Minister’s Message

I am pleased to be back working with local government. Through my long association with local government I know it is critical to the success of local communities and regional productivity.

As the tier of government closest to the people, local governments deliver important services and infrastructure for their communities. When a council finds an innovative way to serve its community, it is worth sharing so all Australians can benefit.

The Australian Government is proud to present the projects recognised by this year’s National Awards for Local Government. Since 1986, the Awards have been rewarding the best of the best with the national recognition they deserve. These Awards give local governments the chance to share information and find new solutions to old problems.

This year, local councils were given the opportunity to enter ten categories including Active Arts, Innovative Infrastructure Development, Asset and Financial Management, and Excellence in Tourism. The projects we’re celebrating through the Awards program are getting better and better every year. In 2013, 192 high-quality entries were received, challenging the independent judges to select the projects that stood out because of their innovation, benefits and ease of adaptation by other councils.

This year’s category winners showcase the diversity of our local governments with winners coming from places like East Arnhem Land, Rockhampton, Liverpool Plains, the Grampians and our major capital cities.

I would like to thank our judging panels who had the difficult task of choosing this year’s winners out of a very competitive pool of entries.

Finally, my congratulations to the Category and National Winners and to all the councils that participated in the 2013 Awards. I commend you all for your strong commitment to making your communities even better places to live.

The Hon Anthony Albanese MP
Minister for Regional Development and Local Government
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National Winners

The National Awards for Local Government highlight the excellent and innovative work being undertaken by local government across Australia to improve business practices within councils and service delivery to communities.

The Awards recognise ingenuity, resourcefulness and self reliance. They also identify and promote councils that are finding new ways of delivering services and developing local solutions to complex and challenging problems.
National Awards for Excellence

National Award for Excellence
Dungog Shire Council, Maitland City Council and Port Stephens Council, NSW

**Safer Motorcycle Routes**

By working together, Port Stephens, Maitland and Dungog Councils developed a ‘safe system’ approach to make motorcyclists’ recreational rides through the Hunter Region safer. The three councils worked with a range of motorcyclist and roads organisations to rethink their road signs and road development.

The **Safer Motorcycle Routes** project was developed following the release of statistics showing high numbers of motorcycle casualties on a route that winds its way through three council areas. With an emphasis on public safety and enjoyment of the region, a system was developed to minimize hazards.

An audit, including a helmet-cam ride along the route, helped the councils’ staff to set up an integrated warning and advisory signage plan across the three council areas. The Plan involved applying ‘safe system’ principles to major road designs, providing enforcement bays for NSW Police and broadening awareness by all agencies of motorcycle riders’ needs.

The success of the project is due to sharing resources and information and working with motorcycle riders, the NSW Police and the Motor Cycle Council of NSW. This enabled all perspectives on road use for motorcyclists to be considered and put into action. The community also benefitted with safer roads and better protected pedestrians.

To learn more about the project see page 9.

National Award for Excellence (small council, under 15,000 rateable properties)
Northern Grampians Shire Council, VIC

**Monash Steps / Stawell Steps**

Northern Grampians Shire Council found an innovative way to reduce the risk of future floods and improve community amenity as a feature of a much-loved community space.

After major flood damage in 2011, the Council designed a structure to reduce future flood damage that would also leave the community with an infrastructure legacy. The **Monash Steps / Stawell Steps** project built two flood spillways that present as a large-scale architectural feature to create different textures, layers and levels.

The project shows what can be achieved when a community works together and is thinking innovatively. Architecture students designed and built the structure with the hands-on expertise of local retired tradesmen and Council staff.

The steps, though a huge piece of water management infrastructure, meld into the banks of Cato Lake providing peace of mind as well as platforms at different levels for sitting, reading, relaxing, bird watching, picnicking and fishing.

To learn more about the project, see page 13.
ACTIVE ARTS
CATEGORY WINNERS

This award category is sponsored by the Department of Regional Australia, Local Government, Arts and Sport through the Office for the Arts.

About the Category

The category recognises excellence in community engagement activities and active participation in the arts. It also encourages showcasing new art forms and supports arts and cultural activities within the community.

The important role of local government in Active Arts projects and events in local government

Local governments support active participation in artistic activities in the community by designating private and public art space. Councils also have a role to play in endorsing new art forms such as digital art, music and video and events that enable Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to celebrate and share arts and cultural activities with the community. On a local government level, the art experience can draw the community together through projects that address social issues such as connectedness and creating social cohesion by empowering the community to celebrate a shared vision. Local government arts practice has the potential to support and unite a community in the wake of natural disasters or to mark an annual occasion that brings people together.
Whittlesea City Council, VIC

Into the Light 2012—The Unfolding Story

In the wake of disaster, communities are often fractured and individuals isolated. In February 2009, the areas surrounding Whittlesea, Victoria were burnt and the township became a service centre for people from the surrounding fire-affected areas. The Whittlesea Community Activity Centre became the emergency relief centre.

