Redesigning
LOCAL DEMOCRACY

JENNY WILLS
with Kate Nash

your "where to start" guide ...

Design and Production: Greg Dunnett

FOREWORD
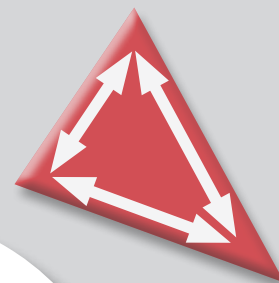
"Citizens as shapers and makers of communities"

This introductory Guide, *Redesigning Local Democracy*, aims to enrich democracy through expanding deliberative and participatory activity, and thereby promoting and reinforcing community wellbeing.

It builds on the concepts of community wellbeing (liveability, equity, conviviality, vitality, adequate prosperity, sustainability and viability) discussed in *Just, Vibrant & Sustainable Communities*, Jenny Wills 2001. Local Government, as the sphere of government "closest to the people" has a unique opportunity to combine its representative role with participatory democracy. Hearing the voices and choices of citizens through encouraging and supporting participatory activity better equips local government to deal with complex governance and development challenges.

The **GEM** relationship model represents a holistic, integrated system and provides tools for democratic development and community wellbeing. The model demonstrates that local democracy is expanded and sustained when governance, community engagement and management are recognised as integrated and interdependent. Underpinned by rights and social and cultural values, the **GEM** model discusses new democratic styles of leadership, workplace democracy, democratic inclusion and active citizenship. These enhance participatory practice and improve democratic decision-making between elected representatives, management and citizens.

The Local Government Community Development and Services Association of Australia (LGCD&SAA) expresses its appreciation to Jenny Wills and Kate Nash for their ongoing commitment to and passion for local democracy to improve wellbeing outcomes. They have generously contributed to several projects, including this one, sponsored by the Association. They have applied their extensive experience, knowledge and understanding to developing the **GEM** model and associated tools.

The LGCD&SAA would also like to thank our partner, the UTS School of Local Government, and the network Councils that participated in the Just Communities Project for their contributions. The issues and ideas involved in the **GEM** model development were discussed, debated and tested at steering group and network Council workshops.

The LGCD&SAA commends *Redesigning Local Democracy* to local governments. The **GEM** model and tools will be an invaluable resource for those Councils wanting to enhance decision making for community wellbeing through the inclusion of citizens in expanded and integrated democratic practices.

Jenny Merkus   Lisa Cornelius

Immediate Past President   President

LGCD&SAA   LGCD&SAA

ABOUT THE LGCDSAA

The Local Government Community Development & Services Association of Australia (LGCD&SAA) is a federation comprising a representative from each state working in community development or services in local government. The representative is nominated by either a community development and services local government association, where such an association exists, or the state based Local Government Managers Association.

The Association has demonstrated its commitment to a strong and viable local government sector. Since its formation in 1986 opportunities for sharing good practice in social and community planning, service development and community development have been provided.

Knowledge and understanding of community wellbeing and its essential elements has been furthered through: successful conferences, which explored contemporary themes, as well as ongoing social policy and justice issues and challenges for local government; several publications; the Just Communities National Project, jointly auspiced by UTS Centre of Local Government and the LGCD&SAA, and workshop programs. Publications include:

• *Working Together to Develop our Communities – Good Practice and Benchmarking in Community Development and Services*
• *Just Vibrant and Sustainable Communities, A Framework for Progressing and Measuring Community Wellbeing*
• This publication – *Redesigning Local Democracy*

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Jenny's work experience in local government extends over 25 years in municipal social planning and as policy director at the Municipal Association of Victoria. Whilst an honorary fellow at the Centre for Public Policy at the University of Melbourne she wrote the pocket guide, *Just, Vibrant & Sustainable Communities*, published in 2001 by the LGCD&SAA.

Following a national workshop program on community wellbeing and wellbeing indicators Jenny assisted the Association in the establishment of the Just Communities Network of Councils. She was an advisor to the Network from 2006-2008. In recognition of her contribution to innovative community development and gender equity in local government she was inducted onto the Victorian Honour Roll of Women in 2008. Jenny is also the co-author of the 1989 publication, Local Government and Community Services, *Fitzroy: a Study in Social Planning.*

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

CONTENTS

1. INTRODUCTION

> ". . . democracy requires colossal transformation of people's characters. Their habits of heart have to change. People need to become democracies within themselves.
>
> … They must feel that they can put a stop to bossing, that they are equals of others, that they have it within themselves to change things, or to keep things as they are. For democracy to be possible, people have to be sure that they themselves are the source of power of the institutions that govern their lives; that government and other institutions indeed rest upon the consent of the governed; and that therefore when in everyday life they withdraw their consent from these institutions, things can indeed change, sometimes in the smallest of ways, perhaps even for the better."
>
> *(John Keane, The Life and Death of Democracy, 2009)*

Early in the 21st century democracy remains a work in progress. As a political system it is sought after in a growing number of nation states that in the 20th century adopted various forms of autocratic or totalitarian rule. But also in so called "western democracies" it is under challenge. In particular, at a time of escalating technology and global reach into every aspect of human life, the adequacy of representative democracy is being questioned. National governments are being forced to move from single-party rule to negotiated coalitions. Communities are calling for stronger and new forms of accountability on the part of their elected representatives, and are eagerly taking opportunities to express their views and to interact with each other via social media.

In Australia local governments describe themselves as the democratic decision-making bodies "closest to the people" and on this basis argue for greater power and influence over decisions affecting citizens' lives. This has been accompanied by considerable discussion of when and how citizens should be drawn into decision-making processes at the local level. Over the past decade most local governments have experimented with a variety of forms of citizen engagement, eager to demonstrate their responsiveness to changing community expectations. But where these approaches have not been sustained there have been few demonstrated impacts of the quality of citizens' lives.

In workplaces, following a period of emphasis on workers as effective individual work units, adapting to technological demands, there is a renewed focus on the critical importance of workforce engagement in rapidly changing economic, technical and social environments. Here too many approaches are tried, often with little apparent impact or longevity.

1. Introduction ...
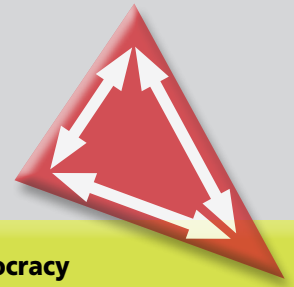
This Guide proposes a comprehensive change process. Local democracy is viewed as a "whole system" of three integrated and interdependent elements working together to produce outcomes that support and encourage community wellbeing.

These elements are: the governance structure and how it operates; the administration which delivers governance decisions in the context of community expectations; and the community of citizens who expect to participate in shaping and influencing decisions that impact their lives.

The Guide introduces the unique **GEM** relationship model linking governance, engagement and management. It aims to help revitalize Council and community discourse and debate about democracy. The Guide also provides tools and other resources for those Councils and communities interested to take the first steps in redesigning their local democracies.

Statistics On Growth Of Democratic States

- At the beginning of the 20th century there were no States with universal suffrage or multi-party elections
- In 1926 - Representative democracies numbered 29
- In 1941 – The number of representative democracies were reduced to 11, but by 1950 had increased to 22
- In 1988 - 66 of the 167 member States of the United Nations were democracies
- At the end of the 20th century 119 of the 192 United Nations members were elected democracies, with 85 of these also respecting human rights and the rule of law

(Several sources including: *Democracy's Century, A Survey of Global Political Change in the 20th Century*, Freedom House Report, New York, 1999)

Representative Democracy

"Human freedom and human dignity, freedom of speech, freedom of thought and freedom of conscience, the right to criticise and the right to freedom of movement are indispensable foundations of human coexistence. Their protection and enhancement are essential to all action by the state. This protection is served by:
the citizen's right to choose and change governments in elections conducted under universal suffrage and by secret ballot,
the responsibility of the executive to the elected representatives of the people, the right and duty of those people to regulate life in society by means of laws and to control the executive.
A democracy is an open society in which all state power is derived from the people. This implies:
the right to participation and consultation in political decision-making at local, regional and national level,
free access to information and free choice between different sources of information,
the freedom of the press and the media,
the freedom to form political parties and to stand for political office,
freedom of association, including the right to form trade unions,
the right to participate in the determination of working conditions,
freedom from slavery and the exploitation of human labour.
Democracy guarantees human dignity. This implies:
the right to life, liberty and respect of the human person,
freedom of speech, thought and conscience,
freedom of religious observance,
freedom of movement of persons, goods and information,
the right to school and post-school education preparing the individual for life in a democratic society.
Equality before the law regardless of sex, race, creed or birth, requires,
an independent judiciary,
the possibility of subjecting all decisions of the executive to judicial scrutiny,
the subordination of the police and the armed forces to the elected government,
the right to privacy and protection of personal freedom."

The Strasbourg Consensus 1983, Council of Europe – Essential elements of pluralist parliamentary democracy (Source: *From Subject to Citizen*, Alastair Davidson, Cambridge University Press, 1997)

2. REPRESENTATION + PARTICIPATION
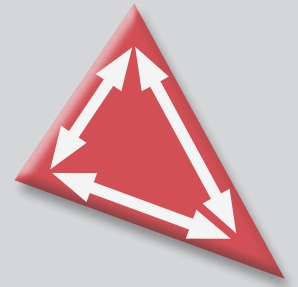
"Modes of participation by local citizens – i.e., expressing voice and making choice – are the most colorful and innovative spots in the unfolding story of decentralization and democracy."

(United Cities & Local Governments, *Decentralization and Local Democracy in the World*, 2008)

"…. the parameters of politics have to change significantly . . . representative and participatory democracy, civil society and local government good practices have to be genuinely and variously *combined*.

"To put that matter in its most simple and brutal form, nothing will be gained by politicians offering the old model of representative democracy with a sprinkling of consultation or the odd public assembly or citizens' jury thrown in for good measure."

(Paul Ginsborg, *Democracy Crisis and Renewal*, 2008)

Democratic governments in the 21st century face the key challenge of meaningfully involving people in political decisions that determine the quality of their daily lives.

Local government, as the sphere of government closest to its constituents, is arguably better placed than either state governments or the Commonwealth to facilitate and ensure an ongoing political voice for people. It can more readily resolve to encourage and support people's effective political participation, that is, their involvement in the development, implementation and review of local policies, priorities and programs (Parry et al, 1972).

By mobilizing local community input into community planning and development processes, and harnessing local knowledge, expertise, skills and differing viewpoints Councils can be strengthened. At the same time local participatory democracy is also reinforced.

From limited beginnings, restricted finances and State government prescription, Australian Councils have nevertheless emerged as complex multi-functional community governments. They now have diverse community responsibilities across all age groups in many aspects of community life.

