An academic view of the issues facing Local Government

LIZ GILLAM
Policy Manager
LOCAL GOVERNMENT ASSOCIATION
OF TASMANIA

I was recently asked to review a book entitled Australian Local Government Economics by Brian Dollery, Lin Crase and Andrew Johnson. It is certainly encouraging that, whilst councils are not spared of all blame, the authors recognise the enormity of the challenges facing Local Government and the wide range of constitutional, structural, political, economic and practical factors that combine to make this a very complicated debate.

With ALGA vigorously pursuing the ‘3 Fs’ campaign – fair funding, fair treatment and formal recognition - this book comes at a useful time. To succeed in this campaign, Local Government must achieve a higher level of understanding in the community about what it does, why and how and, more importantly, the seriousness of the issues the sector is currently facing.

The book puts forward sound arguments in support of ‘local’ governance and service delivery; reasoned questioning of ‘one size fits all’ and ‘bigger is better’ approaches to restructuring of Local Government; and suggested approaches to tackling identified shortcomings. This can only assist Local Government elected members and practitioners to better inform their communities and politicians at other levels of government of the dilemmas facing Local Government.

To those outside the sector, particularly students, the book provides a good introduction and it is hoped it will generate further interest in Local Government. Research into skills shortages indicates a lack of awareness amongst university students about what Local Government does, with a corresponding lack of recognition of the career opportunities available to them.

The book is in three parts: Part A presents a brief history of Local Government and a concise summary of the factors contributing to financial pressures facing it, including those of Local Government’s own making. Part B addresses four aspects of Local Government economics – Local Government in a federal system, Local Government charges, Local Government taxation and intergovernmental grants. Part C explores a number of policy issues. Chapters 7 – 10 examine the thorny issue of council amalgamations.

Given the analysis of issues confronting Local Government in previous chapters, the statement in Chapter 8 that “Effective small municipalities should be left alone while inefficient small councils should be identified and then subjected to restructuring,” is a curious one. The plight facing many small and medium size councils, is not necessarily due to their ‘performance’, but factors beyond their control eg. significant demographic shifts, large areas with corresponding lengths of road and sparse, dispersed populations with expectations of higher standard and more extensive services.

It also begs the question, ‘how’ should they be restructured? Whilst the alternatives to boundary restructuring are described, many councils who might benefit are simply not in the right place! It is not unusual for two or three councils experiencing difficulties to be neighbours - even a coalition of the willing cannot, alone, overcome their combined issues.

However, all is not doom and gloom! Local Government around Australia has initiated an enormous amount of work to get a much better picture of, and to tackle, the long-term sustainability issues facing councils, with major projects underway in SA, WA, NSW and QLD. With the Tasmanian financial sustainability study just about to get underway, we will have the advantage of being able to draw from the experience of other states.

I recently attended a meeting of colleagues from State Associations, to ensure that we have a good understanding of the projects being undertaken in other states and, more importantly, to make sure that we do not duplicate each other’s work. A number of templates and tools for use by councils, covering a wide range of matters including governance, financial planning and reporting, asset management, and working with our communities are being developed, that will be adaptable across jurisdictions.

Importantly, this work is being undertaken with strong levels of cooperation and support, in some cases financial, from state governments, professional associations in the sector, the private sector, and communities.

At a national political level, two exciting developments that have taken place since the writing of this book - the signing, by the Australian and all state and territory governments, of the Inter-governmental Agreement Establishing Principles to Guide Inter-governmental Relations on Local Government Matters and the passage through both houses of Federal Parliament, with bi-partisan support, of a motion recognising the role of Local Government in Australian federalism.

Finally, Local Government’s participation in, and its response to, the COAG National Reform Agenda, also provides a great opportunity to demonstrate maturity and ability in the sector to assist in the social and economic development of Australia.