As light fell on 1 September 2012—the first day of spring being symbolic in the sense of renewal—a magical lantern parade of participants of all ages wound its way towards onlookers, spiralling around a football oval as young local Koori people sang in language. The lantern was dressed with hand-made silk paper leaves, symbolising the new growth that sprouts from burnt trunks after a bushfire.

In addition, individual lanterns en masse create one image—a metaphor for community cohesion, and a shared experience for all. Giant projections of hand-drawn images by teenagers splashed across a five metre high tin shed transforming the landscape. A shadow play, performed by a children’s art group, portrayed the things they remembered, they missed or now appreciated. A poet, reflecting on the events of recent years, invited audiences to take a stone, “charge it with your memories, cast it in a pool of water in the centre of the spiral and let the water wash away pain”.

More than 1500 people were engaged in working towards the event; school children, working with artists in primary schools throughout the Kinglake Ranges, made 600 lanterns; community members made personalised lanterns during community workshops; and the seven metre high tree lantern, begun in Flowerdale, was completed in workshops.

Into the Light 2012—The Unfolding Story was a community driven, creative process where a steering group of local artists met regularly over many months to develop this deeply considered ritual that reflected the unfolding story of a community still moving through the aftermath of bushfires.

Built on an inaugural event in 2011 as part of community healing, the 2012 event created partnerships between neighbouring councils, communities, arts community organisations, local businesses, local artists and individuals throughout the fire-affected areas.

After the event, feedback from artists, school children and other event participants centred on the enjoyment of being part of a group and feeling supported by the community. The comments showed event organisers that Into the Light—The Unfolding Story 2012 was important enough to take place annually.

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**East Arnhem Shire Council, NT**

**iStories**

East Arnhem Shire Council (EASC), in the far north-eastern corner of the Northern Territory, covers an area of 33,359 square kilometres and has a population of 9,120. The EASC region encompasses nine major remote communities, many homelands and outstations, and commercial enterprises such as tourism, mining leases, and pastoral properties. It also includes Groote Eylandt, the largest island in the Gulf of Carpentaria where the Warnindhilyagwa people speak the Anindilyakwa language.

Libraries and mobile services bring the arts and culture of the Anindilyakwa language to both global and local audiences. They are central hubs, and by working together with organisations and partners, these important community services preserve local culture, art, historic records and stories. This collaboration created bilingual stories through singing, pictures, talking and digital media with accompanying artwork, music and audiovisuals.

EASC partnered with NT Libraries to raise awareness of Aboriginal arts and culture by bringing local stories to a global audience in the form of iStories. iStories is a digital arts project that enables Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to create, produce and use context-specific bilingual literacy materials to digitise stories of times past. The project has brought cultural and social benefits to Groote Eylandt, with a range of age groups now accessing the library—from mothers with babies using iPad learning applications to students and older residents viewing photographs and recording their stories for the digital archive.

iStories is a highly successful model that combines cultural and community engagement with technology. Collecting cultural history in digital format brings languages to life and provides a medium to share iStories with the world.

iStories embodies creative expression, learning, accessing information, communicating with family and friends, as well as digitised recording, preserving and sharing contemporary and historical stories. While the project has recorded stories and language on Groote Eylandt, the way is clear for other Australian Indigenous languages, and indeed indigenous languages from other parts of the world to be preserved.

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ASSET AND FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT CATEGORY WINNERS

This award category is sponsored by the Department of Regional Australia, Local Government, Arts and Sport.

About the Category
The category recognises asset and financial management projects and initiatives that build sustainability and the capacity of local governments to meet future community needs.

The important role of local government in asset and financial management
Local governments have a responsibility to maintain, upgrade and replace community infrastructure. Finding ways to use resources to improve the efficiency, effectiveness and quality of community infrastructure are key priorities. Implementing more systematic asset management processes and adopting best practice financial management are all local government responsibilities.
Wyndham City Council, VIC

FieldInspect—Mobile Inspection Application

Wyndham City Council (WCC) services the outer south-western suburbs of Melbourne, Victoria and was named the fastest-growing municipality in Australia in 2012. The benefits of a quieter lifestyle and affordable housing have attracted constant population growth since the 1960s, with eight per cent population growth in the 12 months to June 2011.

With rapid population growth, WCC experienced the corresponding growth in infrastructure and the associated asset management and maintenance responsibilities. Maintenance, renewal and asset management rely on appropriate and timely inspection data to strategically manage the region’s ever growing asset list.

