LGAQ Executive Report to 108th Annual Conference 2004
Introduction

Delegates and Observers

In accordance with the Local Government Association of Queensland (LGAQ) Constitution and Rules, the Executive of the Association formally reports to each Annual Conference on its strategic direction, policies and activities during the previous year.

Consistent with long established precedent, this report provides broad commentary on the external environment in which member Councils operated over the past 12 months. This report also outlines the corporate goals and strategies of the LGAQ together with the more significant initiatives of the Association during this period.

In the interests of efficacy, this report does not contain an exhaustive list of Association policies, programs or initiatives for the previous period. That level of information is available in real time on LG Online.

EXTERNAL ENVIRONMENT

The past 12 months saw improving relations at ministerial level with both State and Federal Governments, as well as significant and welcome real increases in road funding in both higher levels of government budgets. While the issue of payment of FAGs was resolved and the Auslink program announced, the Federal Governments response to the Cost Shifting (Hawker) Inquiry is still sometime off.

The advent of a State Election and the proximity of an impending Federal Election has worked in the Associations Member Council interests. The Executive past and present (pre and post June 2004) have used this window of opportunity to maximise advantage for Queensland Councils.

Following the significant impact of global issues, specifically terrorism on the period 2002/2003, the public policy agenda at State and Federal level had a greater domestic orientation. This has certainly aided both LGAQ and ALGA's push for greater road funding.

The extraordinary population growth in this state (85,000 net increase), most particularly in South-East Queensland over the past year has focussed both higher levels of government, and indeed the media's attention on issues such as regional planning and traffic and transport infrastructure adequacy.

The Courier Mail's involvement in promoting a public policy debate on regional planning and roads and transport infrastructure issues is significant and welcome. Their intervention has brought another dimension to the profiling and community understanding of strategic yet complex issues. The LGAQ has worked assiduously to encourage and further the Courier Mail's community leadership strategy. The joining of the “fourth estate” into debates that were previously the domain of political parties, special interest groups and academics has created a new paradigm in the state's political process.
Federal Government

Following last year’s contretemps over FAGs with former Minister Wilson Tuckey, relationships have been characterised by a period of détente with new (until July 04) Minister for Local Government and Roads, Senator the Hon Ian Campbell. Progress albeit with out final resolution has been made on responses to the Cost Shifting (Hawker) Inquiry. In June 2004 a significant yet still inadequate funding increase was secured under the Auslink program announced by the Federal Government. Importantly, the relationship between the Federal Government and LGAQ/ALGA has been cordial and practical.

The Auslink Statement while the source of some joy for Queensland Councils in that the Roads to Recovery program was renewed for four more years (R2R2), is still in dispute with respect to the guidelines that are yet to be finalised for the “one third” strategic nationally contestable component. Councils and the LGAQ have vehemently opposed a national distribution model, instead arguing that the money should be forwarded to Regional Road Groups for prioritisation and determination based on existing state shares. The LGAQ and its member Councils have also raised concern that the Black Spots Program was not funded beyond 30 June 2006 in the Auslink statement.

In June 2004 the Executive endorsed a partnership with RACQ to prosecute the Mayors and Motorists Campaign against Carnage and Congestion on the National Highway system (NHS) in Queensland. While Queensland will receive an extra $500m over the life of the Auslink program, it falls well short of the funding identified as necessary by the Department of Main Roads and the RACQ to meet basic national standards. Areas outside of the South-East corner of the State have been particularly disadvantaged. Significant lobbying of Queensland based Federal Coalition Government members has occurred post the Auslink statement announcement in order to redress the inequities in that program.

Minister Campbell convened an historic meeting of all State Local Government Ministers and State Local Government Associations in Canberra in June to discuss responses to the Hawker Inquiry. Agreement was reached at that meeting to scope a paper on what elements might be included on a tripartite inter-government agreement on Cost Shifting. That, while a promising development, is still a work in progress. At the time of writing no progress had been made on the separate but related issue of the possible transfer of the FAG determination process to the Commonwealth Grants Commission.

Consistent with recent history of Federal intervention in State or Local Government matters the Federal Government has been a strong supporter of the Development Assessment Forums (chaired by the Property Council of Australia) proposal to remove elected members from the process of determining development applications. The Executive has strongly opposed that proposition.

Another noteworthy development on the Federal scene was the finalisation by the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) of a new inter-government framework for disaster mitigation. The LGAQ can rightly lay claim to that development with the Director of Policy and Representation Mr Greg Hoffman PSM shepherding that process since 1998 following the Association’s first ever Public Inquiry into the very subject. Beyond an agreed and comprehensive national framework for disaster mitigation, the new agreement makes available potentially up to $75m to Councils to fund such work. The outcome is testament to the LGAQ’s ongoing ability to influence national agendas.
In the same vein, persistence by the Executive paid off in securing a commitment by the Federal Government that would result in the removal of anomalies for Council’s off road fuel usage. The LGAQ had protested the unfair treatment of Local Government in the Democrat lead amendments to the Australian New Taxation Scheme (ANTS) package in 1999. The Association made a comprehensive submission to the 2001 Federal Fuel Tax Inquiry and continued to pursue the matter. The savings these proposed changes would generate to Councils in lower fuel input bills for off road activities could be as high as $10m per annum.

State Government

The advent of a new Local Government Minister in the person of Ms Desley Boyle has greatly improved relations between the State Government and the LGAQ. While there have been exceptions such as the Valuation Roll blow-up with the Department of Natural Resources, the relationship has been generally sound and productive. The State Budget distributed significant benefits to Councils and communities in increased road funding amongst other welcome initiatives such as additional funding for regional planning and indigenous Council capacity building.

After comprehensive consultation with member Councils and Annual Conference endorsement, the Executive forwarded all major parties contesting the State election a 10 Point Local Government Election Policy Plan. The plan which was the subject of detailed discussions with all parties provided successful in raising Councils genuine issues and aspirations and achieving 70 percent of the agenda set out there in.

Since the election of the third term Beatie Government the Association’s Acting President has met with the Minister for Local Government on a monthly basis at a minimum, while the Executive Director and the Director General of the Department of Local Government and Planning, Sport and Recreation have met fortnightly. Furthermore the Association has met with all of the Ministers in relevant portfolios in the months following the State Government election.

The major area of contention between the State Government, LGAQ and Councils was changes to the Valuation of and Act and non-production of the 2004 Valuation Roll. The Executive resolutely and publicly defended their member’s interests but on the advice of its lawyers was not able to challenge retrospective legislation introduced into the State Parliament without consultation.

Relationships with the Departments of Main Roads and Transport continued to be harmonious and productive. Transport Infrastructure Development Scheme (TIDS) funding rose to a record $70m in 2004/05, a 100 percent increase in three years. Excellent cooperation was also forthcoming on Road Alliance issues with that program winning the Premier’s overall award for Excellence in Leadership for the Queensland Public Sector.

A major new area of increased focus was regional planning. The Executive oversaw the development of a comprehensive position statement on the subject which was the basis of discussions between the LGAQ, Premier and Deputy Premier in the lead up to the State election and which subsequently gave rise to the Office of Urban Management. Subsequent to the election the Association entered into detailed negotiations over legislative enablement for regional planning in the Integrated Planning Act. The matter was still ongoing at the time of this report.
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On a related front specific advocacy by the Association resulted in a $4m four-year additional allocation to regional planning process in the balance of the state outside the southeast corner.

Another significant development on the state scene was the transfer of ministerial control of the states 32 Indigenous Community Councils, from the Department of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island affairs to the Department of Local Government and Planning, as well as the withdrawal of funding to the Aboriginal Coordinating Council. This development in part led to an increasing number of Community Councils, in particular Torres Strait Island Communities joining the LGAQ.

The Association continued to work cooperatively with the State Government on a range of initiatives such as the “Breaking the Unemployment Cycle” program, Multi-Cultural Partnerships, Youth issues, Natural Resource Management and Electronic Information Exchange.

The Association

The Association is the sum of its members and the 2004 March Local Government elections saw a significant changing of the guard with 46 new Mayors and just short of a 40 percent turnover in councilor ranks. Some 21 Mayors did not recontest their positions at the poll, while an equal number of female Mayors were elected, a record. As was the 30 percent of female councilors elected.

The bywords for the outgoing Executive were leadership, proactivity and engagement of members, while the new Executive have put a strong emphasis on service, value for money for members and renewing representation on internal policy reference groups and external bodies.

The Executive itself experienced significant change with nine new members elected to serve from June 2004 to May 2008. For the record; three Executive members retired at the 2004 poll, one was defeated at that election, while three sitting Executive members lost their place to new members and the two previous indigenous representatives were replaced by their nominating bodies, the ACC and ICC. As a consequence of the magnitude of change, a comprehensive induction was conducted for all Executive members before the first meeting of the new Executive.

The outgoing Executive was delighted with the results of the 2003 Member Attitude Survey which equaled or surpassed the previous surveys. While appreciative of the strong level of support, the Executive took the opportunity to address issues that were highlighted as important for Member Councils in the survey. Most specifically the format and location of events and conferences was changed for 2004; our surveying processes were reviewed and refined; Local Government week timing was altered, more training was

The past year in the Association’s life was marked by a number of major milestones. The first being the retirement of the Association President, Cr Noel Playford, at the March 2004 election, and the subsequent election of nine new Executive members in May 2004. A further noteworthy achievement was the successful launch of LG Online on July 2004, not to forget the repayment of the LGAQ’s debt on Local Government House in Brisbane.
accredited and new themes introduced; and all electronic communication was customized with the advent of LG Online.