In addition, in the process of developing communities and promoting community wellbeing, Councils have helped build shared civic identities that create a sense of place and belonging for many people.

Today, albeit with some State and locality variations in priorities and practices, the key responsibilities of local governments in Australia can be summarized as follows:
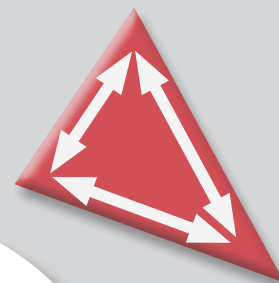
- Representative community government with electoral and legal mandates for local governance and advocacy
- Leading comprehensive policy formulation and integrated strategic and sustainable planning in accordance with the Council-community vision for local wellbeing
- Enhancing and enriching community vitality and conviviality through creative cultural development
- Ensuring the supply of (i) affordable physical, social and cultural infrastructure and (ii) responsive services to meet diverse community needs.

Carrying out these responsibilities is becoming more complex. Councils need to recognise an ever-increasing number of issues, including:

✔ Understanding the local impacts of national and global issues, e.g. climate change, international financial crises, increased urbanization, water and food security and species depletion

✔ Integrating economic, environmental, cultural and social development and aligning it with sustainability parameters and principles

✔ Responding to heightened community expectations for accountability and transparency in all decision-making

✔ Ensuring viable economic planning together with efficient financial management in the provision of infrastructure and services

✔ Monitoring to ensure there is synergy between Council policies and priorities with management/administrative practices

✔ Linking citizens, civic organizations and the wider community into policy planning and funding processes

✔ Acknowledging and fostering local values, beliefs and traditions that underpin aspirations and outcomes for the common good

✔ Respecting and promoting human rights

✔ Protecting cultural resources, heritage, facilities and diversity

✔ Addressing community inclusion, cohesion and vibrancy.

Role of Local Government

"Fundamental principles - Local Governments are elected:

- To represent their local communities
- To be a responsible and accountable sphere of governance
- To be a focus for community identity and civic spirit
- To provide appropriate services to meet community needs and an efficient and effective manner, and
- To facilitate and coordinate local efforts and resources in pursuit of community goals"

(Extract from the *Declaration on the role of Australian local government*, endorsed by ALGA National General Assembly of Local Government, Canberra, 1997)

The influence of economic rationalism in the last decades of the 20th century resulted in an over emphasis by many Councils on corporate solutions. As a consequence, involvement of people beyond their traditional roles as voters or service users, was not always encouraged and key decision-making about the future of communities was often devolved to Council administrations.

This is now challenging for many Councils in terms of demands on political leaders, involving active citizens and achieving comprehensive community wellbeing outcomes. Councils today face ongoing risks of:

- Over reliance on managerial and technocratic approaches, rather than good political leadership coupled with community derived and driven solutions

- Too narrowly defining local government's roles in community wellbeing

- Continuing to restrict decision-making processes to the elected few and selected others

- Under and/or ill-informed decision-making resulting in limited outcomes for communities

- Dissatisfied citizens disengaging from civil society and political processes

- A loss of trust in Councils from citizens, citizen organizations and community stakeholders

Governance Challenges for Cities

- to ensure the benefits of globalization are shared more equally

- to redress the unbalanced emphasis on economic growth and accumulation of wealth by placing renewed emphasis on social justice and environmental sustainability

- to developing enabling strategies that include support for the exercise of citizenship

- to provide local government with more political legitimacy, responsibilities and resources

- to develop co-operative partnerships between government, private sector and civil society

- recognition that the complementarity of civil society and government is at the core of good governance

United Nations Centre for Human Settlements, 2001,
(Source: Quoted by Professor Kevin Sproats, in *Reshaping Australian Local Government*, Edited by Brian Dollery, Neil Marshall and Andrew Worthington, 2003)

Status of Local Government

"Historically, Australian local government has been an anaemic underling, established to undertake a narrowly circumscribed set of activities, wholly dependent on the statutes that established and controlled it, subject to interference by state parliaments and their ministers, repeatedly stripped of responsibilities that would give it some greater substance, frequently dominated by a narrow range of vested interests. . . . . But local government has taken on new responsibilities and acquired new significance. Along with the expansion of local government, there has been a growing awareness of its status."
(Professor Stuart Macintyre, Keynote Address, ALGA General Assembly, 1995)

Such risks create a scenario that, if it continues to play out, could lead to irrelevant Councils and alienated citizens.

By contrast, this Guide proposes a participatory democratic alternative building upon, and strengthening, the base of local representative government. Such an alternative would involve Councils sharing designated governance powers and decision-making responsibilities with their communities and citizens. With this approach community wellbeing would be promoted and sustained through both representative and participatory democracy.

Council Functions

"Amongst its many functions, local government
- maintains over 80 per cent of the nation's road network
- provides, operates and maintains a vast range of community infrastructure
- plans communities, keeps them clean, safe and healthy
- cares for the environment through waste management, natural resource management
- administers community education and local environmental programs
- provides an array of regulatory services often on behalf of other levels of government, for example, environmental health and food inspection services
- promotes regional development, tourism and economic and social advancement
- supports emergency services activities
- provides and increasing array of human services, from services for the young and elderly (such as Home and Community Care) to the promotion of public health and public safety"

(ALGA submission to the Senate Standing Committee Inquiry Into Reform of the Australian Federation, 2010)

3. JUST, VIBRANT & SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES
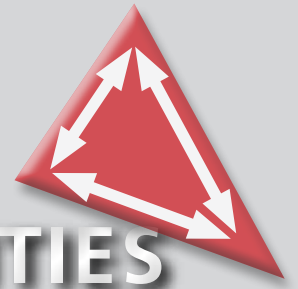
Over the last decade the Local Government Community Development and Services Association of Australia (LGCD&SAA) has actively supported an exploration of participatory democracy and community wellbeing by:

• Commissioning the 2001 pocket guide, *Just, Vibrant & Sustainable Communities A Framework For Progressing & Measuring Community Wellbeing* by Jenny Wills

• Hosting a post publication national workshop program for Councils and communities, facilitated by Kate Nash and Jenny Wills, and

• Conducting national conferences

• Instigating in partnership with the Centre for Local Government, University of Technology Sydney (UTS) the establishment of the *Just Communities Network of Councils*, 2006-2008 for an action research project to enhance local democratic policies and practices.

The 2001 pocket guide looked at connections between democratic governance, active citizenship and community wellbeing. In workshops following the publication it became increasingly evident that if enhanced participatory practices were to become embedded and sustained in Councils as a basis for community wellbeing, then the ways in which councils governed and managed were as important as Councils' attitudes to community participation and their community engagement practices.

The pocket guide also recognized that it was important for the actions in those three areas – governance, engagement and management - to be based on an understanding and appreciation of community cultural values. Community cultural values are the underpinning principles, beliefs and customs that shape community cultural identity and mediate relationships and aspirations within civil society, community organizations and political life.
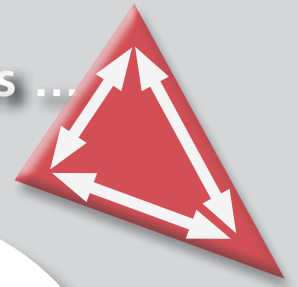
Just, Vibrant & Sustainable Communities scanned a range of Council documents, reviews, conventions and declarations at State, national and international levels to specify the following summary of key values, beliefs and aspirations underpinning wellbeing in Australian communities:

✔ Creativity, social richness and aesthetics

✔ Equity before the law

✔ Fairness, equality of opportunity and social responsibility

✔ Gender equality

✔ Harmony, cohesion and mediation of conflicts

✔ Inclusiveness, connection and compassion

✔ Learning, reflection, innovation and enterprise

✔ Nurturing of physical, social, emotional and spiritual growth

✔ Participation, empowerment and collaboration

✔ Reconciliation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians

✔ Sense of place, belonging and connectedness with other people and the natural environment and its inhabitants

✔ Tolerance, respect for and celebration of difference and diversity of ideas, values and faiths

✔ Universal and equal suffrage

Through the deliberations of the *Just Communities Network* the three equally important areas of governance, engagement and management, that influence community wellbeing, were recognised as interdependent. This insight saw the emergence of the unique **GEM** relationships model for promoting community wellbeing through local democracy.

Civic Values for the 21st Century

The Citizenship Council, chaired by Sir Ninian Stephens, proposed to the Australian government seven civic value commitments as the foundation of Australia's democratic society:

"A commitment to the land (So strong in Australia that it might be seen as a civic value)
A commitment to the rule of law (as one of the essential bases of a free and peaceful society) and to equality under the law
A commitment to the basics of a representative liberal democracy including freedom of opinion
A commitment to the principles of tolerance and fairness
A commitment to acceptance of cultural diversity
A commitment to the wellbeing of all Australians
A commitment to recognising the unique status of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples."
(*Australian Citizenship for a New Century*, Australian Citizenship Council, Commonwealth of Australia, 2000)

Australian Values

• "Australian society values respect for the freedom and dignity of the individual, freedom of religion, commitment to the rule of law, Parliamentary democracy, equality of men and women, and a spirit of egalitarianism that embraces mutual respect, tolerance, fair play and compassion for those in need, and pursuit of the public good

• Australian society values equality of opportunity for individuals, regardless of their race, religion or ethnic background

• the English language, as the national language, is an important unifying of Australian society"

(Australian Department of Immigration and Citizenship - extract from statement for applicants for provisional, permanent and some temporary visas 2011)

4. THE GEM MODEL

The **GEM** relationship model is concerned with how democratic changes can be facilitated and sustained for ongoing community wellbeing. Intrinsic to the model is a belief in the power of democracy and its potential to transform political and bureaucratic cultures so as to enhance community wellbeing outcomes.

Australian Councils have made many advances in good governance, community consultation and engagement and in public administration. However, those three areas are usually viewed separately, and are not necessarily linked to democratic policies and principles.

Such a fragmented approach to local planning and development can be counterproductive to achieving overall and lasting improvements for communities. For example, negative impacts can result from efficiency and effectiveness agendas when both councillors and citizens are disempowered by managerialist driven solutions. Also, outcomes are limited when substantial Council resources are provided for community engagement initiatives but the results are not fed into management and/ or Council decision-making.

This Guide considers it timely that the areas of governance, engagement and management are viewed as three essential ingredients for achieving community wellbeing outcomes. Accordingly, the GEM model views the three areas as linked and interdependent in producing and sustaining systemic community wellbeing through local democracy.