WCC sought a ‘lean thinking’ method to improve productivity, efficiency and quality, and FieldInspect was the outcome. FieldInspect is an application that helps WCC staff perform mandatory inspections of council’s field assets, including road pavements, footpaths, street signs and street furniture. The application, developed by WCC staff, is fully compatible with iPhone and iPad devices and is currently used by administrative and operational staff across WCC.

The application utilises Apple Maps, with an overlay of corporate data and GPS technology and allows staff to easily navigate maps of the municipality using standard screen gestures such as swipe to scroll/pan and pinching to zoom. Asset inspections performed by staff in the field are uploaded to a central server for processing by administrative staff. Integrated systems generate work orders and facilitate strategic maintenance planning. While in the field, staff have full access to email and key corporate systems enabling significant improvement in the time taken for inspections, viewing previous inspections and providing exact mapping and property data.

FieldInspect’s ease of use has proven to be hugely successful with a multitude of benefits including a positive influence on productivity and work satisfaction. FieldInspect allows WCC staff to provide immediate, high quality, precise inspection data leading to better use of financial resources and the ability to provide a safer environment for residents.

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Liverpool Plains Shire Council, NSW

Quipolly Dam Upgrade

Liverpool Plains Shire Council in the north-west slopes region of New South Wales has increased Quipolly Dam’s water storage and improved its safety with a $6.4 million upgrade. Quipolly Dam, originally constructed in 1955, serves as drinking water storage for the town of Werris Creek. It is a 21 metre high, zoned earth embankment dam that was assessed as inadequate in passing flooding events. The dam was in the high C risk category and therefore required upgrade.

Completed in February 2013, Quipolly Dam upgrade is the culmination of five years of planning and nine months construction; its design and construction is the Council’s largest capital project to date. The upgrade facilitates the long-term strategy of providing a regional water supply scheme that improves up to four individual town water supplies and can adapt to climate change. It also provides for future growth as a result of new mining ventures in the area. The safety upgrade construction component has resulted in reducing the dam’s risk category ensuring it is now capable of passing a one in 100,000 year flood event.

The project employed an integrated design brief that included increased storage options. This gave a value-added approach to the mandatory safety works and made best use of the required upgrade works. Increased storage was achieved by utilising an innovative, low maintenance, tipping bucket system installed in the existing spillway. The eight precast concrete units provide an additional two metres in the storage water height yielding a 55 per cent increase in the dam’s capacity.

The dam upgrade has added a new dimension to the region’s liveability. It has created the first aquatic recreational facility for Shire residents, encouraging fishing, picnicking and non-motorised boating activities. While community safety to ensure better management of possible floods was one of the drivers behind the project, a further benefit is that the towns of Werris Creek, Quirindi, Willow Tree and Wallanbadah are closer to being drought-proof thanks to the increased water storage.

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EXCELLENCE IN ROAD SAFETY
CATEGORY WINNERS

This award category is sponsored by the Department of Infrastructure and Transport.

About the Category
The category recognises councils that have implemented effective initiatives to improve road safety in their communities.

The important role of local government in road safety
Excellence in Road Safety encourages councils to implement innovative road safety measures or roadside infrastructure that raises the profile of road safety in the community. It recognises local governments that target specific risk factors such as drink/drug driving, speeding, non-usage of helmets, fatigue, distraction, and pedestrian intoxication. The award also recognises councils that address the specific safety needs of vulnerable road user groups and that provide safety activities aimed at reducing serious injury or death within communities—including improving emergency medical response services for crash victims.
Dungog Shire Council, Maitland City Council and Port Stephens Council, NSW

Safer Motorcycle Routes

The Safer Motorcycle Routes project is a joint initiative of Port Stephens, Maitland and Dungog Councils from the NSW Hunter Region. The project aimed to lessen the motorcycle crashes on recreational routes through the region, which according to the NSW Roads and Maritime Services had experienced more than 1,900 motorcycle casualties that resulted in serious injury or death between 2005 and 2010.

The three councils recognised that prevention is better than cure. The councils agreed to work together to develop a ‘safe system’ approach to reduce the incidence and severity of motorcycle crashes on local roads. Such a system is designed to minimize hazards caused by human error. It is a risk management strategy to identify and analyse hazards as well as a process to apply all reasonably practicable steps to eliminate risks or control any residual risks.

The Safer Motorcycles Routes project was strategically aligned with objectives from the National Road Safety Strategy 2011-2020. It involved traffic and design engineers and road safety officers from the three partner councils in collaboration with road safety and traffic officers from NSW Roads and Maritime Services, NSW Police and the Motor Cycle Council of NSW. Active motorcycle road users were key participants in designing the approach and solutions.