Industrial Relations and broader workforce issues continued to be a high priority for the Association. The Executive displayed significant initiative and leadership to develop a 10 year IR Strategy, conduct jointly with LGMA, the review of CEO Attraction and Retention in Rural and Remote Communities and develop a comprehensive Workforce Emerging Issues Strategy. Rearrangement in the People and Performance Branch has created a specific position to address emerging workforce issues, especially graduate recruitment, skills shortages and strategic linking to vocational and tertiary institutions to both develop appropriate courses and secure a fair share of the graduate pool.

Conferences, seminars and training continue to be a growing area of activity for the Association. The Executive mindful of the more divergent views and special interest groups emerging in local government has sought to provide a broad offering of topics and issues in order to satisfy the plurality that exists within our sphere of government. Conferences and seminars are an excellent way of promoting learning, knowledge transfer between councils, individual councilors, staff and the LGAQ. Record numbers attended these fora over the past year.

With respect to training, the Association continued to travel the length and breadth of the State to offer courses, no centre was too small or too distant for the LGAQ. The feature of the last 12 months was the RECONNECT Program attended by over 800 elected members. That program required a mammoth effort by staff across all the branches in the Directorate.

A special effort has been made to better engage with the Australian Local Government Women's Association, ALGWA(Q) and Regional Organisations of Councils during the past year. Whilst not capable of legally acquiring membership under the Association’s Constitution and Rules both groups do important work. The ALGWA(Q) were significantly consulted in the writing of the Councillor Handbook and in developing the Women in Local Government Leadership breakfast. In the same view a Memorandum of Understanding has been established between the ROCs and the Association and an initial LGAQ ROC Assembly was held in Brisbane in early August 2004.

Importantly the continued excellent performance of LGM and LGW, enabled the Local Government House building to be paid off ahead of schedule. Further ongoing reductions in premium level for LGW and a specific one off 20 percent rebate for that scheme’s members based on a better than anticipated investment return for the 2003-4 financial year were welcome developments. Both schemes remain as shining examples of the benefits of co-operative council action.

The advent of the LG Online was a milestone for Queensland Local Government. In all, 117 councils or 94 percent of the Association’s members joined the scheme which independent experts employed by the ALGA to survey online service provision by the Australian councils, described as clearly the leading technology on offer. The LG Online system is testament to the hard effort of council representatives, contractors and LGAQ staff who together shepherded this project over the last two years.

The process of engaging Member Council went on unabated. In the past two years, every councillor received Council Leader free of charge, each Mayor received a monthly Emerging Issues Update from their district executive member, the Executive News Brief is dispatched to every elected member immediately after each Executive meeting, visits to councils have doubled and the number of representation on LGAQ Policy Reference Groups has been significantly boosted. The Executive is quite genuine in its efforts to fully involve Members Councils in the Association’s Affairs.
The Association continued to have a major presence in the Queensland media. Importantly that presence extends beyond straight news stories (4000 mentions) to significant ‘opinion’ pieces. The LGAQ was able to place no less than seven feature articles in the Courier Mail over the past year. Likewise the Association is regularly asked to participate in talk back radio around the State.

Another noteworthy feature of the past year was the continued and increasing support for elected members. For the first time ever, every councillor received an Elected Members Welcoming Kit which included amongst other things the Elected Member Handbook and Good Governance Guide (previously a publication for which payment was taken) and the Elected Member Remuneration and Entitlements Guide. Beyond that specific measure, the Executive was able to secure a legislative right for elected members to be insured under the LGW scheme as well as a high level commitment to fully investigate the possibility of salary sacrificing for Mayors and Councillors.

Directorate

Following a difficult period that required significant financial constraint, the last year’s hardship has given way to a situation where all of the Directorates, 38 fulltime equivalent positions, were able to be staffed. Similarly a capital spending freeze has been lifted and investment in corporate systems has resumed. The need for fiscal rectitude certainly placed a great strain on the organisation, but did result in a healthier financial position for the LGAQ at no cost to Member Councils.

During the last year, Mr Tony Goode was appointed as Director of the People and Performance Branch, following Ms Judith Himstedt’s departure while Mr Lindsay Enright left to take up a senior position with the Office of Urban Management. Fortunately, despite significant workload pressures, staff changes were kept to a minimum.

Organisational productivity continued to rise during the year and all staff are thanked for their considerable efforts.

For the record in the period between conferences the directorate received on average 800 phone calls a day, 550,000 incoming emails or faxes (45 gigabyte), 7000 items of written correspondence; wrote 8000 outgoing letters; compiling and forwarding 74 submissions to State and Federal Government on various matters in response to inquiries; attended 43 district association, ROC, ALGA or professional body conferences; made exactly 140 appearances in State or Federal Industrial Relations hearings; organised and conducted conferences, seminars and training which over 4600 elected members and officers attended; and produced over 300 circulars and 110 News Releases.
Policy and Representation Branch

Finance, Governance And Community

National Competition Implementation Grant - The BMAP Project

The BMAP Project assisted members in the implementation of National Competition Policy (NCP) reforms, and the maximisation of Local Government access to the Financial Incentive Package (FIP) implementation pool.

At a higher level, the Project was to deliver outcomes that would assist the State to demonstrate satisfactory progress by Local Government, and result in maximum competition payments to the State by the Commonwealth.

Completed early in the year, the success of the BMAP project can be measured by the distribution of eligible funds to Councils from the Pool, and long-term operation and service delivery benefits through improved management practices within Councils.

Funds remaining in the FIP until 2006 may be distributed to Councils that exceeded requirements in respect of NCP reform, but the funds could be adjusted by any reduction in the State’s Competition Payment linked to failure by individual Councils to address issues.

Hence it is in Local Government’s interests to maintain and improve their capacity and effectiveness in providing services to their communities by continuing the good progress made in implementation of NCP reform.

The Association will continue to provide more assistance to Councils in this position to ensure maximum return to Local Government as a whole.

Election 2004 - Local Communities Decide

The 2004 Local Government Elections proved to be record breaking in many senses.

A total of 125 Mayor and exactly 1000 Councillor positions were available to be contested and the outcome was a turnover of about 40%, and a slight increase in female representation.

There are 46 new Mayors and 394 new Councillors.

The Association provided extensive advice and assistance to Councils and Returning Officers throughout the Election period.

Most importantly, the Election Night Tally Room system provided candidates, staff, media and the public with an on-line, web based one stop shop for information about elections in all 125 Local Governments.

Comment on the site has been particularly favourable, with the only difficulty being that the site was a victim of its own success, with over 1.3 million “hits” causing access to be slow at different peak times.
As usual, the Association will be participating in the review and refinement of election processes and legislation by the Department that normally follows each election.

**Valuation, Revenue and Rates**

Contentious issues continued to arise across Queensland in relation to valuation and rating.

Most significant was the retrospective legislation passed by the Government (after no consultation with the Association) rubber-stamping the decision to not provide annual valuations for this year due to industrial action by State employed valuers.

The Association is continuing to investigate the site value issue, albeit somewhat delayed by the unavailability of data for analysis and assessment of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats for Local Government. The Department of Natural Resources, Mines and Energy was unable to provide data - again due to the lack of resources as a result of industrial action. This matter is back on the table with DNRM&E.

The Association continued to provide technical advice and assistance to member Councils with special difficulties caused by significant shifts in relativities of valuation between property types across the community in recent years.

**Cost Shifting**

After a significant consultation process with member Councils, the LGAQ determined its response to the 18 recommendations of the Commonwealth’s Cost Shifting Inquiry Report: *Rates and Taxes: A Fair Share for Responsible Local Government*, broadly and conditionally supporting the recommendations.

For the recommendations of the report to be advanced requires co-operation and participation by all levels of government across the nation.

The Association has participated at roundtable meetings with the Commonwealth Minister, ALGA and other state LGAs, and with Local Government and Planning Ministers from all States.

The relatively short term of office of Minister Ian Campbell, now replaced in a Cabinet re-shuffle by Minister Jim Lloyd, may cause further delays in progressing the implementation of recommendations of the Inquiry.

Realistically, progress will be delayed by the Federal Election, and momentum for change will have to be driven by Local Government, through ALGA, the State Associations and councils when the time is opportune.

The Association will continue to be a prime mover on this issue.
Protection of State Funding

The Association’s Queensland 2004 State Election Local Government Policy Plan was developed from issues raised by member Councils during an extensive consultation process. The 10-point Plan had a strong emphasis on maintaining and increasing State funding for Local Government functions.

The Association conducted direct canvassing of the State Government and major political parties in respect to support for Local Government at the 2004 State Election and provided assistance to member Councils through media and information kits.

The campaign had good success, with acknowledgement of issues by all parties.

The recent State Budget demonstrated that the message had been received in terms of road and transport funding, although an apparent reduction in real terms of other funding to Local Government capital works areas will be monitored.

Affordable Housing

Access to affordable housing is well recognised as vital to maintaining a healthy standard of wellbeing for residents of our communities. Housing affordability is impacted upon by a range of factors including rapid growth, demographic shift, ageing of the population, increases in property prices and reduced land availability.

