

# COMMUNIQUE

## ALGWA National Women's Conference

### "Women Going Places – Ticket to Ryde"

25<sup>th</sup>-27<sup>th</sup> November 2010

***"Why is it - that after 152 years of the existence of Local Government, it is still necessary to draw attention to the gender inequity of Local Government leadership at both the political and managerial levels?"***

***...Because it has not changed - and it needs to...***

The ALGWA National Women's Conference 2010 has brought together women and like-minded men from across Australia who are passionate about supporting women in Local Government. Over the course of the last two days we have focussed on the issues of:

- gender equity
- barriers to women in local government
- pay equity
- workplace structures – flexibility
- work-life balance
- self-empowerment
- leadership and supporting other women
- use of social media
- models of targets and quotas to increase representation by women
- motherhood and careers
- political structures and the level of women's representation

Why are these issues important? Because delivering the best outcomes for our increasingly diverse communities demands a gender balanced approach to decision making. As noted by John Neish, General Manager Ryde Council, *"Leadership teams ... are at their best when male and female energies and views are brought to the table and the best of both are harnessed"*.

A key focus of this Conference has been to critically assess the "journey" for women in local government to date. Our "Ticket to Ryde" has provided an informative and challenging opportunity for us to reflect on where women in local government are now – and where we want to go next.

Confronting and rejecting the prevalence of existing alpha-male behaviours exhibited within local government (by both men and women) is critical if we want to bring about positive change. These negative behaviours (intimidation, bullying, personal attacks, lack of respect) add no value to local government

and are a significant barrier to women (Councillors and staff). When a Councillor utilises negative behaviours, and it is not challenged but rather passively accepted as the 'norm', local government is diminished as a whole. The community expect, and deserve, much more from their local government representatives.

A key message arising from this Conference has been the importance of women supporting women. As was eloquently said by the Hon. Linda Burney MP, NSW Minister for Community Services, *"Lean on the shoulders of other women – and our shoulders should be there for others"*.

There are a myriad of challenges facing women working in local government (as Councillors or Council staff). We have worked to identify those challenges and suggest solutions. Going forward, we have identified specific advocacy and action roles for ALGWA – but also specific advocacy and action roles for us as individual women to effect positive change at our Councils and in our communities.

The 50:50 Vision Councils for Gender Equity Program has a ten year focus, there is still a long journey ahead. It is up to each of us, in our capacity as a Councillor or Local Government staff member, to work together – support and respect each other, share information and through that, strengthen local government and build stronger and more cohesive communities.

During the Conference, Delegates shared their thoughts, aspirations, fears, and frustrations. We identified proposed actions to effect positive change for women in local government. These ideas were collected and grouped under the following categories:

- Advocacy by ALGWA
- Actions for ALGWA
- Women supporting women
- Structural change – building stronger communities
- Changing the management approach of local government
- Strengthening our position – broadening the conversation
- Self Empowerment
- Wildlife management (aka "Elephant spotting")

These contributions will be used to inform the development of ALGWA's forward work for driving a change agenda for women in local government.

The thoughtful and the passionate contributions from all Delegates are highly valued and respected. The full list of ideas will be circulated to Conference Delegates and provided to all ALGWA members.

Thank you.

## **FEEDBACK FROM ‘THE BOARD’ – ACTIONS FOR POSITIVE CHANGE BUILDING A MORE POSITIVE LOCAL GOVERNMENT FOR WOMEN**

### **ADVOCACY BY ALGWA:**

- ALGWA be more proactive – even RADICAL – call for targets (or even quotas) for women in Local Government as Councillors and senior staff management roles. Consider a carrot and stick approach - mandatory targets and mentoring and proactive programs
- Work to support LGAs to address the “unconscious bias” by changing HR thinking and recruitment practices eg selection criteria
- ALGWA to lobby a constitutional recognition of local government and sustainable funding models for local government
- Challenge the persistence of alpha-male behaviour (by both women and men) – advocate for change at all tiers of government.
- ALGWA take a strong pro-active stand on the government’s back down on equal pay for workers in the care sector (usually women) – all underpaid and under valued.
- ALGWA to continue to highlight opportunities for improved workplace environments for Council employees (ie: increased paid parental leave provisions, breast-feeding friendly workplaces)
- ALGWA to have a higher presence in community campaigns on issues important to women (ie: Paid parental leave, White Ribbon Day, caring responsibilities for women – children and aged parents)
- Campaign for increased remuneration (including provision of superannuation) for Councillors.