The model is represented though the **GEM** triangle

DEMOCRATIC GOVERNANCE

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

ENHANCED COMMUNITY WELLBEING

ORGANISATION MANAGEMENT
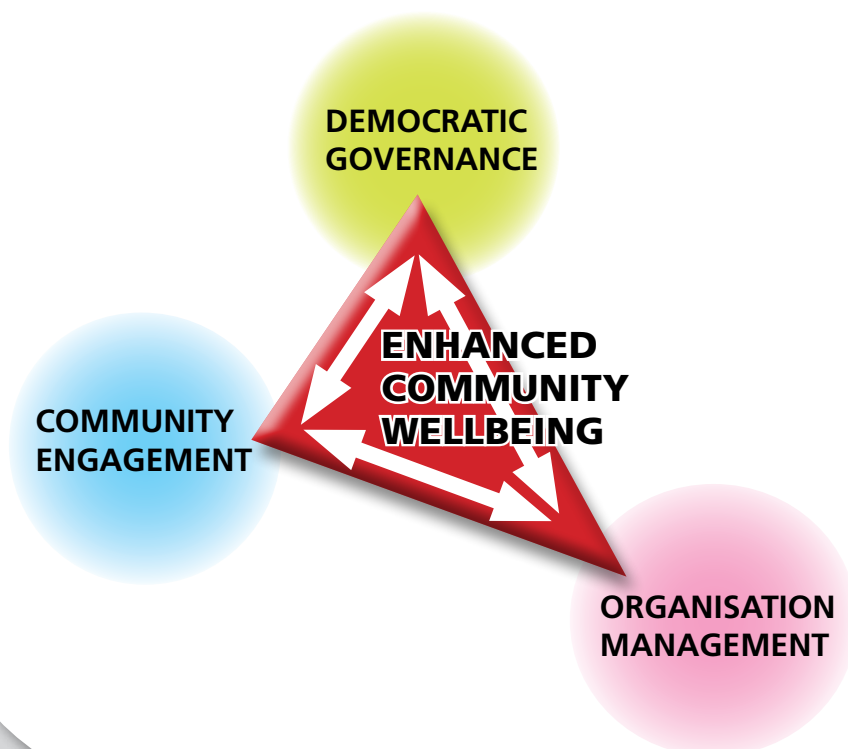
THE GEM MODEL ...

DEMOCRATIC GOVERNANCE

Governance for community wellbeing is primarily concerned with political processes for setting and pursuing strategic directions for local community development.

It requires:

- democratic leadership by elected councillors in shaping and building better communities, and
- councillor encouragement of ongoing active citizenship in local policy formulation, planning, program development, funding and review processes.

The goals of such shared governance are to ensure that political decision-making is:

- consistent with the Council-community vision
- focused on the common good, at both Council and organisational levels, to ensure just outcomes for the community
- transparent and well informed by an empowered citizenry working co-operatively and responsibly with councillors
- accountable to the electorate in terms of integrated and sustainable development objectives that also enhance community vitality and vibrancy

ENHANCED COMMUNITY WELLBEING

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Engagement for community wellbeing is supported by a Council's recognition of the democratic right of citizens, and their organizations, to participate in political decision-making, beyond and between elections.

It therefore requires Councils to strive to integrate ongoing citizen participation within Council and management policies and practices, so that Council and the community can become partners in local development.

It entails Council utilization of a range of targeted public participation techniques and processes to maximize citizen input into political decision-making for community wellbeing.

ORGANISATION MANAGEMENT

Management for community wellbeing requires a commitment by Council management to public good goals with public participation as a key driver of local change.

It also calls for empowering staff so that they are able to promote the democratic rights of citizens to participate, and accordingly to work in partnership with citizens and citizen organizations. A prerequisite, therefore, is that management entrench participatory policies and practices within a democratic workplace structure and culture.

4.1 Democratic Governance

The focus of democratic governance is on the *political process* of governing. It is concerned with the *who, how*, and *why* aspects of decision-making, rather than with the structure or institution of government.

With calls for increased participation becoming more global, interest has heightened in the ways in which democratic political decision-making can be more open and involving. This is evidenced, for example, by usage of an expanding range of deliberative democracy techniques and processes, including various forms of E-democracy, and advances in social media communication technology.

In the latter part of the 20th century, the drivers for many Councils were economic rationalism and managerialism. As a result, Councils were more concerned about the corporation and the competitive delivery of services than with strengthening democratic governance and increasing community participation. This was more pronounced in those Australian states where Councils were amalgamated to achieve greater efficiencies. In those instances restructured Councils were encouraged to re-invent themselves as businesses, with boards of management, and to redefine their citizens as customers.

Whilst such notions are now largely discredited as simplistic and anti-democratic, confusion can still remain around the concept of democratic governance, and its relationship to corporate governance and corporate management.

The democratic governance role of Councils and the corporate governance role of Council organisations are sometimes spoken of as synonymous, but they are not. This lack of clarity has been to the detriment of political engagement and community empowerment. "A consequence of the contemporary failure to distinguish governance and management properly is that the participation engages citizens with managerial rather than with governance activity." (Carver, 2001)

"Governance is the way in which we make decisions regarding the future of society.

Good governance creates an environment in which trust in the systems and processes of democratic government can be strengthened. This trust in turn promotes and fosters the confidence of citizens to engage and participate in public life more fully. Active community participation at all levels of society contributes to better governance.

Elements essential to good governance include openness and transparency; social, financial and environmental accountability; responsiveness and the rule of law. The equitable treatment of all citizens and the full and equal participation by citizens in shaping the future are also fundamental features."

(A Voice for All: Strengthening Democracy, Western Australian Citizenship Strategy, 2004-2009)

4.1 Democratic Governance

Democratic governance derives from legislated powers and electoral mandates. It is concerned with open, transparent and accountable political processes for arriving at policies aimed at common good outcomes for communities. Council roles and functions in democratic governance are primarily the responsibilities of councillors, whilst corporate governance and management responsibilities for Council organisations come within the ambit of senior executives.

The following table compares these differences and clarifies the complementary relationship between democratic governance and corporate governance in carrying out their core responsibilities.

| Democratic Council Governance	Council Corporate Governance
Democratic, political & policy governance	Organisational policy governance
Citizens with civil, political, social and participatory rights	Citizens & service users
Accountable to the electorate, democratic mandate and democratic representation of all community members	Accountable to Council, citizens & service users
Community vision setting: • involving citizens & stakeholders • promoting civic spirit & sense of identify • strengthening sense of place & sense of community	Organisational vision setting, aligned with Council Plan and public value management goals
Guardian & developer of community assets	Organisational management of community resources
Political & policy advocacy	Organisational & policy advocacy
Integrated community development – social, cultural, environmental and economic	Organisational development – structures, relationships and staff development
Strategic & participatory planning for a geographical area	Corporate planning within scope set by state legislation & Council charter
Mayor with Council - community & civic leadership responsibilities	CEO – organisational leadership, responsible to Council
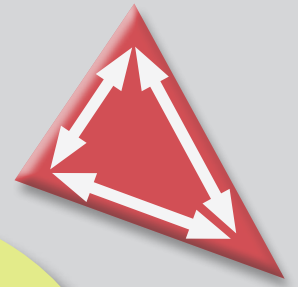
PRINCIPLES OF GOOD GOVERNANCE

"Governance is a very important concept in the first decade of the 21st century. A wide variety of nations, organizations, institutions and individuals are grappling with how best they can be governed.. . . In order to act on behalf of the whole community, provide leadership and pass legislation that affects the community which has elected them, democratic governments must meet specific governance demands. . .

Good governance has been defined . . . as existing when a government governs for and on behalf of its community. This provides the democratic basis which is essential to an understanding of good governance in the local government sector, with a focus on good governance as it applies to democratically elected governments.

Good governance is:

- Participatory
- Consensus oriented
- Accountable
- Transparent
- Responsive
- Effective and efficient
- Equitable and inclusive
- Law abiding"

(*Good Governance Guide*, Good Governance Advisory Group – MAV, VLGA, Department of Victorian Communities, LGPro, 2004)

- Constitutional and legal recognition for local democracy
- The ability to elect local representatives: citizens should be able to elect their local representatives in conditions of local freedom
- Partnerships between spheres of government: there should be cooperation and partnership among local, regional/provincial and national spheres of government
- Defined legislative framework: local democracy should ensure local government has appropriate powers in accordance with the principle of subsidiarity
- Opportunity to participate in local decision-making: all citizens should be able to participate actively in the local democratic process
- Open local government – accountability: local government should be accountable to the community it serves
- Open local government – transparency: the local decision-making process should be open and transparent
- Openness to scrutiny: The work of the executive should be open to scrutiny

- Inclusiveness: the process of local decision-making must reflect the social, economic, environmental and cultural needs of the entire community
- Adequate and equitable resource allocation: in order to respond to the needs of the community
- Equitable service delivery: the distribution of services should reflect the diverse needs of the community
- Building strong local democracy and good governance: commitment to continuous capacity development of democratic local government

(*Time for Local Democracy*, The Aberdeen Agenda, Commonwealth Local Government Forum, 2005)

"Engaging citizens in policy making is a sound investment and a core element of good governance. It allows governments to tap wider sources of information, perspectives, and potential solutions, and improves the quality of decisions reached. Equally important, it contributes to building trust in government, raising the quality of democracy and strengthening civic capacity." (Caddy and Vergez, 2001)

In recent decades the significance of participation to wellbeing outcomes at individual and community levels has emerged. Its importance is now well documented in, for example, the areas of health, integrated planning, environmental sustainability and cultural development and underpins a wide range of public policies and programs at all levels of government.

PARTICIPATION AND COMMUNITY WELLBEING

Individual wellbeing

Feeling part of the community, or community connectedness, is one of the satisfaction measures of the *Personal Wellbeing Index* established in 2001 by the Australian Unity organization and the Australian Centre on Quality of Life at Deakin University.

Other characteristics rated in the annual survey are personal and family relationships, health status, standard of living, life achievements, security and spirituality/religion.

Health

The World Health Organisation in 1998 identified key *Social Determinants of Health with Social Exclusion* as one its 10 evidence-based factors influencing both individual health and community health.

The WHO's Healthy Cities Program in a progress review of developments from 1987 to 1990 identified participation as one of 11 factors influencing positive outcomes for cities, viz, " A high degree of participation and control by the public over the decisions affecting their lives, health and wellbeing" Such participation is increasingly seen as integral to health planning, health promotion and the provision of health services.

Integrated Local Area Planning (ILAP)

- Local areas and communities differ, and more emphasis should be placed on devising appropriate responses to distinctive local circumstances and needs
- Adopting a holistic view of local areas, linking related physical, environmental, economic, social and cultural issues, rather than treating them separately

- Developing a shared understanding of key issues amongst all those concerned with the well-being of local communities, and as far as possible, a shared vision of desired futures
- Related activities of different departments, organizations and spheres of government should be coordinated in order to address key issues and achieve desired futures
- More efficient and effective use of available resources is essential, and unnecessary gaps or duplication between government programs should be eliminated
- Community involvement in planning and management processes should be increased, and
- Local Government has a lead role to play in implementing these principles

(*ILAP Memorandum of Understanding* between Australian Government and ALGA 1992)

Environmental Sustainability

The statement from the UN 1992 Rio Conference on Environment and Development noted in principle 10 that, "Environmental issues are best handled with the participation of all concerned citizens." And in principles 20, 21, and 22 the conference specifically endorsed the requirement for the participation of women, young people and Indigenous peoples.

