

# MINISTERIAL BRIEFING

**Hon Nanaia Mahuta**  
Minister of Local Government

November 2007

# Introduction

This briefing paper is organised into three Parts.

**Part 1** sets out SOLGM's vision and objectives, and the briefly outlines the range of our interests and activities.

**Part 2** identifies our current and strategic issues.

**Part 3** provides fuller information about SOLGM, our relationships, how we are organised, and describes the range of our current activities in a little more detail.

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## Part 1

### Introducing SOLGM

SOLGM is an incorporated society, established in 1988 to represent senior managers in local government, and to promote excellence in management within the sector.

It is an individual membership organisation, with approximately 580 members throughout all local authorities in New Zealand. Full membership is available to, Chief Executives, second tier managers reporting to the Chief Executive, and other managers with significant management, policy or strategic development responsibilities

SOLGM's vision is –

*To be the leading influence for local government managers and staff to advance the sustainability of our communities.*

The Objectives of SOLGM are -

- ◆ *Providing professional leadership in identifying and advocating on the big issues facing communities and local government management;*
- ◆ *Influencing Central Government policy development and implementation of major issues;*
- ◆ *Developing the knowledge base and capability within local government through the development, promotion and dissemination of industry good practice;*
- ◆ *Developing the professional and leadership capability of managers and staff in local government; and*
- ◆ *Providing opportunities for managers and staff in local government to network, learn, and exchange ideas.*

To advance these objectives SOLGM pursues a very full work programme that is organised into two areas of strategic focus and four work streams. These are

- ◆ **Sector Leadership**
  - **Strategic Outlook** – highlighting the key long term issues likely to affect the future of local authorities and communities;



- **Influencing Government and Partnerships** – participation in the consideration of policy and implementation issues;
- ◆ **Sector Capability**
  - **Sector Knowledge Base Development** – the identification and promotion of good practice;
  - **Professional Development and Training** – development and delivery of training for local government managers and staff.

These work streams are advanced through four Working Parties which are overseen by our Executive Committee and two Advisory Boards, and our sector networking activity.

The approach we take to pursuing our objectives is one based on working together with the other national organisations within the local government sector, with central government agencies, and our international partners.

Part 3 of this briefing provides fuller information in how we are organised, and on the full range of activities in which SOLGM is involved.

## Part 2

### Key Issues

#### Current Issues

This section of the brief highlights a series of current issues that we would like to draw to your attention. The issues covered are:

- ◆ The Local Government Legislative Framework;
- ◆ The Local Government Commission Review of the LGA and LEA;
- ◆ Implementing the LGA2002 – The LTCCP Process;
- ◆ The Independent Inquiry Into Rating;
- ◆ The 2007 Local Authority Elections;
- ◆ Implementation of Policy and Legislation;
- ◆ Recruitment and Retention;



- ◆ Shared Services in Local Government;
- ◆ Climate Change

## **Local Government Legislative Framework**

***“The passage of the three local government reform Acts ... in 2002 means that for the first time in many years ... local government ... is operating under a more or less coherent “core” legislative framework ...”***

The passage of the three local government reform Acts (Local Government Act, Local Electoral Act and Local Government Rating Act) in 2001 and 2002 means that for the first time in many years, and perhaps ever, local government in New Zealand is operating under a more or less coherent “core” legislative framework covering its constitution, governance, management, decision-making, planning, accountability, elections and taxation powers.

***“There is still unfinished business from the 2002 legislative reforms ...”***

Underpinning this framework is a balance between provisions allowing substantial autonomy in local decision-making with others requiring high levels of transparency and accountability (significantly more demanding than those applying to central government).

### **Submission**

**We would like to request that some priority should be given to completing the review and replacement of those Parts of the LGA 1974 that remain in force.**

There is still unfinished business from the 2000-2002 legislative reforms, however. Most obviously, some significant portions of the 1974 LGA remain in force. These were “left behind” in 2002 either because they raised issues that required further work that could not be completed within the tight timeframes for the new legislation, or because they were subject to other Government policy exercises that were expected to reach conclusions within relatively short timeframes.

