

QLGRA Insights

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'

DISCLAIMER

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The Road Ahead

A big welcome to all our members and supporters in 2019. We hope you find our newsletter valuable and informative. Please feel free to provide feedback and advice on any items you see or may wish to add.

Do mergers make for better councils? The evidence is against 'bigger is better'.

In 2013, Queensland's LNP government held referendums in four communities that had spent years lobbying for council amalgamations to be reversed. In all four cases, the referendums succeeded, leading to the deamalgamation of the Noosa, Douglas, Livingstone and Mareeba councils from the larger shires they had been merged with.

Mounting evidence suggests that amalgamation has not led to more efficient services, productivity or delivery. Regional mergers reduced competition between regions, which weakened incentives for efficiency and responsiveness to local needs, while also reducing the choice for residents to find a community that best matches their ideal taxation and service rates.

With so many negative aspects, it's no surprise that local restructuring proposals have often been met with stiff resistance from local residents. It also comes as no surprise that many residents argue that their communities were better off prior to consolidation.

We have seen the call for de-amalgamation emerge in many cities and towns across Queensland. There is no reason why de-amalgamation cannot be pursued. Provincial governments have the ability to amalgamate regions and, therefore, also have the ability to separate them.

I believe this is about protecting our special places. It's also about the way we engage. People are very community minded and like to be listened to, people just want a different style of government.

New governments seem to quickly take on the role of manipulating opinion rather than addressing real concerns and quickly lose touch with the broad community. Mega-councils became an expensive bureaucracy, which prevented promised cost savings from being delivered. They say larger councils have a stronger voice - One voice is not stronger - As a result of forced amalgamations, 724 fewer elected council representatives. A delegation of people would have more power at State and Federal level on collaborative measures. This benefits our communities through increased engagement and influence in state and federal circles.

We need more accountability for ALL Councillors in embracing the FIVE Local Government Principles underpinning the Local Government Act 2009, for our community to be heard.

The only way forward is to have our councils re-instated under realigned shire boundaries, which at least worked better than this present system.

Do mergers make for better councils? NO. For you they have created greater problems.

We support the rights of communities to determine their own future as an independent local government area.

What defines a community is a sense of identity and local awareness – It is never too late to do the right thing!

Jannean Dean – Vice President

Comprehensive survey about local government matters

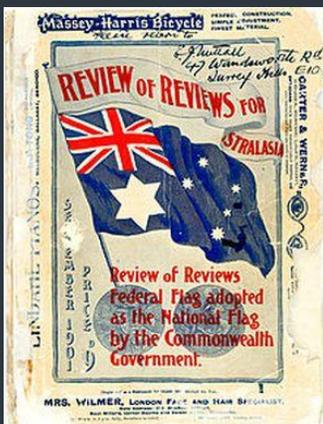
QLGRA Inc conducted the first community based Queensland wide survey of Councils in 2017.

“How well does your council serve your community?” It was an ideal opportunity for us to gather views from ratepayers and citizens about their councils.

QLGRA will be conducting a new survey later in the year. Therefore, it will be important for all to have their say so we can compare the results between them and publish prior to council elections in March 2020.



“Despite the enormous role of local government, the constitution does not mention it”



The edition of the Review of Reviews front cover signed by Egbert Nuttall, after the winning designers of the 1901 Federal Flag design competition were announced.

“In Focus” President’s Perspective

WELCOME TO THE NEW YEAR OF 2019

Already we are seeing more unrest among residents and ratepayers across Queensland. Recent massive rate hikes in Mt Isa, further rumblings of councils working contrary to the wishes of the people with planning acts being disregarded in favour of massive over developments and destruction of sensitive environmental areas.

QLGRA are kicking off our year with a public forum in Townsville (Feb 23/24) which is already generating a great deal of interest in the FNQ region. Three excellent speakers are confirmed for this event and the more people in attendance the stronger the message will be to those in office.

Cameron Richards is an eminent academic who operates internationally with a considerable number of universities. He also has direct links to issues under scrutiny in the Townsville region. Cameron recently released an article “Just how corrupt has Australia (the world) become?” Which is an eye opener for many people.