In a 1999 national Local Government Guide for Local Agenda 21 community involvement is listed as of the six guiding principles for action, viz " – recognition that sustainability cannot be achieved, nor significant progress made towards it, without the support and involvement of the whole community. A co-operative council-community approach from the early stages through to implementation of the project allows for resource sharing, and a supportive and active community which perceives itself as owning both the problems and the solutions. . "

Cultural Development

Agenda 21 for Culture was endorsed at the fourth international forum of Local Authorities for Social Inclusion in 2004 and subsequently adopted by the United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG). The Agenda sees participation as integral to advances in cultural development, human rights, citizenship, social inclusion and shared governance.

The mission of Australia's long standing arts funding and government advisory body, the Australia Council, is to – "enrich the lives of Australians and their community by supporting the creation of the arts." This mission is underpinned by three principles, including, "Access for all Australians – assisting Australian citizens and civic institutions to appreciate, understand and participate in enjoying and celebrating the arts."

The *Brisbane Declaration*, UN International Conference on *Engaging Communities* 2005 affirmed:

- That community engagement is critical to effective, transparent and accountable governance in the public, community and private sectors

- That community engagement is a two way process by which the aspirations, concerns, needs and values of citizens and communities are incorporated at all levels and in all sectors in policy development, planning, decision-making, service delivery and assessment

- That effective engagement generates better decisions, delivering sustainable economic, environmental, social and cultural benefits

- That effective community engagement enables the free and full development of human potential, fosters relationships based on mutual understanding, trust and respect, facilitates the sharing of responsibilities, and creates more inclusion and sustainable communities.

The unique **GEM** model views engagement from the perspective of civic and political engagement, and not simply community participation within civil society. Collectively Councils have an extensive tool-kit of ways for engaging with their communities and progressive Councils have been refining and targeting techniques and methods to maximize community wellbeing outcomes. These include future search conferences, citizen panels, charettes, consensus conferences, citizen initiated referenda, round tables, world cafes, e-democracy, focus groups, deliberative polling and citizen juries. (See also initiatives undertaken by Australian councils that participated in the *Just Communities Network* 2006-08)

However it is important in terms of advancing democracy that, as Ginsborg, 2008, points out, such tools are not simply "auxiliary consultation mechanisms for representative democracy" but rather "reinvent the connection between participation and representation."

By this measure problems still persist with some Council approaches to community engagement. These include:

- engagement being too frequently confined to consultation, rather than a two-way dialogue between community and Council
- lack of preparatory information provided to the community which then detracts from the quality of community input
- timelines too tight to allow for wider and more meaningful input from the community
- valuable community input remaining quarantined within a particular section/ department of Council and not shared across the organisation
- information not feeding into the decision-making processes at senior management and/ or Council levels
- a lack of feedback to the community on how their views, interests and expertise were taken into account in final decision-making by Council

These problems require organisational changes that should be addressed at elected and management levels to ensure that people's *meaningful* participation in the formulation, implementation and review of Council policies, priorities and resource allocation is the key rationale for community engagement activities.

JUST COMMUNITIES NETWORK 2006-08 PARTICIPATORY INITIATIVES

- **Bankstown City Council:** *Community Participation Task Force*
- **Baulkham Hills Shire Council:** *2026 Community Visioning Process*
- **Brisbane City Council:** *Civic cabinet meetings in the suburbs and Community Engagement Intranet Site and Register*
- **Knox City Council:** *Community Engagement Advocates Network*
- **City of Melville:** *Community Plan 2001-2017*
- **Moonee Valley Council:** *Community Engagement Framework*
- **Moreland City Council:** *Organisational Cultural Change Project*
- **Paramatta City Council:** *Residents' Panel*
- **Penrith City Council:** *Community Participation Manual*
- **Sutherland Shire Council:** *Consultation Policy and Framework Review*

"Employing a governance perspective and a new focus on public service allows us to explore the full range of policy choices, management strategies, ethical responsibilities and civic commitments that are necessary to effective and responsible public administration. It also highlights the complexities of democratic governance and civic engagement. In turn, we are reminded that, by definition, democracy involves a diverse collection of people, beliefs, traditions, processes and structures that come into play when public decisions are made. In such a milieu, public administrators are required not only to address the traditional concerns of organizational management, policy development, and service delivery. Increasingly, the job of public administrators will be that of fostering citizenship, and identifying, creating, and managing *public values.*
(Janet V. Denhardt and Robert B. Denhardt, *Governance Processes and the New Public Service*)

The **GEM** model endorses such a systemic approach. In addition to the issues around strengthening local democracy in elected institutions, and deepening citizen participation beyond traditional representative government, **GEM** requires understanding of Councils as workplaces where officers are encouraged and able to engage in participatory democracy. "Workplace democracy is a multi-dimensional international concept with foundations in economics, politics and sociology, psychology and labour history. Generally, theorists suggested that enhancing democracy within the workplace also enhanced civic engagement and political democracy and how workers view their work." (Tim Hatcher) This empowerment challenge is often overlooked in councils' enthusiasm for effective community engagement.

Today management must be primarily concerned with democratic and social criteria, where advancing public interest is paramount. New *public value management* is in contrast to traditional *public administration* where accountability was associated with legal or political standards, and new public management, which emphasizes economic factors and markets.

Public value management has two key aspects. The first reinforces the need for efficient and effective use of public resources in attaining community wellbeing outcomes. The second is concerned with the degree of public involvement in both determining and achieving wellbeing priorities. With *public value management*, the public's role has expanded and people are now perceived as, " …the overseers of government, the funders of government and the users of services." (Moore 1995)

The importance of the public's role and the breadth of public input have continued to grow, so that from a *public value management* perspective, "Ongoing public involvement is required because managers can only know the meaning of public value (which is contested and always changing) through dialogue with citizens. In addition, they can only operate with funds and authority provided by the public – the future flow of which depends upon the renewal of citizen consent." (Lowndes, Prachett, and Stoker, 2006)

This public involvement requires collaboration in which dialogue, interaction and deliberation are the norm and where citizens are full partners. (See Yang and Callahan 2007). In the new collaborative system, shared goals, agreed policies and accepted practices must be underpinned by transparency, accountability and fairness.

Codes of Conduct developed by Councils and Local Government State associations/peak bodies provide an impetus for changed behaviours that will build relationships and trust within Council, its officers and the wider community.

The following *Code of Ethics* for Local Democracy provides another useful checklist for managers to ensure that their behaviours, together with councillors' conduct, are not only ethical but also geared to reinforcing good governance, *public value management* and strengthening community participation.

A Council *Code of Ethics* for Local Democracy

1. Leadership

✔ I recognize my representative/statutory/professional decision-making responsibilities and also that I am an agent for the democratic process and therefore will encourage local participatory democracy

✔ I promote active citizenship as a means to both achieving community-owned outcomes and strengthening and reinforcing local representative democracy

✔ I support the public's meaningful engagement in the political decisions that shape the community and its wellbeing

2. Integrity and Honesty

✔ I take responsibility for my actions and have the courage to act on my convictions to support the public interest

✔ I take responsibility for my actions even if it is uncomfortable to do so

✔ I disclose any conflict of interests and any instances of corruption

✔ I credit the contributions of others in promoting the community's best interests

3. Fairness and Compassion

✔ I support and promote public policies free of prejudice, discrimination and exclusion

✔ In accordance with the law (international, national, state and local laws) and in the interest of fairness to all people, I address barriers to participation arising from issues associated with Aboriginality, gender, income, age, disability, ethnicity, location, sexual orientation, religion

✔ I treat all persons claims and transactions in a fair and equitable manner,

4. Respect for fellow Councillors, officers, public, land, local culture and laws

✔ I acknowledge the individuality and uniqueness of other people and will treat others with courtesy, patience and civility

✔ I recognise the prior ownership, custodianship and spiritual connection to place of Aboriginal people and accordingly will support statements and strategies to promote wider council-community acknowledgement

✔ I will be law-abiding

✔ I will strive to care sustainably for the land we share

✔ I will be sensitive to peoples' attachments to place, local history and cultural icons

✔ I respect diversity of opinion and encourage public debate on policy and funding matters effecting community well-being

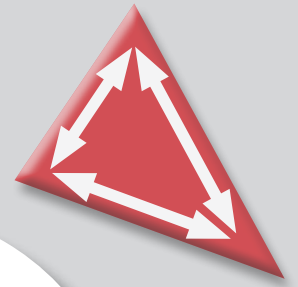**5. Stewardship of public assets and pursuit of common good/public interest**

✔ I will apply a holistic perspective to the community's resources, taking into account economic, environmental, cultural and social aspects in determining a preferred action

✔ I will care for and sustainably manage the community's natural and built resources

✔ I will make decisions based on the merits of issues (not personalities)and common good (not individual) outcomes

✔ I recognize diversity of opinions and will work towards conflict resolution and community consensus on key and strategic issues and funding priorities in our community

6. Accountability and Transparency

✔ I am accountable to the Council and electorate for my behavior and decisions and will report in full and in a timely manner according to according to the appropriate laws and regulations, Council's Governance Code and community expectations

✔ I support open meetings and transparent decision making

✔ I support the public right to know and to be informed about Council processes and procedures

✔ I support Council utilizing diverse communications methods to help ensure the electorate is well informed and able to audit Council decisions

✔ I support innovative mechanisms and processes for devolving decisions to the community so as to continually expand the scope of community governance.

(Sourced and adapted from *Developing A Local Agency Ethics Code*, *2003*, Institute for Local Self-Government, Sacramento CA)

In the 21st century quest for greater participation four important issues will influence local capacities for developing shared and democratic decision-making.

They are:

• styles of leadership
• workplace democracy
• democratic inclusion
• active citizenship.