Local Government does have a role to play and, as expected, the level of Local Government activity varies greatly around the state. The short to medium term objective of the LGAQ is to identify what this level of activity is and to determine whether these actions are consistent with good practice nationally and internationally. Identifying both the cost of this activity and the level of future need are also important aspects. Department of Housing representatives are working with the LGAQ to undertake this work.

Additionally, during 2004/2005 officers from the Department of Housing and Local Government will be working with individual Councils to assist them to make better use of the Local Government Housing Resource Kit. The Kit has been developed as a collaborative project between State and Local Government and is available at:


Social Capital

The Local Government Social Capital Action Research Project (LGSCARP) was developed as a partnership between the Local Government Association of Queensland (LGAQ) and the “Boiler house” Community Service & Research Centre (CSRC), The University of Queensland, in conjunction with five participating Local Governments: Waggamba Shire Council, Maroochy Shire Council, Broadsound Shire Council, Thuringowa City Council and Mt. Isa City Council.

The LGSCARP was an exploratory exercise that sought to “demystify” social capital and its important implications for Local Governments in Queensland. This project was timely given the high level of interest in and academic attention to the value of ‘social capital’ as one of the recognised ‘capitals’ (the others being financial, environmental, human and physical).
‘What Makes Communities Tick’ was a phrase suggested at one of the focus groups in the Waggamba Shire when the researchers asked community members to describe their strengths and successes. It was pointed out that some communities ‘tick’ and ‘click’ while others do not. What factors contribute to this? What role could Local Government play to build communities that tick smoothly? The research indicates that Councils can - and do - make a difference.

The report makes a series of recommendations that are grouped within the following six domains.

1. Corporate/strategic planning
2. Community Engagement
3. Measurement
4. Information Exchange
5. Learning/training
6. Partnerships.

The next stage of this project seeks to build upon the recommendations. This work will include the development of a Local Government Social Capital measurement tool, engagement frameworks, appropriate training, information on the LGAQ web site and the identification of partners to build relationships and alliances.


Community Engagement

Over the past 18 months the LGAQ has undertaken considerable research into community engagement practices in order to more fully understand the complexities of this important aspect of Local Government business. One of the primary motivators for this research is the continuing downward trend reported in the biennial Community Satisfaction Tracking Studies commissioned by the LGAQ.

In previous years we have largely referred to the practice of involving community in the decision making process as ‘consultation’. While consultation is an important aspect of increasing the level of community participation in the democratic process, it is by no means the only method that we can and should apply. Our understanding of ‘engagement’ is that it comprises three primary parts.

1. Information: providing the public with balanced and objective information to assist them to understand problems, alternatives and/or solutions
2. Consultation: to obtain public feedback on analysis, alternatives and/or decisions
3. Participation: to partner with the community in an ongoing way in order to maximise the level and range of community advice and input.

LGAQ released a Discussion Paper in June 2004 to stimulate thought and to obtain feedback on the proposed direction. This feedback is being collated during July and August and will influence the development of Community Engagement Position Paper for Queensland Local Government to be released in September 2004.

It is proposed that a Guiding Team or Teams will be established to oversee this work. The work is likely to comprise the establishment of a shared community engagement vision for Queensland Local Government, comprehensive training, consultation frameworks, on-line resources and collaborative partnerships with key stakeholders.

The Discussion Paper is available on www.lgaq.asn.au
Ageing of the Population

Over the past 40 years Australia’s birth rate has halved. Currently 12% of the population are aged over 65. This figure will increase to 25% by the year 2042. This situation presents both challenges and opportunities for us as a Nation. Australia is not alone in its demographic changes. Japan, Korea, Italy and Spain are similarly situated along with most other European countries. Of all the developed nations only the United States has a replacement birth rate. In 2050 when Europe has a median age of 53, America’s will be 36.

The questions we need to consider are whether this disproportionate number of ‘older’ people is an asset or a liability, and, what are we going to do about it. There are voices in both camps. The argument for the positive sites an opportunity to develop a more adaptive approach to work, life and play. On the other hand, there are opinions that point to a more pessimistic approach to the ageing ‘crisis’. A potential increased need for health, welfare and infrastructure services (and possible rising costs) combined with a lowering tax base is cause for concern. Planning for what our cities, and our workplaces, will look like into the future will require foresight and sound planning especially if we are to avoid the pitfalls of a divided society.

The LGAQ has been in consultation with members, the Australian Local Government Association and both the State and Federal Government to consider the best way forward. This work has contributed to the policy setting agendas of the Queensland Government’s 2020: A State for All Ages and the ALGA/Commonwealth Department of Health and Ageing Australian Local Government Population Ageing Action Plan 2004 -2008.

These plans and strategies can be found at: www.alga.asn.au ; and http://www.families.qld.gov.au/department/futuredirections/qld2020/index.html

Libraries

The Strategic Policy Options for a Smart Library Network Report recommendations continue to be rolled out. A number of Sub-committees have been engaged to oversee the many components of these reforms. These sub-committees are made of up State and Local Government representatives, and where necessary, individual specialists. These committees report to the Public Libraries Advisory Committee who in turn reports to the Library Board of Queensland.

One of the most significant changes that Councils will be aware of is the upcoming implementation of Three-Year Service Level Agreements. These Agreements will be drawn up between individual Councils and the State Library and will commence on October 1 2004. A review period has been incorporated and will commence at the end of year 1.

The Association will continue to monitor the progress of the review and work with the State Library of Queensland to ensure Councils are well represented at this level.

Local Area Multicultural Partnership (LAMP)

LAMP II was launched at the LGAQ Executive meeting on 2 December 2003. As LAMP II constitutes the second round of four year funding from the Queensland State Government, it was an opportunity to showcase the innovative work that LAMP Councils have been doing, particularly over the past year.
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Having started as a pilot program, most of the 15 Councils partnering in the LAMP program have now developed community relations plans, multicultural policies and major multicultural festivals or events. The Association also launched its "Embracing Cultural Diversity: Action Guide for Queensland Local Governments" which highlights many examples of Queensland Councils initiatives that help our communities make the most of our cultural diversity. Further to this, as part of the Association's LGOnline, each month a Council of the Month is featured, giving an indepth overview of the work being done by that Council. LAMP has been featured in a number of national publications and websites as it is now regarded as a leading program across Australia.

Youth

The Association continues to support all levels of Local Government to ‘actively encouraging the contribution, participation and engagement of young people in the development and implementation of policy, programs, opportunities and services that directly impact upon young people exclusively or within broader community agendas’. In September 2003, The Office of Youth with the Department of Communities renewed the funding for the Youth Policy Project Officer position at a reduced level. This provided opportunity for the Association to further engage with Local and State Government around issues such as:

- Education Training and Reform
- Rural and Remote Education, Employment and Education
- Suicide Prevention
- Volatile Substance Misuse
- Drug and Alcohol
- Youth Councils and Youth Representation in Local Areas, and
- Graffiti

LGAQ in conjunction with Brisbane City Council and the Office of Youth recently hosted the annual Youth Development in Local Government Conference. The theme for the conference was “Keeping it Real”, a reminder about the importance of ensuring young people participate in youth development through their contribution of ideas, needs, skills, experiences and networks. 90 delegates attended the conference with over 45 Councils among the representation.

Environment, Planning and Development

Economic Development

Local Governments continue to face challenges in determining appropriate action to take in relation to the economic development of their communities and the Association increased its activities to assist Councils over the past year.

The LGAQ’s Local Government Economic Development Assistance Strategy developed in mid 2003 has formed the basis for ongoing action.

The Association’s work has been in two principle areas. The first has been engagement and relationship building with the Department of State Development and Innovation (DSDI), one of the aims being a review of the applicability to Local Government of the current economic and regional development assistance funding programs offered by the Department.
The second area of focus has been in for the LGAQ’s inaugural Economic and Regional Development Conference to be held in Cairns on 30 Sept and 1 October 2004. The conference theme ‘Economic and Regional Development - How to make it work for you!’ will be a key opportunity for Councils to obtain the latest thinking from international and national experts on economic development, with good examples from across Australia.

Planning and Development Assessment Update

The past 12 months has seen the LGAQ working on proactive initiatives to assist Councils in the planning and development assessment area, such as investigating solutions to address the shortage of planners and also undertaking further work on solutions to lower the cost of development related dispute resolution. A significant focus was also on ensuring that Queensland Local Government’s interests were effectively represented in a number of national inquiries and national planning reforms.

New Planning Course

To assist in resolving problems associated with the shortage of town planners, LGAQ has taken the initiative in undertaking an investigation into the worth of the introduction of a new planning course in mid-2005. The course aims to be a lower level of qualification than that required to be a planner, that will produce technically qualified people that are capable of assessing and approving basic applications.

To determine Council reaction to the proposal, a discussion paper was prepared which received favourable support and feedback from Councils. The work is being undertaken in close co-operation with the Queensland branch of the Planning Institute of Australia (PIA) in accordance with the MOU LGAQ and PIA signed in late 2003.

