

## 2007 LOCAL GOVERNMENT ELECTION WOMEN'S INITIATIVE

### 'STEPPING UP' PROGRAM' *Gender on the Agenda*

#### EVALUATION

#### 1. OBJECTIVES

The Australian Local Government Women's Association (WA) was successful in securing funding from the Department for Communities (Office of Women's Policy) to conduct workshops to encourage prospective female elected members during the nomination period leading up to the 2007 local government elections.

The objectives of the workshops were to:

- i) increase the number of women nominating for election to local government
- ii) increase the number of women successfully contesting local government elections
- iii) increase the sustainability of the Australian Local Government Women's Association (WA Branch) by increasing its profile and its support to women
- iv) provide networking opportunities around the State for all women in local government

#### 3. BACKGROUND

In 2003 ALGWA (WA) was successful in obtaining funding through the Office of Women's Policy to conduct fourteen (14) workshops for prospective female candidates leading up to the local government elections. Evaluation of these

workshops indicated that participants found them very useful and ALGWA gained an important profile during the process.

The Australian Local Government Women's Association (WA Branch) was again funded by the Department for Communities, through the Office of Women's Policy (OWP), to conduct a series of state wide workshops to encourage women to nominate for the October 2007 Local Government elections. Two (2) workshops were held in the metropolitan area, one (1) at Christmas Island (funded by DOTARS) and the remaining nine (9) in regional centres throughout the State. The Department of Local Government provided significant support through officer participation at most workshops.

Funds were also used to produce high quality promotional materials for use during the program and for supporting the on-going sustainability of the WA Branch. This included:

- Posters
- Banners (2)
- Paid advertisements
- Presentation/membership folders
- Generic business cards for networking
- A4 pads
- Pens
- Membership badges
- Rulers
- Letterhead and compliments slips
- Printed Membership brochures
- Printed *MentorNet* brochures

### **3. THE WORKSHOPS- GENDER ON THE AGENDA**

Twelve workshops were held across Western Australia including one at Christmas Island. Locations for workshops were identified during discussion with the Department for Local Government and Regional Development as being those with very low existing female representation. Two metropolitan workshops were included.

The workshops were promoted through:

- display advertisements in the Post Newspaper and The Western Times (to cover the two metropolitan workshops), six editions of the Community News, the Geraldton Guardian (covering the mid-west), and the South Western Times (Bunbury, Albany and surrounding shires)
- Posters distributed to each workshop location and surrounding Shires
- The President of ALGWA (WA) participated in interviews on talk-back radio through ABC Regional Radio for Albany, Geraldton and Wagin
- General broadcast emails through the RRR Network
- Broadcast email to all local government authorities
- ALGWA email network including all members

The workshops provided information on the electoral process, nomination and electioneering, roles and responsibilities of a councillor, and time management strategies as well as emphasising how women can make a difference in the community. Members of ALGWA (WA) and locally based current and past councillors provided an insight into the role of female councillors by sharing their personal experiences.

Support from most local councils was very positive with the Chief Executive Officer, or Mayor/President, doing a brief introduction. Support and assistance with venue, catering, and provision of staff at 'after hours' functions was provided

by the City or Shire involved. Sessions were held during the day at some locations and early evening in others with appropriate catering provided.

Sessions were informal and adjusted to reflect local needs and circumstances.

Participants were provided with:

- ALGWA (WA) Information & Membership Brochure
- NSW Department for Women's Affairs– *Hands up for Women in Council – a kit for newly elected women councillors in local government*
- Australian Local Government Women's Association – *Framework on Women in Local Government, 2007*

#### **4. WORKSHOP ANALYSIS**

With one exception (Shire of Cue due to conflicting events) all Chief Executive Officers approached agreed to hold a workshop and were supportive of the concept.

Evaluation of the project indicated that some women were unable to attend workshops due to work/family responsibilities, travel distance, time of the workshop, and the short notification giving insufficient time to re-organise commitments. Feedback on the workshops was very positive and considered of benefit both from the information offered and support to prospective candidates as well as providing great networking opportunities.

The first workshop at the Shire of Gingin was cancelled due to lack of response. It was agreed that the poor response was due to the short time frame between

notification and the date of the workshop. Only one woman nominated for Gingin.

Despite advertising in both The Post and The Western Times, and brochures and information being sent to thirteen metropolitan councils, the second workshop scheduled at Vincent received no response. Vincent received one nomination from a woman for the Mayoral position and five women nominated for Councilor positions. It should be noted that most metropolitan local government authorities conducted their own candidate information sessions.

Attendance at the remaining workshops varied between two and twelve participants.

Christmas Island was funded and facilitated by DOTARS, attended by four women and five men, and no evaluation was undertaken at the time of the workshop. Five women have nominated.

A total of forty-four (44) women attended eleven workshops with nineteen (19) nominating for election giving a forty-three percent success rate. The majority of participants were from regional/rural/remote areas between the ages of 35-54 years. Forty participants (91%) completed an evaluation form.

