

The Queensland Local Government Reform Alliance (QLGRA) is a non-party political association of groups and individuals from throughout Queensland focused on the reform of local government.

The QLGRA's mission is to be a vigorous peak body promoting the views of local communities regarding improved representation and governance standards in all areas of local government.

OUR SERVICES

To promote:

- the commonality of our cause;
- sharing of strategy and resources with all local communities;
- the benefits of efficient community based local councils to the general public;
- local government as an area of study in public educational institutions.
- a unified non-partisan democratic structure within our Organisation – 'United We Stand'



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The Road Ahead with QLGRA

QLGRA have had a stellar year, and it is due to the commitment of the members to bring together a project and complete it but at the same time fit within the guidelines of the membership of the QLGRA.

There are big steps being taken in Stanthorpe on the De- Amalgamation which saw a great turn out at the showgrounds.

In August we saw The Borg call for Stanthorpe to de-merge

<https://www.stanthorpeborderpost.com.au/news/borg-joins-de-amalgamation-push/3486020> and a week later the Mayor

also called for the de-merge.

<https://www.thechronicle.com.au/news/mayor-calls-stanthorpe-break-away-southern-downs/3401823>

QLGRA is all about communities and protection of communities from unreasonable power of Governments who make decisions which are not in the best interests of residents and community values.

Together as a group and individually we attended Parliamentary Committee meetings and put forward very strong presentations.

New Police Unit to counter far-right extremists/ terrorists

The Victorian State Government has recently opened a new Police unit, the Fixated Threat Assessment Centre, for the purpose of protecting Victorians from Terrorism. The unit will be staffed by thirteen specialist police officers and is based on similar units in Queensland and New South Wales. However a closer look at which types of people the unit aims to target; reveals it may have a more disturbing agenda. Assistant Commissioner Ross Guenther defined "fixated persons" as those who repeatedly write letters, emails or contact local government Councillors or politicians. Police Minister Lisa Neville said the unit would look at ideologies from all sides including far-right extremism.

The important question remains unanswered "what is the government's definition of far-right or right-wing extremism? **Terry Gordon – Membership Officer**

What could be said is that a rolling storm called the CCC came to Ipswich, it can also be said that the beginning of the end of corruption in Queensland has begun.

Currently there is only one organisation that stands in the way of Queensland Local Governments being totally transparent and accountable and we are all working to make sure they see their day in court.

The QLGRA is about connecting Local Government and Social Justice groups and presenting a unified strong voice to seek the best outcomes for all Queensland communities. I am looking forward to a stellar 2019 and to kick it off at our general meeting which will be held in Townsville.

Until then have a safe Christmas and see you all in 2019.

Gary Duffy - Committee Member



What can Ratepayers do if they feel their region is being mismanaged?

Sometimes, as ratepayers, we feel our hands are tied. We cast our votes and hope that those we put in control of our regions, and our tax dollars, were the right choices. With the casting of our votes, we hand over the future of our community to those with the most popular votes.

So how do you determine if your concern is legitimate and, if it is what do you do about it?

Step One: Clarify Your Issues

Step Two: Open the Lines of Communication

Step Three: Educate Yourself Further

Attend council meetings; These meetings are open to the public and anyone is welcome to observe regular council meetings without notice. If you want to know what is going on "behind the scenes", this should be your priority.

Talk to other ratepayers; As much as you need to open lines of communications with your council members, you also need to be talking to fellow ratepayers. Find out how they feel about your concerns or if they have additional concerns of their own. Do your fellow ratepayers share your concerns? If so, are they willing to help you in your attempts to right what may be wrong?

Step Four: Give Your Council & Administration The Chance to Address The Issue

Step Five: Taking Your Concern "Over Their Heads"

Step Six: Last Resorts – Petitions – Public Meetings – Referendums

"Becoming a ratepayer means you must actively take the reins"

"In Focus" President's Perspective

What a year! Councils sacked, Mayors, CEOs and others facing serious criminal and corruption charges. Mayors and CEOs sacked or suspended and that is just the SE corner of Qld.

In other areas we have seen CEOs resign or leave office under the clouds of public scrutiny, along with other ranking officials.

I must apologise to all our members and supporters for the lack of communication over the past few months.

