Council Community Awareness Strategy & Checklist

A resource to assist Councils develop their own local promotional strategies for the 2014 Council Elections.

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Legal responsibilities for promoting elections

Councils have the prime legal responsibility to promote the elections, under the Local Government (Elections) Act 1999, Section 12:

(b) a council is responsible for the provision of information, education and publicity designed to promote public participation in the electoral processes for its area, to inform potential voters about the candidates who are standing for election in its area, and to advise its local community about the outcome of elections and polls conducted in its area.

Councils also have a specific responsibility under section 13A of the same Act, in relation to the voter's roll:

(2) Each council—
(a) must, in a year in which a periodic election is to be held, during the period commencing on 1 January of that year and ending on the day fixed by the returning officer for the close of the roll, inform potential electors in its area (other than those referred to in section 14(1)(a)) of the requirement to apply to be enrolled on the voters roll; and...

In addition to this the Electoral Commission of SA (ECSA) as Returning Officer, has some specific formal information roles and a general power under which it may promote elections. The LGA has a specific responsibility under Section 19A to ensure candidate profile information is published on the internet.
### 2014 Council Elections – Council Community Awareness Strategy & Checklist

#### Developing A Local Strategy - Getting Started

The objective of the Strategy is to increase voter turnout (particularly in the metropolitan area), the number of candidates nominating (particularly in some rural areas), and the enrolment of businesses and others on the Council roll, building on the LGA and Electoral Commission of SA strategies.

**Aim for the Strategy to be prepared for implementation by mid-June 2014**

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Agreeing on the Process</th>
<th>Ideas to Consider</th>
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| Decide who will be responsible for the design and implementation of the strategy.  
  • Project Management  
  • Drafting and endorsing media statements  
  • and public communications  
  • Implementation  
  • Review and evaluation | Consider forming a Working Group to design the Strategy, involving:  
  • Public Relations/Communications  
  • Deputy Returning/Electoral Officer  
  • Governance  
  • Rating staff (for Voters Roll advice)  
  
  **Note:** The Council Electoral Officer will be updating the Council Voters Roll so all those entitled to vote are included, for example, ratepayers who are not residents are added from records used for rates notices.  
  **Note:** Businesses are not automatically on the roll and will need to be informed and reminded to enroll (except in the City of Adelaide). |
| Identify Council’s communications methods  
  • Link to Council’s communications and media strategy  
  • Prepare a schedule of copy deadlines for Council’s regular communications.  
  • Identify upcoming Council and Community events where elections could be promoted  
  • Consider how the rating and budget processes might be used to promote participation  
  • Nominate a contact officer on all communications. | Integrate the Elections Strategy with Council’s communication strategy.  
  • A staged approach for key messages will increase awareness about influencing decision making through voting and standing as a candidate.  
  
  (See resources available in the “Checklist” which follows this page) |
| Ensure there is shared understanding about the key messages at various stages leading up to the 2014 elections.  
  • Enroll by 8 August  
  • Nominations open 2 September and close 12 noon on 16 September  
  • Ballot Packs mailed out 20 - 24 October 2014  
  • Return Ballot Paper for delivery by 5 pm, 7 November 2014. | Integrate across the Council organisation to maximise promotion in conjunction with other Council and community interface activities. |
| Prepare a targeted mailing list of relevant stakeholders, other than known ratepayers (identified in assessment records) including businesses regarding:  
  • nominating as a candidate, and  
  • enrolling to vote | Advise businesses they do not have automatic entitlement to vote and need to enroll on the Council voters roll (Except the City of Adelaide).  
  **Additional stakeholders** could include community interest groups, industry representative bodies, regional planning groups, community leaders, culturally and linguistically diverse communities  
  • Refer "Checklist – Ideas to Consider", which follows |
| Prepare a budget and confirm availability of resources to implement the Strategy. | Consider financial and human resources to prepare the strategy, source/draft materials, and to cover printing and distribution costs, and to deal with enquiries. |
| Prepare the Strategy and ensure endorsement prior to implementation | Refer to the Checklist, which follows. |
## Developing A Local Strategy – Checklist