The multi-pronged approach involved an audit of the most problematic recreational routes with motorcyclists filming video footage using ‘helmet cam’. This enabled the project team to look at the road from the motorcyclists’ perspective and helped council staff to set up an integrated warning and advisory signage plan across the three council areas resulting in:

- ‘safe system’ principles being applied to major road designs including increased clear zones, realignment and increased delineation
- broader awareness of motorcycle riders’ needs and issues, and
- bays for NSW Police to target speed enforcement.

This project is the beginning of a long-term vision shared by the partner councils to reduce road trauma through safer roads and safer pedestrians. The councils, and those who travel in the Hunter region, will benefit by reduced social and economic costs through the reduced incidence and severity of motorcycle crashes.
EXCELLENCE IN TOURISM
CATEGORY WINNERS

This award category is sponsored by the Department of Resources, Energy and Tourism.

About the Category
The category recognises projects and initiatives that build the sustainability and capacity of local governments to assist appropriate tourism development within their region.

The important role of local government in the promotion of tourism
Tourism is an industry that can provide significant benefits to local communities, particularly in regional and remote Australia. Based on its importance within a region, local government involvement in tourism can vary significantly between localities. Local governments are responsible for maintaining, upgrading and replacing community infrastructure. Finding ways to use resources to improve the efficiency, effectiveness and quality of this community infrastructure are key priorities and contribute to visitor amenity. Local governments can also encourage practices which assist local tourism businesses to achieve sustainability and use key events to showcase their local region.
Singleton Council, NSW

*Singleton Visitor Information and Enterprise Centre*

Tourism is a significant industry in the Singleton area. It is home to award-winning vineyards and it is a regular stop for travellers on the New England Highway.

The Singleton Visitor Information and Enterprise Centre in the NSW Hunter region is an information hub for visitors and local businesses to support tourism and economic growth. It takes an innovative approach to service delivery by providing a one-stop-shop for tourism operators, local businesses, visitors and the local community.

The centre enables Singleton Council to cater to the needs of local tourism providers, promote local events and activities and ensure that Singleton has a diverse economic base. For visitors it offers a great experience with ample parking, clean amenities, barbeque and playground facilities, refreshments, giftware, local produce, free internet access, conference facilities and information services. It demonstrates best practice in providing such a broad array of services for both tourism operators and tourists. The one-stop-shop approach addresses both the demand and supply sides of tourism.

The impetus for the project was a survey jointly funded by Singleton Council and Singleton Chamber of Commerce and Industry to ask local businesses how they could support economic growth in the region. The survey included face-to-face interviews with the local business community, targeted interviews with specific businesses and an online survey. Survey results highlighted the need to support local tourism-related business.

The project’s success is the result of Singleton Council’s work with local businesses and tourism operators to improve and promote business and tourism in Singleton using a model that combines efficient and consistent methods. This model includes two programs—Tourism Membership and Your Business and Our Future Business Partnership—that allow tourism operators and local businesses to work in partnership with the Council to promote their business, attend training and networking functions and develop strong working relationships.

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• NALG 2013
• CATEGORY
• WINNER
INNOVATIVE INFRASTRUCTURE DEVELOPMENT
CATEGORY WINNERS

This award category is sponsored by the Department of Infrastructure and Transport.

About the Category
The category recognises innovative infrastructure projects that meet the future needs of the community by supporting and creating jobs and contributing to the quality of life.

The important role of infrastructure development in local government
Local governments plan, develop and maintain key infrastructure such as local roads, bridges, footpaths, water and sewerage (in some states), drainage, waste disposal and public buildings for their communities. Local government also has planning responsibilities that affect the provision of government or business infrastructure. These responsibilities include land rezoning, approving subdivisions, town and environmental planning, development assessment and building regulation. Local government also provides a range of social infrastructure such as recreational and cultural facilities, and in smaller communities through its leadership, making a major contribution to human capital infrastructure.
In the wake of January 2011 flooding, Northern Grampians Shire Council in Victoria’s Wimmera region was kept busy. The low-lying Cato Lake overflowed causing damage to Council infrastructure and neighbouring properties and businesses worth around $20.5 million. To alleviate future flooding, the Council designed a structure that would both mitigate the risk and provide the community with an infrastructure legacy.

The Monash Steps / Stawell Steps project was the solution. This project is no ordinary spillway—it is an innovative approach to a problem that has created something unique: a large-scale architectural feature on the banks of Cato Lake that doubles as a practical solution to a water management problem. Two flood spillways ensure businesses and houses around Cato Park are protected from future storm or flood events.