Lower Cost Dispute Resolution

Work has continued on dealing with the problem of the continuing escalation of development dispute resolution costs and action is being undertaken at two levels. The first approach is at the State level. As part of the 2004 Queensland State Election campaign, the LGAQ sought from the State Government an undertaking to initiate an investigation into opportunities for lower cost Dispute Resolution approaches for resolving Planning and Development disputes. The State Government response was ‘a commitment to monitor the current system to ensure costs remain manageable and supportive of a Joint Working Party to review all present appeals system and assess alternatives once all councils are operating new IPA compliant planning schemes’. This is not an acceptable outcome due to the urgency of this issue and lobbying is ongoing in this regard.

The second approach is for Councils to actively implement lower cost dispute resolution processes within Council planning and development decision-making processes. Draft Guidelines on this matter will be ready for comment early 2005 with several Councils nominating to trial the proposed models. The results of the trial will form part of the finalised Guidelines.

Building Controls

In the building area, the Swimming Pool Fencing and Plumbing and Drainage legislations were completed and implemented and a submission was made on the Building Legislation Amendment Regulation.
Inquiries

Two major national submissions were made, firstly to the Productivity Commission Inquiry into First Home Ownership and secondly, to the House of Representatives Standing Committee Inquiry into Sustainable Cities 2025. The submission to the First Home Ownership Inquiry showed that there was no evidence demonstrating that fees and charges are a significant contributor to house price increases in Queensland and that the current legislative mechanisms apply realistic restrictions (full cost pricing) and are transparent to industry and community and promote efficiency. The final First Home Ownership Inquiry report supported our position. The final report into Sustainable Cities 2025 has not been released.

Development Assessment

The draft best practice development assessment principles proposed by the national Development Assessment Forum (DAF) are of real concern to the LGAQ in that a number could result in an erosion of the autonomy of Local Government. The LGAQ submission strongly opposed the proposed principle of removing Councillors from the development assessment process. It went on to recommend a State-by-State investigation of the respective development assessment systems, as many of suggested principles were clearly to address problems in the DA systems of other States that were not present in the Queensland system.

Native Title and Indigenous Cultural Heritage Issues

Workshops

The commencement of the Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Act 2003 and the Torres Strait Islander Cultural Heritage Act 2003 on 16 April 2004 introduced a new cultural heritage protection regime in Queensland.

LGAQ was successful in obtaining support from the State Government to conduct Local Government workshops throughout the State aimed at providing Councils with an overview of this new regime. Twenty-five workshops were conducted by LGAQ throughout Queensland during April, May and June 2004. As a consequence of Council requests additional workshops have also been run subsequently.

The Native Title Work Procedures Manual has been expanded to include three Chapters covering Indigenous cultural heritage, cultural heritage management plans and cultural heritage studies. Work also commenced on a number of tools to assist Councils with the new protection regime including flowcharts, checklists, and ready access to a range of relevant publications and resources now available on LGOnline.

Policy Changes

In February 2004 the State announced two policy changes that should alleviate delays and expenses experienced by Councils when planning developments involving land where native title may still exist. LGAQ had been lobbying the State government for quite some time to address both these issues.

The State confirmed that acquisition of land by a Council for land development (commercial, housing, urban or industrial) is within the scope of the Acquisition of Land Act 1967 as long as the Council manages the development (this could be through a contractor), and the development is not for the benefit of a specific third party (i.e. for the benefit of a developer).

Also, as from 05 November 2003 a reduction of up to 50% of the land’s market value has been made from the amount payable when unallocated State land is acquired for a public purpose, on the condition that Council addresses any native title issues and also bears all costs associated with the land transfer. If the
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native title compensation payable is more than 50% market value, then Council must bear this liability. Conversely, if the compensation payable is less than 50% market value, Council will retain this benefit.

**Commonwealth Funding**

Changes made to the Commonwealth Attorney General’s Native Title Financial Assistance Scheme in July 2003 began to impact on Local Governments from early 2004. Assistance is not being continued for some work previously funded. LGAQ has raised this issue on a number of occasions at both Departmental and Ministerial level. Discussions are continuing with the aim of ensuring that Queensland Local Governments continue to receive the level of native title assistance and representation needed.

**Environment and Natural Resource Management Conference**

The Annual LGAQ Environment Conference continues to build into a significant regional conference for Local Government.

The 2004 Conference focused on the areas of environment protection and natural resource management and attracted over 100 delegates, which was consistent with delegate numbers from previous years. The trade display was also well supported with 11 traders present.

Keynote presentations and Local Government case studies were presented on a range of topics including: fostering community engagement in environmental issues, climate change and energy efficiency, Local Government engagement in natural resource management planning, pest management, green purchasing and sustainable urban development.

Pre-conference workshops and technical tours continue to be popular and will form an integral part of future conferences. The workshops and tours this year provided delegates with an opportunity to consider a number of issues associated with environment protection and natural resource management, and visit a number of relevant sites include the Cairns Port and the Stanwell Wind Farm.

**Natural Resource Management**

Following two years of intensive lobbying of the State and Australian Governments, the LGAQ finally received approval in February 2004 for a $1.4 million project over 3 years to support Local Government and Community Councils involvement in the development and implementation of regional NRM planning.

The LGAQ NRM project will deliver to Councils:

- Development of Local Government NRM guidelines, best practice manuals and case studies.
- Policy and technical advice on the engagement and delivery of local and regional NRM.
- Provision of NRM information, including quarterly NRM newsletters, regular circulars, articles and LGAQ publications.
- Regular delivery of NRM related training programs/workshops to members.
- Establishment and facilitation of Statewide and Regional Local Government NRM reference groups.
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- Access to the LGAQ legal advisory service to assist Councils in addressing regional NRM legal issues.

Key activities the three member NRM team has undertaken since February include assisting with the development and delivery the LGAQ Environment and NRM Conference in July 2004, the establishment of the NRM website on LG Online and presentations at various regional meetings of Councils.

In addition, individual meetings have been held with over 90 Councils to effectively engage in the development and implementation of regional NRM approaches to land-use and natural resource planning and management. Meetings will be held with all remaining member Councils by the end of 2004.

The LGAQ has also continued its work to ensure that the regional NRM planning frameworks are sustainable in the long-term.

Since 2001 the Association has been working with Councils refining a framework for improved coordination of natural resource management planning. The current and preferred framework is based on the regional planning process established under the Integrated Planning Act (IPA) including the formation and role of Regional Planning Advisory Committees (RPACs).

The State Government initiated a review of the regional NRM planning arrangements early in 2004 and engaged a consortium of researchers to undertake a study of existing regional natural resource management (NRM) planning arrangements. The Association has ensured that the concerns of Local Government were well represented.

The LGAQ will be undertaking a review of the Local Government position regarding the preferred future regional institutional arrangements for natural resource management to ensure that it is reflective of current Local Government needs.

Weed and Pest Animal Management

The LGAQ has continued its efforts in relation this important issue.

The 2004 State Election Local Government Policy Plan called on the incoming Government to commit an additional $5 million per annum to enable the reintroduction of essential programs for the control of weeds and feral animals across Queensland. The Government's response indicated that additional funding would be considered with other priorities as part of the normal budget process. Lobbying efforts are continuing in this regard.

The Association developed a submission and appeared before the Senate Environment, Communications, Information Technology and Arts Reference Committee on Invasive Species in April 2004. A similar LGAQ submission has been made to the House of Representative Standing Committee on Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry Inquiry into the impact on agriculture of pest animals.

The Association successfully lobbied the State Government to amend the Land Protection (Pest and Stock Route Management) Act 2002 providing a further 1-year extension for the completion of Local Government Area Pest and Stock Route Management Plans from 1 July 2004 to 1 July 2005.
Stock Route Network Management

Effective management of the stock route network continues to be an issue for many Councils and the LGAQ has continued its work in addressing this issue.

The LGAQ initiated the formation of the LGAQ Stock Route Management Working Group to oversee the development of a position paper that identifies existing and emerging problems and discusses possible options for their resolution. This is part of a broader review of Local Government stock route management, including the contemporary usage of the stock route network, revenue and maintenance costs, compliance and enforcement.

The position paper was finalised and presented to the Minister for Natural Resources Mines & Energy, the Hon. Stephen Robertson on 23 December 2003.

In March 2004, the Minister requested the Land Protection Council (established under the Land Protection (Pest and Stock Route Management) Act 2002 to provide strategic advice to the Minister about the management of pests and stock route network) to review the LGAQ's Stock Route Management Position Paper.

The Minister has requested the Council to provide advice and recommendations as to how the management and use of the State’s stock route network may be improved by November 2004.

Environmental Protection Act Roles and Responsibilities Review

The LGAQ, in partnership with the Environment Protection Agency (EPA) has recently completed the first stage of the process of refining the current environmental regulatory roles and responsibilities of Councils and the EPA. The project is being undertaken in response to the continuing environmental protection regulation jurisdictional issues impacting on Local Government and the EPA.

The project aims, as far as practical, to enable Local Governments and the EPA to collaboratively achieve outcomes expected by the communities they represent and to achieve the most environmentally effective allocation of available resources.

Following detailed consultation with Local Governments, including two workshops with Councillors at the LGAQ 2003 Annual Conference, and input from 22 individual Councils, a report was produced early in 2004 detailing the core principles for future legislative and program reform.

The LGAQ Executive and State Cabinet have now signed off on the core principles and it is expected that the implementation of the core principles will commence in September 2004 with an estimated completion time of approximately 18 months.

