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Community Governance in Rural Australia

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Introduction

- Background – Australian local govt
- Governance as a concept
- Types of Governance at local level
- Community governance and practice in Victoria
Australian Local Government

Populations ‘000

NSW  6,691.8
Vic  4,929.8
Qld  3,774.3
WA   1,951.3
SA   1,528.2
Tas  476.2
NT   197.1
Distribution of urban, regional and rural local governing bodies (no. and %) by State, 2002-03

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>NSW</th>
<th>Vic</th>
<th>Qld</th>
<th>WA</th>
<th>SA</th>
<th>Tas</th>
<th>NT¹</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>143</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Region &amp; Rural</td>
<td>131</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>143</td>
<td>113</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>579</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>%</td>
<td>75%</td>
<td>58%</td>
<td>91%</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>74%</td>
<td>93%</td>
<td>97%</td>
<td>80%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>175</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>157</td>
<td>142</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>722</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

¹ Includes Northern Territory Trust Account.
Source: Department of Transport and Regional Services.
## Scale of local government, by state 2002

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State</th>
<th>Number of councils</th>
<th>Pop per council</th>
<th>Number of councillors</th>
<th>Pop per councillor</th>
<th>% of councils with wards</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>NSW</td>
<td>175</td>
<td>37,887</td>
<td>1771</td>
<td>3680</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vic</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>60,962</td>
<td>593</td>
<td>8122</td>
<td>81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Qld</td>
<td>157</td>
<td>28,898</td>
<td>1037</td>
<td>3483</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WA</td>
<td>142</td>
<td>13,409</td>
<td>757</td>
<td>2515</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SA</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>22,079</td>
<td>694</td>
<td>2163</td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tas</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>16,216</td>
<td>280</td>
<td>1680</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Governance

- Origins in the Greek word for the ‘steering’ of boats - mainly been limited to the ‘affairs of state’

- *governance* = the types and processes of governing

- *government* refers to the institutions that are required to carry out the governing functions.
Governance as Structure

- The organizational and institutional arrangements of state and non-state actors
- The formal partnership arrangements between the public and private sectors
- Encompasses both the state and civil society where government involves only the state
- Has shifted from a hierarchical model to a more flexible approach and a greater sharing of power between the state and the market
Governance as Process

Where the ‘government’ acted in a commanding, controlling and directing manner ‘governance’ involves the processes of leading, facilitating, collaborating and bargaining
Local Governance

- Local government has shifted from a relatively basic system of administration to new styles of public management.
- Some services may no longer be in public hands but they are still part of local governance.
  - Eg under contract to private or voluntary groups.
Governance Forms at Local Level in Victoria

1. Corporate Governance
2. Participatory Governance
3. Community Governance
Local Governance 1
Corporate governance

- State government
- Local Council
  - Board of Directors
- Local services
- Clients
  - Share holders

- Voting
- Decision Making
- Accountability
‘Corporate’ Representation

- Representatives are ‘acting for’ the electorate as a whole
- ‘Acting for’ = the placement of ‘experts’ in the political process to ‘do the job for us’
- Involves a notion of ‘trusteeship’
Putting the systems together

Corporate governance

State government

Local Council
Board of Directors

Local services

Clients

Share holders

Unsubdivided

Corporate Represent

Voting Proportional Quota

Reduces Property Franchise Vote

Voting
Decision Making
Accountability
Local Governance 2
Participatory governance

State government

Local council

Local services

Clients
Citizens
Special Interests

Voting
Decision Making
Accountability
Influence
‘Interest’ Representation

- Elected representatives
  - Personal advocates
  - Sectional interests
- Accountable at elections
  - As individuals
  - As members of group
- Central notion
  ‘Accountability’
Putting the systems together
Participatory governance

State government

Local council

Local services

Clients

Citizens

Special Interests

Increases Property Franchise Vote

Subdivided

Interest Represent

Voting Majority Preference

Voting
Decision Making
Accountability
Influence
Community Governance

- The state has shifted various forms of responsibility onto the private and voluntary sectors

- Self-organising networks develop their own policies and help to shape their own environments.

- ‘an arena of participation …[embracing] all activity which involves either the provision of public services within the community, or the representation of community interests to external agencies’ (Woods, Edwards, Anderson, & Fahmy, 2001).
Local Governance 3
Community governance

State government

Local council

Local services

Communities
Clients
Citizens
Special Interests

Voting
Decision Making
Accountability
Influence
‘Mirror’ Representation

- Depends upon the representatives’ characteristics as a reflection of those groups in the community
- A ‘politics of presence’ that includes representatives of minority characteristics such as gender or ethnicity
Putting the systems together
Community governance

State government
Local council
Local services
Communities
Clients
Citizens
Special Interests

Unsubdivided
Mirror
Represent
Voting
Proportion
Quota

Voting
Decision Making
Accountability
Influence
Integrated Community Governance

- Focuses on the way local groups are integrated into the structure of local government itself
  - consultative mechanisms where there are various
    - public meetings
    - public hearings
    - discussion groups
  - partnership arrangements where local government establishes
    - community forums
    - local committees
    - local advisory boards
Examples of integration

1. Local government advisory committees
2. Consult with small rural towns four times a year
3. Assist in kind and sometimes with finance
Independent Community Governance

- claim to represent the interests of local people and independent of local government
- may develop specific partnerships with local government but control over many local decision-making mechanisms of their local communities
- not simply working at community level but also negotiating relationships with other levels of governance
- varies according to social, demographic, historical, economic and biographical factors
Examples of Independence

1. Create own shop front

2. Buy their own community assets

3. Create their own local festivals
Organizational Role

- Act as local ‘representatives’
  - Some seen as ‘mini’ councils
- ‘Umbrella’ organisation for the town
- Information channels
  - Local newsletters
- Various forms of membership
  - Who turns up through to small payment
- Some independent finance
Community Processes

- Advocacy and fund raising
  - Submission Skills
  - Fitting the funding templates
    - State and Federal funding prerequisites – community groups apply though local government
    - Reconstructing local needs to fit funding criteria

- Partnerships
  - Local government

- Community asset building for local and tourist consumption
Processes at Other Levels

- More ‘efficient’ outcomes by using the volunteer capacities of local community organizations
- Promoting sustainability as the responsibility of the local townspeople, eg
  - Regional Solutions at federal level
  - Building Great Communities at state level
  - Community Building consultants at local government

- Outcome: community associations become the avenues for local governance activities
Conclusions

- Local community groups
  - have replaced some of the governance functions of local government authorities
  - now lead, facilitate, collaborate and bargain as
    - A consultative mechanism for local decision-making
    - Partners with a range of outside agencies
    - Advocates for local needs

- This may be called a new community governance that is both
  - an outcome of the ‘minimal state’ approach of the higher levels of government in Australia
  - the desire of local development groups to ensure a sustainable level of services for their communities.
Further References