Statewide Community Satisfaction Survey

The report on the statewide Community Satisfaction Survey, conducted in October, has been released. Overall, 2006 satisfaction scores in each of the nine areas, are marginally lower than those in 2002. The report suggests this may reflect lower performance, or rising community expectations. Whichever is the case, it appears to support Local Government’s argument that many councils are finding it difficult to do all that is required and/or expected of them. In light of this, it is encouraging that the level
of satisfaction with customer service remains high.

It is interesting that, in terms of areas most in need of improvement, ‘roads, footpaths and traffic’ (27%) and ‘planning and development’ (11%) rated the highest. It should also be noted that 14% of those surveyed, did not name an area for improvement. These were also the areas that scored the lowest satisfaction rates.

In relation to roads, these findings support the need for a more strategic approach to the State’s road network and suggest that the Road Summit proposed for early 2007 is timely. In relation to planning, there are a number of systemic planning issues that should be addressed through the Better Planning Outcomes project. However, there are also a number of high profile projects that may have influenced these ratings.

An issue which is high on the agenda for a number of councils is the provision of water and sewerage services. The report findings in relation to this area may not correlate with the messages councils are getting from their communities. It is important to stress that the statewide results cannot be taken as an indication of satisfaction levels with an individual council and this may be an area that some councils see a need to survey further.

◊◊ For further information, contact Liz Gillam on 6233 5971 or email liz.gillam@lgat.tas.gov.au.

Legislative Council Select Committee - Report on Planning Schemes

The report of the Select Committee was recently released and it will come as no surprise to councils, particularly those who made submissions, that a number of improvements in the planning system were suggested. These are very much in keeping with the direction of Better Planning Outcomes.

A number of recommendations relate to increased resourcing of planning within the State Government, with the result that councils would be better supported, particularly in relation to the development and amendment of planning schemes. The role, functions and operations of Resource Planning and Development Commission (RPDC) were also the subject of a number of recommendations.

One recommendation, of particular interest to elected members, is that of mandatary education in the area of planning. The LGAT and state associations across Australia, are looking at how best elected members can be assisted in this area.

The report clearly recognises the impact that the lack of qualified planners is having across the board. Again, this is an area which LGAT and other associations, in conjunction with Planning Institute of Australia, are actively working to address.

◊◊ The full report can be found at www.parliament.tas.gov.au/ctee/REPORTS

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National Approaches to Skills Shortages

At national level, the Australian Local Government Association (ALGA) and Local Government Managers Australia (LGMA) are working with other industry bodies to identify and implement sector-wide approaches to address skills shortages.

Following a national forum, facilitated by LGMA in April 2006, a steering committee has now been established. A project officer has been employed to work with the sector to implement a range of identified priorities including improving the image of Local Government, developing new and smarter ways of working, and promoting the sector as a good place to work. ALGA has recently gained representation on the Steering Committee, which will help ensure a consolidated Local Government effort.

In addition, a national working group has recently produced a report for the ALGA Board that provides an overview of developments occurring nationally. The report makes a series of recommendations for further action including the need to ensure engagement and coordination, at both the state and national levels, in order to avoid duplication of effort, to build on initiatives that have already been put in place and to share resources.

The National Training Agenda

LGAT recently hosted a forum involving officers from the training units of all the State Local Government Associations to share information on training and skills development issues of national significance. A representative of ALGA attended the meeting, together with representatives from Government Skills Australia (GSA).

Formed in July 2005, GSA is the industry council for government and community safety, which includes five industry areas: Local Government, Public Sector, Public Safety, Correctional Services and Water. GSA provides training resources and services to support the recognition of skills and professionalism in government administration, services and operations across these five industry sectors, each of which is now represented through an Industry Advisory Committee (IAC). More information on GSA is available at www.governmentskills.com.au.

At the Hobart meeting, it was agreed that greater cooperation between GSA and the State Associations would be beneficial in ensuring national developments and initiatives in the areas of training and skills are relevant to the Local Government sector as a whole.

Mature Age Workforce

As previously reported, LGAT has conducted a transitional employment survey, designed to gather information from Tasmanian council workers approaching retirement age, about what they are prepared to consider in terms of ‘transitional employment’ after their official retirement date. The findings, which will assist councils in determining appropriate workforce planning strategies, indicated a high level of interest in transitional employment, or phased-in-retirement, arrangements. A further survey, seeking indications of the type of initiatives that might need to be implemented to facilitate transitional employment, is currently being conducted. The results are expected by the end of the year.

