



Paths For Women in
Local Government:
National Figures and Local Successes

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UTS Centre for Local Government, 2004

PATHS FOR WOMEN IN LOCAL GOVERNMENT: NATIONAL FIGURES AND LOCAL SUCCESSES

WORLDWIDE DECLARATION ON WOMEN IN LOCAL GOVERNMENT

“Women have the equal right to employment in local government and equality in recruitment procedures. As employees in local government women and men have the right to equal pay, equal access to benefits, promotion and training as well as the right to equal working conditions and treatment in the evaluation of their work”

Declaration by the International Union of Local Authorities (IULA), Harare, 1998

INTRODUCTION

This report provides a picture of the employment of women in Australian Local Government. The research was undertaken between 2003 and 2004 funded by the national office of Local Government Managers Australia (LGMA) under its innovative research grants program introduced in 2003.¹ The research had three purposes:

1. To provide a comprehensive, contemporary review of women's employment in Local Government in Australia.
2. To document the career and developmental profiles of women who have succeeded in attaining senior managerial positions in local government.
3. To identify and assess the impact of innovative practices for the recruitment and development of women employees in councils.

It is presented in the following sections:

Section 1: Contains an overview of women's employment and the differences between the States.

Section 2: Focuses on women in managerial and senior administrative positions. It makes some international comparisons and contains case studies of four women General Managers from councils in New South Wales.

Section 3; Looks at some of the policies and initiatives which have been introduced in councils. It outlines the practices introduced in the councils managed by the four NSW women General Managers and the program being developed as part of the National Framework for Women in Local Government.

¹ The research was undertaken by Associate Professor Michael Paddon of the Centre for Local Government at the University of Technology, Sydney with assistance from Sarah Artist of Catalyst Solutions and the report was drafted by Michael Paddon. The views in the report are those of the author and do not represent the views or policies of LGMA

SECTION 1: A NATIONAL PICTURE OF WOMEN'S EMPLOYMENT IN LOCAL GOVERNMENT

WOMEN EMPLOYEES IN AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT

In terms of employment, local government is both the smallest and the most "male" of the Government sectors in Australia. In 2001 local government employed 125,000 people. Just over 50,000 of them, 40% , were women. This is dwarfed by the 828,000 people working for State and Territory Governments, the majority of whom were women (61%). 46% of the Commonwealth Government's 392,500 workers were women (all figures from Table (i) in Appendix A).

For people working for State and Commonwealth Governments there are no significant difference in the proportions of men and women public servants between each of the States and Territories. However, in local government, the differences in the composition of the workforce between the States are marked. In 2001, the majority of local government employees in Victoria, 58%, were women. The only other State or Territory where the proportion of female workers exceeded the national average was the Northern Territory where the overall numbers of employees are only just over 1,200 (Table (ii) of the appendix). Queensland and Tasmania had the most overwhelmingly "male" local government workforces in which seven out of every ten workers were men.

CHANGING AND UNCHANGING PATTERNS OF EMPLOYMENT

Over the long term this pattern of employment has been changing with women's employment on the increase. Women were only 19% of local government employees in 1947, had increased to just over quarter of the workforce, 26%, in 1985² and to 40% in 2001. However, in the past decade the increase in women's employment in the industry has slowed. There was virtually no change in the relative employment of women between 1996, when 39% of council employees were women and 2001 (see Table (i) of the appendix). The picture in each of the States and Territories matches the national picture with little change in the proportions of women employees since 1996. This is partly a product of the fact that overall employment by local government has been declining over this period with a reduction of 3,311 jobs, a 2.6% drop. This poses the important question of whether there will future significant increases in the proportion of women working for local government if overall employment continues to decline. Hidden by these national figures is another fundamental change in local government employment: the growth of part-time work.

Hidden behind these national figures is a fundamental change in the nature of employment: an increase in part time work. In 1985 15% of local government workers were working part-time: by 2001 more than one in four local government workers, 26%, were part-time (see table (ii) in the appendix). The increase overall in part-time working in local government reflects a growth of 5 percentage points in part-time work amongst men nationally. Part-time work by men has increased in every State (though not the Northern Territory) and the growth in part time employment contracts has been particularly evident in Victoria with compulsory competitive tendering a major contributor during the period in which it legally enforced from 1994 until 2001³.

² Dalton, T and Windsor K *Women in Australian Local Government: Toward Equal Opportunity Employment*, Labour Resource Centre, Melbourne, 1987

³ Teischer J and Van Gramberg B "Privatising Local Government: the Victorian Experience" in Fairbrother P, Paddon M and Teischer J *Privatisation, Globalisation and Labour* Federation Press, Sydney 2002

Does this imply that the pattern of male employment in the industry is becoming more similar to that of women? If the answer is yes, but marginally.

FULL-TIME OR PART-TIME WORK IN THE CURRENT WORKFORCE

A major proportion of the women who work in local government are working part-time. In 2001, almost one-half of the women employed were part-time (44%, Table (iv)) and in the State of Victoria the majority of women, 57%, are part-time workers. In all the States and Territories women are much more likely to work part-time than men but with Queensland and the Northern Territory have the lowest proportion of women working part-time. The extent of part-time work by women in local government appears to have changed little from the mid nineteen nineties, showing a marginal increase nationally from 43% to 44% and small increases also in New South Wales, Queensland and Victoria.

Despite the recent growth in part-time working by male local government employees women fill seven out every ten part-time positions, while seven out of every ten full-time positions are filled by men.

GENDER SEGMENTATION OF THE WORKFORCE

Twenty years ago, researchers into women's employment in local government concluded that local councils in Australia have exhibited a "higher degree of occupational stereotyping [between "male" and "female" occupations] ... than is commonly found in the workforce overall"⁴. They were reflecting on a range of figures which told a similar story:

- Only 2.5% of outdoor positions were filled by women when outdoor employment made up 38% of local government jobs.
- There was a heavy concentration of women's employment in clerical areas and in "traditionally female jobs" such as social workers, community services and librarians.
- 81% of all women employees were concentrated in just 10 occupations which were those generally considered 'female' occupations.

These patterns are proving resistant to change. At the end of the nineteen eighties a review of the position of women in councils in NSW added that women were poorly represented in specialist areas including building and engineering staff and they were under-represented in senior levels of local government in the state. At that time there were no female Town Clerks and only one Shire Engineer. The areas of community services and in library services which were growing in importance and offering more employment opportunities for women were also said to be largely defined as women's work with relatively lower status and payment structures⁵.

There are still discernable differences in the patterns of male and female employment. In its Plan for education and training in the sector for 2003-2006, the National Industry Training Board for Local Government, (ALGT), refers to research into 21 councils indicating that men dominated operational works (where 80% of employees were men), and environmental health and education (nearly two thirds of employees were men); women were just over 70% of employees in Administrative areas; in Planning and Management of the Physical Environment

⁴ Dalton and Windsor op cit.

⁵ Traucki C and MacNeill A, 1989 *The Largest Minority: Employing Women in Councils* NSW Department of Local Government EEO Advisory Unit.

the proportions of men and women employees were more similar to the proportions in the local government workforce as a whole (see Table 1)

Table 1: Workforce categories of men and women in 21 Councils, 2002

Category	% Men	% Women
Government and Administration	29.8	70.2
Planning and Management of Physical Environment	57.1	42.9
Environmental Health and Regulation	64.8	35.2
Operational Works	80.6	19.4

Source: *A National Vocational Education and Training Plan for Local Government 03-06*

We get a comprehensive confirmation of the gender differences in specific occupations and groupings of occupations in local government from the Census of Population and Housing:

- In 2001, four out of every ten women working for councils were working in a group of occupations which the ABS terms “intermediate clerical” positions”⁶ (as keyboard operators, receptionists, clerks, library assistants, child care workers and in similar jobs);
- Two in every ten were working in professional positions (which includes librarians, human resource professionals and welfare and community workers as well as what are traditionally seen as the “professions” such as accounting, architecture and engineering) (see Appendix Table (v)).
- These proportions have not changed since 1996.