We note that some of those provisions related specifically to the Auckland region, and that the recently established Royal Commission is likely to consider these. In general, however, it is disappointing to find that the other remaining Parts of the 1974 LGA are still in force in November 2007. We are not aware of any current programme or plan for these to be addressed. We would like to request that some priority should be given to completing the review and replacement of those Parts of the LGA 1974 that remain in force.



The “core” local government statutes represent only part of the framework of legislation that governs the activities of local authorities. In addition, a large number of other statutes deal with specific areas of local authority activity – these are often referred to as the “functional Acts”. These include some major pieces of legislation such as the Resource Management Act 1991, along with others such as those governing animal control, the sale of liquor and parking enforcement, to name but a few. Many of these Acts predate the LGA2002. They do not necessarily reflect the thinking about the role and purpose of local government that is expressed in the LGA2002. Many will reflect an older, more detailed and prescriptive style of empowering legislation for local government. In 2002 there was some expectation that following the enactment of the new local government Acts, attention would subsequently be given to the consistency or otherwise of the “functional Acts” with the general framework expressed in the LGA2002.

***“We would ... support any initiative you might take to .. “harmonise” the various “functional Acts” with the general framework under the LGA2002.”***

We are not aware of any such work currently being undertaken. We recognise that this would not be a quick or simple task, and that in practical terms it would involve an ongoing stream of work over a number of years. We would, however, support any initiative you might take to initiate a stream of work to “harmonise” the various “functional Acts” with the general framework under the LGA2002. We are pleased that this issue was also identified by the Independent Inquiry into Rating.

***“There is a risk of erosion of the ... framework if the advice given to Ministers on issues in other portfolios is based purely on a “subject area” perspective without the implications for the system of local government being adequately considered. “***

There is also an ongoing dimension to this issue. The legislation that affects local government covers a wide range of subject areas and is administered by a variety of departments. These departments are experts in their respective subject areas but they do not necessarily know or care a great deal about the framework for the role of local government, or the integrated planning through the LTCCP process, that are set out in the LGA2002. There is a risk of erosion of the LGA framework if the advice given to Ministers on issues from other portfolios is based purely on a “subject area” perspective without the implications for the system of local government being adequately considered.



***“SOLGM would support any move you might make to increase the resources available to DIA for ongoing policy work in the local government area.”***

***“In briefing your predecessor ... we suggested that Government ... needed to have a clearer view of the cumulative impact of measures driven from different portfolio areas but ... impacting on local government in the same timeframes. “***

SOLGM strongly supports the role played by *Local Government New Zealand* in representing the views and perspectives of the local government sector on the full range of policy issues affecting local government. There is also, however, a need for the perspective of the system of local government (“local democracy”) is to be adequately represented, within the Government’s internal policy processes. We see the role of your officials in the Department of Internal Affairs as an important one in this regard. We are conscious that the resources available to DIA for policy work are quite modest, and that the portfolio has huge reach in terms of the range of issues in which it has an interest. SOLGM would support any move you might make to increase the resources available to DIA for ongoing policy development and implementation work in the local government area.

In briefing your predecessor in February 2006 we suggested that Government in its own decision-making processes needed to have a clearer view of the cumulative impact of measures driven from different portfolio areas but impacting on local government in the same timeframes. This reflected the concern that local authorities were facing multiple major change processes at the same time. At the same time that councils were dealing with the implementation of the LGA2002, and in particular the development of the first full and audited LTCCP, they were also confronted with the roll out of the new Building Act, significant changes to the RMA, and other lesser legislative changes. We noted that the capacity of any organisation to manage multiple major change processes simultaneously was finite. In the event most local authorities have come through this testing period successfully. We note, however, that the timeframes for the accreditation of local authorities as Building Consent Authorities have been extended. We remain concerned at the potential for similar legislative tsunami in the future.



## **Local Government Commission Review of the LGA and LEA**

Section 32 of the LGA2002 requires the Local Government Commission to review the operation of the Local Electoral Act (LEA) and LGA and report to the Minister as soon as practicable following the 2007 local elections. The Commission has to report on:

***“Section 32 of the LGA2002 requires the Local Government Commission to ... report to the Minister as soon as practicable following the 2007 local elections.”***

- ◆ The impact of conferring on local authorities full capacity rights and privileges (the general power contained in section 12 of the Act)
- ◆ The cost-effectiveness of consultation and planning procedures; and
- ◆ The impact of increasing participation in local government and improving representation on local authorities;

and may also report on other things as it sees fit.