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Due Date</th>
<th>Checklist Tasks</th>
<th>Ideas to Consider</th>
<th>Resources Available</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>June and ongoing</td>
<td><strong>Raising awareness about Local Government and the 2014 elections.</strong></td>
<td>Prepare Elections web page based on LGA good practice model</td>
<td><strong>Generic Information Sheets</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Key dates 2014</strong></td>
<td>• Enroll by 8 August</td>
<td>Develop social media presence through Facebook, twitter YouTube, Instagram,</td>
<td><strong>LGA Council Election Web Page pro-form</strong></td>
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<td>• Nominations open 2 September and close 12 noon on 16 September</td>
<td>Pinterest or similar.</td>
<td><strong>Other LGA Resources</strong></td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Ballot Packs mailed out 20 - 24 October 2014</td>
<td>Include text in Council’s regular publications, local paper, and promote through</td>
<td>• <strong>Information Session for Candidates</strong> - <strong>Council Guide and Power Point</strong></td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Return Ballot Paper for delivery by 5 pm, 7 November 2014</td>
<td>• Media releases</td>
<td><strong>presentation</strong></td>
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<td></td>
<td>“Do you know any good community leaders? Encourage them to stand as a candidate in the November 2014 Council elections”</td>
<td>• Promote on talk back radio, radio interviews, and community radio</td>
<td><strong>ECSA information</strong> - Load on relevant page on Council’s website including amended enrolment form and elections brochure. Ensure button/pointer from Council website home page to ECSA enrolling, nomination and voting election information at <a href="http://www.ecsa.sa.gov.au">www.ecsa.sa.gov.au</a></td>
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<td></td>
<td>Increase general awareness about Local Government and upcoming elections.</td>
<td>• Notices in public places, and other local publications</td>
<td><strong>Making Connections - Appendix A</strong></td>
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<td>Use existing consultation methods to reinforce election messages, such surveys, rating periods, community forums</td>
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<td>Promote at community events &amp; existing community facilities, such as through libraries and customer service centres as well as through:</td>
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<td>• Field Days, Annual Show Days</td>
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<td>• Static or staff notices/displays</td>
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<td>Convene an Information Session to attract interest “About Local Government”</td>
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<td>• Consider targeting specific groups such as culturally &amp; linguistically diverse groups (CALD) and young people</td>
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<td>If updating signage &amp; general branding consider highlighting Council property and services more clearly to improve recognition of Council facilities</td>
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| June and ongoing | **Target networks to motivate potential candidates**                            | Potential target audiences include:  
- non-elected members of Council subsidiaries and existing community focus group members, and Ward Forums  
- Community Centres and Libraries  
- Neighbourhood Houses  
- Community interest groups and service clubs  
- Business and Traders Groups  
- Industry representative bodies  
- Regional and Local Authorities  
- Area Consultative Committees  
- School Councils  
- Tertiary and training campuses in your area  
- Sporting bodies  
- Community Builders and Leadership Programs  
- Aboriginal community leaders  
- CALD community leaders  
- Emergency Services  
- Landcare Groups  
- Youth Advisory Committees and Youth networks locally  
- Consider identifying success stories and publishing testimonials from previous elected members – profile those from under-represented groups                                                                 | **Generic Information Sheets**                                                                                                                                 |
|                 | **Key Message: Consider nominating**                                            |                                                                                                                                                                                                                      | **Other LGA Resources**  
- Information Session for Candidates - Council Guide and Power Point presentation  
- So you want to be on Council                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
|                 | Advise key election dates for candidates  
  - Must be on voters roll by 8 August to nominate  
  - Nominations open 2 September and close at 12:00 noon on 16 September  
  - **Businesses do not have automatic enrolment** (except in the City of Adelaide). They need to enroll on the Council voters role to nominate as a candidate and to vote.  
  - Target information to community leaders, information networks. Explain leadership and local decision making role, and promote opportunities to nominate as a candidate.  
  - Is there a need for flyers and posters in languages other than English?  
  - Mail out media releases, flyers and/or notices for notice boards  
  - Attend established community forums to promote the elections                                                                                   | **Making Connections - Appendix A Page 8**                                                                                                                                                                           |
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| June        | **Source material for Information Kits for potential candidates**                | • Council’s strategic plan and key policy documents  
• Map of the area and ward boundaries if relevant  
• Community profile  
• Council area demographic profile  
• General information about Local Government  
• *So you want to be on Council* booklet  
• ECSA Election Kit for Candidates                                                                 | Councils website  
| June, July  | **Key message: To Vote - Enrol by 8 August**  
• Must be on voters roll to vote and nominate as a candidate  
• **Businesses do not have automatic enrolment**. They need to enroll on the Council voters role to nominate as a candidate and to vote.  
• Distribute message to all who are likely to be entitled to be on the voters roll (in addition to ratepayers) using ECSA template letters and relevant attachments                                                                 | • Information in rates notice envelope  
• Target new housing areas. There may have been change of address since last election  
• Target isolated community locations  
• Target potentially under-represented groups through community leaders and networks  
• Target new citizens from citizenship ceremonies  