LGAT is also conducting its own research into Australian and overseas experiences, with phased-in retirement arrangements and the policy implications associated with implementing such programs. This research will be used as the basis for further discussions with the Department of Economic Development about how to provide Local Government with some good practice models for phased-in-retirement.

Environmental Health Paraprofessionals Project

As part of the effort to address environmental health workforce shortages, the national Environmental Health Committee (enHealth) has commissioned a project to examine new ways in which the environmental health workforce might operate across the country and, in particular, to assess the feasibility of developing a technician position that can support professional environmental health workers. This builds on a scoping exercise conducted in Tasmania earlier in the year.

Phase 1 of the project is being undertaken from within Tasmania and is being overseen by a national advisory group. A consultant has been engaged to develop an agreed policy framework regarding the role of technicians and the final report is soon to be submitted to the Advisory Committee. Phase 2 of the project, which would entail...
developing more detailed competencies for the specified areas in which environmental health technicians may be permitted to work in Local Government settings, is dependent on the outcomes of phase 1.

Regional Seminars on Rural Health Workforce Strategies

A new partnership with GP Workforce Tasmania and the Area Consultative Committee Tasmania has been developed to conduct a series of regional consultation forums with councils to explore the impact that health workforce shortages might have on the health services in rural and regional communities. The forums provide a great opportunity for councils and other stakeholders to learn about emerging workforce trends and to share information on what they are doing in their own regions to address health workforce shortages. Insights from these sessions will be considered at a GP Workforce summit scheduled for early 2007.

Tasmanian Pandemic Influenza Project

The State Government has commenced a major project to establish a whole-of-community approach to pandemic influenza planning within Tasmania. The project plan brings together, and adds to, existing state and national health and community safety plans to provide an integrated approach to preparing for an influenza pandemic in Tasmania, with the aim of minimising illness and potential social and economic disruption. Tasmania’s existing plans can be accessed at www.dhhs.tas.gov.au/healthyliving/pandemic.

The Tasmanian Pandemic Influenza Project (TPIP) will, in essence, deliver and test agreed plans, protocols, processes and procedures to be implemented in the event of a pandemic. It will also look at governance, legal and industrial issues and engage in recovery planning to address the anticipated consequences of a pandemic, including the possibility of economic recession.

Councils are particularly involved in the development of Community Assessment Centres (CACs) that will be deployed to assist local people in the event of an outbreak.

Working groups have been established to address each of these areas with LGAT representation, where appropriate. The planning project will be completed within 12 to 18 months and there will be continuing consultation with Local Government on relevant aspects of the project as it proceeds.

For further information on these policy issues contact Dr Christine Standish on 6233 5966, or email christine.standish@lgat.tas.gov.au.

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No news isn’t good news; it’s just poor communication

BECHER TOWNSHEND
Managing Director
BEYOND PR

The Mayor has her speech prepared, the ribbon is ready to cut and an audience of school children await the big moment, but something is missing. Could it be the media?

Every organisation experiences occasions when the media do not turn up to their planned event or media conference. There are many reasons why this may happen: perhaps you didn’t let them know about the event ahead of time, to allow them sufficient time to assign a journalist to the story, perhaps a bigger story has broken elsewhere and your story is no longer a priority. Or perhaps, the most common cause of all, you haven’t communicated to the media that you have news worth covering. Your story needs to be worth telling to get the media interested.

The most important thing you can do is take a step back from your involvement in the issue or event and objectively determine whether there is a newsworthy angle to be had.

Ask yourself the following questions:
• Is the event/story timely i.e. is it relevant?

If you are responding to something that has been a story in the media, you need to do it NOW, not tomorrow or the next day. If you wait, the media will have moved on and will no longer consider the issue relevant.

• Does it have an impact on the readers/audience for the specific media outlet?

