au

Alison Kerr-Jones, Mayor, Shire of Maroochy, PO Box 76, NAMBOUR, QLD 4560. Ph: 07 54758501. Fax: 07 54418364. Email: maroochy@maroochy.qld.gov.au

Y. A. Chapman, Mayor, Shire of Pine Rivers, PO Box 5070, STRATHPINE, QLD 4500. PH: 07 32050555. Fax: 07 32054658.

Dianne Thurley, Mayor, City of Toowoomba, PO Box 3021, Village Fair, TOOWOOMBA, QLD 4350. Ph: 07 46886611. Fax: 0746383830. Email: council@toowoomba.qld.gov.au

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6. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER ACTIONS

6.1 The journey's been long and there's still a long way to go

The representation of women in local government in Australia has improved considerably over the past 2 decades and on a range of criteria the situation in Australia appears to be progressive when compared to many other countries. In the past few years a series of programs and initiatives has been put in place in different states of Australia to encourage women to nominate for local government and to support those women, both elected and appointed, who are already there. Despite the achievements, there is still much to be done if the espoused aims of government and community organizations about equity in local government are to be achieved. Local government has the potential, which needs to translate into action, to attract and retain women who have a contribution to make to their local communities – women who, after all, 'hold up the other half of the sky'. There are 4 key issues that have emerged from this study, which form the basis for the recommendations for further actions.

Issue 1: Increasing the representation of women elected representatives in local government

Recommendation 1

That a comprehensive initiative such as that conducted recently in Victoria be developed as a resource package nationally and distributed to each state and the Northern Territory. This package to include:

- Information kits containing practical advice, information and case studies for women considering standing for election in local government, and for those who want to help others to stand.
- Workshop outlines, leader notes and suggestions on how to establish a mentor contact list to support intending candidates in the lead-up to the election
- A media and publicity kit for use by women candidates emphasizing the contribution women can make to their local communities through local government
- A candidate database on a compact disc which can be used to collect data on candidates and election results.

Responsibility: *ALGWA (see recommendation 8); Office of the Status of Women; State Departments of women*

Recommendation 2

That a model policy and discussion paper on child-care costs as a routinely claimable expenditure be developed for consideration by every state and the Northern Territory.

Responsibility: *ALGWA, Australian and State Local Government Associations, State Departments of Local Government*

Recommendation 3

That the Victorian Charter for Women in Local Government be developed as a national model of best practice and all local governments be encouraged to adopt it.

Responsibility: *Municipal Association of Victoria, ALGWA, Australian and State Local Government Associations*

Issue 2: Keeping the women there

Recommendation 4

That a model mentor program be established nationally for distribution to those states which do not have such programs. The model program should include support, information, resource referral and assistance to women in local government with particular emphasis on women who are newly appointed or elected.

Responsibility: *ALGWA, Federal and State Departments of Women, Australian and State Local Government Associations*

Recommendation 5

That appointed women be offered opportunities for relieving in senior positions and that those who reach senior positions receive appropriate career development including the opportunity to relieve in other senior positions as well as undertaking appropriate management training courses.

Responsibility: *ALGWA, Federal and State Departments of Women, Australian and State Local Government Associations*

Recommendation 6

That an exit survey be developed nationally and distributed to local governments in Australia for completion by women leaving local government.

Responsibility: *ALGWA*

Recommendation 7

That an Australia-wide survey be carried out to establish what has been done to advance gender equity in local government, and the degree to which bullying exists in local governments.

Responsibility: *ALGWA, Federal and State Departments of Women and Local Government*

Issue 3: Women supporting women in local government

Recommendation 8

That funding be sought from the Federal, State and Northern Territory governments for time-limited positions as Women's Policy Advisers. These positions would be funded for three years and would have responsibility for developing many of the projects outlined in earlier recommendations.

Responsibility: *ALGWA (National Women's NGO Funding Program)*

Recommendation 9

That the Australian Local Government Women's Association should have branches in every state and the Northern Territory.