The steps are a huge piece of infrastructure that meld into the banks of Cato Lake using bricks to create different textures, layers and levels. The two spillways are lined with brick down to the lake’s edge and between the spillways. There are also platforms at different levels for sitting, reading, relaxing, bird watching, picnicking and fishing. The walking path around the lake continues via two timber boardwalks that span the spillways. Parklands provide a large open space for all to enjoy.

The steps were created through a partnership between 11 organisations including Northern Grampians Shire Council, students from Monash University Design and Architecture school, a local brick manufacturer and the Victorian State Government and the Australian Government. The architecture students designed and built the structure in six weeks under the guidance of their professor, an architect, as well as the hands-on expertise of local retired tradesmen and Council staff. The students not only had the opportunity to see their design become reality, but also experienced living and working in a region.

The Monash Steps / Stawell Steps project was completed in November 2012 and officially opened on 22 March 2013. It has become a much-loved community space enjoyed by everyone.
PROMOTING RECONCILIATION
CATEGORY WINNERS

This award category is sponsored by the Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs (FaHCSIA).

About the Category
The category acknowledges initiatives that strengthen reconciliation by better engaging Indigenous Australians in the life of local government communities.

The important role of local government in advancing reconciliation
Local governments have the potential to inspire individuals and groups to re-examine their relationships with each other. FaHCSIA recognises the important role that local government can play in strengthening relationships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians in their communities. The aim is to remove the social and economic disparity between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians and ensure that Indigenous Australians enjoy the same life opportunities as other Australians. The outcome is lasting reconciliation in a society that values equality, diversity and everyone’s contributions.
Yarra City Council, VIC

*Follow in my Footsteps—Celebrating Aboriginal Culture in Gertrude St*

The City of Yarra is a metropolitan municipality in the inner north-eastern suburbs of Melbourne, Victoria. It is home to a diverse population of approximately 80,000 including more than 300 Indigenous Australians. It covers more than 10 suburbs, with Fitzroy and Collingwood being of particular significance to the Indigenous community.

It includes Gertrude Street, the most historically significant urban strip in Aboriginal Victoria, and the birthplace of some of the nation’s most influential Aboriginal organisations such as the Victorian Aboriginal Health Service. Much of the street’s heritage has been affected by the increased demand for inner city living, which has compromised the Aboriginal community’s access to the area.

The Council’s Aboriginal Partnerships Plan (APP) 2011–2014 is the central piece of policy that guides its work with the local Indigenous community. The APP prompted the *Celebrating Aboriginal Culture in Gertrude Street* project to recognise, honour and celebrate the social and political struggles that have taken place on Gertrude Street. To preserve local history, *Celebrating Aboriginal Culture in Gertrude Street* combined traditional storytelling with walking tours and digital media. Street plaques were used to mark places of significance to the Indigenous community.

In June 2012, more than 100 people from the local community participated in the guided walking tours to learn about the street’s Aboriginal history and discuss its future. The walks were developed and delivered by four well-known Aboriginal actors including Uncle Jack Charles, Melodie Reynolds, Greg Fryer and Jason Tamiru, and the content was enhanced by many informal conversations with the local Indigenous community. Council’s first Facebook page was also created, to provide cultural context for online discussions and to publish walking group discussions as webcasts. The project brought together a variety of stakeholders including Council officers, Aboriginal community members, business owners and residents. Many participants in the project admitted they were astonished by the depth and richness of the area’s history. By using digital technology to record stories, these narratives will continue to be shared, keeping the Indigenous history of the area alive.

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Cherbourg Aboriginal Shire Council, QLD

Cherbourg Planning Scheme

Cherbourg is a small town approximately 250 kilometres north-west of Brisbane in Queensland with a resident population of over 1,200, comprising more than 40 different Aboriginal clan groups including traditional owners. Cherbourg was originally founded as an Aboriginal settlement in the early 1900s and so has a diverse cultural heritage.

A shared future is a great way to draw a community together. A local government planning scheme was developed by the Queensland Government to assist Indigenous councils to guide the growth of their communities. Cherbourg Aboriginal Shire Council is one of the first Queensland Indigenous councils to develop its own land-use and infrastructure plans.

Cherbourg Aboriginal Shire Council, in conjunction with the Remote Indigenous Land and Infrastructure Program Office, commissioned management organisations AECOM and Buckley Vann to prepare the first planning schemes for the Indigenous Cherbourg community. As part of Cherbourg’s vision to become self-sufficient, the Cherbourg Planning Scheme documented the community’s history as well as their vision for future.

The focus on broad community collaboration and the future wellbeing of the whole Cherbourg township helped the community to concentrate on what the planning scheme could achieve. One of the key activities was for Elders and the community to work together to develop a map of significant places that documented the past, for use by future generations. As a result, the map has been used to engage the community in the planning scheme.