Journalists are motivated foremost by stories that have an impact on their readership/audience. After all, if someone was telling you a story that you couldn’t relate to and that had no relevance to you, you would stop listening, wouldn’t you? If journalists lose their audiences, their media outlet will quickly lose their journalist.

So, tell the media the angle that makes the story relevant to them. If you want to announce the winners of an award, let the media know where the winners are from so they can feature their local winner at the top of the story. People often fail to understand that the journalist’s first responsibility is to produce a newsworthy story that will interest that media’s public.

“...dealing with the media requires basic commonsense and an appreciation of where they are coming from.”

Frankly, the reporter does not care whether that ‘public interest’ story will help or hinder the organisation. You will help yourself and your organisation by recognising that this is not meant as a personal slight by the media but simply a different motivation. Is the issue important in relation to other events during the day?

• Can the story be cut down to its bare bones and still be interesting?

Stories on TV and radio do not last long – a typical ‘in-depth’ story is only about 70 seconds long. If your story needs more time, you may be better off approaching a journalist who is specialised in that area, such as an arts, environmental or political reporter.

• Can you provide colour and movement for TV and a vibrant image for newspaper photos?

Except when your story is an enormous scoop, TV journalists will not be interested unless you can tell them they will have good visuals, rather than just talking heads.

For example, all of these principles could be applied to a council or community organisation holding an annual fair. The fact that you’re having a fair isn’t really news – everyone has fairs. What makes yours different? Is it that it will showcase the latest in rural irrigation techniques, or that a ten-year-old boy has entered the giant pumpkin competition? Both of these are stories: the first a hard news story that would suit a radio interview and the second a good picture or colour story for TV and newspapers.

One of the continuing problems facing media representatives from any organisation, particularly in times of stress or social change, is how to tell a story to a reporter effectively.

Once you have a newsworthy angle and are preparing a story for the media, it’s also essential to make sure all information is accurate and that sufficient background information is provided. This will allow an editor to more easily run with an angle for a story that works for their audience and thus provide more opportunity for coverage.

Remember not to be too commercial – journalists are looking for stories about people, not products.

And, the golden rule; never stretch the truth. However clever you think you’ve been in clouding the truth, it will come out eventually and you will have no defence and nothing to fall back on. Journalists have long memories for these types of things and long after you’re gone, the organisation will still suffer from your error in judgment.

When it comes down to it, dealing with the media requires basic commonsense and an appreciation of where they are coming from.

Becher Townshend is the Managing Director of public relations consultancy Beyond PR. Previously, he spent nearly a decade as a State Political Reporter for The Advocate Newspaper and Southern Cross Television. Becher now specialises in effective and crisis communications and conducts media training seminars for TCCI’s College of Management.

L G A T N e w s – D e c e m b e r  2 0 0 6

people and performance

2 3
Performance Appraisals
Don’t Work (Part 1)

• Reward productive employees with more responsibility
• Deal with problems head-on
• Set objectives for the future
• Assess training needs
• Learn more about the group dynamics of their team
• Gain recognition and reward (although appraisals are most definitely not pay reviews – these should ideally be handled separately)
• Look ahead and set objectives that will help their career
• Identify support for you to provide
• Resolve grievances
• Seek reassurance and appreciation

The very best appraisal system is one that occurs in an ongoing way.... After all, you would not think much of an air conditioning system which monitored air temperature once a year.

Why don’t appraisal systems work?

There are two main reasons why performance appraisals tend not to work.

First, the appraisal system itself and the accompanying documentation, is often badly designed. Second, and most important, is that the underlying relationship between team leader and team member is often quite poor. Performance shortfalls by team members have not been picked up or spoken about. The team leader has omitted actions which could have undertaken to better support team members.

The System itself! (Real Performance Management)

The very best appraisal system is one that occurs in an ongoing way, when the relationships between the team leader and team members are sufficiently high for there to be ongoing recognition of good performance, when appropriate praise is given, and when poor performance is corrected as it occurs. After all, you would not think much of an air conditioning system which monitored air temperature once a year.