Responsibility: *ALGWA, the Western Australian and South Australian Departments of Women and Local Government Associations.*

Recommendation 10

That the current ALGWA web site be independent and more of a resource to women in local government. An immediate priority would be to mount this report and the list of women in leadership in local government on the revised site as one resource.

Responsibility: *ALGWA and its members with appropriate skills*

Issue 4: Women's information and researchRecommendation 11

That a national database be established on employees and elected representatives in local government.

Responsibility: *Australian Bureau of Statistics function. ALGWA and Office of the Status of Women to approach.*

Recommendation 12

That national data currently collected is published in a way that facilitates research on women and gender issues.

Responsibility: *Australian Bureau of Statistics function. ALGWA and Office of the Status of Women to approach.*

¹¹ Australian Bureau of Statistics, Australia Now – A Statistical Profile,

² Australian Bureau of Statistics, Australia Now – A Statistical Profile, Geography and Climate

³ Australian Bureau of Statistics, Australia Now – A Statistical Profile at <http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs/>

⁴ Yearbook Australia, 1994.

⁵ Torres Strait is the small sea passage between the northern tip of Queensland and Papua New Guinea

⁶ Births, Australian Bureau of Statistics. 3301.0. 1997 issue

⁷ Commonwealth Office of the Status of Women, Women in Australia 1999, p.33

⁸ *ibid*, p.55

⁹ Unpublished data, Transition from Education to Work Survey, quoted in Commonwealth Office of the Status of Women, Women in Australia 1999, p.56.

¹⁰ Australian Bureau of Statistics, 6202.0 Labour Force Australia.

¹¹ Australian Bureau of Statistics, 6291.0.40 Participation rate – Australia.

¹² Much of this section on governance has been drawn from the local government study of Australia, prepared by Professor Kevin Sproats, and available at <http://unesco.org/huset/lgstudy>

¹³ Whip, R and Fletcher, D.1999. Changing Characteristics of Women on Local Government Councils in Australia: 1982-1993

¹⁴ Recording of turn out by gender was discontinued in 1967.

¹⁵ Australian Electoral Commission, Voter Turnout from 1901 – 1998 at <http://www.aec.gov.au/voting/turnout.html>

¹⁶ Whip, R and Fletcher, D.1999. Changing Characteristics of Women on Local Government Councils in Australia: 1982-1993.