The past and present committee of QLGRA have been very busy with several exhaustive submissions to government on Operation Belcarra, the proposed Waste Reduction Reforms plus the Financial Sustainability of Councils, just to mention the major undertakings.

Because of these submissions, QLGRA were invited to address two parliamentary committees 1) Financial Sustainability 2) Waste Reduction.

Unfortunately, we have not managed a face to face meeting with the current Minister for LG as yet, or the Shadow Minister.

At our AGM in August in Ipswich we saw a major changing of the guard with 60% of the new committee first time participants.

I am excited with the new ideas, enthusiasm and knowledge the new members bring to our committee and feel confident our reputation with government and the Department of LG, as being the peak representative body for Queensland people in

matters pertaining to LG, will only grow stronger.

Our foundation member and Secretary, Joanna Kesterven stood down from her position after six years of tireless work which has helped drive and develop our current status and reputation.

QLGRA (and the people of Qld) owe Joanna the highest respect and thanks for her work on our behalf, I am proud to have been associated with Joanna over the past six years and know she will continue to keep a close eye on us (with sound advice when needed) in the future.

For those who visit our website and view our social media platforms you will notice a new look and logo, this is reflective of the new approach and enthusiasm of the committee to forge forward with greater effort on behalf of Qld residents and ratepayers. #QldICACnow and #qlgra will feature prominently in all future releases. Our IT person will elaborate in this section of this newsletter.

We are currently planning our next Forum and General meeting, (February 23/24, 2019) details will be released soon.

I would like to think QLGRA had some influence in the government creating two new offices to investigate councils, councillor behaviour and allegations of corruption and wrong doing by councils.

The Independent Tribunal has been formed to address Councillor (including Mayoral) behaviour while the Office of the Independent Assessor will address the more serious issues of alleged corruption of councils.



I encourage anyone with evidence of wrongdoing to forward official complaints to these bodies. In an analysis a few years ago it was found that not one complaint sent to the CCC was classed as vexatious, so if you have evidence that can be substantiated please lodge your complaint.

The major change to the system is complaints will not be sent back to council for initial investigation but will be independently assessed for further action if warranted.

I am sure we will all be watching closely to gauge the success, or failure, of these new offices.

In the past, it has been reported less than 2% of all complaints were ever addressed by the CCC (Ref: research by Prof Tim Prenzler) so we hope this figure will increase dramatically.

In the mean time QLGRA will continue to fight for the people to have councils that are true Servants of the people as they should be and not the dictatorial feudal lords so many see themselves as being at present.

I thank each and every one of our members and supporters for their continuing support and encouragement.

On behalf of the committee and QLGRA I would like to wish everyone a very MERRY CHRISTMAS and a successful NEW YEAR in 2019.

Colin Hewett - President



The strength of will for change

If a community wants things to change, sometimes they have to be willing to get together and track mud on the carpets in local and state government halls.

We do not live in isolation. It is a myth to think we can have "willpower" enough to withstand every obstacle we come up against at both local and state government levels without a system in place to make our lives easier.

We only have so much inner strength, which is why we can expand our strength in numbers.

When we put our egos aside we are able to let others help us, and we become a cohesive unit, more flexible, deeper in reserves, and happier in community. And when it's time to celebrate our success, we've already got our party started!

Decisions are made at the point of action by our group to ensure that the best decision is made for the particular circumstances. In our high-performance group, members are viewed as partners in our organization, all working together to accomplish common goals.

"It's easier to be ignorant and say I don't know about the problem. But once you know, then you have a responsibility to do something."

There is strength in numbers, and if we all work together as a team, we can be unstoppable."

Craig Kielburger

LEGISLATION

Monthly Pick

The Code of Conduct for Councillors can be viewed at www.dlgrma.qld.gov.au/code-of-conduct

Other persons who may be appointed as investigators

Section 150BA of the LGA provides that the Independent Assessor may, by instrument in writing, appoint a staff member of the Office of the Independent Assessor, a public service employee or another person prescribed by regulation as an investigator if satisfied the person is appropriately qualified. An investigator's functions are prescribed under section 150AY of Local Government Legislation (Councillor Complaints and Other Matters) Amendment Regulation 2018 the LGA and include investigating the conduct of Councillors as directed by the Independent Assessor and investigating potential offences against the conduct provisions.