### **ACTIONS FOR ALGWA:**

- ALGWA National needs to develop a contemporary vision statement
- Do presentations at all LGMA and LGA state conferences throughout Australia in 2011 to inform profiles of women – LWGA/YoWiLG.
- Consider change of title from WILG to WILL – Women in Local Leadership (lot of strength in the word WILL)
- Establish monitoring programs – for professional expertise but also to guide through the landscape of local government.
- Establish mentoring programs – supporting women Councillors and staff working in Local Government and encouraging younger women and women from different cultural backgrounds to consider running for Council or employment within Local Government.
- Establish strategic alliances with other organisations – expand the boundaries of the conversations we have.
- Work with ALGA to hold a Mayor and CEO forum on gender diversity.

- Establish a stronger networking presence for women in local govt for women to come together and share ideas.
- Create opportunities for leadership development for women
- Focus on leadership not management
- Life long learning and education
- Provide some information sessions for women about smart campaigning
- Develop a communication strategy - provide support even if only giving direction/assistance; a sounding board
- ALGWA needs to make it clear to both new women councillors and longer serving councillors that members are available as mentors and “listeners”.
- How about LGMA to take on board the 50:50 gender equity, to move stage 2 away from ALGWA only; stage 1 ALGWA initiative has been excellent but we need to not get it (stage 2) stuck in “woman land”
- ALGWA should increase its membership fees so its members can do their work. It’s not a chook raffle!
- ALGWA should seek funding for training courses on how elections work, how to get (and stay) elected and how to use technology for community and election campaigns.
- Engaging young women in local government and identifying and supporting women for leadership roles
- For awards and accreditation ensure that we ask for “demonstrated” change rather than just statements that things have changed – HOW HAVE THINGS CHANGED – demonstrate change in attitudes – numbers alone won’t be good enough
- Set up Facebook support group
- Websites should be used more ALWA and YoWiLG
  - More info
  - More controversial
  - More issues
  - More up to date with views, etc
- Mentor other women in non-traditional roles
- Mentoring women “on the cusp” could be facilitated by ALGWA
- Provide a welcoming environment for women
- Host regular regional meetings of ALGWA – build local government networks
- Need strategies to support and nurture indigenous women’s participation on local government

- Development programs in rural towns for women wishing to stand for council, to dispel their fears of not being able to cope or feeling that they are not able to be part of team with men Councillors
- How about ALGWA getting funds to make a promo or documentary for local government and encouraging women?
- Work together on implementing strategies to improve opportunities for women in local govt. Yes...FUND SOLUTIONS
- ALGWA should fund network training courses for computers, the internet, social media (facebook, twitter, etc..) – why not have a focus on this at the next Conference?
- ALGWA needs to email/mail membership reminders every year and share membership details (with the permission of the member)
- Need a better mix of ALGWA Execs and staff older and younger; A broader membership
- YoWiLG: - should continue; - meet 6 monthly to make comments; - keep movement program going and get all LG to do it! Accountability

#### **WOMEN SUPPORTING WOMEN:**

- Provide shoulders for younger women to lean on
- Dare to be different! Challenge and change the structures – don't play the boy's game - or things will not change
- Build on our strengths; have compassion; show empathy; be consultative
- Remember: women can make a difference – don't be intimidated
- Establish a relationship with Emily's List to support and encourage (and fund) more women to stand for local government
- Share information with other women, help each other more
- Female Councillors should show respect to non-elected women. At the Conference Councillors turned away when they know you are a Council officer
- Women need to work together and not against each other. Women need to respect each others choices. We blame men for a lot of injustices but should we be looking at ourselves? Should we be more responsible for ourselves and then learn to work together?
- Can ALGWA be aimed not just at elected women but all women. I didn't see too many of the women GM's attending.