Segmentation and concentration in the industry’s employment are even more apparent if we take each occupational category and estimate the proportions of male and female employment. If the proportions in each category directly reflected the proportions of men and women in the overall workforce in local government there would be 40% women and 60% men in each occupation. In practice, there are only two occupational categories in which the proportions of men and women are even close to these overall proportions:

- Professionals, where 50% are men and 50% women, and
- Associate professionals, (which includes office managers, customer service managers and sport and recreation managers) of whom 57% of employees are men and 43% women.

⁶ These groupings are taken from Australian Standard Classification of Occupations (ASCO) used in the Census. See Appendix

The other occupational groups are very clearly dominated by either men or women. In other words, occupations are segmented. Women predominate in the occupational groups of:

- Advanced clerical work (95% of this group which includes Secretaries and PAs are women);
- Intermediate clerical work (where 76% of workers are women) and
- Elementary clerical work (where 63% of the employees are women employees as filing clerks, trainees, laundry workers and caretakers).

Nine out of ten tradespeople and labourers in local government are men (and these occupational groups still employ over 28,000 people, 23% of the total in local government. The highest occupational concentration in any category is for intermediate production workers in which 98% of the 16, 617 workers are men. The other occupational category clearly dominated by men is in management and administration.

SECTION 2: WOMEN IN SENIOR MANAGEMENT AND ADMINISTRATIVE POSITIONS

Male predominance in occupations is evident at the most senior levels in local government. In the managerial levels of the organization the broad picture across the industry is still that the more senior the position, the more likely it is to be filled by a man. Figures prepared in 2001 for an international comparison put the number of CEOs (or equivalent) in Australian Local Government at only 35 or 5.1%. According to the National Framework for Women in Local Government (discussed at greater length below) 10% of Senior Executives in Australian local government are women. While ABS Census figures estimate that in the generic classification of “managerial and administrative employment” 70% were men and 30% women in 2001.

Table 2: Women In Executive Positions in the Australian Public Service

Position	Federal Public Service		State/ Territory Public Service		Local Government	
	No	%	No	%	No	%
CEO			44	13.3	35	5.1
Senior management	398	24.1	4,664	18.8	n.a.	n.a.

Source: **State of Women in Urban Local Government in Australia** Roslyn Irwin 2001

The proportions of men and women in managerial and administrative categories have remained constant since 1996. The only State in which the proportion of women in these positions is significantly greater than the national figure is Victoria where nearly 4 in ten Managers and Administrators are women, though for Victoria this proportion is marginally lower in 2001 than 1996. The proportion of women managers and administrators is lowest in Western Australia, at 23% in 2001 and has fallen in the five-year period from 1996 by two percentage points. The proportions in NSW are very close to these national figures and have also remained unchanged between 1996 and 2001 (at 71% and 29% respectively).

INTERNATIONAL COMPARISONS

Differences in the organization and functions of local government, compounded by even more fundamental differences in overall labour markets and in gender differentiation, make serious international comparisons of the position of women in local government employment difficult. However, a UN commissioned report in 2002 attempted an estimate of the comparative position of women in Asia and the Pacific.

Of the three “developed” economies in the study, the proportion of women in senior management positions in Australia was comparable to that of New Zealand (at just over 5%) but considerably higher than Japan (3%). Perhaps most surprising is the figure for the Philippines in which it is estimated in the study that nearly one in three senior managers in local government is a woman.

Table 3: Women in Senior Management Positions in Local Government in Asia and the Pacific in 2000

Country	% Senior management positions held by women
Australia	5.1
Bangladesh	3.8
Japan	3.0
Nepal	2.3
New Zealand	5.8
Philippines	32.5
Sri Lanka	13.7
Thailand	0.1
Vietnam	2.1

Source: Jean Drage, Women in Local Government in Asia and the Pacific: A Comparative Analysis of thirteen countries, UNESCAP/LOGTRI, 2001

Recent research in the UK also provides evidence about senior local government managers which looks familiar in Australia, notwithstanding the significant differences between the structure and functions of local government in the two countries.

Under the legal obligations attached to Best Value⁷, all councils in England are required to annual information on a range of performance indicators to the Audit Commission from which a "State of Local Government" report is compiled. The published national indicator to monitor equity in relation to women's employment looks at the employees of a council who are the most highly paid 5% and measures the proportion who are women.

Across all councils in England, 26% of the highest paid 5% employees are women (table 3). But there is a considerable variation between the councils. The proportion of women in the highest paid jobs in London Boroughs, Metropolitan Authorities, County Councils and Unitary Councils is very similar (between 37-40%). These are, broadly, larger, better resourced councils which, most importantly in this context, provide educational and social services, two of the service areas in which women traditionally have made up the largest proportions of the local government workforce in England. In the smaller district councils, without these service responsibilities (which are also the largest number of councils), the proportion is 19%.

The proportion of general managers/CEOs in English councils who are women, 10%, is comparable to Australia.⁸ The number and proportion of women chief executives is not changing dramatically over time. For England and Wales, there were 36 chief executives in 2000, around 14%, a figure which had increased by only one percentage point over a five-year period⁹. Recent research has looked in some detail at the work experiences of 30 of these women CEOs and compared it with their male counterparts. It has identifies a number of

⁷ Best Value is a continuous improvement approach to council management and performance measurement introduced in England under legislation in 1999. Councils are required to report each year to the Audit Commission against a range of nationally established indicators. A variant of Best Value, but without this centrally established and monitored system of performance indicators, was introduced in Victoria in 2000.

⁸ Fox.P and Broussine M. 2001 *Room at the Top: A Study of women chief executives in local government in England and Wales*, Bristol Business School, University of Western England, Bristol

⁹ Simmons-Lewis S. 2002 "Best in the Business" *Local Government Chronicle* 30.8.2002, London

barriers which the women have faced. Women chief executives commented on inappropriate comments in the interviewing process which they believed would not have been applied to male candidates, including questions about their ability to handle family responsibilities and a senior job and comments about styles of dress and physique. The women CEOs referred to their isolation in senior positions, and to hostility from colleagues and in particular from some councillors. Perhaps as a result, it appears that women senior managers often decided against trying to get promotion to chief executive level because of the difficulties they envisaged they would face in that position¹⁰. “While some women chief executives felt that they had been employed to signal a commitment to change, including equal opportunities and modernisation, this did not necessarily mean that that [councillors] welcomed or wanted a woman in post”¹¹.

Table 3: Proportion of Highest Paid Local Government Employees in England who are Women

Type of Council	Proportion of Highest Paid 5% of Employees who are women
London Borough	38%
Metropolitan	37%
County Councils	40%
Unitary Councils	39%
District Councils	19%
All Councils	26%

Source: summarised from Audit Commission 2004

An comprehensive evaluation of all the available research on women employees in UK local government conducted by the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister concluded “women candidates for the position of chief executive may be assessed on criteria which fall completely outside of job descriptions and entirely within the realm of personal prejudice” This perception was supported by a finding from the survey of chief executives which found that women chief executives were more likely to have been recruited to local authorities which had used outside consultants in the recruitment process”¹².

The UK research suggests, however, that appointing a women as chief executive in a council is important in both signalling and initiating change in the organization. It had a flow on effect in that there were then likely to be greater numbers of women appointed to other senior positions.