Section 7 of the Regulation inserts new section 239B into the LGR to prescribe other persons who may be appointed as investigators by the Independent Assessor for section 150BA(1)(c) of the LGA, i.e. a person, or an individual employed or engaged by the person, who contracts with the Independent Assessor to provide services to conduct investigations. The appointment of contracted investigators by the Independent Assessor will be on an 'as needs' basis.

This Month's Q&A

Q: What are the benefits of becoming a member of QLGRA?

A: Membership allows us to maintain our involvement and activities in representing all Queenslanders.

QLGRA is the community's direct link to all those institutions and organisations at Local, State and Commonwealth levels, which can impact on the future of every Queenslanders.

QLGRA aims are to promote, advance and secure the special and general welfare, interests and opinions of persons, residents and ratepayers.

QLGRA will:

- represent views and concerns of ratepayers, residents and business at all levels;
- work with like minded associations, other groups or community bodies and contribute comment to government to the benefit of members;
- be non-sectarian and apolitical.

QLGRA is a state-wide advocacy organization that builds community participation in the shaping of our governance system to ensure transparency, accountability and care for all.

Our work is aimed at strengthening the voice of the people and communities wherever decisions shaping the future of our economic and governance systems are being made.

Community strengthens the capacity of state and local consumer advocacy groups to participate in such discussions. The technical assistance we provide includes policy analysis, strategic planning, and community organizing support. Together we're building a network of organizations dedicated to creating a more just and responsive Government.

Calendar of Events

Biannual Meeting

Townsville
23rd – 24th February 2019

AGM

24th and 25th August 2019

Community Forum

TBA

Community Consultation

TBA



Councillors Job Description
FIVE Local Government Principles underpin the Local Government Act 2009:

1. Transparent and effective processes, and decision-making in the public interest;
2. Sustainable development and management of assets and infrastructure, and delivery of effective services;
3. Democratic representation, social inclusion and meaningful community engagement;
4. Good governance of, and by, Local Government;
5. Ethical and legal behaviour of Councillors and Local Government employees.

Submissions to State Government

Waste Bill

Operation Belcarra

Section 234

Financial Sustainability

Section 268A

Regional Contribution

The QLGRA has recently agreed to work with the South East Queensland Alliance (SEQA), another peak group for community and resident organisations, which shares a similar local government reform agenda to QLGRA.

A delegation of SEQA members met with Stirling Hinchliffe, LG Minister and ministerial staff from the Local Government and Planning sections of the relevant departments on 19 November.

The following topics were canvassed:

Elections

- Direct election of Mayors *
- Divisional election of councillors *
- Ratio of electors to councillors
- Funding caps/public funding *

Transparency ①

- Secret meetings/closed meetings
- Publish contact information (ie ministerial diaries)
- Redacted reports
- Minutes/video
- RTI - make more information available
- Opportunities for question time for minority bloc councillors *

Beneficial entities/business enterprises *②

Mayoral power *③

- Budgets *
- Staff directions
- Chief of staff role *

LGAQ

Community consultation inadequate – need for community reference groups

Councillor discretionary funds *

Revolving door between councils and developers/planners

Planning issues

- Caps on height and yield
- PDAs

** Items raised by Minister.*

Numbers represent the order of priorities that SEQA has decided to work towards.

Greg Smith – President

OSCAR (Organisation Sunshine Coast Association of Residents) www.oscar.org.au

EYE ON IT

Current Trends

#qlgra

#QldICACnow

Great strides are being taken by individuals and groups across Queensland now in relation to Local Government Reform. There have been numerous successes in relation to holding Local Government accountable for their Operations and Expenditure.

We want to pool the collective knowledge and experience from across the state by providing an updated website with increased functionality to enable members to collaborate, share resources, and support each in this fight. To that end we are updating and redesigning the QLGRA Website.

To have your say on the features, services, and resource you need or would like to see please email

qlgralliance@gmail.com with a Subject Line of “QLGRA Website Suggestions”.

The days of going it alone are over, together we are stronger and can create a better future for our State.

Kate Jeffrey – Secretary

“Good governance never depends upon laws, but upon the personal qualities of those who govern. The machinery of government is always subordinate to the will of those who administer that machinery. The most important element of government, therefore, is the method of choosing leaders.”

Frank Herbert