4.4.1 Styles of Leadership

"Society today needs leaders who can work for quiet, positive, sustainable change. We need people who can help others understand that thoughtful, value-based behaviour will benefit them and their society. To achieve these shifts, leaders must understand how to help people change their self-image and how they view their self-interest."
(Robert Theobald, *We DO Have Future Choices, Strategies for fundamentally changing the 21st century*, 1999)

"The challenge is to revitalize our community and a new brand of leadership is necessary instead of one which simply continues to manage our community along historical tracks. The new leadership must be transformational and head down new and exciting paths.
I believe what is required of this kind of leadership is the ability to develop a vision of what can be, to mobilise the community to accept, participate and work towards achieving a new vision, and lasting changes." (Greg Jones, quoted in the *Queenscliffe Herald*, September, 2010)

Achieving multi-faceted community wellbeing in the 21st century is partly dependent upon leadership that can champion widespread input into complex decision-making processes. Therefore people in public leadership roles at political and civil society levels need a comprehensive skills set, together with nurturing attitudes, that can foster the development of empowerment strategies. Such leaders will have a strong sense of the power of democracy and its potential to develop people and transform their behaviour. (See Amanda Sinclair, 2007, on liberating leadership).

It is increasingly apparent that, from a starting point of trustworthiness, ethical behaviour and communication skills, the following leadership characteristics will also be increasingly sought. These skills should help build and bridge new relationships for organisational, community and political change:

✔ Awareness of the importance of sharing power
✔ Self awareness and reflection

✔ Understanding that common good outcomes should drive political behaviour

✔ Appreciation of both formal and informal organisational and community processes

✔ Empathy

✔ Innovation, creative thinking and a willingness to take risks

✔ Good interpersonal and negotiation skills

✔ An ability to make and maintain relationships and collaborate with others

✔ Acceptance of conflict and controversy

✔ Openness and willingness to share information

4.4.2 Workplace Democracy

"My concept of a democratic workplace is one in which workers have the opportunity to genuinely participate in and influence the decisions which affect their lives at work. As expressed by Guy Standing, 2008: 'workplace democracy is surely about the distribution of power, income and assets, and such matters as technological and job design. While workers need information, democracy is having the capacity to do something with it.' " Lansbury, 2009)

If increased community participation and common good outcomes are to be realized through new *public value management,* democracy will need to be supported and reinforced not only within the community, but also across the Council organisation.

The local government workplace culture is highly regulated, dependent on a complex web of regulations and political decisions. 'Silos' dominate and the connections between organisational and governance arms are strictly, though not always effectively, filtered through senior officers. At the same time, it is often quite junior officers who are charged with the tasks of achieving community connections and delivering on political undertakings to engage more closely with citizens.

Australian Councils in the *Just Communities Network*, 2006-08, found that relegating such responsibilities to lower oganisational levels worked against sustained political and policy changes. However, even when more senior managers are involved the results of community engagement do not necessarily influence strategic decision-making. " . . . although local government use community engagement mechanisms with relatively high frequency . . .they are less likely to use citizen input in decision making." And, "Public managers determine who will participate, how they will participate and how the values and concerns shared by the public will be incorporated into the decision-making processes, as well as how they will be reflected in the outcome." (See Yang and Callahan, 2007, USA study of 428 municipal managers)

This raises questions. How do local government work environments support Council officers in fostering and leading meaningful democratic engagement between Council and its citizens? Can they do this unless they themselves are empowered to operate democratically in their own working lives?

For several decades management thinkers and practitioners have been drawing attention to the increasing complexity of all work organizations. Transformation of workplaces has been facilitated in a number of ways: for example, interdependent work units, high skilled workers in self-managing groups, cross-functional and flexible groupings, devolved decision making and control, and decentralised accountability models with interactive feed-back loops. Innovations such as these have the potential to strengthen the new public value management in pursuing both its internal and external goals.

New *public value management* will be achievable when CEOs and senior managers are committed to achieving this kind of organisation and the continuous cultural changes that will be required to sustain it.

4.4.3 Democratic Inclusion

"Social exclusion is the process by which certain people and groups find their access to basic citizens' rights blocked (civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights)" (Committee on Social Inclusion and Participative Democracy, United Cities and Local Governments, 2008)

A central tenet of democracy is equality of all people, not only in franchise terms of equal voting entitlements, but as citizens equal to each other. As equality underpins local democracy, good governance should aim to include all people in the shaping of local communities.

This means embracing inclusion, not simply as related to service access, but as a key democratic concept incorporated within all of Councils' activities.

Such a democratic positioning would require councils to implement holistic Council-community actions aimed at redressing barriers to participation, such as those associated with low socio-economic status, Aboriginality, ethnicity, gender (see p33), disability, age and/or location.

"People crave a sense of belonging to the place they inhabit and they should have a right to be part of their local community as equals. An important step is ensuring legal inclusion and equity, but that is only a framework that has to be supported by organic community building. Community resilience relies on deep and sustainable networks that have been nurtured over a long a long time, and resources must be made available to diverse communities. Communities can be inclusive and exclusive, especially ethnic and religious ones. Many examples exist around issues such as gender, sexuality and religiosity that can make ethnic and religious affiliations difficult if not impossible for people. Not everyone from an ethnic background may want to be part of and represented by that community. Thus nurturing neighbourhood and social groups may be a better tool in creating and maintaining sustainable communities that cut across ethnic and religious lines.
(Gerhard Hoffstaedter, research fellow Latrobe University Institute for Human Security and co-founder of the Melbourne Free University Project, quoted in The Age, Melbourne 1/10/2010)
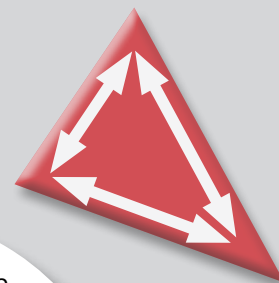
Once obstacles to participation for all these groups are identified they can then be analysed and tackled by Councils from a perspective grounded in human rights, in contrast to a limited welfare perspective, or the restricted view of one or two departments.

A citizens' rights approach would oblige Councils to redress exclusion thus helping all people to develop their potential and to participate fully in civil society. Such a foundation would increase opportunities for people to then connect with political processes that can in turn build and strengthen better functioning communities for all citizens.

The right to be included, and to participate as equals, is packaged with seven other democratic rights in the *Local Democratic Rights Chart*. The Chart also suggests a number of Council policies and actions relevant to each right. Consideration and endorsement of these rights by Council could provide a springboard for the development of shared power and good democratic governance.

HUMAN RIGHTS
- Universal Declaration on Human Rights, 1948
- Convention Relating to the Rights of Refugees, 1961
- International Convention on the Protection and Rights of All Migrant Workers and Their Families, 1990
- International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, 1965
- Convention on the Elimination of All Form of Discrimination Against Women, 1979
- Convention on the Rights of the Child, 1989
- UN 18 Principles for Older People, 1991
- International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, 1996
- The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, 1996
- Madrid International Plan for Action on Ageing, 2002
- ACT Human Rights Legislation, 2004
- Convention on the Rights of Peoples With Disabilities and Optional Protocol, 2006
- Victorian Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act , 2006

UN EXAMINES AUSTRALIA'S HUMAN RIGHTS RECORD, 2011

"Australia appeared before the UN Human Rights Council's Universal Periodic Review Working Group in Geneva on 27 January It was the first time that this particular UN body has had an opportunity to conduct an in-depth examination of Australia's human rights status.
Fifty countries put forward more than 150 recommendations as to how Australia could better protect and promote human rights. Many Australian Government policies fall short of our legal human rights obligations.

The key recommendations were for Australia to:

- Adopt a comprehensive national Human Rights Act

- Establish independent inspectorates to monitor places and conditions of detention and deaths in custody

- Provide human rights training and education for law enforcement officers

- Review procedures and laws applying to the Northern Territory intervention

- Ensure that traditional Aboriginal lands are not leased by the government in exchange for housing and basic services

- Give greater decision-making powers to Aboriginal people

- Use the Declaration the Rights of Indigenous Peoples as the basis for government laws, policies and programs affecting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples

- Sign and ratify Convention 169 of the International Labour Organisation dealing with the rights of Indigenous and Tribal Peoples."

(Indigenous Rights Update, Amnesty International Issue 1, March 2011)

But first, a fundamental franchise anomaly of representative government in Councils should, as a matter of urgency, be addressed and rectified by local and state governments. That is, all Councils in the twenty-first century should "catch-up" with Queensland which in 1920 introduced adult suffrage for Council elections thus completely rejecting any form of property ownership as a basis for voting entitlement. Such long overdue reforms would deliver equal voting rights for all Australians at local, State and Commonwealth elections. These reforms would also serve to legitimate local government's claim for its inclusion as the third sphere of democratic government in the Australian constitution.

> "The local government franchise is hardly ever discussed in Australia. The property element is left over from the nineteenth century before the democratic principle became established . . . .Each person should only vote in his or her place of residence. This is the essence of democracy. Whether we are dealing with representative or participatory democracy, popular control and political equality are the key democratic principles."
> (Rosemary Kiss, in Reshaping Australian Local Government, UNSW Press 2003)

Local Democracy Rights *Chart*

Political Participation & Citizens' Rights	Council Policies & Actions to Promote Political Participation
Right to vote	• Publicise and promote the democratic role of local government throughout the community to encourage high rates of voter interest and turn-out • Make information widely available on election process and candidates • Schedule pre-election meet-the-candidates events in all wards
Right to stand for political office	• Provide regular political information to the local electorate and encourage citizens to seek election • Provide timely and gender specific information sessions for candidates
Right to freedom of political expression and association	• Demonstrate commitment to open government and an active civil society • Stimulate community discussion and debate on local issues and canvass views across all sectors to ensure a diverse input of opinions and community debate
Right to participate as equals	• Offer training for community members to build their capacity and confidence as active citizens • Develop a Charter for Community Governance & Civic Participation which spells out how Council will strive to ensure inclusive participation by addressing barriers and constraints to democratic involvement
Right to information	• Endorse premise of open government, establish policy and implement procedures to maximise freedom of information • Develop user friendly information resources and accessible outlets throughout the community
Right of citizen self-determination – for citizens to decide what sort of community is wanted, how to make it happen and further the common good	• Training for councillors and officers in listening to the community and enabling citizens to be shapers and makers in community development, not simply voters and users/consumers of services • Implement a Charter of Active Citizenship – Rights & Responsibilities • Develop strategies for collaborative work with the community in vision setting, policy development, planning, programming and budgeting • Mandate team work across Council so that there is a comprehensive and coordinated response to issues
Right to participate in community cultural life	• Acknowledge the diverse range of values, beliefs, principles, traditions and institutions that constitute local cultural identity and underpin the richness and vitality of community life • Establish mechanisms, promote processes and provide funding so that citizens can participate in cultural activities of their own choosing that give meaning to their lives and enhance their development and personal wellbeing
Right to have trust in Council and its processes	• Commitment to open, accountable and transparent government • Implement a Council Code of Ethics and Conduct • Explore in councillor and officer training how the code could promote high standards and guide day to day behaviour • Utilise the code in annual Council governance and staff performance reviews
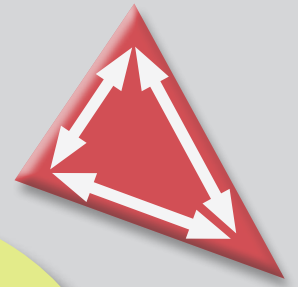
DEMOCRATIC INCLUSION – GENDER EQUITY AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Gender inequality persists in the 21st century in both developed and developing countries, in public and private sectors, in political representation at all governmental levels, in corporations and professions and on boards and committees.