Water, Noise and Air Environmental Protection Policy Review

In late 2003, the EPA initiated a review of the environmental effectiveness and economic efficiency of the air, noise and water environmental protection policies (EPP). EPPs are subordinate legislation under the Environmental Protection Act 1994 and are required to be reviewed by the Minister for the Environment every seven years. The EPPs under review provide details on the environmental policy, protection and management measures to be adopted in regard to water, noise and air pollution.
The EPA and the LGAQ jointly facilitated a number of consultation sessions in February 2004 to allow input from Local Government into the review. The initial stage of the review process is now complete with the EPA intending to further consult with the LGAQ in the near future.

National Packaging Covenant

Review

The LGAQ continued to work over the past year at the national level to resolve the very significant issue for Local Government of waste packaging management.

The LGAQ became a signatory to the National Packaging Covenant (NPC) in 2000. The National Packaging Covenant is a co-regulatory agreement between industries in the packaging chain and all spheres of government based on the principles of shared responsibility and product stewardship. It applies to all consumer packaging throughout the supply chain, from raw materials suppliers, to retailers and the ultimate recovery or disposal of waste packaging.

The Covenant was due to expire in August 2004, however as a result of a decision of the Environmental Protection and Heritage Council (EPHC), consisting of all State and Federal Environment Ministers, the Covenant will now expire in April 2005. At their April meeting, the EPHC instructed the National Packaging Covenant Council (NPC Council) to develop a detailed proposal for future arrangements consequent to the expiry of the Covenant by October 2004.

The NPC Council has developed and released a proposal for consultation that includes the majority of the recommendations of the Independent Local Government Evaluation, which was project managed by the LGAQ on behalf of the Australian Local Government Association (ALGA).

The key recommendations for a strengthened Covenant are that it must:

- Deliver **measurable outcomes** in managing the environmental impact of consumer packaging;
- Require **signatory action plans** and reports to contain detailed actions, outcomes, timelines and quantifiable performance measures;
- Better utilise the National Environment Protection Measure (**NEPM**) process by improving Covenant Council assessment processes and jurisdictional enforcement regimes; and
- Be adequately resourced and **funded**.

The Association has been heavily engaged in the review process to ensure that the issues raised by Local Government are adequately addressed in any initiative intended to replace the original National Packaging Covenant. The Association also continues to work closely with other state associations and ALGA in an attempt to establish a consistent National Local Government position in regard to the proposal.

Funding for Local Government

Additionally, as a direct result of considerable effort by the Association over the past year, considerable levels of funding under the transitional arrangements of the National Packaging Covenant flowed to Local Governments to assist in implementing preferred practice kerbside and drop-off centre recycling. Additional programs are also currently being developed through the National Packaging Covenant process, which are designed to assist councils to further enhance their current recycling initiatives. These programs, including the provision of funding for the installation of public place recycling were rolled out during 2003/04.
Roads, Transport And Infrastructure

National Road and Transport Issues

Funding

The first signal of 2004 being an election year occurred in January, with the Hon John Anderson, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Transport and Regional Services announcing the continuation of the Roads to Recovery Programme for another four years.

The Roads to Recovery programme has been a critical source of funding for councils to help address the current maintenance backlog on local roads. With the impending finalisation of the programme in 2005 drawing closer. The LGAQ in collaboration with the Australian Local Government Association (ALGA) continuously lobbied the Australian Government throughout 2003 to renew the programme.

Consequently, the Australian Government’s announcement to renew the $1.2 billion programme was very welcome news for the Association and indeed local government across the nation.

However, unlike the original programme, Roads to Recovery Mark II (R2R2) will quarantine $400 million to be paid to councils for local land transport infrastructure projects of strategic regional importance (commonly referred to as the Roads to Recovery strategic component).

In preparedness for the release of further details, the Association was party to the development of a national local government policy position, which advocated that each state should receive a proportionate share of R2R2 strategic funds and that regional groups of councils should decide how the funds are allocated.

Six months on, in June, the Australian Government launched its much-anticipated Auslink Whitepaper, which outlined how the Australian Government intends to spend $11.8 billion in land transport for road and rail over the next five years.

Among other issues, of most serious concern to the Association was Queensland’s share of funds, $1.4 billion in total and the proposed process for the distribution of the strategic component of the Roads to Recovery funding, that is, a nationally contestable process with no guarantee of state shares.

In response to the Auslink announcement, the President wrote to all LGAQ members, the Hon John Anderson, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Transport and Regional Services, the Hon Ian Campbell, Minister for Local Government, Territories and Roads as well as State and Federal members of Parliament expressing the Association’s concerns.

The Australian Government has still not released any guidelines for the administration of the R2R2 programme, and as such the Association is continuing to lobby for state shares and regionally based mechanisms for the distribution of these funds.

Policy and Planning

The Association has continued to be involved in various roads and transport issues at the national level through our participation in the ALGA’s Roads and Transport Advisory Committee, namely;

- Performance Based Standards for heavy vehicles
- Networking the Nation Local Roads Data and Shared Services Project
Local Government Asset Management Initiatives
Austroads Partnership Agreement
AAA Safer Roads Campaign
National Local Roads Congress

Queensland Road and Transport Issues

Funding

The Association’s previous work on the Layton Inquiry, and now its partnership campaign with the RACQ, “Mayors and Motorists against Carnage and Congestion” has without doubt raised the profile of Queensland’s roads and transport infrastructure problems.

This is evidenced in the LGAQ’s most recent Community Attitudes Survey where roads and transport issues consistently rated high scores as well as “The Roads Solution” series undertaken in June by the Courier Mail.

Recognising the need to respond, in June, the State Government handed down its budget with record spending for roads and transport infrastructure.

The Budget includes an additional $1.1 billion for roads over the next five years (over and above normal Roads Implementation Program [RIP] sources), including;

- Extra funds of $186.3 million over three years as part of the Smart State Building Fund announced by the State Government in December 2003.
- Extra $301 million committed in the 2004 state election, namely; $120 million Tugun Bypass; $120 million for Centenary Highway extension (Springfield to Ripley Road); $35 million for Pacific Paradise interchange on the Sunshine Motorway; and $26 million for Yeppoon Western bypass, upgrade of Yeppoon - Tanby Road.
- Extra $571 million over four years for the Arterial Roads Infrastructure Package.

Furthermore, the LGAQ was successful in securing, as identified in it’s 10 Point State Election Policy Plan an additional $5 million per annum over five years of Transport Infrastructure Development Scheme (TIDS) funding for projects on the Local Roads of Regional Significance under the Roads Alliance Program.

This was shortly followed by another announcement of an additional $2 million per annum over five years of TIDS base funding for road projects, taking the total TIDS funding allocation to a record $70 million.

In keeping with its commitment to improving Local Government road planning and management capability as part of the Roads Alliance, the Hon Paul Lucas, Minister for Transport and Main Roads agreed to continue TIDS capability funding at $1 million per annum for two years, commencing 2004 – 05 financial year.

In effect, since the introduction of the Roads Alliance in August 2002, the Association has been successful in securing from the state government a total of $6 million of TIDS funding for local government capacity building.
Policy and Planning

Road Management and Investment Alliance

During the past twelve months, significant progress has been made on aspects of the Roads Alliance framework.

Regional Road Groups have continued to work on issues including:

- Finalisation of their Local Roads of Regional Significance (LRRS) network
- Purchase/upgrade and implementation of road asset management systems
- Adoption of asset management specifications as contained in the Road and Bridge Asset Management Kit
- Participation in data collection training
- Collection of road asset data
- Development of stage one regional investment strategies
- Development of regional works programs
- Investigations into project prioritisation methodology and works program delivery strategies, and
- Consideration of Joint Purchasing and Resource Sharing opportunities.

The LGAQ and Main Roads Roads Alliance project team have also;

- Participated in various Regional Road Group and Technical Committee meetings
- Released Part 1 of the Program Development Kit - Investment Strategy Development
- Released Joint Purchasing and Resource Sharing Guidelines
- Developed a draft project prioritisation methodology
- Produced the first Roads Alliance Annual Progress Report
- Produced an updated Roads Alliance promotional brochure
- Distributed a Roads Alliance communication survey to all members
- Developed Roads Alliance web pages on LG Online, and
- Developed draft system requirements specifications for the Roads Alliance Hub.

Roads Safety Action Plan

In December, Queensland Transport formally released the Queensland Road Safety Strategy 2004 - 2011. The Roads Safety Action Plan 2004 - 05 is the first of four consecutive two year action plans to assist with implementing the strategy.

In the past, road safety action plans have concentrated predominately on State Government road safety initiatives. However, through the combined efforts of the LGAQ and Institute of Public Works Engineers
Australia - Queensland (IPWEAQ), the 2004 - 05 Plan has incorporated a range of local government related road safety initiatives.

**Roads Off Alignment**

Over the past 12 months, the Association has continued to work in partnership with the Department of Natural Resources and Mines in developing a framework to assist Councils with addressing the issues surrounding off alignment roads.

Consideration of the wide range of issues associated with off alignment roads indicates that there is not one simple ‘fix all’ solution. Therefore, the framework being developed involves a structured program to address the scope of roads off alignment scenarios confronting most Queensland Councils.