The Planning Scheme will assist the Council, the Queensland Government and the Australian Government to make better planning decisions, and gives the community greater autonomy and a say in their future.
REGIONAL COLLABORATIONS
CATEGORY WINNERS

This award category is sponsored by the Department of Regional Australia, Local Government, Arts and Sport.

About the Category
The category recognises non-capital city councils that collaborate on a regional basis with other councils, Regional Development Australia (RDA) committees, the community or other bodies to strengthen investment and development opportunities, share resources, build regional competitive advantage and create jobs.

The important role of collaborative actions in local regions
As public sector agencies, councils have a responsibility to continually improve their performance to achieve optimal value for their residents. Improved performance can be achieved through greater efficiency by adopting innovative management practices, exploiting the potential of technology or developing more customer-focused service delivery arrangements, as well as collaborating with other councils in the region.
Townsville City Council, QLD

Citysolar Program—Townsville City Council’s Whole-of-Community Collaborative Framework for Action

Townsville City Council (TCC), located in North Queensland, encompasses the city of Townsville and surrounding rural areas including Magnetic Island. The area receives around 320 days of sunshine each year making it the perfect place to transform the way people think about and use energy.

The TCC’s Citysolar Program is driving a vision for a tropical sustainable city. Citysolar provides a collaborative framework for community participation in a sustainable future by making it affordable, practical, feasible and socially acceptable.

The framework is based on collective learning, community-based education and involvement, thematic communication, experiential learning, systems-thinking and community networks. To reach for a future grounded in better planning, together with a sustainable, energy efficient city, TCC used the collaboration frameworks with schools, universities, local businesses, and industry and government agencies to change behaviour. The framework has also been applied to projects across the energy, transport, health, communication and finance sectors.

Citysolar works at a whole-of-community level where its success has largely been due to the collaboration across industries, businesses, schools and residents. The framework has the ability to shift from local-scale sustainability to a transformative system that is replicable and transferrable to other cities in Australia and the world.

The benefits of the program include community involvement in sustainability initiatives and programs, and building the community’s capacity to manage its future. Through this program the Townsville community has adapted its behaviour to become more energy conscious and implemented solar initiatives to reduce the impact of climate change.

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Warren Shire Council, NSW

**Lower Macquarie Water Utilities Alliance**

The Lower Macquarie Water Utilities Alliance (LMWUA) is an outstanding example of regional collaboration in western New South Wales. This collaboration involves eight local-government-owned water utilities from the Shires of Bogan, Bourke, Brewarrina, Cobar, Narromine, Warren and Wellington as well as Dubbo City.

The councils adopted a leading position in providing cost-effective services for their communities. They established best practice strategies and initiatives, ensuring ongoing sustainability of their water and waste water activities in a collaborative, cooperative way.

In addition, the alliance formed strong partnerships with state government agencies such as the NSW Office of Water, NSW Health, NSW Environment and Protection Agency, and Orana and Centroc Regional Organisation of Councils.

The objectives of the LMWUA are to share resources such as staff, water and information on activities such as best practice strategies and funding. This whole of catchment model embraces the key issues of water resource management, public health and environmental responsibility, with a principal aim of ensuring that communities receive the highest levels of service possible.

The Alliance has provided benefits to the eight shire communities by improving health outcomes and delivering cost effective and sustainable services; to the staff of the Alliance regions, by providing skilling and networking opportunities; and to the environment by maximising the efficient use of water resources and implementing best-practice technologies.

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STRENGTH IN DIVERSITY
CATEGORY WINNERS

This award category is sponsored by the Department of Immigration and Citizenship.

About the Category
The category recognises local initiatives that promote the benefits and respond to the challenges arising from migrant settlement and Australia’s cultural, religious and linguistic diversity.

The important role of local government in advancing strength and diversity
The challenge for local government is to find innovative approaches to attracting and supporting the successful settlement of newly arrived migrants. Local government can provide a supportive community for migrants by promoting local cultural diversity—through multicultural policies, inter-faith initiatives, celebrations, and citizenship and affirmation ceremonies. Local governments need to consider the prospect of employment opportunities and programs to engage and support young migrant refugees and to be mindful of improvements required for migrants, such as interpreting, aged care and childcare facilities.
Hume City Council, VIC

Supporting Parents—Developing Children

Hume City Council (HCC) takes pride in its heritage and history and the region’s rich cultural diversity. Located on the urban-rural fringe 20 kilometres north-west of Melbourne, HCC includes the outer north-western suburbs of Melbourne and a number of rural localities between 13 and 40 kilometres from the city centre.