This is despite a history of well argued feminist platforms for change and myriad initiatives at local, state, national and international levels to tackle barriers to gender equality in participation and decision-making.

In 2010 the issue of gender inequity in Australian Councils came under the spotlight in a National Year of Women in Local Government.

The year, with backing and funding support from the Federal Government, targeted the ongoing deficit in women's participation and representation in Australia's Councils - women in senior executive roles represent only 20% of positions, although constituting 51% of the workforce and only 30% of councillors are female.

A wide range of gender awareness activities took place during 2010 including:

• the introduction by the Australian Local Government Women's Association (ALGWA) of an awards and accreditation program to recognise Council achievements in redressing gender inequity

• the appointment of 21 gender equity Ambassadors across Australia

• the dedication of the Local Government Management Association's (LGMA) annual Management Challenge, to gender equity matters, with the participation of 128 Councils teams

• the Australian Local Government Association's launch of the booklet, *Women in Politics*

This significant national initiative emerged from ALGWA's 2007 National Framework for Women in Local Government and subsequent activities, and was strongly backed by the LGMA. There was also support from a wide range of local government peak and professional bodies, the Australian Centre of Excellence in Local Government and State and Federal governments through the Local Government Ministers' Council (LGMC).

 The objectives of the national steering committee established to oversight the year's program were to:

• Raise awareness of the benefits of increasing the participation of women and embracing gender equity at both elected and executive levels

- Acknowledge the significant role women play in the effectiveness and long-term health of local government
- Encourage councils to establish voluntary targets to increase the participation if women in decision-making roles and in leadership training programs
- Encourage councils to further expand their human resources practices to promote gender diversity and flexible work practices.

The LGMC in addition to supporting the introduction and ongoing operation of the awards program has also agreed to:

- Support goals for increasing women's participation
- Support the establishment of an ongoing data base on women's participation
- Incorporate women's participation into a proposed local government workforce strategy
- 2020 targets of 40% of women as elected members, 35% as mayors and 30% of women in senior staff positions.

With access to the experiences, resources and skills of the Victorian Women's Participation in Local Government Coalition (WPILGC) Councils in that state are particularly well placed to achieve these new targets. The coalition, established in 1996 with a partnership of local government peak and professional bodies and women's groups, has received ongoing support from successive Victorian governments.

During 2010 the coalition focused its efforts on formal endorsements by Councils of the Local Government Women's Charter and Councils' preparation of local plans – around the charter principles of *gender equity, diversity and active citizenship* - to increase women's participation and representation leading up to the 2012 Council elections.

WPILGC's strategy places emphasis on cultural change within Councils, their organizations and communities to achieve increased women's political decision-making. This approach reflects the tri-partite **GEM** relationship model of working simultaneously at governance, engagement and management levels to ensure and sustain local democracy and community wellbeing.

The VLGA, a WPILGC partner, has recently been funded by the Victorian State Government to increase the number and diversity of women candidates in the 2012 Council elections. The sharing of Victoria's experiences from this project, and initiatives from other states, should provide valuable information and resources for all Councils as they tackle the 2020 targets for women's participation in local decision-making.

4.4.4 Active Citizenship

"An active citizen is not someone who has simply accumulated a store of facts about the workings of the political system – someone who is able to perform well in a political quiz. An understanding of how the social and political systems work is an essential element, but equally important is the motivation and the capacity to put that knowledge to good use. Essentially, it is a question of active commitment to democracy.   An active citizen . . . is someone who not only believes in the concept of democratic society but who is willing and able to translate that belief into action. Active citizenship is a compound of knowledge, skills, and attitudes: knowledge about how society works; the skills needed to participate effectively; and a conviction that active participation is the right of citizens."

(*Education for Active Citizenship*, Senate Standing Committee on Employment, Education and Training, 1989)

"Local government will encourage non-discriminatory participation of all citizens in building democratic communities which share power and ensure a more equitable allocation of community resources."
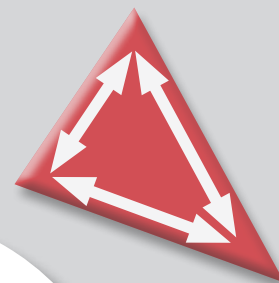
(Extract from *Declaration on the role of Australian Local Government*, ALGA, 1997)

Active citizenship is essential for the operation of democratic governance. Maximizing the potential for citizens to exercise their power depends not only on the interests and motivations of citizens, but also on the positive political messages Councils convey about the central importance of active participation to good local governance.

Councils have been very successful in promoting people's participation in diverse community activities. They have done this through a range of health, cultural, sporting, community care, recreational, educational and other programs. As a result, Councils over many decades have strengthened local civil society relationships and networks, and they have nurtured the growth of more cohesive and vibrant communities.

This community building work has provided a strong platform for Councils to engage more meaningfully with their citizens at a political level. Such engagement should result in citizens having a greater say on policies, local priorities, resource allocation and implementation so as to achieve improvements in community wellbeing outcomes.

Therefore the suggested next step for Councils in promoting active citizenship is not to review and/or expand external engagement practices, but rather to undertake an internal examination of how governance and operational aspects encourage, or detract from, citizen involvement in decision-making.

For Councils interested in furthering empowerment, embracing new political leadership styles, together with a public value perspective, would clearly signal to citizens that their participation rights are of paramount concern to councillors and Council officers.

"Our system of government relies for it efficacy and legitimacy on an informed citizenry. Without active and knowledgeable citizens, the forums of democratic representation remain empty: without vigilant and skilled citizens able to act through our democratic institutions, there is no check on potential tyranny. Citizenship recognises the equal civic worth of every individual. No-one, no matter how rich or powerful, can evade the responsibilities of citizenship or usurp its entitlements. Our democratic values require that every citizen is able to participate in the exercise of these rights and responsibilities."
(Whereas the people, Civics and Citizenship Education, Canberra 1994)

5. CHANGING FOCUS
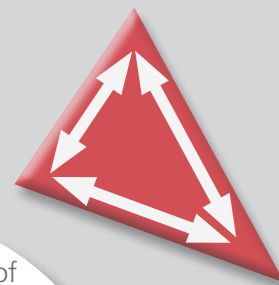
"…. too often improvement is not seen as being about improving the life chances of individuals and communities or about building a stronger democracy. . . . The challenge is now to reconnect the improvement agenda with local politics and with what really motivates local councillors and council officers. The challenge is to develop the next chapter in the local government improvement story with a focus on helping those councils which have achieved competence to retain it and to secure a step change in performance and to move beyond competence and achieve innovative and transformative change."

(*Beyond competence: driving local government improvement,* Tavistock Institute, Local Government Centre-Warwick Business School, 2005)

Councils play an important role in the nurturing and development of civil society at the local level. The functions of Councils across Australia and the programs they operate, facilitate, and/or fund, open up opportunities for people's community participation.

Such participation enhances individual health and subjective wellbeing and contributes to the collective quality of life. Community wellbeing is viewed broadly in terms of how well a society satisfies peoples' wants and needs around liveability, equity, conviviality, adequate prosperity, sustainability and viability. (See Eckersley, 1998, Labonte, Hancock, and Edwards, 1999, and Landry, 1994 and *Just Vibrant & Sustainable Communities*, 2001)

Council planning, policy and service systems can demonstrate the benefits of being the level of government closest to the people, where people's access is primarily determined on the basis of local residency, rather than by property or other ownership requirements.

Councils have been pro-active in tailoring and targeting services to ensure that vulnerable people are not excluded. They have also addressed specific barriers that would otherwise exclude people from community life.

From experience in strengthening civil society, growing social capital and social justice and developing cohesive communities, Councils are well positioned to encourage and enhance civic participation. This participation means that people are able to contribute to political decision-making that shapes their communities.

The ways in which the Council and the Council corporation operate is equally important in facilitating or blocking people's participation. Further, as demonstrated by Lowndes et al 2006 (* *see side note*) changes in Council governance and management styles can have significant impacts and outcomes for people's empowerment. This reinforces the **GEM** model's requirement for tackling participation and inclusion from all three perspectives - governance, the corporation and the community.

*Research by Lowndes et al focused on the way in which the organization operates at both political and managerial levels and the consequences its behaviour can have in terms of restraining or enabling participation. The study saw formal and informal organisational arrangements - practices, conventions and customs - as a key factor that authorities can influence and this was examined to explain differences in levels of participation in a study of eight local authorities in England. The research found that irrespective of socio-economic status and levels of social capital, authorities can make a big difference by demonstrating an openness and responsiveness to participation at political and managerial levels, by providing incentives for people to mobilise and by reinforcing participation. (Local Political Participation: The Impact of Rules-In-Use, Vivian Lowndes, Lawrence Prachett and Gerry Stoker, 2006)
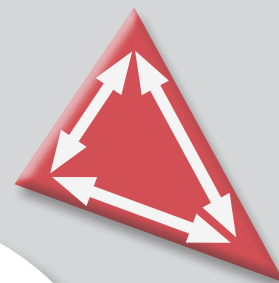
Councils are therefore challenged to rethink their external focus on community engagement as the primary conduit to enhanced participation. Instead, Councils are encouraged to bring about internal governance and management/administration changes that facilitate empowerment across Council and the community.

To guide Councils with an examination of possible internal changes, Councils could begin to consider governance and organisational practices from the perspective of citizens and citizen organisations. Responding to the way in which citizens seek a greater voice could help modify the behaviour of councillors and managers whilst strengthening their own roles through greater collaboration with their communities.

Councils are referred to the *Charter of Active Citizenship for Citizens and Citizens' Organisations* as a starting point for the development of local charters to guide governance and organizational changes.

Charter
of Active Citizenship for Citizens And Citizens' Organisations

(Citizens' Organisations: Those community organizations created and managed by citizens that do not seek profit and operate in the general interest, protect citizen rights and/or preserve the common good irrespective of activity, size, motivation or membership)

1. Right to Participation

✔ Each individual has the right to actively participate in public life, individually and through citizens' organizations

- Public life covers situations and places where issues of general community interest and the common good are at stake
- Participation applies to the whole public policy cycle and not simply tokenistic involvement when the decisions have already been taken
- One hundred percent participation should be the aim, ensuring the involvement of minority and hard-to-reach groups

2. Role of Councils

✔ Councils value and encourage citizen activities aimed at protecting rights, preserving and/or enhancing the common good and/or general interest

- Councils shall remove obstacles to participation and formulate policies transparently, tailoring approaches for different community groups
- Councils shall integrate best participatory approaches in their work practices
- Councils shall call for citizen views and respond appropriately
- Councils shall support and encourage citizens' organizations in undertaking their roles and responsibilities
- Councils shall collaborate with citizens' organizations in their autonomous initiatives, play an active role in joint partnership agreements, and work in partnership with them

3. Responsibilities of Citizens' Organisations

✔ COs have the responsibility to contribute to promoting a greater awareness among citizens and to increasing people's participation in local democratic life.