Parts of this framework were workshopped at the 2004 Roads and Transport Forum. The Draft Framework is near completion with minor refinements required before state wide consultation occurs.

**Roads and Transport Forum**

The Association’s 9th Annual Roads and Transport Forum was held on the 29th and 30th April 2004 at the Brisbane Convention and Exhibition Centre. This Forum was the most successful to date with over 457 delegates representing 107 Queensland Councils including 50 newly elected Mayors and Councillors.

The program covered areas such as:
- The Roads Alliance Program
- Road Funding - Auslink and Roads to Recovery
- Roads Off Alignment
- Intermodal Transport,
- Road Safety,
- Recreational Boating, and
- Asset Management.

The 2004 Forum also saw the introduction of focus point sessions and best practice case studies, which proved to be very popular in providing practical examples for delegates to explore.

**Regional Airport Security**

The “Enhanced Aviation Security Package” released by the Australian Government in December 2003, resulted in some 40 - 50 regional airports in Queensland being required to implement enhanced security arrangements. In Queensland’s case, the new regulation has impacted on the majority of Council owned regional airports and regional air service providers such as Mac air and Qantas Link.

The Australian government initially offered $14 million nation wide to assist regional airport operators upgrade their security infrastructure (capital works only) on a 50/50 cost share basis.

However, after extensive lobbying by the ALGA and other relevant stakeholders, in June, the Australian Government announced that funding would be doubled and that the 50/50 cost sharing arrangement would be abolished, in place of a direct grant.

As part of the security package, the Commonwealth Department of Transport and Regional Services (DOTARS) developed detailed documents, templates and model systems to assist airport owners to undertake risk assessments and develop appropriate security programs.
LGAQ provided comment on the documents as well as assist DOTARS in convening workshop sessions in regional centres across Queensland.

**Local Government Counter Terrorism Risk Management Kit**

Throughout 2003, the Association worked in partnership with the Premiers Department, the Queensland Police Service and the Department of Emergency Services to prepare a guideline to assist local governments in Queensland undertake a broad level assessment of potential terrorism or security risks to their critical infrastructure services, local mass gathering events as well as continuity of government services.

The Kit establishes a three-step process for councils to follow which will result in the development of a security risk profile as well as to define security risk management arrangements. Three local government trials were held in March and April 2004 to test the suitability of the process.

The kit will be launched at the 2004 Annual Conference and the roll out of the program will be undertaken over a 12 month period starting in September 2004.

**Natural Disaster Relief and Mitigation Arrangements**

Almost three years after the LGAQ represented local government on the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) Review into the arrangements for dealing with natural disasters, Local Government will be recipients of a $70 million, three way funding program to support the assessment and implementation of disaster mitigation strategies.

To complement the COAG reforms, the State government in late 2003 enacted it’s new Queensland Disaster Management Act.

These national and state reforms, will in effect, introduce a cultural change in the way disaster management issues are dealt with by local government, most notable through;

- An emphasis on preparedness and mitigation not just on response and recovery
- Encouraging a corporate mainstream approach to disaster management, and
- A restructure of the Queensland natural disaster management system around local, district and state disaster management plans.

To assist local government with the implementation of these reforms, the Association has secured funding under the Natural Disaster Mitigation Assistance Program (first trache) for the LGAQ Disaster Management Capability Development and Implementation Project, which will operate over the next three years.

**Memorandums of Understandings (MOU)**

Since Annual Conference 2003, LGAQ has committed to new or revised Memorandum of Understandings for the following;

- Level Crossing MOU with the Department of Main Roads, Queensland Transport and Queensland Rail to clarify the management and funding responsibilities for level crossing infrastructure.
- Institute of Public Works Engineering Australia - Queensland (IPWEAQ) MOU to formalise and improve the long history of cooperation and collaboration between both organisations.
Queensland Transport MOU has been reviewed since its was first signed in 1998. This MOU guides the dealings between both organisations as it relates to the planning, co-ordination, and provision of transport services and associated infrastructure.

**Water Reform Program**

The last 12 months to 30 June 2004 was the final year of the Department of Natural Resources, Mines and Energy funded water reform program to assist local governments to implement the requirements of the Water Act 2000 as well as respond to other water related issues. The program will continue however to the end of 2004 on residual funding. Key activities included:

- dedicated role of Water Reform Project Officer within LGAQ to provide advice to local government on water issues, and act as liaison with the State Government
- representation on the Water Reform Implementation Group, Rural Water Pricing Group and Drought Urban Water Supply Taskforce
- monitoring, reviews and advice on DNRME programs under the Water Act vis-à-vis: Water Resource Plans, Resource Operation Plans, water allocation and pricing, water licensing, water trading, and the impacts upon land valuation and rating arising from the separation of water allocations from land
- regional workshops for local governments on preparing statutory Strategic Asset Management Plans and Customer Service Standards; and to facilitate these plans, development of 20 model operations and maintenance procedures for water and sewerage assets
- negotiation with the Environmental Protection Agency over their proposals to reform licensing of sewage treatment plants, and
- preparation of a publication for Councils on water conservation.
Business Support Branch

The Business Support Branch is structured around three clear strategy offerings:

- Business Operations
- Commercial Services
- Business Information

Commercial Services

LGM Queensland

The public liability environment faced by Local Government improved markedly during the 2003/4 year. LGM Queensland continued to provide members with a stable and secure source of public liability and professional indemnity cover. Continued participation in the national Local Government reinsurance purchasing program enabled very reasonable increases to member contributions compared with the private market. Benefits also began to show from the introduction of liability law reforms, pushed strongly by the LGAQ, in the Personal Injuries Proceedings Act and the Civil Liability Act. The reforms saw a slowing in claims being made against Councils and assisted LGM's pro-active management strategies by requiring earlier claim notification and provision of better claim particulars.

During the period LGM's membership continued to grow with the 15 members of the Darling Downs Local Government Association coming on board. In order to maintain closer contact with members a series of 11 regional member forums were jointly conducted with Local Government Workcare. The forums were very well attended and enabled members to discuss current liability law and risk management issues directly with LGM and neighbouring Councils.

A very significant enhancement of LGM's cover occurred with the addition, at no additional cost, of casual hirees cover. This cover has not been available to individual Councils for a number of years and goes a long way to addressing the difficulties experienced with enforcing insurance requirements for casual hirees of Council facilities. Members were also provided at no cost with LGM's Risk Chase software that assisted in reviewing risk management practices and benchmarking performance on a statewide basis. Management services provided by Jardine Lloyd Thompson continue to be a cornerstone of LGM's success.

Local Government Workcare

2003/4 saw a further 12.6% reduction in the average LGW member contribution rate. This meant that Local Government Workcare has reduced the average rate paid by Councils prior to establishment of self-insurance in 1998 by more than 50%.

The self-insurance scheme continued its capacity to deliver significant cost reductions to members whilst also building strong financial reserves. The level of LGW's reserves enabled identification of an amount that could be used to pay out the LGAQ's loan with QTC for Local Government House and thereby avoid very
significant amounts in interest payments. The requirement for self-insurance operations to be co-located with the LGAQ was the primary factor in the LGAQ purchasing the Evelyn Street building.

LGW also continued to provide many new member services designed to reduce workers compensation claim costs. Comprehensive internal WH&S auditor training provided at no cost to staff of more than 70 members has been followed up with assistance in analysing audit outcomes and developing safety improvement action plans. The intensive management of psychological (stress) claims and advice to members on avoiding such claims has delivered very positive outcomes and kept this potential growth area of high cost claims relatively in check. The launch of a new web site for LGW has provided more accessible scheme information and enabled the electronic lodgement of claims.

**Business Information**

**Marketing**

The marketing mission of the LGAQ is to maximise the effectiveness of the association by identifying, marketing and promoting the LGAQ’s products and services to target markets in line with its mission and to raise awareness and understanding of the role of local government in Queensland.

In order to ensure a consistent corporate approach to marketing management the LGAQ Executive endorsed a three year marketing plan in March 2002. This plan incorporates various tools, including every form of communication and as such provides key strategies aimed at utilising and integrating a range of marketing tools to fulfil key objectives.

During 2003/2004 the LGAQ continued to implement the marketing plan. In particular, LGAQ senior officers continued to have regular informal contact with Council CEO’s in an endeavour to ensure two way communication between LGAQ and Councils. This relationship strategy is aimed at ensuring Council issues are understood and being addressed by the Executive.

The marketing plan also highlighted the importance of engaging Local Government elected representatives. To this end, the LGAQ continued to provide a complimentary copy of “Council Leader” directly mailed to all Queensland Councillors. Executive members provided constituent Mayor’s with a monthly issues update.

Following the Local Government Elections in March 2004, the LGAQ provided every newly elected and returned Councillor with an extensive range of publications including a Councillor Remuneration and Entitlements Guide, Councillor Handbook, a Good Governance Guide and Local Government Online Registration Details.

All Councillors have been offered access to Local Government Online. This service contains a vast array of information and technology tools. Councillors have the ability to establish a personal profile so that only relevant information is presented to them when they log on. This customisation in no way limits individual ability to access the entirety of the information available.