Mark Solomons, investigative journalist at the Brisbane

Times will present on how he researches and presents stories in the media. Mark has already published several articles on council corruption and one of the few journalists standing up for the people.

He will discuss the pitfalls of investigation, whistleblowing and possibility of litigation if you get it wrong.

Jason Ward is a renowned “anti-corruption crusader” (courier mail) and investigator who is immensely disliked by many in public office. His background in exposing the truth of council corruption is rated by us, as being more effective and superior to some of the official investigative authorities.

BOOKINGS ARE ESSENTIAL FOR THIS EVENT. Contact details in this newsletter.

The only way to bring about changes in council behaviour and practices is through the strength and determination of the people. Be part of this event as we forge forward to make change happen. There is a clear case for a full and independent inquiry into local government and the private enterprises influencing their actions. Inadequate legislation coupled with a lack of intent to proactively pursue wrongdoings from authorities is completely unacceptable to the people and must be brought back into line.

Remember councils, mayors and councillors are your servants and should act accordingly.

The people’s poor perception of councils is now becoming a regular complaint within the halls of power, however, what are councils doing to rectify this image?

Federal elections in 2019 followed by council and state elections in 2020 are our best chance to make change happen, to quote that ridiculous tv ad – “choose wisely”.

QLGRA are planning road trips by members of the committee during 2019 and we would love to hear from groups as to what we, as the recognised state-wide peak representative body for residents and ratepayers, may be able to do to assist you going forward.

WE HOPE TO SEE YOU IN TOWNSVILLE FEB 23/24.

Unfortunately, our secretary has been forced to take leave of absence due to urgent family matters, but our Vice president has already stepped into the role of Acting Secretary until our Secretary is able to resume her role. We continue our forward progress undeterred and without interruption to achieve better councils on behalf of the people of Queensland.

Colin Hewett - President



“Mere good governance is not enough; it has to be pro-people and pro-active.

Good governance is putting people at the centre of development process.”

Narendra Modi

Local Government Remuneration and Discipline Tribunal Report 2018

Remuneration and Discipline Tribunal

The Local Government Remuneration and Discipline Tribunal is an independent entity established under the Local Government Act 2009. As required by section 246 of the Regulation, the Tribunal prepared a remuneration schedule for the 2019-2020 financial year.

The Tribunal decided to increase the maximum remuneration levels previously determined for each category of council by 2.1 per cent from 1 July 2019.

Councillors are provided with electronic equipment to enable them to perform their duties. Resources included a computer workstation/iPad3, printer, modem and Smart Phone.

Expenses incurred for vehicle usage, conference registrations, accommodation, meals, travel and telecommunications.

Remuneration package includes salary and superannuation at 12%.

There were 20 complaints of misconduct referred to the Tribunal between 1 July 2018 and 30 November 2018.

Councils referred include: Fraser Coast Regional Council, Gympie Regional Council, Livingstone Shire Council, Redland City Council, Cassowary Coast Regional Council, Central Highlands City Council, Logan City Council, Ipswich City Council, Cairns Regional Council, Sunshine Coast Regional Council, Bundaberg Regional Council, Mapoon Aboriginal Shire Council.

This is the final report of the Tribunal in its current form. As from 3 December 2018 it ceased to exist and its functions will be taken up by two new bodies:

- The Councillor Conduct Tribunal, effective from 3 December 2018, which will take over the discipline responsibilities; and
- The Local Government Remuneration Commission which will be established in early 2019 to take over the remuneration responsibilities.

<http://www.dlgrma.qld.gov.au/resources/report/local-government/remuneration-discipline-tribunal-report-2018.pdf>

Remuneration	Category 1	Category 2	Category 3	Category 4	Category 5	Category 6	Category 7	Category 8
Mayor	\$ 106,100	\$ 122,421	\$ 130,584	\$ 155,067	\$ 179,552	\$ 204,036	\$ 228,521	\$ 253,006
Deputy Mayor	\$ 61,211	\$ 73,454	\$ 81,615	\$ 102,019	\$ 122,421	\$ 138,745	\$ 158,332	\$ 175,472
Councillor	\$ 53,049	\$ 61,211	\$ 69,372	\$ 89,775	\$ 106,100	\$ 122,421	\$ 138,745	\$ 150,986

This Month's Q&A

Q: What was the key challenge for local government in 2018?