THE PATHS TO SENIOR MANAGEMENT IN LOCAL GOVERNMENT: WOMEN GENERAL MANAGERS IN THEIR OWN WORDS

Since New South Wales 1993 Local Government Act, the most senior appointed position of a council In the State, with a set of responsibilities designated in the legislation, is the General

¹⁰ Fox and Broussine 2001, *op cit*

¹¹ Morgan S. 2003 *Equality and Diversity in Local Government in England: A literature review* Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, London, p 52

¹² Morgan S *ibid* p 52

Manager. The number of General Managers in NSW who are women can be almost counted on the fingers of one hand. Four, of what were at that time six GMs were interviewed at the end of 2003, to get a biographical account of how each of them had managed to move into senior positions in local government in the State. The four were Kim Ansom, at Waverley; Jacqueline Brown, at Pristine Waters; Sheridan Dudley, at Camden and Pamela Westing, at Byron Shire¹³.

The Councils they manage are varied in size and character, illustrating one general observation that having a woman as General Manager is not merely a privilege of the large, metropolitan councils. Waverley is a mid-sized urban/beachside area in Sydney's eastern suburbs with a diverse and cosmopolitan population nearing 60,000. It is one of the most densely populated local government areas in Australia. Byron Shire is located at Australia's eastern-most point, covers an area of 566 square kilometres with a population of just over 30,000 which supports itself largely from tourism and agriculture. Camden, just over one hour's drive south west of Sydney, has grown considerably in population since the 1980s to nearly 50,000 people, but remains a mixture of urban and rural. Pristine Waters Council, established in 2000 in the Clarence Valley in the State's north was the largest coastal Council in NSW but with a population of only 11,073. In February 2004 it was amalgamated into a new Clarence Valley Council (and as a result Jacqueline Brown is no longer the General Manager)

Given the nature and number of the biographies, it is not helpful to try to draw too many general conclusions. However several things stand out from these personal histories:

- They have gained significant managerial experience working outside local government at different stages before and in addition taking on senior roles in local government.
- They have gained this experience through moving geographically, often interstate at stages in their careers. None has made her way up solely in one council or even in local government.
- The professions in which they are qualified and have gained experience have not been in what are still often thought of as the "traditional" areas of local government.
- If the requirements for Town Clerks that preceded the 1993 Local Government Act were still in operation, and specifically the inflexible qualifications requirements, they would have made it into such senior positions.
- Personal support or mentoring, in most cases from more senior but supportive male managers, has been significant. This has been in the absence of more extensive and general networking or support structures for women in their positions.
- However, at least two of the four have experienced comments and assessments by senior males in the local government sector which relate more to appearance than actual or presumed competences.
- Each has, in different ways, also managed the competing requirements career with those of families and/or dependents.

¹³ Their accounts of their careers, which are contained in appendix B of this report, were transcribed from the interviews and while they are not literally, "in their own words", in each case the summary has been "authorized".

SECTION 3: INNOVATIVE POLICIES AND INITIATIVES FOR WOMEN EMPLOYEES

The research presented in the previous sections of this report indicates that, despite longer terms trends in employment patterns, there are lower proportions of women working in Australian local government than the other tiers of Government and there remain quite distinct patterns of segmentation in the workforce. Some occupations and positions remain predominantly “female” (such as clerical work in its various forms) and some overwhelmingly “male” (covering outdoor work in most councils). And while it is possible to chart the “success” of individual women into senior positions such as those of General Manager overall women are not well represented in the senior management and administrative levels of local government in Australia. There have been a number of policy initiatives at national, state and local levels, over what is now a considerable period of time, with the objectives of changing some of these patterns either directly (for example through recruitment and selections practices) or indirectly by making local council workplaces more attractive to and supportive of women workers. As an illustration, the NSW Department of Local Government developed a program of information and strategies in 1989 for the Implementation of Equal Opportunity in Local Government with guidance on matters such as; how to set up and implement a program; Personnel Policies and Practices; and developing an EEO Management Plan. A number of Councils in the State worked with the Department to put the program into action for their own organizations.

Women Staff in Byron Shire Council

The Council has a staff of 240 equivalent full time positions, and of the 47 staff in supervisory or management positions, 10 of these (21%) are women. These include the General Manager, the 1 of the four Directors roles (the Director of Corporate and Community Services) and 2 of the 12 middle management roles. Of the 90 outdoor staff, two are women. Byron has adopted a number of policies to address the issues particularly relevant to its women staff

- A Harassment Prevention Policy and Procedure is given to all staff during induction. While the Council has had no formal complaint in accordance with the policy since 1994 several informal complaints have been handled internally by the Human Resources section.
- A woman is always included on all recruitment panels.
- Job share and reduced hours arrangements are possible by negotiation with a supervisor, and there are currently several of these arrangements in place
- Rostered day off (RDO) and flexitime systems have been approved and are being introduced

The evidence documented in this report is that the employment patterns have been resistant to change. This suggests, either, that progress with implementation of these sorts of programs across the country has been relatively slow. Or it suggests that the policies developed thus far have not really identified or addressed the significant processes at work. It is likely that there is a combination of both. For example, the slow pace with which local government as a whole introduces some innovative ideas in work practices is illustrated by the apparent reticence in introducing “family friendly” workplace arrangements aimed particularly at women. A report commissioned by LGMA in 2003 on the extent of Home Based work in local government, which

is one of what are often packaged as family friendly arrangements, found it not to be at all extensive but concluded that considerably more councils had informal arrangements than had formal policies or procedures¹⁴.

In terms of focus, much of the attention of policies and initiatives has been on attracting more women to local government and ensuring that recruitment and selection procedures are appropriate. Important as these issues are they are likely to be insufficient in a period when overall employment in local government has been declining and in which the patterns or employment have been changing¹⁵.

Women at work in Camden Council

There are 230 staff currently working in Camden (full time equivalents). Women comprise:

- 2 out of 4 Senior Staff, including the General Manager
- 2 out of 8 Managers
- 1 out of 80 Outdoor Staff
- 1 out of 15 Building inspectors
- 2 out of 12 Engineers
- All administrative staff
- Half the finance staff (though men are more senior)

The Council adopts the following measures to address the issue of women working in local government:

- An Organization Culture Inventory conducted in 2002, provided indications of instances of harassment and discrimination. As a result, EEO training was conducted throughout the organization, including the coverage of issues relating to the treatment of workers.
- The treatment of people with dignity and respect has been included as a Corporate Core Behaviour, against which staff are assessed annually.
- The Council has also recently implemented a *Dignity and Respect in the Workplace Policy*, which has as its policy statement:
- *This policy provides guidelines on the interaction between all Council personnel and is designed to ensure that Camden Council management and employees are not subjected to unwanted harassment, bullying or unacceptable behaviour by other staff, management or Councillors.*
- Other policies which Council has in place include a Flexible Work Hours policy, an EEO policy, a practice of re-imbursing staff for childcare costs incurred by working after hours when this is not part of the usual requirements of a job, and numerous part time positions

The most recent national initiative is the National Framework for Women in Local Government. Developed in 2001 by the Australian Local Government Women's Association, the National Framework was supported by the Federal Government (through the National Office of Local

¹⁴ Michael Paddon, Centre for Local Government, UTS, **Home Based Work in Australian Local Government: A report prepared for Local Government Managers Australia, 2003**

¹⁵ It is important to recognise nonetheless that while the overall numbers of employees may still be static or even by decreasing there is still turnover of staff in councils for the recruitment of whom these policies and procedures are important.

Government and the Office of the Status of Women), by the Australian Local Government Association and Local Government Managers Australia. Implementation of the National Framework is now being promoted and coordinated at National, State and (some) council levels. In words which could have been taken from the conclusions to this report, its starting point is that "Despite considerable change over recent time, women are still significantly underrepresented in elected member and senior management positions in Australian Local Government"¹⁶

EEO in Pristine Waters Council

At the end of 2003 there were 68 people working for Pristine Waters Council, 50% of them men and 50% women. All of the outdoor positions were filled by men, and, hence, all of the women in the council are working indoors.