#### **STRUCTURAL CHANGE – BUILDING STRONGER COMMUNITIES**

- Establish Status of Women's Advisory Committees to support stronger inputs to decision making by women within LGA's

- What “structure” or destructing is needed to make women feel comfortable to get involved with? Noting that women are not attracted enough to make up 50% of LGn
- Development programs for young people to encourage them to stand as a candidate for council. To dispel the myth that councillors are stuffed shirts and council is not work bothering about. Those are the people of the future who need encouragement to take the town forward
- We need more women to be encouraged into LG career guidance in schools especially the male dominated areas such as building surveying and engineering
- Think of Council strategies for service provision –key life points where local government can play a community connecting roles – ie: linking up new mothers, supporting people leaving employment, supporting people with chronic health needs, supporting aged people in our communities.
- Think about spatial connections in place making – ie: location of roads, planning locations for schools and social infrastructure
- Provide the BEST services in the most needy suburbs
- Avoid ‘gating’ our communities (through poor planning of roads, housing affordability) – porous boundaries make better communities
- Pre-school facilities services on premises of councils
- Recognise that local government sets the building block for the community – inclusivity and responsiveness.
- “Roads, rates and rubbish” is a significant undersell of local government.
- Lobby to minimise interference by Department of Planning and Ministers interfere in land planning that is not regional as outcomes have significant implications on the local amenity for women and families.
- Return power in planning and rates back to local councils whose representatives (women and men) are closer to the community.
- Women are easy targets of developers and those that represent them when politicians and parties accept donations from the construction industry and corporations.
- Identify the women in your community with passion and encouragement and support them
- Set up local networks support groups and social groups for women – staff and elected members
- Succession planning targeting women
- Implement a maximum of two terms for Councillors – eg: 2 terms rotates long term men

- Need to address the basic culture in the workplace and make changes: - bullying; - discrimination; - sexism; - intimidation; - harassment; - gender inequity.
- Model of parenthood are changing – men want to see their children
- We need to encourage more men into part-time work / flexible work opportunities for both men and women
- Structured way to encourage young women to stand for council
- What can we do to encourage community (voter) engagement?
- Noted that cost-shifting by state and federal governments - no money to support, no resources to support, no assistance to support
- All donations in money and in-kind must be declared by candidates to elections in all three tiers of government.
- Broaden mentoring network. Increase ALGWA membership
- Need to get all LG related associations together to make a combined effort to encourage women across the Board: - LGMA; LGWA; LGA

## **CHANGING THE MANAGEMENT APPROACH OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT**

- Positive change at Local Government is needed
- We need to be able to combine our various roles
- We need to Benchmark for council: - % acting in higher duties; - % acting in other positions; % doing training in leadership, etc
- Provide superannuation for elected representatives
- The NSW Draft Guidelines on the appointment and oversight of general managers needs to deal with sexism in appointment of GMs and doesn't have to be AGM to be a GM
- Breaking the stereotype of a GM must be a director , and a director must be a manager. Take the opportunity to choose from other ranks.
- Change council meeting procedures to enable a format right-of-reply for staff (to reduce mistruths, grandstanding, bullying and harassment at what should be a decision-making forum)
- Work to eradicate negative 'alpha male behaviours' (verbal aggression, personal attacks, disrespect of the individual, discourtesy, threatening and intimidating behaviours) – note: these negative behaviours are exhibited by both men and women
- Make Councils report on Gender – ie: Formal KPI's
- Consider possible staff exchanges between Councils to allow women to enhance skills and experience.
- Greater focus on training and support for women on career planning and applying for senior positions

- If the government(s) are serious about gender equity then forced amalgamations remain a further impediment to women who may wish to contest elections.
- Need for mentoring programs for young professional women and access to mentoring for rural Councils
- Need to engage and educate men in the development of women and engage senior management in supporting any programs or initiatives
- Encourage city councils to undertake gender audits – an organization wide audit in which all staff participate and involve them (staff) in strategizing for change – Anu Mundhur, Researcher Flinders University
- We know the issues – the challenge is to get message across to whole of council
- Work to increase workplace flexibility
- R.E.S.P.E.C.T. – a fundamental foundation for better local government and creating a more supportive environment for women (Clrs and staff)
- More women will take up local government roles as the work challenges get harder and the pay conditions loose parity with other jobs. Once local government becomes women’s work, men will not want their jobs. Careful the high pay will go to male consultants
- Awards (industrial) to be reviewed to recognize shift towards “emotional intelligence” skills and have these recognized in the salary structure
- Be more flexible with work arrangements for women
- LSL conditions (in WA) to be changed in line with other states as current system largely impacts on women who may reduce hours for caring needs
- 50/50 awards program to be mandatory to bring about structural and procedural review and changes; outcomes to be included in annual reports on council websites
- Try workshops for women and mtg procedure and dealing with men
- Change perceptions about flexible working arrangements. You don’t need to be in the office 9-5 every day to be productive
- Progressing different leadership partners - not necessary to be a front person
- Change job ads/selection criteria for senior management on education and achievements in your last job
- Roll out ‘friendly’ GM’s for media coverage on women in local government.
- Track policy change against outcomes - measure some pilot councils changes over 2 years