In the southern half of the HCC region, more than half the residents were born overseas in countries such as Turkey, Iraq, Lebanon, India, Italy and Vietnam. Research found that immigrant families were not aware of the benefits of early childhood services and were unsure how to access these services.

The Supporting Parents—Developing Children project, which commenced in July 2011, connects parents and children from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds to early childhood development learning opportunities. This social inclusion project is a three-year collaboration between the Scanlon Foundation and seven different Australian and State Government departments. The multi-faceted program supports early childhood development, literacy, community engagement, social cohesion and pathways to employment and training for parents.

Parents and their children have access to language, literacy and numeracy programs and have been involved in English language classes, language specific and multilingual playgroups, and bilingual story time sessions. Through participating in the program, parents have also gained valuable skills that will assist with employment opportunities.

The programs are held at school and community hubs, allowing parents and children to become familiar with a safe community environment. Parents and their children learn together in a community setting where they feel safe, enhancing their capacity to learn new skills and develop confidence and community connections. Support is provided by occupational therapists, speech therapists and bilingual facilitators.

Seven language specific playgroups have been established under the project including Turkish, Arabic, Assyrian Chaldean and Bhutanese, helping newly arrived migrants to settle in the new location. As a result, parents have reported higher levels of connectedness and feelings of belonging to their new country.

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WOMEN IN THE COMMUNITY
CATEGORY WINNERS

This award category is sponsored by the Department of Regional Australia, Local Government, Arts and Sport.

About the Category
The category recognises local governments that demonstrate a commitment to providing opportunities for women.

The important role of local government in increasing opportunities for women’s participation in the community
Local government, and women in local communities are working together to provide adaptive and responsive services to meet ever changing community needs. By women taking the lead and sharing vital information and raising awareness, they are helping to build stronger communities that are learning how to deal productively with their own issues. Rural women in particular are the energy force underpinning much of what happens in their communities. Through fostering, mentoring and networking opportunities, stakeholders can work together to provide a responsive information flow to and from the community.
Bankstown City Council NSW
The Bankstown Children and Families Hub

Bankstown City Council (BCC) in the Canterbury-Bankstown region of Sydney, NSW is a residential, commercial and industrial local government area in south western Sydney. It is home to residents from 160 countries.

The Bankstown Children and Families Hub is an innovative collaboration of service providers working together as a one-stop-shop to provide information and services for families. At this central location residents receive information on tailor-made programs, including referrals, reflecting their unique circumstances and requirements.

The need for a centrally located hub was initially identified through the Council’s Social Planning Workshops. Residents reported that they either did not know about family and child support services or were overwhelmed by the number of services available.

In 2012, a new BCC facility—the Bankstown Women and Children’s Health Centre—opened co-locating Bankstown Women’s Health Clinic, Bankstown Occasional Care, Bankstown Immunisation Clinic and two community meeting rooms. The move to centralise child and family services established the Centre as an information and services hub. Interested organisations formed the Hub Reference Group, which facilitated ongoing consultation and implementation.

The Bankstown Children and Families Hub has become a focal point for access to child and family services, as well as a safe place for social contact. It is a universal service that is not based on residency status. Many attendees are mothers from culturally diverse backgrounds, who appreciate being able to meet other women in similar circumstances.

While the Hub is open to all, the majority of attendees are mothers with children less than five years of age. This target group has responded well, with increasing numbers attending Friday family activities such as ‘Mum & Bub Yoga’, ‘Women-only Basic Car Maintenance’ and an ‘Understanding Islam and Muslim Women’ seminar.

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Northern Grampians Shire Council, VIC

From Adversity Rise Champions—The women of Joel Joel take charge

The Northern Grampians Shire Council (NGSC) is in the Wimmera region of Victoria. The Council recognised that the farming community of Joel Joel, about 20 kilometres north-east of Stawell, needed extra support after being hit by three devastating floods in a 15 month period in 2010 and 2011. The floods damaged farming properties and homes causing millions of dollars worth of destruction to livestock and fencing.

Council’s Flood Recovery Team (FRT), funded by the Australian Government’s disaster relief funding, was established to look after the community’s physical, social and economic needs. The FRT was tasked with managing $30 million worth of infrastructure damage, giving social support, and empowering the residents to help themselves.

After witnessing the devastation and stress on their families, the local women took charge of the recovery and the future of their community. The FRT saw the strength and resolve of the Joel Joel women and provided them with the support to grow, advocate, and succeed in leading their community’s flood recovery.

Initially the FRT provided a facilitator to work with the women to provide them with a framework encapsulating a path of advocacy and empowerment.

The community, led by the women, organised a concert by country musician Adam Brand, coordinated local prisoner work teams to replace fencing and to clean public spaces, and hosted 80 Army cadets to work on farms. The women also met with state and Australian Government ministers to highlight their situation.