The arrangements and the environment around EEO were described by the General Manager as "essentially informal". So, while the Enterprise Agreement did not make provision for carers leave, the flexi-time arrangements were used flexibly. The Council had never had an EEO grievance or complaint

However, the Council had developed an EEO Management Plan adopted initially at the end of 2000 and revised at the end of 2003. The overall responsibility for the EEO management had been the GM's, but overall planning and implementation were handled through the Council's Staff Consultative Committee which also operates as an EEO Committee. The Consultative Committee had members elected for each industrial Award section of the organization and management. In addition the Council had EEO Contact Officers for each workplace. The 6 EEO contact officers were 50% men and women (the depots were represented by men, as there were no female outdoor staff. EEO is a standing item on the agenda of the Consultative Committee.

The EEO Management Plan revised in 2003 made provision for, sets time frames and broad performance measures for:

- EEO Awareness training for all staff and councillors:
- Undertaking and analysing a staff survey to assess the demographics of the workforce and ensure no groups are disadvantaged.
- Reviewing staff procedures to ensure they comply with EEO principles and developing procedures where there are any gaps.
- Developing guidelines for contractors and trainers to ensure they are aware of Council's policy and it is reflected in their operations

The Framework comprises a Statement of Commitment, Goals and Objectives aiming to increase this representation of women both as elected representatives and in employment. It also outlines a number of potential strategies to be pursued at the local level, at State level and nationally.

¹⁶ Australian Local Government Women's Association **National Framework for Women in local Government**, 2001, p1

At the local level, the framework proposes the following potential areas for action in relation to staff support for women:

- **Mentoring**
 - Introduce mentoring programs for emerging leaders and young women.
 - Introduce recognition programs for the achievements of women.
 - Introduce leadership scholarships for emerging leaders.
- **Training**
 - Ensure equal participation of women in current training opportunities.
 - Encourage participation in targeted women's training where desired by female staff.
 - Ensure women's participation in management training regardless of their professional backgrounds.
 - Arrange training for all staff that considers EEO, harassment, stereotyping.
- **Selection and Promotion**
 - Ensure that appropriate and senior women are included on all selection panels.
 - Ensure job description and selection criteria recognise management skills and experience and are not solely related to technical expertise.
 - Consider selection criteria which recognises different management paths.
 - Ensure age discrimination does not occur.
 - Review acting and development opportunities, and the existence of career paths for all staff.
- **Equal Opportunity**
 - Council and CEO/GM prepare a Plan to increase the participation of women staff in decision-making.
 - CEO/GM report to Council annually on percentage of women in senior positions with trend information to be included in the Annual Report.
 - Council to review staff appraisal systems and processes to ensure the absence of bias.
 - CEO/GM identify the particular issues for Indigenous women, women of non-English speaking background and women with disabilities and take action to address any difficulties.
 - Run cultural awareness training for all staff.
- **Development of Women's Networks**
 - Encourage interested women to participate in women's networks and provide travel subsidy for attendance at meetings and training.
- **Cultural Change**
 - Review the organisational culture and undertake a climate survey.
 - Ensure harassment policies are operational and understood.
 - Include support for senior women staff in the CEO/GM performance indicators.
- **Family Responsibilities**
 - Ensure family friendly human resources policies for all staff.
 - Consider part-time, job share and work-at-home (sometimes) positions for managers and team leaders.
 - Consider childcare provisions for staff at required evening Council meetings.

The National Framework acknowledges that there is variation in the degree to which councils may be adopting some of these strategies already. This is illustrated by the current policies and procedures introduced specifically for women employees in each of the four Councils with

women General Managers in NSW who provided this research project with details of their personal histories: Byron; Camden; Pristine Waters and Waverley¹⁷.

Action at the level of individual councils will be insufficient in itself to change the profile of employment in the industry as a whole. The National Framework therefore also has a series of strategies to be developed at the State level, in the hands of a proposed coalition of strategic partners, including State-based Local Government representative bodies (elected and staff) and relevant State Government Officers, to be developed as appropriate in each State. The intention is to provide organizational support; a system of networking; education; and a system of support for individual councils with information on EEO related issues. In NSW the coalition of interested organizations is being coordinated by the State Government's Department of Local Government. Amongst its program of activities is the preparation of a resource kit to be available for all councils later in 2004. All the State level activities are shaped around the strategies contained within the National Framework.

As part of its coordination role, the State's Department of Local Government surveyed all the Councils in NSW in October 2003 to ascertain awareness amongst councils of the National Framework and the extent to which councils were adopting or had already implemented the proposed strategies. 143 of what were at that time 172 councils in the State completed the survey¹⁸. There appears to be widespread knowledge that the Framework initiative exists; nearly three quarters of councils (73%) said they were aware of its existence. But only just over one in three councils (35%) had considered the National Framework as a council- a far higher proportion of regional town or city councils had considered the Framework than those in Metropolitan areas (57% compared with 35%).

Across NSW, 36 Councils (25% of those responding to the survey) said they had endorsed the Framework at the council level: 6 were Metropolitan Councils (including Waverley details of which can be found in the box below); 18 were Regional Towns or Cities or what are termed by the Department "fringe" urban councils; 11 were Rural councils (including Pristine Waters, further details of which are in the box above but which has now been amalgamated into the new Clarence Valley Council.

Sixteen councils in NSW had adopted action plans based on the National Framework; these are 21% of the regional towns and cities or urban fringe councils which responded to the survey; 12% of the responding metropolitan councils and 5% of councils in rural areas.

The National Framework for Women in Local Government can be characterised as an approach which is seeking to organise a coalition of interests around a broad program of activities aimed at encouraging councils through providing education, advice and information resources. In the UK, in addition to whatever initiatives are being taken by individual councils, there is now a more centrally directed and prescriptive approach to performance in achieving objectives of increasing and enhancing the role of women in local government. One of the broad sets of indicators on which English Councils are required to report annually to the Audit Commission under the "Best Value" requirements is "Corporate Governance". A new measure has been added to the Best Value Performance Indicators on Corporate Health with the impetus coming

¹⁷ These four councils are used to provide illustrations of the range of initiatives currently being implemented based on information provided by the General Managers during the discussions about their own histories

¹⁸ The program of amalgamations of councils being undertaken by the State Government has reduced this number by around 20 by mid 2004.

A Council which has Adopted the National Framework for Women in Local Government- Waverley

Waverley Council has adopted the National Framework for Women in Local Government it also has in place a 10-point action plan under the NSW Department for Women programme to promote more women councillors. Together these two initiatives have raised the awareness of gender issues within the Council.

It has 434 staff (full time equivalent at the end of, of which 39% were women. 3 of the 6 senior staff in the Council Executive Team are women including the General Manager, Director of Library and Community Services and the Director of Corporate and Technical Services. At the next level of management, there are 10 women of 25 managers, which is a high rate of 40%. This has increased from 6 to 10 in the past couple of years, although over time the overall promotion of women in the workforce has remained static.

The 2002 EEO Plan contains a full staff profile, showing a breakdown of Council departments by gender. The percentage of female staff in each department is:

- Library and Community Services: 84%
- Corporate and Technical Services: 48%
- Planning and Environmental Services: 30%
- Beach and Recreational Services: 27%
- Public Works and Services: 2%

The Council encourages the employment of women in the following ways:

- The essential criteria for positions has been reviewed (including for mgt positions) to raise the recognition of leadership skills and rebalanced their value compared to technical skills;
- Non-traditional methods of management recruitment such as writing and running advertisements in a different way has tended to attract people outside as well as within local government.
- Compulsory training covered EEO and harassment issues has been conducted over a number of years, requiring a half day commitment from all employees
- The Council pays the HECS fees for career-related training.
- Also conference attendance is occasionally put to an Expression of Interest, enabling more junior staff to attend; and
- Council promotes itself as a Family Friendly workplace through
 - Flexitime;
 - Above award provisions for leave related to the birth or adoption of a child;
 - Increasingly flexible arrangements for returning to part time work after the birth of children; and
 - Several designated places in a local childcare centre enabling council employees to source childcare close to the workplace.

from the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister which now has national responsibility for local government Since 2002/3 Councils have been required to report on their progress towards implementation of an Equality Standard devised by the national organizations with responsibility for equity legislation in relation to race, sex and disability (see box) There are a six designated levels of compliance the most modest of which is the adoption of a comprehensive equality

policy and the most extensive, that a council has been exemplary in achieving its targets and has set new ones

BEST VALUE REPORTING ON EQUALITY IN ENGLAND

Under the Corporate Health Indicators specified for Best Value reporting by councils in England, Councils are required to report annually on "The level (if any) of the Equality Standard for Local Government to which the authority conforms". Levels are defined in **The Equality Standard for Local Government which covers four** areas: Leadership and Corporate Commitment; Consultation and Community Development and Scrutiny; Service Delivery and Customers Care; and Employment and Training.