The following is an analysis of the feedback:

- The majority of participants heard about the workshops through shire information or via the Chief Executive Officer (28%)
- Posters/flyers (17%), word of mouth (12%), local news (10%) and email (10%) were the next most effective methods of promoting the workshops
- 77% of respondents found the workshops useful or very useful, while only 8% found them not useful or only partly useful

- 49% of respondents found the whole workshop useful, while experiences of local councilors (25%) and roles and responsibilities (22%) were also identified as being useful
- 'How to Run a Campaign' was identified as the least useful part of the program, followed by "How to Nominate" (3%)
- A few suggestions were made for improving the workshops, including sample election materials, flowchart of actions and dates leading up to the election, more about how to prepare a candidate profile, and information about each local government authority
- 66% of respondents said that the workshop made a difference in helping them to decide to nominate, while only 8% said it was not helpful
- A majority of respondents (63%) had not stood for local government elections before
- Other areas identified for improvement for future workshops included earlier advertising, information at women's centres, workshops to be held out of working hours, and involving younger people
- 30% of respondents said they would like to put onto the ALGWA (WA) mailing list

## **6 EXPENDITURE**

The Australian Local Government Women's Association (WA) received a grant of \$28,358 from the Department for Communities through the Office of Women's Policy.

The total cost of the project was \$30,142.67 with the Association directly funding \$1,784.67. Refer to attachments for detailed acquittal.

Design – artwork, brochures, flyers, posters, merchandising	1268.93
Printing	2940.06
Advertising	8918.10
Mileage and travel	2588.08
Merchandising	4010.50
Postage and stationery	215.00
Accommodation and meals	701.23
Catering	2750.77
Administration	6750.00
<b>Total</b>	<b>30142.67</b>

## 7 SUMMARY

Feedback from the workshops indicated that the project was worthwhile in providing relevant and factual information to participants which would allow them to make an informed decision on whether to nominate for the October 2007 local government elections.

In meeting the key objectives of the project, the following results were recorded:

- The number of female candidates elected for the first time was 114 (34.2% of total new candidates) and ninety one (91) were re-elected. This data will become benchmark data for future monitoring of trends.
- Total female representation now sits at 28.6% showing a marginal decrease from 2005 (29%), a slight rise from 2003 (26%), and a more significant rise from 1995 (22.7%). In the ten years since the 1997 election, there is an overall increase in female representation of 5.5%. (see attached graph)

- The program also provided the Association with increased capacity through the development of professional marketing and membership resources that have increased the visibility of the Association and will support its future sustainability. It was also very pleasing to have an improved response from local government authorities, particularly Chief Executive Offices and sitting female councilors.

We were very encouraged to note some other important outcomes in the 2007 elections:

- The Shire of Narrogin now has two female councillors where it previously had none
- The Shire of Mt Magnet now has two female councillors where it previously had none
- The Shire of York now has one female councillor where it previously had none
- The Shire of Yilgarn now has one female councillor where it previously had none
- The City of Bunbury has increased its female representation from three to five
- The Shire of Wongan-Ballidu has increased its female representation from one to two
- The City of Albany has five new female councillors, representing a real increase in female representation of three



- The Shire of Merredin has three new female councillors
- The Shire of Christmas Island had four women nominate, and one successful female candidate, increasing its female representation to two. Both female councillors are from a CALD background.

Overall there are ninety four (94) re-elected female councillors across the State, and 114 new female elected members. Although the percentage of females elected is only 29%, some of these specific achievements are very encouraging, especially if we acknowledge an approximately 6% increase since the 1995 elections.

Improvements for a future program of workshops would include:

- Earlier and more widespread advertising
- Concentration of workshops in country locations as most metropolitan local government authorities conduct their own candidate workshops
- Advertising targeted at younger women
- Samples of election campaign materials

The Australian Local Government Women's Association (WA) would like to express its sincere thanks to the Office of Women's Policy for its continuing support.

Anne Banks-McAllister

ALGWA (WA)

7<sup>th</sup> November 2007

## 2007 Local Government Elections

### Female Candidates

Total Female candidates = 334

Female candidates elected = 205 (114 new and 91 re-elected)

Percentage females elected of total females nominated = 61.4%

### New Candidates (not re-elected)

New councillors elected (219 male + 114 female) = 333

% of new female councillors = 114/333 = 34.2%

### Total Candidates

718 candidates elected

513 male candidates elected (71.4%)

205 female candidates elected (28.6%)

For 2005 we are unable to determine how many of the elected female councillors were new/re-elected. However the following gives a sense of the trend in overall female representation.

Gender of elected candidates	1995	1997	1999	2001	2003	2005	2007
Female	327	328	321	202	210	208	205
Male	1,112	1,091	1,065	530	597	509	513
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,439</b>	<b>1,419</b>	<b>1,386</b>	<b>732</b>	<b>807</b>	<b>717</b>	<b>718</b>

Gender of elected candidates %	1995	1997	1999	2001	2003	2005	2007
Female	22.7%	23.1%	23.2%	27.6%	26.0%	29.0%	28.6%
Male	77.3%	76.9%	76.8%	72.4%	74.0%	71.0%	71.4%

NOTE: 1995, 1997, 1999 and 2001 many be the total number of council members whereas 2003, 2005 and 2007 is just the elected members for those years. Still needs to be verified.