• Advertise in local media, community newsletters and other local publications (coordinate local promotion with LGA’s advertising schedule for maximum benefit/exposure)  
• Advertise through social media presence  
• Check out using local businesses and traders organisations and provide promotional material for them to use through the Council’s webpages.                                                                 | LGA pro-formas  
• Voters Roll flyer  
• Voters Roll media release  
ECSA template letter  
Refer Making connections (Appendix A of checklist)  
LGA Promotional materials  
• Advertising Artwork for placement in local media or newsletters  
LGA Advertising Schedule  
Ensure button/pointer from Council website home page to enrolling, nomination and voting election information |
| July        | **Plan “Information Sessions for Candidates”**  
• Schedule in late August/early September  
• Prepare presentations and Information Kits  
• Book venue, equipment and catering  
• Invite guest speakers  
• Prepare promotional flyer/advertisement.                                                                 | • Liaise with Deputy Returning Officer.  
• Check out option of running Council session concurrently with ECSA session for candidates.                                                                 | LGA Resource  
• Information Session for Candidates - Council Guide and Power Point presentation  
ECSA resources – www.ecsa.sa.gov.au  
• ECSA Nomination Kit for Candidates  
• ECSA Statement of Restrictions relating to Electoral Material, Illegal Practices and Campaign Returns |
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<tr>
<td><strong>August to November</strong></td>
<td>On-going communications and promotion to encourage participation in elections</td>
<td>• Integrate with Council’s overall communication and media strategy</td>
<td>Councils existing/new communications strategies</td>
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<td>Councils existing publications (including website)</td>
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<td>LGA Resources</td>
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<td>• Newsletter article proformas</td>
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<td><strong>Late August/early September</strong></td>
<td>Key Message: Nominate to Stand for Council</td>
<td>• Posters/banners in public places encouraging nomination (remember to seek advice from)</td>
<td>LGA Proformas</td>
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<td>Key Dates 2014 • Nominations Open – 2 September • Nominations Close – 12:00 noon on 16 September</td>
<td>• Council planning staff &amp; general inspector staff re Development Act requirements and any by-laws</td>
<td>• Nomination Media Releases</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Convene “Information Session for Candidates”</td>
<td>• Canvas interest in participating and promoting a “Community Forum – Meet Your Council Election Candidates”</td>
<td>• Nomination Banners</td>
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<td>• Advertise in local media including community newsletters (see LGA’s advertising schedule to coordinate local advertising for maximum benefit/exposure)</td>
<td>LGA produced promotional Material:</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>• Nomination Flyers</td>
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<td>• Advertising Artwork for placement in local media or newsletters</td>
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<td>LGA Advertising Schedule</td>
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<td></td>
<td>ECSA resources at <a href="http://www.ecsa.sa.gov.au">www.ecsa.sa.gov.au</a></td>
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<td><strong>September/ October</strong></td>
<td>Election Edition of Council’s Newsletter</td>
<td>• Also distribute to targeted mailing list</td>
<td>LGA proformas</td>
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<td>Key message: Vote by 7 November • Profile candidates, including photographs • Promote “Community Forum – Meet Your Council Election Candidates”</td>
<td>• Displays in Council service centres, libraries, community centres and public places</td>
<td>• Vote Media Releases</td>
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<td>• Advertise in local media including community newsletters (see LGA’s advertising schedule to coordinate local advertising for maximum benefit/exposure)</td>
<td>• Vote Banners</td>
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<td>LGA produced promotional Material</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Vote Posters</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Advertising Artwork for placement in local media or newsletters</td>
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<td><strong>By mid October</strong></td>
<td>Plan and convene “Community Forum – Meet Your Council Election Candidates” Overview Council directions and significant local issues Allocate equal time for each Candidate to speak and allow question time</td>
<td>• Ask Candidates to promote the session during their campaign and encourage residents and ratepayer voters to attend.</td>
<td>Council presentations and resources</td>
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<td>• Residents and Ratepayers Groups may be interested in hosting.</td>
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| October/      | Key message: Vote, return ballot papers by 7 November                          | • Press releases  
• Radio interviews  
• Posters/banners in public places encouraging voting  
• Remember to seek advice from Council planning staff & general inspectoral staff  
re Development Act requirements and any by-laws  
• Information with Council rates notices  
• Advertise in local media including community newsletters (see LGA’s advertising schedule to coordinate local advertising for maximum benefit/exposure) | LGA proforms  
• Vote Media Releases  
• Vote Banners  
LGA produced promotional Material  
• Vote Posters  
• Advertising Artwork for placement in local media or newsletters |
| early November| • Ballot packs mailed out 20 - 24 October  
• Voting closes at 5 pm on 7 November |                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |                                                                                                                                                      |
| November      | Key message: Profile New Council Members  
• Election results                                                                 | • Profile in local paper and/or Council newsletter  
• Press releases  
• Radio interviews | LGA commentary, and access to election statistics by Council area                                                                                                                                                   |
| End November  | Review and evaluate the implementation of the Strategy                           | • Record what worked well, what did not work so well, and how to improve for 2018                                                                                                                                  | LGA election statistics                                                                                                                                                                                                 |