¹⁷ Australian Electoral Commission, Election Statistics, 1993, 1998

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- ¹⁸ Sawyer, M. 1997. *Women in Parliament*, Current Affairs Bulletin, February.
- ¹⁹ In 1997 the Australian Labor Party introduced a target of 35 per cent for endorsement of women in winnable, generally safe, seats. This target, however, has not been reached and sceptics suggest that it is unlikely to happen in the near future.
- ²⁰ Sawyer, M. 1997. *Women in Parliament*, Current Affairs Bulletin, February
- ²¹ Where the Commonwealth had total discretion over the appointment. Implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action, p. 163 at url<http://osw.dpmc.gov.au/>
- ²² NSW Government Action Plan for Women 2000 – Power, Decision Making and Leadership, p 42 at <http://www.women.nsw.gov.au/>
- ²³ Women's Policy Office, July 2000. Representation of Women on Government Boards and Committees, Women Today at <http://www.wa.gov.au/wpdo/>
- ²⁴ Burton, C. 1997. Women's Representation on Commonwealth and Private Sector Boards. A research paper for the Office of the Status of Women.
- ²⁵ NSW Government Action Plan for Women 2000 – Power, Decision Making and Leadership, p 44 at <http://www.women.nsw.gov.au/>
- ²⁶ Purdon and Associates, 1997. *Female Representation in Local Government*. This report was funded by a grant through the Office for the Status of Women by the Federal Minister of Sport, Territories and Local Government.
- ²⁷ Purdon and Associates, 1997. *Female Representation in Local Government* P.11
- ²⁸ At these sessions members of the community can address their Council, however the procedures differ widely. Some Councils only allow community members to address them on items in the business paper for that meeting, whereas others allow any community member to address the Council on any issue. The length of time for each speaker and for the public access session varies as does the need for community members to notify Council ahead of time of their intention to speak.
- ²⁹ Public question times allow members in the public gallery to direct a question or questions at either individual Councillors or members of staff on any Council issue. If the question can't be answered without some research, the questions are taken on notice and responded to later.
- ³⁰ The Victorian Local Government Women's Charter calls on each local government to adopt a range of principles aimed at equity for women in representation, local community and social development, planning and reconciliation.
- ³¹ Australian Social Trends, 1999.
- ³² Women's Electoral Lobby at <http://www.wel.org.au>
- ³³ Emily is an acronym for Early Money is Like Yeast.
- ³⁴ A single-issue party formed to fight extension of Sydney Airport. Its constituency is the metropolitan areas surrounding the airport.
- ³⁵ The Tasmanian Government Department responsible for women.
- ³⁶ At <http://www.women.tas.gov.au/>
- ³⁷ The Stegley Foundation is a private philanthropic trust established in 1973 by the late Brian and Shelagh Stegley, in Victoria. The Stegley Foundation's philanthropic role is to promote social justice through social change. Through its funding program, the Foundation is committed to the principle of empowering disadvantaged sections of society and making local and other spheres of government more responsive to the needs of their constituents.
- ³⁸ Purdon Report, 1997, and information provided from each Local Government Association and the Australian Local Government Directory, July 2000.

³⁹ Whip and Fletcher. 1999. 'The Changing Characteristics of Women on Local Government Councils in Australia 1982-1993'. *Australian Journal of Social Sciences*. February v34. p.59

⁴⁰ Sinclair, A. 1987. *Getting the Numbers*, North Melbourne, Municipal Association of Victoria in conjunction with Hargreen Publishing Company.

⁴¹ Councils On-line, <http://www.alga.com.au/>

⁴² Purdon and Associates, 1997. *Female Representation in Local Government* This report was funded by a grant through the Office for the Status of Women by the Federal Minister of Sport, Territories and Local Government.

⁴³ Representation in this context is defined as having the same characteristics of the people being represented. Whip and Fletcher point out that Pitkin (1967) and Perkins and Fowlkes (1980) identify a different definition, which is acting in the interests of people represented, without having the same characteristics.

⁴⁴ The elected head of a Shire, as opposed to a Council, is generally a President, however the responsibilities and rank are the same as a Mayor.

⁴⁵ The Australian classification of urban local governments included in the Australia report on local government has been used here.

⁴⁶ Mayors in Australia are either directly elected for the whole term or are elected annually by their fellow councillors.

⁴⁷ Most states set the remuneration level for councillors but it ranges from as little as meeting fees of \$50-\$100 in some instances in Western Australia to the more general allowances of \$5,000 - \$10,000 in other states, with a higher allowance for the Mayor. In Queensland councillors determine their own pay, and their allowances are substantially higher than in the rest of Australia, with the Mayor and Deputy Mayor receiving a much higher allowance than the councillors.

⁴⁸ Whip and Fletcher. 1999. *The Changing Characteristics of Women on Local Government Councils in Australia 1982-1993*. *Australian Journal of Social Sciences*. February v34. p.59

⁴⁹ Department of Local Government 1999 National Report at <http://www.dlg.gov.au>

⁵⁰ Parents and Citizens Associations are a formal part of each primary school.

⁵¹ Maitland City Council Public Inquiry, October 1997, p.145

⁵² Maitland City Council Public Inquiry, October 1997, p.134

⁵³ It is up to each council to determine whether child-care costs can be claimed by elected representatives. Some local governments do include this in their facilities policy, but they would be a minority.