Authorities report the level they have reached as follows:

- Level 1: The authority has adopted a comprehensive equality policy including commitments to develop equality objectives and targets, to consultation and impact assessment, monitoring, audit and scrutiny.
- Level 2: The authority has engaged in an impact and needs assessment, a consultation process and an equality action planning process for employment and service delivery.
- Level 3: The authority has completed the equality action planning process, set objectives and targets and established information and monitoring systems to assess progress.
- Level 4: The authority has developed information and monitoring systems that enable it to assess progress towards achieving specific targets.
- Level 5: The authority has achieved targets, reviewed them and set new targets. The authority is seen as exemplary for its equality programme.
- To report these levels, an authority must have adopted the Equality Standard for Local Government. If the authority has not adopted the Equality Standard it should report the following: "This council has not adopted the Equality Standard for Local Government"

Source: Office of the Deputy Prime Minister **Guidance on Best Value performance indicators for 2003/04** available on <http://www.odpm.gov.uk>

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APPENDIX A: STATISTICAL APPENDIX

DEFINITIONS

This Appendix consists of a number of tabulations from statistics provided by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) from the Census of Population and Housing. Tables (ii) to (viii) have been compiled from tabulations undertaken by the ABS specifically for this project. They therefore use the following definitions which are those of the ABS:

- **The Local Government Sector:**

Where the tables or statistics refer to Local Government, they take as their basis all those working in the Local Government Sector under the GNGP (industry sector Classification) – this uses the name of the workplace of employed people to classify them into government or non-government industry sectors.

- **Occupational Classifications; the Australian Standard Classification of Occupations**

All of the occupational information in these tables is based on the Australian Standard Classification of Occupations (ASCO) which is used by the ABS for collecting, analysing and publishing all statistics in relation to occupation¹⁹. In its second edition when these statistics were compiled, it uses two main criteria to make the classification: skill level and skill specialisation. The basic classification identifies 986 occupations, which for the purposes of the comparisons for this report are grouped into nine Major Groups used under ASCO. Because the classification is a general one which is used for all Australian industries and sectors, the terms used do not necessarily correspond with the particular job titles or specifications used in each state for local government or those used in particular councils. The nine ASCO Major Groups are

- Managers and Administrators
- Professionals
- Associate Professionals
- Tradespersons and Related Workers
- Advanced Clerical and Service Workers
- Intermediate Clerical Sales and Service Workers
- Elementary Clerical Sales and Service workers
- Labourers and related workers

¹⁹ Australian Bureau of Statistics 1997: *Australian Standard Classification of Occupations (ASCO) Second Edition*, Statistical Concepts Library

THE TABLES

The Appendix contains the following tables:

- Table (i): Male and Female Employees in Australian Governments, 2001**
- Table (ii): Male and Female Employees in the Australian Local Government Sector 1996 and 2001**
- Table (iii): Proportions of Male and Female Staff who are employed Part-time and full time**
- Table (iv): Proportions of Part-time and full time staff who are male and female**
- Table (v): The Occupational Distribution of Men and Women in the Local Government Sector**
- Table (vi): The Relative Employment of Men and Women in Local Government Occupations**
- Table (vii): Men and Women in Management and Administration**
- Table (viii): Part time and Full time Work in Management and Administration**

Table (i): Male and Female Employees in Australian Governments, 2001

State/Territory	Commonwealth Government					State Government					Local Government				
	Male	Female	Total	% Male	% Female	Male	Female	Total	% Male	% Female	Male	Female	Total	% Male	% Female
ACT	26,300	23,098	49,398	53	47	6,263	9,955	16,218	39	61	91	132	223	41	59
NSW	62,062	51,016	113,078	55	45	114,504	160,198	274,702	42	58	26,617	14,588	41,205	65	35
Victoria	47,239	41,129	88,368	53	47	58,316	110,073	168,389	35	65	12,293	17,062	29,355	42	58
Queensland	35,334	28,634	63,968	55	45	74,881	106,382	181,263	41	59	20,996	9,079	30,075	70	30
South Australia	14,964	12,800	27,764	54	46	24,258	40,487	64,745	37	63	4,807	2,934	7,741	62	38
Western Australia	16,144	15,195	31,339	52	48	33,451	50,988	84,439	40	60	7,365	4,796	12,161	61	39
Tasmania	4,361	4,129	8,490	51	49	9,414	13,821	23,235	41	59	2,261	1,050	3,311	68	32
Northern Territory	6,927	3,159	10,086	69	31	5,569	8,725	14,294	39	61	694	505	1,199	58	42
TOTAL	213,331	179,600	392,491	54	46	326,656	500,629	827,285	39	61	75,124	50,146	125,270	60	40

Source: ABS 2001 Census of Population and Housing: Tables on Industry Sector by Sex (CC49)

Table (ii): Male and Female Employees in the Australian Local Government Sector 1996 and 2001

1996

2001

State/Territory	Male No Total	Female No Total	Total	Male % Total	Female % Total	Male Total	Female Total	Total	Male % Total	Female %Total
New South Wales	28005	14609	42614	66	34	26608	14587	41195	65	35
Victoria	13093	17431	30524	43	57	12297	17050	29347	42	58
Queensland	21292	8225	29517	72	28	21010	9072	30082	70	30
South Australia	5023	3031	8054	62	38	4810	2941	7751	62	38
Western Australia	6955	4471	11426	61	39	7236	4623	11859	61	39
Tasmania	2707	1352	4059	67	33	2253	1036	3289	69	31
Northern Territory	1070	811	1881	57	43	709	532	1241	57	43
AUSTRALIA TOTAL	78145	49930	128075	61	39	74923	49841	124764	60	40

Source: special tabulations from ABS

Table (iii): Proportions of Male and Female Staff who are employed Part-time and full time

State/Territory	1996						2001					
	% Total staff P/T	% Total staff F/T	% Male P/T	% Male F/T	% Female P/T	% Female F/T	% Total staff P/T	% Total staff F/T	% Male P/T	% Male F/T	% Female P/T	% Female F/T
New South Wales	17	83	7	93	37	63	22	78	12	88	39	61
Victoria	38	62	14	86	56	44	41	59	18	82	57	43
Queensland	12	88	7	93	28	72	18	82	12	88	31	69
South Australia	21	79	10	90	40	60	24	76	14	86	39	61
Western Australia	21	79	9	91	40	60	22	75	13	85	39	61
Tasmania	20	80	9	91	42	58	22	78	13	87	41	59
Northern Territory	32	68	27	73	37	63	29	71	24	76	36	64
AUSTRALIA TOTAL	22	78	9	91	43	57	26	74	14	86	44	56