A: The past year had been challenging for the local government sector with the conduct of councillors continuing to be the focus of media attention and the release of the report by the Crime and Corruption Commission – Operation Belcarra: A blueprint for integrity and addressing corruption risk in local government – in October 2017.

Queensland's 77 councils provide services and ways to engage and connect, deliver frontline assistance in times of harsh climate events and are a source of employment and strength for Queensland communities.

It is vital that councils operate in a way that inspires respect and confidence, and that policies and decision making are in the communities' interests.

An ongoing challenge for the department is to maintain a policy and legislation framework that supports the autonomy of local governments while ensuring the highest levels of integrity and accountability. To this end the department introduced amendments to the Local Government Act 2009 and the Local Government Electoral Act 2011. This has seen the establishment of the Office of the Independent Assessor and provided strict requirements around gifts and donations during future local government elections. In addition, the department designed and delivered capacity building training programs focused on local government integrity.

Their aim is to rebuild community confidence in the local government system in Queensland and to ensure that councils have the resources and capacity to govern effectively and to provide a strong voice for their communities, with limited state intervention.

LEGISLATION

Monthly Pick

The Department of Local Government, Racing and Multicultural Affairs administers the following portfolio legislation from which its functions and powers are derived:

City of Brisbane Act 2010 – Is specific to Brisbane City Council and provides for its constitution and the unique nature and extent of its responsibilities and powers. The City of Brisbane Act 2010 aligns to the requirements of the local government system provided in the Local Government Act 2009.

Local Government Act 2009 – Provides a legal framework for a system of local government in Queensland that is accountable, effective, efficient and sustainable as well as for the way in which a local government is constituted and the nature and extent of its responsibilities and powers. It ensures that the local government jurisdiction is sufficiently recognised to support each local government to take responsibility for the good rule and government of its area.

Local Government Electoral Act 2011

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Communities (Justice, Land and Other Matters) Act 1984 (Part 9, Div 2 and part 10)

Multicultural Recognition Act 2016

Racing Act 2002

Current Petitions

Coronial inquest into systemic bullying deaths of staff in Queensland local governments

Principal Petitioner: Gary Duffy Closing Date: 09/02/2019

Link: <https://www.parliament.qld.gov.au/work-of-assembly/petitions/petition-details?id=3028>

Documents tabled by Rob Pyne in Queensland Parliament back in 2016 & 2017 outlined public requests for inquiry into HR and OH&S files of Local Government. With allegations that Local Government failed to meet their OH&S Duty of Care and outlining claims of many bullying and intimidation matters within Local Government dating back to 2015.

The CCC Report 'Culture and Corruption Risks in Local Government: Lessons from an Investigation into Ipswich City Council (Operation Wingate)' identified that the council's culture was characterised as having:

- abusive attitudes of councillors and senior executive employees towards support staff
- fear of reprisal, due to inappropriate exercise of power within the organisation.

When viewing these finding and disclosures and remembering that there are real families and real people that may have been adversely affected by the Ipswich City Council culture, we have a duty of care to request a Coronial Inquest into the death of Local Government Employees that may have been a result of this culture and failure of Duty of Care.

A Coronial Inquest will not only provide justice to the families of those affected but also have widespread implication in continuing to improve local governance standards and practices and a improving the workplaces for Local Government Employees, while ensuring that nobody else is exposed to this risk again.

If you or a loved one have been affected by bullying within Local Government, we want to hear from you, contact us at secretary@qlgra.org.au and make sure that you seek support and guidance from relevant community services.

Prevent engagement of private companies by local governments for staff management

Principal Petitioner: Jannean Dean Closing Date: 15/03/2019

Link: <https://www.parliament.qld.gov.au/work-of-assembly/petitions/petition-details?id=3063>

Local government staff are being employed, hired and dismissed by private companies through contracts between third party companies and councils for profit.

One private company, the LGAQ, has business arrangements with councils on staff management, but also supply services and products to those councils, which are approved by staff under LGAQ's management.

What position does this place staff being managed by private companies whereby they are approving the services of those private companies for whom they depend on for their livelihood?