- Female councillors should check out position of recruitment consultants on gender equity and diversity
- Female councillors should check position description and selection criteria for general managers to remove barriers to women
- Female councillors should question the expectation that senior managers should work 24/7 – need to make GM and senior mgt jobs more attractive to all staff to aspire to
- Local government to look at scheme for progression (pay and responsibility and respect) for leadership roles not management roles that you apply for when they are available – if they ever become available
- Develop uniform KPIs for use by councils re: gender equity
- Encourage councils to use matrix not policy to measure social happiness of community and staff (as per Barbara Pocock) approach
- Develop model workforce plan with gender equity targets
- To encourage women to go for senior roles long hours are capped and job sharing made possible
- Use/investigate international models and quotas for employment at all levels

### **STRENGTHENING OUR POSITION - BROADENING THE CONVERSATION**

- The common denominator regarding gender issues is ATTITUDE
- Need to talk to non-converted
- We need to somehow change men's attitudes to female colleagues
- This is a power shift argument
- Diversity will bring better decision making
- We need to adopt a "gendered" approach to change – one that seeks to change gender relations and imbalance in power
- Formalise arrangements/membership with state and federal LG associations
- Women represent 50% of the population – and women should represent 50% of all endeavours.
- Women's Associations are part of the answer!
- Can we please go forward speaking strongly about showing responsibility of strategies for our communities as a jointly woman/man "natural" synergy
- Support men who support women (male champions)

- Need more men to champion our cause. Need men like Ray and John Neish to speak at General Manager Conference, etc. It's great to hear his/their view of what needs to be done to promote gender equity
- Guest speakers include showed only women. Since we work with men, John Neish should have been on front page – as courtesy and inclusiveness
- Before coming here a male manager sarcastically asked me “when is the men’s conference? Women talk about equity but then have these things.” ARGH! My initial response, “the other 364 days a year” and men are welcome to attend. 30% of Clrs are women at my council. 20% are in senior director roles. 15% are managers!!! I'll take him some informative reading back to work on Monday
- Women/mothers bring up liberated boys
- Men need to do/take up more caring and calming roles
- Men need to do/take up more caring and calming roles
- Educate men to do equal housework

## **SELF EMPOWERMENT**

- I am fabulous!
- I am a healthy person!
- It's all about the women!
- Find some spare space in the day for you
- Don't be more 'blokey' than the blokes – be yourself
- Be confident in who you are – talk back to the fearful voices in the back of your head.
- Have a go, back yourself! Do things your way.
- Manners matter – courtesy costs nothing
- Presentation matters
- Stop apologising!!
- We are angry!!
- Always do your best – you cannot be expected to do any more
- Look after you head, your heart and your body
- Keep a sense of humour – Laugh loud, laugh often
- Grab things with both hands, shake things up!
- Everyone needs something to do that we like doing and we think is valued; someone to love; and, something to look forward to
- Sitting at home you're not valued. You have to get out

- Share the load – no one can do it all alone.
- Take your holidays! Do not overwork, turn off your mobile phone

### **“ELEPHANT SPOTTING”**

- Overbearing and patronizing men are elephants in the room
- Negative alpha male behaviours (exhibited by both men and women) – intimidation, put-downs, personal attacks have no place in local government.
- Identify how you spot an “elephant”, e.g., behaviour that is gender inappropriate; initiation style (frat-boy) (bullying) (exercise mgt style); sporting events that are anti-women; hidden recruitment techniques; being told that you have to work harder than men
- The elephant in the room is focusing on the “problems” and not the solution; we need to work together to fund the solutions
- Men who hold the power and want to keep it are the elephants in the room. Time to find ways to engage them
- We are the elephant! We don’t put ourselves out there enough
- Men are the elephant
- Bullying is the elephant in the room
- Don’t blame men for gender inequity
- Bullying – I was given an assembly session as a new councillor – I googled bullying definitions, private one for each C and then spoke about how it affected me – so I named the Elephant and it has shrunk
- Men don’t want to answer to women; - Men don’t want women in senior roles because we make them look bad; - It’s a man’s world and always will be
- Don’t voice a problem ie “Elephant in the room” if you do not want to be part of the SOLUTION!!