In high performance teams, team members are able to comment on the performance of the team leader, saying what works for them and what doesn’t, pulling the team leader up when he or she fails to meet a key commitment, or agreed standards of behaviour.

Put this kind of freedom of speech and behaviour in place in your team and it is almost as if an appraisal system is no longer needed. The focus moves from a backwards looking critical assessment of shortcomings not previously spoken about, to a forward looking focus on the developmental needs of team members and the team leader. A good work relationship will not only withstand this kind of honesty and integrity; it demands it! How would this work in your team?

At their worst, appraisal systems are a [poor] fail-safe mechanism when no ongoing feedback is given. At their best, they are an integral part of the developmental program for team members and a framework for providing appropriate recognition.

A properly designed appraisal system will contain a statement of performance objectives which describes the outcomes expected of team members, how they are measured and when tasks are to be completed. A statement of the specific support to be provided by the team leader in order for team members to reach agreed objectives is also essential. This describes the training and additional resources required and outlines delivery dates.

Communication process – The Interview

Finally, there is the appraisal interview itself. This has a number of functions.
First, it is a review of performance in an overall way, against the previously agreed outcomes.

The primary focus of the interview, however, should be on the future. The goals and objectives your team member has for his or her career development should be discussed, along with how they can best be expressed. The team leader should ask how he or she can support these goals. This facilitates agreement on specific performance objectives for the ensuing period. These should take account of revised team objectives to be fully effective.

A key element of the ‘perfect appraisal system’ is its mutuality. Team members and their team leader are responsible for making the overall relationship work and for the effectiveness of the appraisal system.

The appraisal system needs to be simple and readily adaptable for each work situation. To ensure its effectiveness, involve all team members in the development of the scheme, and its continual review.

**Part 2 of Performance Appraisals Don’t Work, to be featured in the March 2007 edition of LGAT News, will look in more detail at the performance appraisal process including effective preparation, handling confrontation and post-appraisal actions.**

LG Performance Tasmania supports councils and individual managers in developing both systems and skills for managing performance. Performance appraisals are just one component of an effective management system and quality relationships with all council staff. For more information about regular workshops, custom seminars and support in these areas, please contact Deidre Parker at LG Performance Tasmania on 6236 9055 or email deidre@highperformancetraining.com.au

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### Tips for Team Members

- Work towards an honest, open relationship, where two-way feedback is a constant feature of your relationship with your team leader. Provide feedback about the extent to which your leader has supported you and the team. Relate this to the agreements you made at the previous review.
- If goals and outcomes are not clear to you for any reason, ask. Make sure you know what is to be done, to what standard and by when. Ask for the level of support you feel you need: resources, authority, personal coaching.
- If your team leader is focusing on the past, ask what specific outcomes he or she might want of you to avoid the ‘problem’ in the future. Suggest any training you might feel useful or necessary. Indicate your commitment to meeting the performance outcomes agreed.
- Ask your team leader for changes in his or her behaviour which would make it easier for you to meet the agreed performance objectives - more time - less 'control' - more feedback - more specific project definition etc.
- After the interview, get some quick ‘runs on the board’. Indicate your commitment to the agreed outcomes.

### Tips for Team Leaders and Managers

- Work towards an honest, open relationship. Spend time in understanding your team members’ values and in respecting the genuine differences which exist. Provide day-to-day feedback and praise what’s working.
- Ensure the principal outcomes for team members are clearly specified. Understand the level of skill and motivation your team has.
- In setting up an appraisal interview, stick to your commitment about the interview time. Allow more time than you anticipate is required and make sure you are uninterrupted during the interview. Keep the focus of your discussions on the future.
- In commenting on overall good performance, talk about how this can be extended to the future. In discussing

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**Brett Smith**

Brett is our HR Compliance Manager; he assists local councils to take a proactive approach to HR management, including risk exposure. His strategic and operational experience in enterprise bargaining, OH&S, HR planning, performance management, and compliance audits make his services uniquely valuable.