Source: special tabulations from ABS

Table (iv): Proportions of Part-time and full time staff who are male and female

State/Territory	1996				2001			
	Part time Positions		Full time Positions		Part Time Positions		Full time Positions	
	% held by men	% held by women	% held by men	% held by women	% held by men	% held by women	% held by men	% held by women
New South Wales	27	73	74	26	35	65	72	28
Victoria	15	85	60	40	19	81	58	42
Queensland	38	62	77	23	48	52	74	26
South Australia	29	71	71	29	37	63	70	30
Western Australia	25	75	70	30	35	65	69	31
Tasmania	31	69	76	24	41	59	76	24
Northern Territory	49	51	60	40	47	53	61	39
AUSTRALIA TOTAL	24	76	71	29	32	68	70	30

Source: special tabulations from ABS

Table (v): The Occupational Distribution of Men and Women in the Local Government Sector

Occupation	1996			2001		
	% Males	% Females	% Total	% Males	% Females	% Total
Management and Administration	7	4	6	7	5	6
Professional	13	21	16	15	22	18
Associate Professional	11	12	11	12	13	12
Trades	14	2	9	14	2	9
Advanced Clerical	0	7	3	0	6	3
Intermediate Clerical	8	41	21	9	41	21
Intermediate Production	23	1	14	22	1	13
Elementary Clerical	2	7	4	3	6	4
Labourers	22	6	16	20	5	14
AUSTRALIA TOTAL	100	100	100	100	100	100

Source: special tabulations from ABS

Table (vi): The Relative Employment of Men and Women in Local Government Occupations

1996

2001

Occupation	Male No	Female No	Total	Male %	Female %	Male No	Female No	Total	Male %	Female %
Management and Admin	5132	2182	7314	70	30	5303	2251	7554	70	30
Professional	10176	10396	20572	49	51	10954	10842	21900	50	50
Associate Professional	8417	5872	14289	59	41	8742	6568	15310	57	43
Trades	11108	943	12051	92	8	10240	829	11069	93	7
Advanced Clerical	293	3250	3543	8	92	149	3129	3278	5	95
Intermediate Clerical	5924	20416	26340	22	78	6541	20255	26796	24	76
Intermediate Production	17963	425	18388	98	2	16252	365	16617	98	2
Elementary Clerical	1930	3365	5295	36	64	1889	3183	5072	37	63
Labourers	17202	3081	20283	85	15	14853	2315	17168	87	13
AUSTRALIA TOTAL	78145	49930	128075	61	39	74923	49841	124764	60	40

Source: special tabulations from ABS

Table (vii): Men and Women in Management and Administration

1996

2001

State/Territory	Males No	Females No	Total	Male % Total	Female % Total	Males No	Female No	Total	Male % total	Female % Total
New South Wales	1798	744	2542	71	29	1740	726	2466	71	29
Victoria	994	626	1620	61	39	1051	642	1693	62	38
Queensland	1124	383	1507	75	25	1247	461	1708	73	27
South Australia	401	118	519	77	23	354	128	482	73	27
Western Australia	528	174	702	75	25	625	191	816	77	23
Tasmania	194	97	291	67	33	204	71	275	74	26
Northern territory	93	40	133	70	30	82	32	114	72	28
AUSTRALIA TOTAL	5132	2182	7314	70	30	5303	2251	7554	70	30

Source: special tabulations from

Table (viii): Part time and Full time Work in Management and Administration

	1996						2001					
	Male % P/T	Male % F/T	Female %P/T	Female % F/T	Total %P/T	Total %F/T	Male %PT	Male %FT	Female %PT	Female %FT	Total %PT	Total %FT
New South Wales	5	95	19	81	9	91	9	91	25	75	14	86
Victoria	5	95	20	80	11	89	7	93	22	78	13	87
Queensland	5	95	17	83	8	92	9	91	24	76	13	87
South Australia	4	96	17	83	7	93	9	91	18	82	11	89
Western Australia	4	96	15	85	7	93	8	92	19	81	11	89
Tasmania	4	96	24	76	10	90	10	90	23	77	13	87
Northern Territory	11	89	8	93	10	90	20	80	28	72	23	77
TOTAL	5	95	19	81	9	91	9	91	23	77	13	87

Source: special tabulations from ABS

APPENDIX B: WOMEN GENERAL MANAGERS IN NSW LOCAL GOVERNMENT IN THEIR OWN WORDS

Four, of what were at that time six women General Managers in the State of NSW, were interviewed at the end of 2003, to get a biographical account of how each of them had managed to move into senior positions in local government in the State.

The four, whose accounts of their careers are summarise here, were:

- Kim Anson, at Waverley;
- Jacqueline Brown, at Pristine Waters ²⁰;
- Sheridan Dudley, at Camden and
- Pamela Westing, at Byron Shire

They were selected because of the diversity in their councils. They were interviewed in December 2003 a informal but structured discussion about their careers; their paths to their current positions; key influences or supports; lessons from their experience which they would pass on to others. Their accounts of their careers were transcribed from the interviews and while they are not literally, “in their own words”, in each case the summary has been “authorized “. It has been the intention to follow up these interviews with similar discussions with women General Managers/CEOs in the other States.

Kim Anson - General Manager Waverley Council

Kim Anson graduated as a social worker from Sydney University, and her first positions were in youth work and then community work. She worked first in Redfern with Aboriginal children and young people, then co-ordinated a neighbourhood centre in Riverwood. She then moved to the Northern Territory to manage an Aboriginal owned business at Ayers Rock, and back to Sydney to work with the Housing Commission on two projects, one of them offering an early insight into local government as she was appointed to co-ordinate a local government programme promoting housing initiatives.

Kim was then appointed as Manager of Aboriginal Community Council at Uluru, the first woman to hold such a position. Up until Kim’s appointment it was generally believed that a man was needed to advise and manage such a Council’s affairs which included the need to deal with sensitive, sacred issues as well as a sometimes-tough bush environment. Kim appreciates that the Council took some risks in appointing her. The Council had responsibilities for such diverse functions as running the health service, getting grants and constructing housing, developing outstations, ensuring co-ordination between all the business and other arms of the community and managing the administration of the community. During her time there the traditional owners were granted title of the National Park, which then involved the Community Council in many challenging innovations as joint management arrangements for this Australian icon were implemented with a govt dept and traditional owners as partners. The job provided great

²⁰ In February 2004 Pristine Waters amalgamated into new Clarence Valley Council and as a result Jacqueline Brown is no longer General Manager.

opportunities to develop diverse skills, including in liaison and working in partnership with govt departments at senior levels.

On returning to Sydney Kim was appointed as the Manager of Community Services for Waverley Council. Four years later she was promoted to the position of Deputy General Manager, then after another restructure she moved to the position as Director of Corporate and Technical Services. The latter role included the engineering functions of the Council, along with HR, finance, IT, property services, public consultation and administration. During this time at Waverley Council, Kim feels she benefited from the approach of the Mayor, who aimed to move the Council to being an organization whose staff profile reflected that of the community. This naturally meant more women were considered for positions which previously they might not have been. The Local Government Act was also under review at the time, which removed a structural impediment to promotion - Kim would never have considered doing the qualification which was compulsory for Town Clerks and Deputies until 1993. Kim also enjoyed working with the General Manager of the time, who promoted the skill development of his senior staff and particularly encouraged them to develop their financial management skills and their knowledge of all Council activities via management of cross-council projects.

Kim then accepted an Executive Director position in the State Government, initially with NSW Planning and then the Dept of Housing, managing housing policy and strategy. After nearly two years however, she found that this position came to seriously clash with her family commitments. As her partner was facing health issues and her son was still a preschooler, Kim found it increasingly problematic to manage the regular inter- and intra-state travel which the position entailed while still fulfilling her family commitments. She therefore applied for and moved back to a senior position at Waverley Council, where she was soon appointed to the position of General Manager after 12 years of service over 15 years. In her new role she found that the level of organization knowledge and the quality of the trust and relationships which she had built at Waverley Council gave her the capacity to fulfil her professional role while also participating more satisfactorily in her family life. Proximity between home and work also helped. For example with the Council Chambers being only five minutes from home, she could have dinner with her son after work then return to the Council for night meetings or leave work briefly to attend occasional, important school functions in the daytime.