**After the Election**

- An Orientation Program and on-going training program for newly elected Council Members will be required in accordance with Council’s Training and Development Policy for Elected Members. The key elements of the program/s could be highlighted at the Candidates Information Session and in the Candidates Information Kit. (Note the LGA also has support resources for orientation/induction).

- It is also suggested that opportunities be considered and promoted for community members to become involved as non-elected members to increase awareness of how Council operates, as a stepping stone towards nominating as a candidate in the 2018 Local Government Elections or “growing potential candidates”, through involvement on Council committees, community consultation focus groups, and as volunteers.
Appendix A: Making Connections

Past statistical and anecdotal evidence indicates there have been certain groups under-represented in Local Government elections, as candidates and potentially in voter turn-out numbers. These groups are:

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people
- Young people
- People from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds (referred to as CALD); and
- Women.

Information about the relevance of Local Government to the community generally and opportunities for influencing decision making is likely to facilitate greater interest and thereby participation in Local Government, including increased voter turn-out and candidate nominations amongst under-represented groups.

This Appendix includes tips for making connections with people in the under-represented groups highlighted above. The suggestions have been sourced through literature reviews and through the outcome of a focus group session with under-represented groups and the Local Government Communicators Network.

1. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people
   A resource guide for Local Government Councils in South Australia – titled *Involving Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People in Local Government Elections* was prepared for the May 2003 elections, and has been updated for the November 2014 elections. The resource is available via the LGA website - [www.lga.sa.gov.au/councilresources](http://www.lga.sa.gov.au/councilresources). Key tips and ideas identified during consultation with Aboriginal people during the development of the Guide follow.

   - Brief written messages and verbal communication is preferred, and are more effective if delivered through a respected community leader
   - Promote positive attitudes within the Council organisation and facilitate cultural awareness understanding
   - Create a welcoming environment at the “front desk”
   - Aboriginal people are more likely to feel comfortable talking to another Aboriginal person, or someone they know and trust in the local community
   - Tap into established networks, gatherings and forums, and meeting places
   - Avoid jargon and aim for informality
   - Talk through the election processes, take along posters for display in meeting places, and a ballot pack and sample voting papers to show each step in the process.
   - Make efforts to engage local Aboriginal people, artists or industry in the development of promotional material
   - Recognise diversity based on gender, and family connections, and geographic belonging
   - Hold information sessions in places familiar to Aboriginal people (the Civic Centre can be an intimidating environment)
   - People may need to travel long distances, particularly in country areas. Check out suitable days and times
   - Consider transport assistance/reimbursement of travel expenses, provide refreshments and take account of special dietary requirements such as diabetes
   - Local Government business is not well understood, so if matters are raised that are not related to Local Government, try to make appropriate referrals to other agencies or information sources.
2. Young People
A resource titled Youth Development: Policy to Practice – A Guide for Local Government in South Australia (2005) is the source of the following tips. (It is out of date and no longer in print.)

- Use Youth Advisory Committees as ambassadors to spread the word through their networks.
- Use role models to encourage involvement
- Communicate meaningful information in a timely way that is relevant to young people.
- Use email, SMS, social media, youth newsletters, street press, local media, posters where young people hang out, and cinema advertising
- Talk to young people at schools, TAFE, and go where young people are – shops, skate parks, and where young people hang out
- Provide ongoing and supported options for involvement – networks, committees, and mentors
- Provide food and drinks, make sessions fun and offer friendship
- Most young people do not have much money (if any) – assist by offering transport, attendant carers and reimbursement of expenses
- Don’t overlook young people from culturally and linguistically diverse communities – use interpreters for key messages and at information sessions
- Encourage involvement of young Aboriginal people
- Recognise diversity based on gender and CALD groups
- Ensure sessions are youth friendly and informal – young people want to be heard and get involved in ways which are meaningful to them
- Hold sessions in youth specific spaces, centres and services – for example, library areas and recreation spaces
- Consider options for ongoing involvement and participation of young people such as:
  - Youth Advisory Committees, other council planning and decision making structures
  - Actively seek out young people to be involved in consultation events.