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w w w . s e a r s o n b u c k . c o m . a u
Addressing Skill Shortages In Local Government

A new problem looming on the Australian industrial landscape is that of skill shortages and Local Government is by no means immune from this impendence to delivering excellent service.

But a new approach to tackling this issue is emerging within successful organisations world-wide. These organisations are striving to be ‘employers of choice’. Once they have achieved that enviable reputation, they don’t appear to have the same problems in attracting and retaining good staff as other employers may be facing.

What is an Employer of Choice?

Employers of Choice adopt modern work practices so that people want to work for them. Being an Employer of Choice generates loyalty, trust and a sense of ‘belonging’ amongst employees. Discerning employees, especially those with high-demand skills and talents, are now actively seeking Employers of Choice.

Employers of Choice also:

• create a work culture that encourages new ideas, open communication, regular constructive feedback and acknowledges employees’ contributions; and
• create a workplace culture based on fun, respect, ideas and responsibility.

Many people assume skills shortages are simply caused by not training enough people to fill the jobs available. However, the causes of skill shortages are complex and can vary across industries, occupations and over time. The culture, work conditions and remuneration levels within an organisation all have an impact on whether it can attract and retain skilled people.

The Tasmanian Government has introduced an Employer of Choice Award to celebrate and reward workplaces that adopt modern work practices and promote a work-life balance as part of a strategy to increase productivity and attract and retain skilled workers.

The aim of the Employer of Choice Awards are:

• to encourage businesses to adopt employment practices that are likely to attract and retain skilled labour;
• to assist businesses to attract and retain skilled labour by promoting and recognising ‘Employers of Choice’;
• to improve productivity and employees’ work-life balance;
• to promote Tasmania as a place of choice for skilled workers; and
• to attract more skilled workers from interstate and overseas.

This concept of adopting modern, clever work practices fits with the Tasmanian Government’s aim of promoting innovation in the state. Winning organisations will be entitled to display the Employer of Choice logo when advertising their business and seeking new employees - further promoting both Tasmania and the business as a place of choice for skilled workers.

◊◊ Further details can be obtained from the Department of Economic Development by phoning 1800 440 026 via the website www.development.tas.gov.au.
The complex network of groups and organisations that make economic, community and environmental activities happen each day, is a region’s ‘whole system’. There are many players in this system: business, community, industry, cultural, environmental and governments. Local Government is one player in the ‘whole system’ team.

The conventional way of organising for mutual regional interests is through a ROC - Regional Organisation of Councils. However, this only provides a Local Government perspective.

If a ROC does not take a ‘whole system’ view, then its purpose, structure and associated programs become skewed. Other organisations appear and disconnection develops. Territorial behaviour and turf wars become inevitable.

The year 2000 in Northern Tasmania saw three bodies focusing on tourism, economic development and governance. Now there is one that combines the whole system within a company structure, limited by guarantee and shares. A skills-based independent board of management is drawn from the broader community and councils’ role in the new organisation is defined by a Shareholders Agreement. The structure is flexible enough to respond to opportunities.

Corporate membership is growing and, each year, 120 private sector members contribute in excess of $100,000 to the organisation through membership fees. From 2003-04, the $700,000 budget was 80% funded by Local Government. From 2006-07, only 20% of $2.8million, will be funded by Local Government. This is a significant and dramatic shift that is building community ownership.

This whole-of-region focused organisation goes beyond the traditional ROC structure. Local Government’s Role in the ROC is being part of the team which is a more realistic reflection of how regions and their communities should work together.

**A Heart Healthy Ho! Ho! Ho!**

**DR DIANE FLETCHER-WAY**
State Nutrition Manager
HEART FOUNDATION - TASMANIA DIVISION

Traditionally, Christmas parties are a time to indulge. The food and drinks are all sooooo tempting! As a result, we often gain extra kilos over the Festive Season. Here are some skinny hints on how to avoid Christmas kilograms and a cardiac arrest.