In the course of her career Kim did not seek to achieve postgraduate qualifications, as she was progressing at a time when there was less of an emphasis on formal qualifications than is the case currently. One of her most valuable sources of recent learning and development has come from the work of Stephen Covey and Daniel Goldman. In particular, the work on emotional intelligence competencies accords with her own views of how to achieve high performing organizations, and the need to have leaders who are good leaders of people. Kim now has a compulsory development program for all managers at Waverley Council which promotes emotional intelligence. She finds that reading and thinking about this work continues to refine her own skills. Kim has been a member of the Community Services professional association while working in that field, and was also active in her early career in the Social Welfare Union as part of the campaign to achieve the first award for non-govt welfare workers. In recent years she has joined the Local Government Managers Australia (LGMA), working with the policy committee on various issues.

Kim's career progression has involved a lot of on the job learning and recognition of that learning and skill development by her bosses and staff as well as colleagues inside and outside her organizations. These people have often then become her career champions. She particularly appreciates those individuals who were willing to be brave enough to take a chance on a woman in a non traditional role, such as the Aboriginal Council at Ayers Rock in the mid 80s and the Mayor and Councillors of Waverley Council in the early 90s.

For women in local government Kim believes that often barriers to progression include a tendency to recruit only from within local government, as well as the fact that the more established council functions are male dominated and the newer functions tend to have more of a balance or be dominated by women. This creates a situation in which there are more men in executive roles, as women have not had the same amount of time to rise through the ranks. Once a greater number of women achieve executive positions, then they become role models for other women who start to believe that progression is possible and seek promotion opportunities.

Her advice to younger women wishing to progress is that there is now more emphasis on qualifications. The ability to manage people well to achieve results is also valued and will be more and more highly valued in the future. Kim recommends breadth and diversity early in a career, including learning to manage people from a broad range of technical backgrounds. She suggests that young women should take on opportunities to expand the scope of their skills and knowledge and then deliver. Local government increasingly needs to deliver co-ordinated outcomes across many disciplines. Anyone with experience doing that will have improved career prospects. Another important tip is never to leave anywhere badly-maintain good relationships and don't burn your bridges - the industry is a small enough one that news travels.

Career "champions" who admire and respect your work can and will promote women to other jobs, encourage them to understand and value their skills or act as referees. As women acquire trust and strong relationships along with their skills and knowledge, their potential as good career material gets better recognised and they are more likely to break into traditional male areas and progress.

Jacqueline Brown- Pristine Waters Council

Jacqueline Brown has been General Manager at Pristine Waters for three years following a career path she describes as resulting from "more good luck than careful management". A school leaver at 17, her first jobs were in financial services, initially at a bank, then a credit union. The credit union position took her into information technology (IT), which was to be one dimension of her path into management when she enrolled in a part-time Management and IT degree at Wollongong University in 1990. Three years into her degree she was appointed to an IT job at Wollongong City Council.

The six years Jacqueline Brown spent at Wollongong were fundamental in setting her on a path to being a General Manager. The Council provided financial support and the time-off necessary to help her complete her degree in 1997. The Council also funded her training and qualification in quality management through the Australian Quality Organization. At Wollongong she moved into Corporate Planning. She attributes considerable significance in her development over this period to the General Manager of

the Council, who, as her direct manager, was a mentor who provided enthusiasm and support. She describes him as being a “non-traditionalist” in local government terms.

Jacqueline Brown had been pregnant when she first went to Wollongong so her degree, QM training and corporate management experience were all acquired while she was also parenting a young daughter.

In 1999 she left local government briefly to take a senior management planner position with the Sydney Catchment Authority attracted by the challenges of managing the Y2K processes and the preparation for the Sydney Olympics. She found it a frustrating move from a non-traditional organization headed by an energetic and encouraging general manager to one organised and managed in traditional ways which brought her into tension with the CEO. After a year she applied for the position as GM at Pristine Waters.

Pristine Waters is a small mainly rural council for which appointing as GM a woman, relatively young (at that time 36year old) from Metropolitan NSW must have seemed a fairly radical step. It produced tensions with some of the councillors and sections of the local community which she herself says would not have arisen if they had appointed an over-forty year old male. Her style of dress was the major issue referred to in her first performance review after a year in the job. In practice, the more fundamental difficulties were around her attempts to introduce a more strategic management and leadership style and procedures into a council where the councillors, and particularly the Mayor had become entrenched in a more hands-on involvement including detailed item-by-item spending of the budget. After two years and with a change in Mayor, the council's understanding of the appropriate role for the General Manager in relation to councillors has been completely reframed. The Council's management has won external recognition and awards in the past twelve months.

Her management style she says is “easy going” and inclusive, based on mutual trust rather than formal expectations. The council office certainly works without any signs of status differences being made to get in the way of effective and friendly operations.

As (now) a single parent, she has a strong personal commitment to more flexible working arrangements. She is a strong believer in the benefits of being able to work from home and will be pressing for more flexible provisions for home based work and job sharing in the next Enterprise Agreement at Pristine waters. In the last EBA she pressed for the introduction of flexi-time for indoor staff against some opposition from the Divisional Managers. A review of the arrangements after six months saw the indoor staff vote overwhelmingly that they should continue.

She acknowledges that there is a lack of network support for women who are general managers and readily admits that she does not know how many women General Managers there are in the state. However, the dearth of support networks she thinks would be experienced by all new GMs, and is not specific to women in the position. If there is a difference it is that the insecurity experiences in some more traditional sections of local government as a result of the emergence of younger women managers can produce situations where they offer little support and wait to see the women fail.

When we closed the discussion, Jacqueline Brown was asked what advice she would give on their career development to younger women who might be interested in

becoming GMs in local government “It will require strength of character. You will need to listen to advice and find people to talk to”.

Sheridan Dudley - Camden Council

Sheridan Dudley specialises in organization strategy and structure and public sector reform. She has filled 17 positions in her 20-year career within largely male-dominated organizations, covering academia, industry, a non-government organization, NSW, Victoria and Northern Territory governments and 7 years in local government. The five years she has spent in her current position, as General Manager of Camden Council has been the longest time spent in one position throughout her career. She is a strong, outspoken woman, who has been driven throughout her career to seek challenges and “give it a go”, to make a difference to communities and to remain at the cutting edge of public sector and management reforms.

Beginning with arts and law degrees, Sheridan’s first big break was working in personnel administration at a College of Advanced Education in Victoria when the Dean invited her to teach administrative studies, which included management, organization change and business administration. She then worked in a training and development role for Telecom with responsibility for executive development for the top 5,000 managers, of whom only a few were women. During this period and a 1 year stint in the private sector, she gained a Masters in Administration then worked at Swinburne Institute of Technology (now University) teaching undergraduate and post graduate organization behaviour, theory, strategy and structure. Moving to the Northern Territory in 1986, she became the first woman appointed as Director of Industrial Relations for a state or territory in Australia, and later the second woman in Australia to become a Commissioner for Consumer Affairs. The Minister later appointed Sheridan to run the Community Services Division of the Department of Health and Community Services, where her portfolio included community welfare, youth and children’s services, aged care and other human services. In 1989, Sheridan and her husband moved back to Melbourne where for a year she managed the community services branch within the Department of the Premier and Cabinet, before taking on a position for two years as the National Executive Director of the Child Accident Prevention Foundation of Australia. After taking a posting in China as a Professor of Management teaching management within the Iron and Steel Industry, Sheridan moved to Tamworth as College Director of Tamworth TAFE College. In 1994 she moved to Sydney to work within the Premier’s Department running the public sector reform agenda for two years. Sheridan took her first role in local government in 1996, when she was appointed as Director Strategy at Warringah Council with responsibility for implementing a purchaser-provider split. Sheridan was appointed to Camden Council as General Manager in 1998.