The LGAQ recognises the critical role of the media in positioning the profile of Queensland Councils and the representational and advocacy role of the Association. The President and Executive Director continue to provide proactive and reactive media comments and perspectives. The Associations relationship with the media remains strong in the sense of viewpoint being sought.
Local Government Week

With the aim of increasing public awareness of Queensland Council’s contribution to community governance and service provision, the LGAQ facilitates a “Local Government Week” each year. The majority of Queensland Councils become involved in activities within their communities including open days, community sausages sizzles, tours of Council facilities, morning teas and youth forums.

The LGAQ commissions a specific media watch during the week. It is clear from that analysis that Councils have gained significant positive media exposure from “Local Government Week” activities.

Local Government Online

During 2003 the LGAQ continued to build and deliver the “Connecting Communities” facility. This initiative resulted from Councils working with the LGAQ and various private technology vendors to construct a portal capable of hosting a broad array of databases and technology tools. This facility was funded by the Federal Government through “Networking the Nation (NTN)” up to 30 June 2004.

Based on the recommendations of the Gartner Group, the “Connecting Communities” facility was constructed around the latest software and hardware technology. It was this leading edge technology that provided the majority of the superior use advantages, clearly made available by the solution.

Because of the nature of this advanced platform, the Executive decided to convert all current LGAQ information and technology offerings to form part of a common facility.

Local Government Online represents a suite of otherwise unavailable resources and services for elected members and local government employees through the internet. These resources include:

- GovNet
- Qld Government Date Hub (statistics)
- Integrated Planning Geographic Information System
- LGAQ Legislation Service
- LGAQ Circulars
- LGAQ Award Service
- Legal Opinions
- Media Monitors
- And Much More

With the NTN funding source concluding on 30 June 2004, Councils were given the opportunity to trial Local Government Online for six months. Councils were invited to become subscribers as from 1 July 2004. 117 Councils are now paying subscribers. The future direction of Local Government Online will be directed by the Executive following advice from subscribing council user groups.
Business Operations

Local Government House

Local Government House is located at 25 Evelyn Street Newstead and provides cost effective accommodation meeting rooms and training facilities for LGAQ operations. Local Government House also provides accommodation for LGAQ strategic business partners and Local Government “professional groups” at commercial rates of rent. These tenants include:

- Jardine Lloyd Thompson
- Local Buy Pty Ltd
- Resolute Information Technology Pty Ltd
- Local Government Managers Association
- Institute of Public Works and Engineering Australia Queensland
- Australian Institute of Environmental Health

A specific facility is available on the second floor for visiting Councillors and Officers to use as an office away from home.

Finances

Appendix 3, Annual Accounts, contains the Association’s consolidated and audited financial statements for the year ending 31 May 2004.

As a requirement of the Queensland Audit Office, the 2003/2004 financial statements have been presented as “General Purpose Financial Statements”. The Statement of Financial Performance shows a net result of $1.7M. After taking out grant revenues and expenditures and the LGW retirement of LGAQ debt, the operating surplus for the year was $330,000 ($100,000 better than budget).

The attached independent audit report, signed by the Auditor-General Queensland, is unqualified. The Audit Committee (Mr G Grundy, Mr S Fynes-Clinton and Cr L Tyrell) met on four occasions during the financial year and provided reports to the Executive. Following the election of the new Executive, Cr Brendan McNamara replaced Cr Les Tyrell on this committee. The Audit Committee has endorsed the published accounts.
Local Buy Pty Ltd

Local Buy is a wholly owned subsidiary of LGAQ and provides Queensland Councils with a vast array of fully tendered or quoted contractual arrangements for goods and services.

The Board of Directors of Local Buy (listed below) met on six occasions during 2003/2004. Year end financial statements (fully audited and unqualified) revealed a surplus in excess of budget. Local Buy financials are consolidated with LGAQ financials in appendix 3 to this report.

Board Members:

Mr Graham Grundy - Chair
Cr Noel Playford OAM - resigned during the year
Cr Paul Bell
Mr Greg Hallam PSM
Mr Bill Simpson
Mr Ian Leckenby
Ms Michelle McFayden - General Manager - resigned
Ms Eleanor Jackson - General Manager

A strategic review conducted by the Local Buy Board saw the electronic procurement part of the business transferred to Resolute Information Technology Pty Ltd as from 1 June 2004.

LOCAL BUY VISION STATEMENTS

Following are the core values, core purpose and desired future as outcomes of the “Developing a Vision” workshop.

CORE VALUES:

Local Buy’s core values reflect our behaviour, performance and culture.

- Local Buy is committed to the values of integrity and the highest standard of professionalism.
- Local Buy is committed to a performance driven and results oriented focus to provide value to our stakeholders.
- Local Buy values a culture centred on teamwork, communication and continuous improvement, promoting freedom to dissent, err and learn, in a rewarding environment.

CORE PURPOSE:

To provide comprehensive, value adding procurement services to Qld Local Government.

DESIRED FUTURE

Local Buy will be respected as the leader in the provision of procurement services within the arena of Queensland Local Government, through our commitment to exceed our stakeholder expectations.
Resolute Information Technology Pty Ltd (Formerly DDS Pty Ltd)

Resolute is a wholly owned subsidiary of the LGAQ and delivers Local Government Online on behalf of the LGAQ as well as providing I/T services to Queensland Councils and small to medium size private businesses.

The Board of Directors of Resolute are as follows:

- Ms Kathryn McDonald - Chair
- Mr Greg Hoffman PSM
- Mr James Barclay - Logan City Council
- Mr Ian Leckenby

Resolute’s financial statements (fully audited and unqualified) have been consolidated with LGAQ financials in appendix 3 to this report.

**Vision Statement**

To be the provider of choice to Queensland Local Government and SMEs for the provision of strategic and operational IT consulting, web development, hosting and facilities management, help desk and support services through best practice in customer service, innovative technology-based solutions and the expertise of our highly-skilled team.

**Mission Statement**

Resolute is focused on the provision of services to provide a robust environment for the delivery of Local Government Online on behalf of the Local Government Association of Queensland.

Resolute provides the Local Government Association of Queensland with well-researched options for the strategic direction of Local Government Online.

Resolute delivers a broad range of IT services to the Local Government Association of Queensland, Local and State Government and small to medium sized corporate clients including strategic and operational IT consulting, web development, hosting and facilities management, help desk and support services.

Resolute invests in its people to ensure the organisation has the capacity and capabilities required to exceed customer expectations.
People and Performance Branch

Improving the positioning of Local Government in the Employment Market - Emerging Issues Strategy

Following significant feedback from member Councils with concerns about Local Government’s capacity to maintain a sustainable and capable workforce, LGAQ committed itself on behalf of its member Councils to adopt a more aggressive and strategic management approach to local government workforce issues to complement its existing Workforce Relations services to Councils.

The LGAQ in collaboration with the Local Government Managers Association commissioned an independent Review of CEO Recruitment and Retention Issues for Remote and Rural councils.

The recommendations arising out of this review were analysed and where appropriate included in its Labour Market positioning initiative viz Strategy to address Emerging challenges for the Local government workforce which identifies twenty-eight (28) initiatives to improve Local Government’s position in the employment market.

Implementation of the initiatives which range from immediate activities to promote local government as an employer of choice to further dedicated research and development of more sophisticated workplace and employment strategies to respond to specific workforce issues has begun, with some surprisingly early positive results beginning to emerge.

Enterprise Bargaining

While members continue to report a high incidence of Enterprise Bargaining fatigue with some following the LGAQ suggestions of adopting a business-case approach to EB or simply rolling over existing agreements, enterprise bargaining does still reportedly deliver productivity dividends to some Councils, particularly in those Councils who do dedicate some initial planning towards pending EB negotiations.

In all, the LGAQ assisted with the certification of over 87 Enterprise Agreements for various Councils as well as worked with a number of Councils in developing an EB agenda prior to their negotiation.

The LGAQ has also been able to provide valuable advice to Councils in response to common logs of claims served on individual Councils and positioned itself to share intelligence from the above experiences with Council’s undergoing or about to undergo enterprise bargaining. LGAQ’s “clause vetting” activity has also minimised risks for Councils of having their position later challenged due to deficiencies in the framing of the agreed clauses of their EB agreement.

Industrial Disputes

There has been a noticeable increase (about 20%) in the number of disputes that LGAQ has assisted Councils in before the State and Federal Industrial Relations Commissions. These disputes have invariably involved industrial disputation on EB-related matters or challenges to the legitimate termination of employees from Council. Results have been overwhelmingly favourable for Councils.
Union Applications to vary common local government employee awards

Union applications were submitted to the Australian and Queensland Industrial relations Commissions to vary the two (2) main awards covering Local Government employees. The applications from the AWU, FEDFA and ASU represent the most significant challenge to the status quo of the current awards since their initial adoption in 1993. If successful, the changes to the awards would have significant impact on Councils both by way of cost increases and additional administration.

LGAQ as the peak employer body has expended significant resources rebutting as appropriate the union applications to date and signalled officially to the Industrial Commissions its intention to formally oppose the applications as they are currently presented. While there may be some minor matters agreed to on a consent basis, both applications are expected to proceed to full arbitration cases before the Commission and will require the allocation of significant resources from LGAQ operatives as well as necessary input from Council representatives.

Following significant consultation with member Councils, the LGAQ has lodged their own applications to vary the awards to ensure that its own reform agendas are included as part of the conciliation and arbitration cases arising out of these matters.