-思虑周到，总要有一个策略和人的参与，你都在控制。
-设置为甜、咸和喜欢的食物在你去聚会之前。
-有健康的零食 - 水果，蔬菜零食，或低脂肪酸奶 - 在你出去之前。不要去一个空的胃，否则你会想太饱。
-让第一“食物”在聚会中喝一杯含酒精的饮料，或者将柠檬或酸橙。不要喝含糖分的饮料。看看你的选择，吃适度的食物。注意你的身体，在聚会前别吃太饱。

**Thinking Drinking II - From Problems to Solutions**
26 - 28 February 2007, Melbourne

Professionals interested in alcohol issues are invited to attend *Thinking Drinking II*, a major meeting organised by the Australian Drug Foundation and the Community Alcohol Action Network. *Thinking Drinking II* will focus on how to change attitudes, customs and policies in order to create sustainable change.

Key issues to be discussed include:

- Efforts to change drinking customs;
- New and emerging alcohol issues;
- Practical steps for community prevention; and
- Advocacy issues.

Local government issues will be a focus of the *Thinking Drinking II* program as it is a key stakeholder in the regulation of drinking and the prevention of community alcohol problems. Issues to be addressed include:

- Demonstrated local government experience;
- Case studies from capital cities, regional centres and rural and remote communities; and
- Best practice projects.

For further information, please visit www.adf.org.au; email thinking.drinking@adf.org.au or phone (03) 9278 8137.

...in brief...

**Beyond Roc and Role!**
True Regional Cooperation in Northern Tasmania
Understanding personalities, the key to effective staff relations

Treat your Staff as Individuals

We are often told that we are not all the same. It is true that we are different from each other, but we also do have important things in common. On top of our basic drive to survive, we all have our personal underlying motivations - things that are important to us, and which show up in the way we carry out our work. Doing the job right is what matters to one person, whereas for another, doing it with flair is what counts. For another, having others know of their success is important. Being able to recognise what matters to staff, helps you to give them the incentive and recognition they need to do their best - willingly.

Observe by Engaging

How often do you take time out to notice and really listen to your staff? Do you engage with them, observing what matters to them? The time spent doing this may be well rewarded in the long run.

Council employees’ concerns range from their own work environment to the environment at large. How well they understand and cooperate with each other, matters to more than themselves. People in their local community depend on them for the best outcomes, and lack of understanding between council workers, at any level, has effects that go way beyond the immediate. People they never see are directly and irrevocably affected by what they do, whether it is the standard of workmanship, or the quality of their decisions.

Self-esteem and satisfaction in our work affects how we do our job. Knowing that our peers and bosses understand and respect our concerns, can affect us at a subconscious level. Recognition and acknowledgment of our values can make a huge difference to our motivation and commitment. We are more able and willing to cooperate with those who show respect for the things that matter to us.

Managing Personality Differences Provides a Key to Success

A key tool to understanding human motivation, is an understanding of personality differences. According to our personality, we have a set of concerns which others will either value, or not, depending on whether they have the same, or a different personality type to our own. Sometimes our concerns will be similar. Sometimes they will be diametrically opposed. Recognising this, is the first step towards improving understanding, communication and outcomes.

As a workplace tool, good quality personality information can improve your self-understanding and motivation, as well as that of your staff. Accessing and using this information can help lift workplace morale and motivation and consequently, improve outcomes.

◊◊ For more information, contact Socratic Solutions on 6224 3771, email: pauline@socraticsolutions.com.au or visit www.SocraticSolutions.com.au.

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DR PAULINE ENRIGHT
Proprietor
SOCRATIC SOLUTIONS

Getting the best out of any workforce requires more than ensuring technical expertise. Employers are increasingly recognising the importance of the human component of work. Personal morale, as well as relationships between employers and employees, crucially affects the standard of work, overall outcomes and productivity of an organisation.

This is especially so in the diverse and eclectic workforce of Local Government. One way for council leaders to improve both their leadership skills and the efficiency of their staff, is to better understand the different work styles and motivations people have. The key to this, is recognising differences in what each person finds most important in life. This shows up in the way they approach and carry out their work.