The recovery work became more than a business partnership. The FRT became immersed in the life of the community and empowerment became not just a buzz word but a daily way of doing business. The women of this community are now better informed about the responsibilities of the three levels of government and have the confidence to apply for grants and organise large-scale events. The women of Joel Joel have shown how much can be achieved with ingenuity, hard work and lots of passion.
YOUTH ENGAGEMENT AND PARTICIPATION
CATEGORY WINNERS

This award category is sponsored by the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations.

About the Category
The Youth Engagement category recognises councils that empower young people to take part and be active in their communities.

The important role of local government in youth engagement and participation
Being involved and connected to a community is important for the wellbeing of individuals and of broader society. Young people who are engaged in their communities will find opportunities to contribute, develop a sense of achievement and networks and skills to support them in other areas of life.

The Australian Government recognises the important role local governments play in connecting young people to their communities and helping them achieve their potential. The Youth Engagement Award celebrates successful local government initiatives that support the Government’s vision for young people and contribute to its stated priority of empowering young Australians to take part and be active in their communities.
City of Playford, SA

**Juggernaut (young riders as leaders)**

The City of Playford is located in the northern suburbs of Adelaide, South Australia and 2011 demographics show that 28 per cent of Playford’s population is aged under 17 years.

Juggernaut, a program for ‘young riders as leaders’, is a community initiative set up in response to consultation with young local residents who wanted to be actively involved in local skate competitions as well as Council plans to build and organise recreational facilities. Juggernaut promotes direct communication between Council planners and young people who use recreational spaces. This enables local youth to become involved in the design of recreational facilities which encourage healthy, active lifestyles.

Working with the concept of young people teaching other young people to create greater outcomes, Juggernaut has been operating for six years and partners with the Council, Anglicare and Obesity Prevention and Lifestyle. Developed by two young community members, membership has grown to over 40 people. Older group members who have left the program have come back to Juggernaut to teach leadership, event management and mentor younger members.

Juggernaut participants work in their community and travel to other South Australian Councils to teach young people skills in BMX, scooter and skateboarding and give presentations to schools promoting healthy eating. The Juggernaut participants also give presentations to Mayors, councillors, council staff and youth workers about how to engage local young people to help design recreational facilities. The young people in Juggernaut inspire hundreds of young people each year to be active, healthy and creatively engaged within their communities.

The Juggernaut project has shown that getting young people involved not only has the capacity to make large scale community change but also supports development of youth in public speaking and leadership, providing constructive pathways to future employment.

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Wattle Range Council, SA

**iPOP Limestone Coast Peer Education Project**

Wattle Range Council (WRC) located in the Limestone Coast region of South Australia comprises 13 diverse townships and surrounding rural farming areas. Clinical health workers identified the need for young people in the region to have broad access to information on health issues, including substance abuse and mental and physical health.

The iPOP project is a community partnership between the following organisations: Wattle Range Council; Community Health Services; Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services; Shine SA; Blue Light Outdoor Adventures; Focus in Youth; and the Innovative Community Action network.

High school students and youth volunteers were recruited to participate in the Information Peer on Peer program known as iPOP, to help address prevention and promote early intervention.

Peer education is about young people helping other young people to get the information they need to make informed choices and maintain a healthy lifestyle. Youth volunteers attended a three-day peer educator workshop about drugs and alcohol, sexual health, and mental health issues affecting young people and the matching services by local and state-based health providers.

The volunteer educators were encouraged to share their knowledge with their peers on an ad hoc and formal basis, and participate in regular support and training meetings. Participant-driven activities included a health tent at the Penola Show where peer educators held practical demonstrations promoting safe behaviours and handed out show bags which included health information.

Engaging youth in peer on peer education has been a successful way of spreading important health messages to young people. iPOP’s success is centred around the peer educators and their fellow students who initiate community change by addressing health issues upfront and ensure young people and adults have access to information.

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How the awards are judged

Judging the National Awards for Local Government in 2013 was a two-step process. Firstly, independent panels judged the ten category awards, followed by national judging, where the panel heard short presentations from category finalists.

At each stage the following general criteria and questions were addressed:

**Innovation**
What aspects of the project demonstrate something new such as a new way of delivering a service or new uses for existing technology?

**Process and planning**
What aspect is unique about the process used to develop the project? For projects that directly affect the community and other stakeholders, how were those parties involved?

**Benefits**
What are the benefits of the project? Who benefits and how?

**Transferability**
What aspects or components of the project could be adapted or adopted for use by other councils?

Would you like to know more about the National Awards?

Visit the National Awards for Local Government website at www.regional.gov.au/local/awards

Contact the Awards team at:

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