In doing so, they should strive to achieve the following:

- ◆ Accountability towards their members and their constituency at large
- ◆ Transparency, especially on financial matters when they are beneficiaries of public funds and/or citizens' contributions, and codes of conduct, membership and governance policies
- ◆ Independence from other actors, such as trade unions and political parties, whose roles they shall not take on
- ◆ Democracy in their structure and procedures

- Citizens' organizations shall promote interests and aspirations of citizens, especially marginalized groups
- Citizens' organizations, when bringing new problems to the political agenda, shall encourage discussion and propose appropriate measures

4. Right to Intervention

✔ Whenever citizens' rights, general community interests and/or the common good are at stake, citizens' organizations have the right to intervene with opinions and actions, as well as publicly disclosing any actions and/or omissions which may be detrimental to citizens' rights, general interests and/or the common good
- Councils shall respond to citizens' organizations interventions
- Councils shall facilitate citizens' organizations interventions

5. Right to Promote Community Wellbeing

✔ Citizens' organizations have the right to undertake activities promoting the wellbeing of the community and the rights of all citizens. This includes:
- Support for integrated community planning and development across cultural, social, environmental and economic areas
- Interventions regarding perceived public and environmental health risks
- Promoting inclusion of all citizens and tackling discrimination and obstacles to participation through a range of means

6. Right to Consultation

✔ Citizens and citizens' organizations have the right to participate in all council public consultations. Consultation shall be appropriately designed and tailored to the public issue under consideration so as to promote participation of citizens and citizens' organizations according to agreed specifications (see 13 below):
- Citizens and citizens' organizations should play a role in the approach to and design of consultations
- Councils shall guarantee that final decisions have not already been taken and that citizens' and citizens' organizations views will be taken into account
- Councils shall ensure that the processes are open, transparent and non-bureaucratic
- Design and timelines for consultation shall take into account the limited resources of citizens and citizens' organizations and their organizational processes
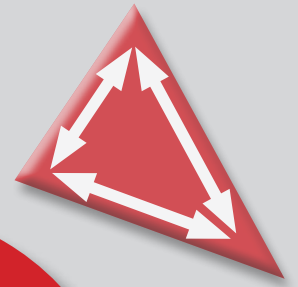
7. Right to Access

✔ Citizens and citizens' organizations have the right of access to all relevant information and documentation and to consult with Council officers on public life/common good matters.

Citizens and citizens' organizations have the same right of access to public and private media as do all other actors in policy-making.

Councils shall assist through:

- Facilitation of citizens' and citizens' organizations access to information, documentation, resources and tools
- Full information on laws, regulations
- Facilitation of citizens and citizens' organizations access to various communication channels
- Citizens' and citizens' organizations access to and free circulation in public places

8. Right to Evaluate

✔ Citizens' and citizens' organizations have the right to take part in evaluation procedures and bodies and appraise outcomes of evaluation activities

- Councils shall use participatory monitoring and evaluation instruments
- Councils shall ensure transparency, clear definitions of evaluation methods, and explanations to the community on outcomes

9. Respect of Time and Obligation to give Feedback

✔ Councils shall:

- Respect citizens and citizens' organizations time, by adopting swift and simple procedures and provide timely and informative replies to citizens' and citizens' organizations inputs and holding information sessions at appropriate times
- Define an appropriate timetable for citizens' and citizens' organizations participation
- Avoid excessive bureaucratization that hinders citizens' and citizens' organizations participation
- Provide clear and prompt feedback, especially in cases of rejection of citizens' and citizens' organizations proposals
- Not over-consult – if something has already been asked, don't repeat similar questions until there has been initial feedback to the community

10. Trust and Equal Dignity

✔ Councils shall carry out their relations with citizens and citizens' organizations on the basis of trust and equality, irrespective of their size and the number of people involved. They shall:

- Ensure citizens' organizations remain independent of councils
- Ensure attention to all organizations dealing with minorities and less powerful and/or marginalized groups, irrespective of size, purpose and nature of the group
- Ensure comprehensive and diverse input by not restricting citizens' organizations to only one representative

11. Facilitation and Support Measures

✔ In order to promote and support the development of civic activities, Councils shall provide resources to citizens' organizations. This includes:

- Provision of in-kind forms of support, e.g. expenses, meeting venues, photocopying, administration

12. Operation and Enforcement of the Charter

✔ The provisions in this Charter are to be endorsed by Councils and applied immediately:

- citizens' organizations to have a right of appeal to an independent and formally constituted body established by the local government peak bodies

13. Criteria for Involving citizens' organizations

✔ Councils with citizens' organizations\ input shall define and apply a set of criteria to identify which citizens' organizations to involve in policy-making processes, whilst ensuring openness for all those who wish to be involved

These criteria shall vary according to the type of relationship being considered (dialogue, cooperation, collaboration or partnership) and shall be adapted to the concrete situation in which such relationship is to take place

(Sourced and adapted from *The European Charter of Active Citizenship,* Giovanni Moro, May 2006)

6. GETTING STARTED TOGETHER
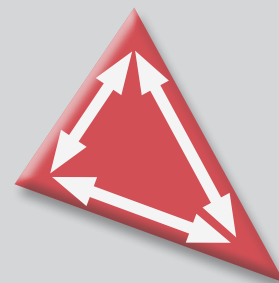
"When different groups' mandates are not respected, they tend to feel disempowered and frustrated, and do not play an effective role. When residents' legitimacy is not respected, they feel not listened to, think they have no control over decisions and therefore less likely to engage, and will feel unsatisfied, with agencies and politicians. Similarly, when ward councillors' democratic electorate mandate is not respected, they too feel not listened to, think they have little control over decisions, and therefore do not play an effective community leadership role. When officers and professionals' basis of accountability is not respected, they can have concerns about a lack of effective or equitable service delivery, and do not have sufficient incentives to problem solve.

(Liz Richardson, *DIY Community Action Neighbourhood problems and community self-help, 2008*)

According to the **GEM** relationship model the three areas of governance, engagement and management are inextricably linked and interdependent. Therefore it is suggested that a first step in democratic development is for citizens, Councillors and officers to jointly develop a common understanding on how to build community wellbeing through local democracy.

Too frequently Councils embark on change from only an organizational and /or internal perspective; whereas democracy building requires a holistic approach across Council and the community.

Before implementing democratic initiatives, an essential first step is to explore the concept and challenges of democracy. Such knowledge should help to strengthen initiatives and help them become embedded within a new democratic culture.

Therefore, developing in both Council and the community an understanding of the following six key areas could provide a base for building consensus to implement local democratic changes:

Such understanding could be deepened through a democracy orientation training program provided *jointly* for Councillors, officers and citizens.

To instigate such a program a Council-community pilot team could be recruited to oversight the design of locally appropriate modules. This would preferably involve councillors, officers and citizens working together in tackling difficult questions from their different perspectives.

UNDERPINNINGS OF DEMOCRATIC CHANGE

✔ New styles and skills required for 21st century leadership

✔ The concept of public good outcomes and public value as key drivers of political and managerial behaviour

✔ The application of democratic principles and human rights at the local level

✔ The fundamental importance of public scrutiny of power and broad concepts of transparency and accountability, i.e. beyond financial matters

✔ Community cultural values, beliefs and aspirations as foundations for local wellbeing

✔ Creative thinking, continuous innovation and risk taking as essential ingredients for community wellbeing.

To maximise outcomes the *community wellbeing democracy team* could be formally acknowledged as a key Council-community committee with specified terms of reference, timelines, reporting and review requirements and budget. Council's website could be utilized to list members, provide regular progress reports on the team's work and to invite feedback from across Council and the community.

The *community wellbeing democracy team's* deliberations could lead to the development and finalization of a local democracy orientation program. This program could then be rolled-out across Council and the community at accessible times and venues and at little or no cost to participants, to maximize attendance. The co-operation and collaboration involved in these developments would serve to model the behaviours needed for developing community wellbeing initiatives that can promote and reinforce local democracy.

When moving to the next phase of implementation through shared community governance, a new locally specific training program - reflecting challenges, lessons and advances in participation and empowerment - could also be developed jointly.

Storing this information in a *democracy database* that is regularly updated with knowledge gained from local experiences could provide a valuable resource for local democratic developments for councillors, managers, officers and community members.

A Seven Step
Checklist
for Community Wellbeing through local democracy

✔ **Step 1**
Commit to developing a democracy orientation program

✔ **Step 2**
Establish a joint democracy team with councillor, manager, officer and citizen representation

✔ **Step 3**
Develop modules for the democracy training program

✔ **Step 4**
Offer the democracy orientation program extensively throughout Council and the community

✔ **Step 5**
Implement democratic innovations according to the GEM model

✔ **Step 6**
Review democratic initiatives

✔ **Step 7**
Store experiences and lessons into a *democracy database* and incorporate within Council's policies and practices

7. SHARING COMMUNITY GOVERNANCE
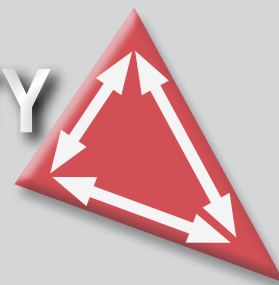
" . . .democracy-building is an ongoing process of struggle and contestation rather than the adoption of a standard recipe of institutional designs. Democracy building work for the next century involves going beyond current formulations to find and promote those new and emerging visions and movements for democracy which will extend and deepen its meanings and practices towards full citizen engagement."

(John Gaventa, *Triumph, Deficit or Contestation? Deepening the 'Deepening Democracy' Debate*, 2006)

Australian Councils could play a significant role in deepening democracy by experimenting with new ways of sharing local governance powers with citizens and citizen organizations.

A premise of this Guide is that wider involvement, i.e. participation beyond elected representatives, Council staff and small groups of activists, will result in better informed local decision-making and increased wellbeing outcomes for the community.

In addition, according to the **GEM** model the participation of all parties – councillors, officers and citizens – is essential for driving, strengthening and sustaining local democracy.

Significantly, the goal of empowerment of all players is not to undermine or detract from the role of elected representatives, but to add value to decision-making processes. Councillors of course have the ultimate responsibility for the formal passage of policy, budgets, local laws etc, through legislated powers and electoral mandates.