3. People from Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Backgrounds (CALD)
The following tips have been collated from various sources focusing on engaging with CALD people.
- Review demographic profile of the area to target key CALD communities and locations
- Enquire about the most effective ways to communicate or the best information networks to use
  - Migrant Resource Centre
  - Community leaders (Secular) – may be informal and not hold position of formal authority
  - Religious leaders
  - Community Development Workers
  - Community social support groups
- Seek advice from ethno-specific or umbrella community organisation and enquire at:
  - Federation of Ethnic Communities Councils of Australia
  - Multicultural Communities Council
- Recognise there will be diversity within specific groups based on gender, age, religious beliefs, and geographic origin, and avoid forming stereotypical views:
  - Be sensitive to special needs and experiences of disadvantage and life traumas, gender roles and codes of behaviour for women within some communities, and towards the elderly
- Use ethnic radio and community press – relate stories about community leaders and successes
- Use language services and interpreters for promotional material to ensure key messages are conveyed.
  - Contact the Interpreting and Translating Centre (ITC) website www.translate.sa.gov.au 8226 1992 or 1800 280 230 Monday to Friday business hours, email itc@sa.gov.au
- Seek out opportunities to promote Local Government elections at cultural celebrations and events, and established CALD community forums
- Ask permission and display posters at gathering places – relevant shopping places, ethnic schools, churches, and migrant service agencies and centres
- Make an effort to understand CALD specific protocols
- Be aware that some CALD groups may mistrust the motives of governments and their representatives
- Hold information sessions in places where CALD people feel comfortable and welcome
- Provide support and assistance with transport and reimbursement of expenses.

**Note:** To nominate in Council elections requires Australian Citizenship or property ownership (in most cases). Potentially target citizenship ceremonies and provide information to new citizens about their voting (and nominating) rights.
4. Women

Historically, women have been under-represented as elected members of Councils (and in senior staff positions). Women in South Australia, although comprising about half of the total population, comprised less than 3% of the total elected membership in 1973, 16%, in 1987, and by 2010 this had grown to 27%. Some of the reasons advanced for this low representation of women on Councils are as follows.1

- A strong male culture which often marginalises and excludes women. A cultural change will be dependent upon a change in organisational culture, recognising that this is also a sector wide and societal problem.
- Many women Councillors experience that the line between robust debate and harassment has often been crossed and there is an unwillingness by colleagues to take this matter seriously.
- Primary responsibility as carers and struggling to meet the time demands and demands of public life – being available to the community.
- Long distances to travel in rural and regional areas, often at night alone.
- Need for training and confidence building – meeting procedures, public speaking, assertiveness, governance matters, managing conflict, and how to run a campaign.

It is recognised that some of the above issues may also be barriers to men participating in Local Government.

The formation of the South Australian Branch of the Australian Local Government Women’s Association in 2005 was an important step forward in providing support and resources to women in Local Government. The Association aims to support women in the sector in a range of ways, including through establishing peer networks, mentoring programs, providing training and resources, and tackling attitudinal change issues (refer www.algwa.org.au).

Targeted communication channels which may improve connections with women include the following:

- Women’s health and lifestyle providers and service clubs
- Women’s special interest and support groups
- Women’s networks through tertiary institutions
- Notices in places frequented by women and children
- Libraries, community centres, neighbourhood houses
- Council customer service centres
- Child care centres
- Recreational facilities
- Shopping centre displays

A more recent review through the “Missing in Action – Community Action Project” (2013) considered why women are “missing in action” from elected positions in Council, the subsequent impact on local communities and how this can be addressed.2 It was considered by those involved in the project that community leadership includes a focus on community that is clear, relevant and optimistic. Leaders are expected to be capable, confident assertive and resilient. Four key elements were identified that would encourage women to become involved in community leadership:

- understanding relevance and the value individuals can add
- an inviting and encouraging culture
- opportunity for dynamic and innovative change, and
- support and mentoring to succeed.

Essentially, it was considered that the key to encouraging greater participation by women is in the messaging that the LGA and Councils provide. In particular, it needs to show:

- relevance of local councils to communities
- new people and ideas are welcome
- support and information is readily accessible, and
- councils provide genuine and positive leadership opportunities.

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1 Consultation outcomes informing the development of the National Framework for Women in Local Government. Australian Local Government Women’s Association (ALGWA) 2001 and subsequent publications.


Available at www.lga.sa.gov.au/electionresources