



GETTING GOVERNMENTS TO LISTEN

WORKING WITH STATE AND FEDERAL GOVERNMENTS

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Background – The Problem

- ❖ Around Australia, local councils are making significant decisions which make a difference to the lives of their citizens.
- ❖ Local government policies and programs impact on Australian employment, housing, education, health and the well-being of residents.
- ❖ Yet too often some of the most significant initiatives taking place at a local level are not fully recognised by state or federal governments.
- ❖ It may be that legislative amendment is required to assist practical policy implementation.

The Current Situation

- ❖ In some cases, financial incentives or partnerships may guarantee the sustainability of pilot projects.
- ❖ There are countless ways in which local, state and federal governments can work together to better respond to local communities.
- ❖ But finding the time to locate the best individual or government department, or the particular policy or grant details is complex and daunting, especially for small and more remote councils.
- ❖ Currently, councils develop a range of policies and procedures, yet working with governments is often ad hoc or the result of a crisis.

A Strategic Solution

- ❖ That is why it is suggested that councils consider developing a **GOVERNMENT RELATIONS STRATEGY**.
- ❖ It is important to plan in advance how individual councils will work cooperatively with state and federal governments.
- ❖ Governments need to be kept informed of all the good news before there is a request to discuss a problem.

Government Relations Strategy

- ❖ Here are a few ideas to start developing a Government Relations Strategy:
 - Decide who will be responsible for the basic work and ongoing updating of the Strategy. Some councils may use a small committee of elected and professional personnel, others may ask a General Manager or senior officer to present a basic framework for discussion.
 - Establish a listing of key state and federal government Members and Senators within the Council area. Be sure to update responsibilities of Ministers and Shadow Ministers.
 - Locate existing federal and state departments and agencies within the Council area.

Government Relations Strategy cont...

- Develop a priority list of key issues which require state and federal cooperation.
- Plan an annual event to bring together key stakeholders at a forum to discuss the priorities of Council. Such an event should be the initiative from the local level, inviting partnership and participation. It may be a public event to keep rate payers informed, or it may be a smaller strategic discussion.
- The advantage of such a forum is that it allows Council to set the agenda, indicate priorities and possible solutions. It puts Council at the centre of policy development rather than having to react to policy already decided some distance from Council.

In Addition

- ❖ Of course councils should continue to work with individuals and invite Ministers and others to visit for special events, but the approach suggested above strengthens the role of Council.
- ❖ In addition to this very basic strategy, a Government Relations Strategy can be expanded to keep an up-to-date listing of all state and federal government grants so that more councils take advantage of existing government funding opportunities.

Some Helpful Websites

www.governmentgrantsaustralia.org

www.dss.gov.au/grants

www.australiacouncil.gov.au

www.australiangovernmentgrants.org

<http://australia.gov.au/topics/business-and-industry/grants-and-financial-assistance>

[www.aph.gov.au/About Parliament/Parliamentary Departments/Parliamentary Library
/pubs/rp/rp1314/QG/CommunityGrants](http://www.aph.gov.au/About_Parliament/Parliamentary_Departments/Parliamentary_Library/pubs/rp/rp1314/QG/CommunityGrants)

Conclusion

- ❖ Once councils have a framework and resource listings, it will be easier to keep up-to-date with the best ways of working with federal and state governments.
- ❖ Remember: You are closer to your communities than either state or federal government, so with some strategic planning you can be proactive in establishing strong partnerships, and have fruitful relationships.
- ❖ For further clarification: margaret.reynolds.tas@gmail.com