Throughout this dynamic career, Sheridan was appointed to roles where she was required to direct organization change strategies or to teach others about change management. This kind of role has offered her opportunity and freedom, and several mentors have nurtured her along the way. These mentors have included the Dean at the Victorian CAE, the Northern Territory Public Services Commissioner, a local government planning consultant who specialises in urban design, and the then General Manager of Warringah Council, who gave Sheridan a “crash course” over 18 months in what was required of a General Manager. These men had faith in her abilities, and gave her opportunities. For Sheridan it has always been men who have had the power and the

inclination to assist her in her career, who have been the “keepers of the keys and openers of doors”. Although she dislikes formal mentoring programmes, Sheridan now offers mentoring and support at a personal level to several people from her own and other organizations, both to women and men, regarding a variety of issues including career management, skill development and achieving a work-life balance.

Sheridan’s experience with networks has been mixed, and she has a strong suspicion of some women’s networks who she feels tend to gather together to feel inferior. She would prefer to come from the attitude that most women need to be twice as good as the men to reach the top, and therefore that they should celebrate their strengths together. Sheridan attends meetings of a senior executive women’s group which includes General Managers and women from the NSW Senior Executive Service. She relates most closely to a network of local government General Managers and CEOs across Australia and New Zealand, and says that they meet regularly to share common challenges and have a strong code of support.

Sheridan and her husband have moved together throughout her career, sometimes transferring as a result of hers and sometimes his positions. She has five stepchildren whom she inherited at the age of 28, some of whom lived with them at various times during the 1980’s when they lived in Melbourne, with the youngest graduating from high school by the time they moved to Darwin in 1986.

Working in male-dominated environments throughout her career, Sheridan has experienced occasional incidents of discrimination. Applying for a job in local government, she was told once by a Councillor that she “didn’t have the balls for the job”. Her experience in China had some unpleasant aspects as the two women professors on the course were treated quite badly by some of the expatriate male staff, and as a result Sheridan lodged an Equal Employment Opportunity complaint. She also speaks humorously of the

MERIT principle – Mates Elevated Regardless of Intelligence or Talent.

However, Sheridan believes that local government is a microcosm of the community, and that discrimination in local government is no worse than that experienced elsewhere. She believes that there are a couple of factors unique to local government which have contributed to the low number of women in General Manager positions – the first was the old Local Government Act which required a Town Clerk’s certificate, making it largely inaccessible to many women. Secondly, the disciplines which are traditionally elevated to General Manager status are those traditionally dominated by men, such as accounting, engineering and health and building surveying. Women who are currently General Managers tend not to have a traditional background, but rather to be appointed from outside or to come from Community Services or Urban Planning backgrounds. Her hope is that as Local Government becomes more focused on improving places and communities, that women with a focus on the big picture will have a better chance.

Having referred briefly to barriers for women, Sheridan is quick to affirm that she has chosen working environments in which she has received support and encouragement. She has not herself experienced a glass ceiling, and believes that women who focus on a glass ceiling will certainly find one.

Her advice to younger women wanting to progress is to be visible, interesting and to develop a broad support base. She urges them to find mentors and male powerbrokers, to go to conferences and submit papers, to professionally up skill and to join men's networks and professional associations. Above all, she advises that regrets or backward looks are a waste of time, and that instead it is important to take opportunities and challenges as they arise.

Sheridan speaks about her career with pride and satisfaction mixed with laughter and a sense of fun. She says she has always been ambitious, but not about a specific career goal. At no point during her career would she have ever been able to predict where she would be in five years time. Instead she has always focusing on achieving the best she can do, challenging herself, and staying at the leading edge. She continues to enjoy local government because she aims to make a difference for individuals and for the community, and to make a difference in people's lives.

Pamela Westing - Byron Shire Council

Pamela Westing was schooled in California, where her interest in town planning began with a high school project. Originally studying in architecture at the University of California, Berkeley, she then transferred into a Bachelor of Arts in Political Science when she began to be more interested in the setting of buildings rather than in the buildings themselves. After a couple of years travel, Pam completed a Masters degree in Urban and Regional Planning, progressing to work with an advocacy group representing residents in planning for the San Francisco Bay area, then various councils within California. She immigrated to Australia over twenty years ago, where she found attitudes towards women were a decade behind the country she had left.

Her first position in Australia was as a planning research officer at a suburban council in Melbourne, a short-term contract position as she had married and was planning to start a family. At this stage in her working life Pam was fortunate to work for a supervisor whose wife was also a town planner, who was then working from home. Her supervisor was therefore supportive in allowing her to work from home, and what began as a one-year project lasted for four years. During this time she was able to work fifteen hours per week from home, combining her work with looking after young children and visiting the office just once a week. However, when this position finally finished she found it difficult to find other part time work, as job share and part time positions were quite rare. It was at this time that Pam and her husband decided to trial a role reversal arrangement, in which her husband took primary care of the house and the children. This arrangement has continued for eighteen years, during which time her husband has been responsible for the needs of a growing family. He has also been flexible with his own career in order to relocate and fit in with his wife's career.

Pamela's first supervisory role was the position of Senior Planner with Eurobodalla Council, in which she learned the necessary management skills on the job. She stayed with this Council for nine years, being promoted to Strategic planning manager then Development Planning manager, then Deputy Director. For 7 of her 9 years at Eurobodalla Council Pam was the only woman of 30 middle managers, in an environment which was not particularly progressive in its attitudes towards women, although not overly harsh. She did however have regular opportunities for acting in the Director's role, thereby preparing her for her next career move.

In 1992 after nine years at Eurobodalla Council, Pam's position held few challenges for her, with some of her previous projects coming up again for review. She began a process of applying for a Director's role, which she found to be difficult as at that time most of the interviews were conducted by the elected representatives. In rural areas, this meant a group of "conservative elderly gentlemen" who had an image of a Director which did not fit a Californian woman. Pam found herself on several interview lists, missing out on appointments. She finally achieved success after the Local Government Act 1993 was introduced, and it was the General Manager who took a leading role on the selection panel. Pam felt that her appointment on merit was more likely once the responsibility for hiring was with the person who depended on her performance. The General Manager who finally appointed Pam was from a state government background, and appointed her to the position of Director of Sustainable Development at Port Stephens Council.

Port Stephens Council was a supportive environment for Pam, as there were several other women in senior positions and the council was strong on staff development and training. She attended middle management training, Franklin Covey training on self-development, as well as partially completing a diploma in Local Government management from Deakin University. Pam became involved in several professional networks particularly those within the planning profession, which were useful in providing a forum for moral support and discussion of ideas. She was also given opportunities to act in the General Manager and other executive positions, again preparing her for her next career move.

After seven years with Port Stephens Council, Pam was appointed to the position of General Manager at Byron Shire Council, the first time in her career in which she has not been the first woman in the role. She is adopting a consultative style and focusing on building a supportive team environment and a more positive organisational culture. She aims to spend at least the next four years in this position which she enjoys for its challenges.

In reflecting on her experience progressing a career as a women in local government, Pam reflects that it is not an easy place to work, and requires a certain toughness and willingness to accept a high degree of public exposure. She believes that more women will move through the ranks as family friendly policies are introduced, and as more women are elected onto Councils. Her career has only been possible with the support of her husband, and while she feels she has missed out on time otherwise spent with her children, they have had an unconventional but happy childhood. Her advice to younger women aiming to achieve the role of General Manager would be to get as broad a background as possible, to develop negotiation and media skills, and to join as many organizations and networks in order to build a profile and keep up with professional developments and opportunities. Pam concludes that not all councils would appoint a woman to the role of General Manager, and that therefore a woman has a harder row to hoe.