There is a clear conflict between the interests of these private companies, the private company's expectations and their civil servants' core values:

- 'integrity' putting the obligations of public service above business interests of private companies;
- 'objectivity' providing advice and decisions on rigorous analysis of the evidence not on what the "Company wants"; and
- 'impartiality' is acting solely according to the merits, serving equally well without political third-party persuasions.

Responsibility should not be a choice between the local government of the day and the private companies' interests. Civil servants are servants of the Crown and should not be under the management of a private company.

Commission of Inquiry into Local Government Procurements and Contracts

Principal Petitioner: Gary Duffy Closing Date: 09/04/2019

Link: www.parliament.qld.gov.au/work-of-assembly/petitions/petition-details?id=3067&fbclid=IwAR3bAvRO_rHPaXXH35_NnnmNgXIExbO69HLiX6g8UBvp8MpUZVNhnDNBkdU

This petition is a request that the Queensland Government undertake a Commission of Inquiry into possible illegal activities and associated criminal activity involvement in Queensland Local Government procurements, contracts and development approvals.

The CCC's report into one Council found:

- A culture of corruption, improper use of power and inappropriate relationships.
- An unhealthy culture which resulted in corruption, bullying and graft.

Fitzgerald Inquiry resulted in six people being prosecuted. After CCC limited investigations in 2017 - 2018 relating to corruption in one Council, to date, four Business executives and a former CEO have pleaded guilty and many more have been charged.

The Commission of Inquiry should make a full and careful inquest of any matter or thing concerning criminal activity, neglect or violation of duty, or official misconduct or impropriety appertaining to certain named people and corporations in tabled documents by former MP Mr Rob Pyne, or if any other persons obtained or gave any benefit or favour regarding procurements, contracts or development approvals. Your petitioners, therefore, request the House to call on the Government to exercise their power under the relevant Acts and in the public interest to call a Commission of Inquiry into corruption within Queensland Local Government procurements, contracts and development approvals.

EYE ON IT

Current Trends

#qlgra

#QldICACnow

#RoyalCommission

The new QLGRA website is progressing well and we aim to have released in January after slight delays over the Christmas and New Year season.

One of the focuses of the new website is to be a distribution base for:

- Area Updates – Letting others in the State know what is going on in your neck of the woods so that we can all clearly see the commonalities of the issues we face across the state.
- Petitions – Promoting Petitions that have been lodged relevant to the State of Queensland and working together to co-ordinate action on those petitions for the benefit of all.
- Submissions – Promoting Submissions that been called for, or which need to be made to bring about the changes in Local Government Legislation and machineries across the state.
- How to Guides – we have some amazing people and groups do amazing things in their local area which could be used to help mobilise and assist other Groups and people across the State to kick some of the same goals.

If you have something to contribute, suggestions or content that could benefit the State then please let us know by emailing us as secretary@qlgra.org.au.

Working together we can bring about change and put an end to corruption in our State.

Kate Jeffrey – Secretary

Follow us on





BI-ANNUAL CONFERENCE

TOWNSVILLE & SURROUNDS

Co-hosted by **Townsville Ratepayers**

Townsville Residents & Ratepayers Association

Venue: **CWA Hall on Denham Street**

PROMINENT GUEST SPEAKERS + Q&A

Dr Cameron Richards - Professor of interdisciplinary studies with extensive experience in the Asia-Pacific region

Mark Solomons – Investigative Journalist Brisbane Times

Jason Ward - Renowned anti-corruption crusader

Saturday 23rd February 2019

Public Forum

9am – 4pm

Sunday 24th February 2019

Bi-Annual Meeting

9am – 12pm

\$25 PER HEAD

Morning tea, lunch and afternoon tea provided. (light refreshments)

Contact Secretary for:

- Discounted accommodation
- Dietary requirements
- Enquiries

**BOOKINGS & REGISTRATION
ESSENTIAL**

FORUM DINNER

ALL participants and friends are welcome to join us on Saturday night for dinner at Cowboys Leagues Club Ltd - A 335 Flinders Mall, Townsville
Costs at own expense.

Please be advised that QLGRA Inc does not hold public liability insurance cover and your attendance at any QLGRA function will be at your own discretion.

www.qlgralliance.org.au