However, with a participatory approach other roles such as vision setting, planning, establishing priorities, and evaluation can in fact be shared with the community. This results in Council benefiting from increased knowledge and expertise plus an enhanced community ownership of final decisions.

"The power and responsibility of representatives are not negated or even diminished. They are, rather, modified, enriched and institutionally constrained by the deliberative and participatory activity that is taking place around them. And the crucial theoretical point regarding the relationship between the two – between representative and participatory democracy – is that *the activity of the second guarantees the quality of the first*. If it works well, deliberative democracy guarantees transparency, builds wider circles of decision-making and plays a crucial role in the small but expanding group of educated and active citizens with an ethic of public service in their very bones." (Paul Ginsborg, 2008)

For shared or networked community governance to succeed, major ongoing attitudinal, behavioural and operational changes will be required. New arrangements will, for example, emphasise place-based relationships and partnerships. This will require enhancing and sustaining collaboration between public, private and nongovernment organizations. Change will be accelerated if three preconditions are met.

✔ A sense of goodwill towards each other will be needed by all parties. The experiences gained in developing and rolling-out the local democracy orientation program should provide a strong foundation for developing trust and goodwill. This could be reinforced by regular positive statements, from the mayor, CEO, and community leaders and activists, about the importance of building local democracy as a key local priority.

✔ Key players from Council – elected representatives, managers and officers – and the community need to be prepared to take risks and to do things differently to achieve enhanced community wellbeing. The Tavistock Institute's 2005 research into transformational change in Councils identified a number of ways to promote and embed change, including rewarding experimentation, celebrating difference, willingness to accept and learn from failure and innovations in policies and people management.

✔ A commitment is be needed by all parties and players to follow through with devising roles, structures, mechanisms and processes that are conducive to, and reinforce, new governance arrangements. Such changes will according to Mandell, 2006, entail the building of, and capitalizing on, new relationships in which communication, respect for autonomy, reciprocity, negotiation, dialogue, and conflict resolution are key factors.

Shared governance for Councils and communities at political and organizational levels is more than simply co-operation, or coordination, as it requires a willingness by all parties to collaborate through partnerships and networks in radical changes for better community wellbeing. "Networked local governance rests on a fuller and rounder vision of humanity than either traditional public administration or New public management. People are, it suggests, motivated by their involvement in networks and partnerships; that is by their relationships with others formed in the context of equal status and mutual learning." (Stoker, 2006)

This emphasis on relationships is evident in the pioneering work commenced in 1989 by the Brazilian City of Porto Alegre on participatory budgeting, where citizens are actively involved in working together in the key Council area of financial decision-making.

Participatory budgeting at Porto Alegre begins with open citizen assemblies, assisted by Council staff, where needs are identified, discussed and debated. Expenditure priorities are then established through a facilitated process of consensus decision-making. The various local citizen assemblies also elect representatives to continue city-wide discussions with councillors and officers so that annual budget allocations can be agreed and subsequently submitted for Council's formal consideration. (See Fox & Leindecker, 2008)

As with any democratic initiative there are of course issues about levels of participation and the citizen influence over final decisions. However the ongoing commitment of the Brazilian Worker's Party and the City to participatory budgeting means that citizens, including those on low incomes, poorly housed and educated, continue to take the opportunity to have their say about their futures.

This participatory budgeting approach, reflecting the tripartite **GEM** relationship model, has been adopted more widely in South America and by local governments in developed countries, and has been adapted to other areas of local decision making, for example planning and policy matters.

Such initiatives and experiments, if implemented in accordance with the **GEM** model, and underpinned by a belief in the transformational potential of democracy, could result in widespread democratic changes that support community wellbeing.

The following **five** Council actions are suggested to ensure that local wellbeing development is tackled in a democratic way.

The checklist should enhance power sharing between councillors, managers, officers and citizens when applied across Councils' core responsibilities in vision setting, integrated planning, policy formulation, program design, organizational development, implementation and review.

The **five** areas are not discrete, and well-considered steps in any one area may impact upon others. For example, information access can be readily seen to have flow-on effects to the other four. Therefore it is important to think holistically across Council and the community in developing democratic change strategies.

The stages and recommendations for better implementation of open government initiatives, from a 2011 USA Open Government Review, are a useful resource (see box). They indicate how doing things differently can promote greater public access to information, more transparency by Councils, and enhance democratic change processes.

Similarly, the transnational initiative of the European Active Citizenship Network (see box) should provide helpful lessons to further the promotion of citizens' participation in shared governance.

In applying the *democracy wellbeing checklist*, Councils and community representatives are encouraged to utilize the range of tools in this Guide, adapt them to local needs and circumstances, and to incorporate them within Council-community democracy modules and manuals.

Those tools include:

- *The Code of Ethics for Councillors and Officers* (p25),
- *The Local Democracy Rights Chart* (p32) and
- *The Charter of Active Citizenship for Citizens and Citizens' Organisations* (p38)

Also State local government associations, the ALGA, the United Cities and Local Governments and other international organisations promoting local participatory democracy can be useful resources for Councils. (For example, see Implementing Shared Governance, Mentoring for Active Citizenship and USA Open Government.)

Democracy Wellbeing
Action Checklist

✔ **Maximise information access and utilization for councillors, managers, officers and citizens**

✔ **Expand the community's control over local resources through, for example, participatory budgeting and delegations**

✔ **Devolve decision-making to the organizational levels in Council and the community members who have the key responsibilities for implementation and evaluation**

✔ **Promote ethical conduct for community empowerment with all three parties**

✔ **Advocate citizen equality and the inclusion of all people from a human rights perspective.**

MENTORING FOR ACTIVE CITIZENSHIP – A TRANSNATIONAL INITIATIVE

In May 2010, building on the work of the European Active Citizens' Network, non-government organizations from seven European countries launched a new project. The project of mentoring exchanges between administrators aims encourage co-operation between towns and development mutual understanding between their respective citizens.
The organizations are:

- The Bulgarian Index Foundation – its interests include promoting civil society and strengthening social safety nets

- The German Centrum for Corporate Citizenship – its role is focused on connecting business goals and common good interests

- The Macedonian Centre for Regional Policy Research and Co-operation – a think-tank with interests in active citizenship and decentralization and a roles in capacity building and training for local governments

- The Polish Association of Consumers – it promotes rights, provides education and representation and protection of consumer economic and legal interests

- The Slovenian Centre for Information Services – its role is empowering non government organizations in civil society; it offers training and fosters active citizenship interests

- The Austrian World of NGOs – a pro-democracy organization promoting social inclusion and citizen rights

- The UK Rutland Citizen's Advice Bureau – it provides free advice on a range of citizens' rights and responsibilities and influences government policy-makers.

Through hosting mentoring exchanges the project aims to promote active citizenship in their respective countries by

- developing partnerships between civil society organizations

- strengthening leadership, knowledge, skills and tools of the partners

- sharing experiences, identifying difficulties and sharing good practices and

- enhancing understanding and appreciation of different cultures and experiences

The European Commission supports this ACN initiated mentoring project.

IMPLEMENTING SHARED GOVERNANCE

A 2011 guide from the North American National League of Cities tackles two questions:

- How to bring more civility, more trust, and a greater sense of common cause to public discussions on the urgent problems we face?

- How can we promote shared responsibility and engage more people in the work of building better communities?

The guide defines democratic governance as "the art of governing a community in participatory, deliberative, inclusive and collaborative ways". It proposes the following seven principles to promote good practice by leaders:

1. Model civility
2. Strengthen skills
3. Create opportunities for informed engagement
4. Support a culture of informed engagement
5. Make the most of technology
6. Include everybody
7. Make it last

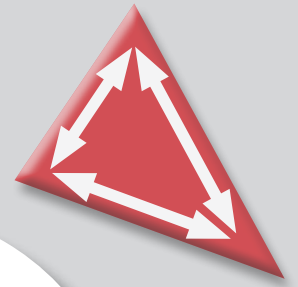A number of examples are given of local initiatives including:

- the development of a neighbourhood college by the city of Scotsdale to provide citizens with information and tools to engage more effectively with government:

- neighbourhood planning assemblies in Burlington, Vermont, for budgeting and other local decision making;

- establishment by the city of Minneapolis, Minnesota of an open on-line forum for citizens to engage with elected officials and community leaders on civic issues;

- an annual Youth Town Hall for discussions between Council and young people in Fort Worth, Texas.

(Beyond Civility: From Public Engagement to Problem Solving: An Action Guide for City Leaders, National League of Cities, Centre for Research and innovation, January 2011)

See also the Local Government Association of UK 2008 publication Votes and Voices: the Complementary Nature of Representative and Participatory Democracy. It contains nine essays from academia, local government and the nongovernment sector on ideas to promote cooperative and collaborative good practice in local governance.

In conclusion, this Guide has argued for an expanded participatory practice of local democracy to achieve and sustain greater community wellbeing.

The Guide has focused on the human right to participate in public life, that is, in political decision-making where citizens are not simply *voters* and service *users*, but *makers* and *shapers* of communities. (Cornwall and Gaventa 2009)

Added to the participatory approach is the unique **GEM relationship model** that sees real democratic progress as being conditional upon achieving changes in the three interdependent areas of Council democratic governance, corporate management and operations and community engagement.

Shared community governance resulting from this dynamic approach, i.e. representative plus participatory democracy, and guided by the **GEM** model, should help facilitate the development of new roles and responsibilities, new structures and the creation of flexible partnerships and collaborative networks.

This Guide contends that, as a result of these transformations, together with other local initiatives and innovations, Councils and communities will be better placed to redesign their local democracies to maximize community wellbeing outcomes and in doing so meet the challenges of the 21st century.

USA OPEN GOVERNMENT 2011

Four stages towards Open Government

1. Increasing data transparency

2. Improving open participation

3. Enhancing open collaboration

4. Realizing ubiquitous engagement

Eleven Recommendations for Implementing Open Government Initiatives

1. Use a phased implementation approach

2. Use a democratic, bottom-up approach

3. Consider conducting pilot projects and/or establishing centers of excellence

4. Secure necessary resources

5. Prioritize the use of the 80/20 rule

6. Align open government initiatives with the agency's goals

7. Establish governance mechanisms for data sharing

8. Expand the number of metrics over time

9. Address cultural barriers

10. Make public engagement an everyday routine

11. Institutionalize incentives

(An Open Government Implementation Model: Moving to Increased Public Engagement, Gwanhoo Lee, Associate The American University and Young Hoon Kwak, the George Washington University)

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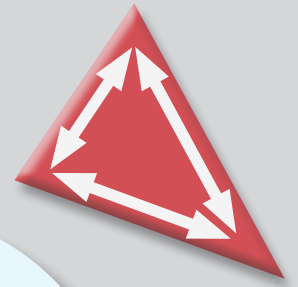
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