The LGAQ has also attended the Commission a number of occasions to represent Councils affected by the ALHMA pay equity application to vary the Child care workers award. This matter is continuing and is expected to result in some additional costs for Councils with LGAQ manoeuvring to both contain the costs where appropriate and ensure the results provide long-term and sustainable benefits for Councils.

Industrial Agreements

An Industrial Commission review of registered Industrial Agreements identified in excess of 75 Industrial Agreements applying to local government entities. The LGAQ after consulting with affected Councils has reduced this number of outstanding Agreements to just over thirty (30) by effecting the abolition of Agreements superseded through registered Certified Agreements.

LGAQ has continued to negotiate with unions and the Commission on the preferred methodology to effect the abolition of the remaining Agreements.

Other Award matters

Significant LGAQ resources were applied to representing Councils interests in the conclusion of the IR Commission-conducted reviews of awards which was required pursuant to the S130 of the IR Act. Other award matters attended to by LGAQ invariably involved challenges to the interpretations of awards by Councils or claims for retrospective payment to employees due to non-adherence to some technical elements of an award.

Australian Workplace Agreements

There was a sight increase to the number of Councils seeking assistance from LGAQ on the development and registration of Australian Workplace Agreements. These invariably involved irregular work activities and circumstances that made award coverage impractical eg pool management or seeking specific outcomes eg payout of accumulated long service leave.
Case

The Federal Industrial Relations Commission handed down an Award Safety Net increase of $19.00 per week. The LGAQ lodged a submission with the State Industrial Commission in their State Wage Case review for the federal increase to flow on to state awards. Like the Federal increase, the anticipated State increase is expected to apply from September.

Industrial Relations 10 year Strategy

Following significant consultation with member Councils, the LGAQ formally adopted its strategy for industrial reform titled “Reforming Industrial Relations for Local Government in Queensland - A Roadmap for Change 2003 to 2013.”

Despite most available resources being diverted towards responding to the union challenges to the existing awards, progress began on some of the initiatives prescribed within the strategy to better align the industrial framework affecting local government with its business and operating agendas, with particular attention being given to seeking further exemptions for Executive Management from award coverage and reducing the number of regulatory instruments affecting local government.

Workplace Health and Safety Forums

Significant attention has been paid to improving the relationship between LGAQ and Council WH&S professional staff with regular LGAQ attendance at regional WH&S forums. The email user group has proven to be effective in improving consultation on industry safety matters which has improved LGAQ’s capacity to respond effectively to proposed changes to the WH&S regulatory framework affecting Local Government.

The revamping of the annual WH&S conference proved to be successful with improved attendances and positive feedback from attendees.

Workplace Health and Safety Act 1995 - Guidelines for the prevention of Harassment in the Workplace

The LGAQ made significant submissions to State Government in relation to the release of the above guidelines. While not successful with all of its resolutions for changes, some positive changes for Councils did ensue out of LGAQ and other employer group’s combined representations.

Workplace Investigations/CMC joint Presentations

There was a significant increase in the number of investigations conducted by LGAQ on behalf of individual Councils. These investigations invariably involved performance issues for employees or claims of inefficiency or maladministration against administrative operations units of Councils. LGAQ brought to the investigation not only a level of expertise in these matters but also an inherent knowledge of local government operations which added to the credibility to its findings which assisted when matters required interaction with the CMC.

Also, the LGAQ at the invitation of the CMC participated in a number of CMC regional forums designed to assist local governments understand the role of the CMC and the local government’s responsibilities in relation to CMC matters.
Employment Assistance Programs

LGAQ continued to promote and administer the entry-level employment and training opportunities available to members through State and Federal Government policies and programs.

Under the State Government’s Breaking the Unemployment Cycle initiative, LGAQ administered funding assistance for 1,098 fulltime ($16,000 per trainee) and school-based apprentice/trainee ($4,000 per participant) positions which were allocated to local governments in the 03/04 financial year. Additionally, funding incentives (up to $68,700 for a four-year apprenticeship) for a further 21 fulltime apprentice positions was allocated bringing the total number of apprentice positions over two financial years to 173.

The most pleasing outcome has been the recent announcement by the Queensland Government of the extension of the Breaking the Unemployment Cycle initiative for a further three years, and the Department of Employment and Training’s request for LGAQ to continue its role on behalf of local government.

Recruitment and other Human Resource Solutions

There was a small increase in the number of Councils seeking LGAQ assistance in recruiting senior managers during the previous 12 months as well as Councils seeking assistance in identifying experienced and capable operatives for short-term stints as CEOs. Other services sought by Councils included salary reviews and market scans, organisational reviews and conflict interventions such as workplace investigations and mediation.

Two hundred and seventy-one employees and elected members representing 98 Councils attended Workplace Relation forums convened across the state. Also HR forums were convened in a number of centres and attracted the interests of larger and medium-size Councils. Greater attention was given to the participants determining the agenda of these forums in order that LGAQ can better determine the needs of these Councils that may be of business interest to LGAQ.
Publications

The Workplace Relations Unit issued 24 Circulars to Councils providing updates on award and legislative variations and developments as well as distributed quarterly WR Bulletins which provided important information and updates on significant Commission and Legal decisions and cases that might have implications for Councils as employers.

Award Service

The numbers of award changes as well as turnover of Council staff has ensured the continuing and growing popularity of the Award Service. Enquiries go to both the provisions of the awards and relevant legislation and their application. There is a significant increase in requests for historical information, which places pressure on the resources available for such research.

This has been complemented by a noticeable increase in the requirement to educate (rather than just inform) enquirers in an understanding and appreciation of the vagaries, interpretation and application of provisions and processes contained within the IR system, which regulates local government employment.

Employment Survey

The annual survey to establish trends in Local Government again returned 100% participation ensuring the integrity of the data. The figures confirm that Local Government is a growing industry with an overall increase of about 1500 employees in the preceding 12 months, continuing the trend of recent years.

Other trends include:

- While women continue to be underrepresented, their numbers are growing at twice that of males in local government.
- An escalation of the trend of a reduction in the external workforce and an accompanying increase in numbers of the inside workforce;
- A decrease in the numbers of full-time and casual staff but a significant increase in numbers of part-time staff.

Other data collected and analysed relates to the extent of above-award pay rises for Council staff which provides important bench-marking data for Councils for planning, EB and budget purposes. The data suggests a variation of between 0% and 25+.

Reconnect

Following the March elections, the LGAQ conducts an “induction or welcome” program for newly elected and returned councillors. The 2004 program “Reconnect” focussed on the administration/policy split in relation to the role of elected members as well as insights into the full-range of responsibilities of Councils in the modern era.

Fourteen (14) LGAQ staff delivered the program within 24 regional centres from Sabai Island to Charleville. Twenty-seven Councils opted to have individualised in-house programs. In total, there were approximately 770 participants from across 117 local governments who attended a Reconnect session.

Feedback from attendees was unanimously positive (see attached) with a total overall rating of 89% for the program.
Flexible Learning Leaders

LGAQ is currently engaged as a tutor for other people and institutions interested in nominating for an annual ward for promoting flexibility and quality of leadership currently sponsored by the Australian National Training Association (ANTA). LGAQ was one of the recipients of this Award in 2002 for its efforts in promoting Local Government councils as a key industry, leading the way in training, staff development and ranges of occupations available within councils and was asked to continue its involvement in the program by serving as a tutor for other interested bodies.

This involvement will further open doors to Councils and staff, to apply and be recognised as leaders within training and staff development, as started by LGAQ.

Memorandum of Understanding with QUT

LGAQ entered into a Memorandum of Understanding with QUT to conduct research into employment opportunities for manual workers, particularly those intending to retire within the next ten years.

The research is part of LGAQ’s response to some key issues affecting “outdoor workers” within local government, including:

- Ageism - and the need to retain skills and knowledge, within our industry
- Inability to recruit within local government, and strategies to better respond to these concerns
- Workplace reforms
- Absence of career opportunities, within local government

The outcomes will enable our members to better plan training programs/courses and identify and respond to the major employment concerns for the future delivery of local government services.

The longer-term aim of the project is to acquire joint funding with QUT to undertake comprehensive whole-of-local-government investigations to provide recommendations for future interventions and strategies for the future planning of the local government workforce.

Education Training Reforms Intersectoral Taskforce

LGAQ has attended a number of meetings with this taskforce which have focussed on key issues which will affect communities, schools, TAFE colleges and Registered Training Organisations (such as LGAQ).

The primary outcomes of the taskforce is the conduct of a number of pilot programs designed to engaged the “unengaged” within the community.
National Training Packages

LGAQ retained its accreditation as a Registered Training Organisation for (1) Local Government Diploma of Governance and Administration and has entered into a MOU with Southern Queensland Institute of TAFE to deliver (2) Local Government Operational Works - a package established to accommodate and reflect the skills and knowledge of the outdoor workforce.

Summary

The past twelve months, particularly the period from February to August, has been the most intense in recent memory. The State elections followed closely by the Local Government elections, LGOnline going live, the RECONNECT program, the new Executive taking office and the impending Commonwealth election have not only put pressure on Council elected members and staff but also on the LGAQ.

It is at such times that the Association’s leadership and support for its members proves the real value of the united position of Local Government in Queensland and the role played by the Association in representing its members interests.