SOLGM and Local Government New Zealand jointly developed a background paper *“Strengthening Local Democracy”* that was forwarded to the Local Government Commission in March 2007. This in large part reflected the feedback from a survey among local authority which we undertook following the 2006 LTCCP process, and the experiences of the 2004 local elections. It contained a total of 49 recommendations. The report is available at [www.solgm.co.nz](http://www.solgm.co.nz).

The key messages we sought to convey were that:

***“It is too soon to make informed judgements about the long term impact of the LGA 2002”***

- ◆ It is too soon to make informed judgements about the long term impact of the LGA;
- ◆ The overall framework of the LGA2002 appears sound, although in some respects still incomplete. As noted previously, significant sections of the LGA 1974 still remain in force. There are also a large number of other statutes dealing with specific areas of local authority activity which predate the LGA 2002, and may or may not be consistent with the general framework in that Act; and that



***“Any amendments to the Act at this time should be aimed at enabling the framework “to work better” rather than fundamental change”***

- ◆ Any amendments to the Act at this time should be aimed at enabling the framework “to work better” rather than fundamental change. Based on experience to date a significant number of areas are identified where the Act could be simplified and streamlined.

We have had preliminary discussions with the LGC about the process that it proposes to follow in undertaking its review. We understand that it intends to report as soon as it can on any issues relating to the LEA that require legislative amendments, and to report in mid 2008 on other issues. SOLGM is holding a 2007 local elections debriefing for electoral officers in early December. We will advise the LGC of any issues that are identified.

We look forward to continuing to work with the LGC as it progresses its review.

### ***Implementing the LGA2002 – the 2006-16 and 2009-19 LTCCP Processes***

***“The development of 2006-16 LTCCP was the most challenging milestone ... in the implementation of the new LGA.”***

The LTCCP process sits at the core of the planning and decision-making framework established by the LGA2002. The development of 2006-16 LTCCP was the most challenging milestone for local authorities in the implementation of the new LGA. The framework for planning and decision-making by local authorities that is set out in the LGA2002 is a comprehensive one. It can justly be described as international leading practice. It requires a considerable investment in the development of information and systems by local authorities, on the basis that dividends will flow to communities through ongoing improvements in the quality of governance and management. The framework is in a real sense about continuous improvement with successive LTCCPs building on those that have gone before them.



***“The 2006 LTCCPs represent a significant advance on previous practice in terms of the volume of reliable information that is made available to communities ... ”***

***“The 2006 LTCCPs represent a significant step towards integrated strategic planning for sustainable communities.”***

***“SOLGM has made a considerable investment in assisting local authorities deliver this framework.”***

The 2006 LTCCPs represent a significant advance on previous practice in terms of the volume and quality of information that is made available to communities about the services the local authority provides, the issues facing their districts, and the likely future cost of local services. This has involved a significant learning curve for local authorities, but we see the results as overwhelmingly positive. That said we are also conscious that in many areas of the process, practice is still evolving. Our expectation is that there will be considerable further progress with the 2009-19 LTCCP round. SOLGM's heavy commitment to improving practice in this area is described later in this briefing.

The 2006 LTCCPs represent a significant step towards integrated strategic planning for sustainable communities. In more hard headed terms, what this actually means is that there is far better information available than previously about the likely future costs of developing, operating and maintaining local infrastructure and services. That is the good news.

The bad news, as demonstrated by the controversy leading to the establishment of the Independent Inquiry into Rating, is that some people did not like the picture this information painted. This is perhaps unsurprising – people will always wish the things they want were cheaper than they are, or argue that someone else should have to pay for them. This does not indicate that the planning framework is not working, or that plans have not been developed properly. The Rating Inquiry is discussed in a later section of this briefing.

SOLGM has made a considerable investment in assisting local authorities deliver on this framework. During 2004 and 2005 SOLGM worked together with National Asset Management Steering Group (NAMS) to develop a guidance package for local authority staff involved in developing their councils' LTCCPs – the “LTCCP Jigsaw”. This was launched and promoted at a series of regional seminars in April and May 2005. The final version was published on [www.solgm.co.nz](http://www.solgm.co.nz) in August 2006<sup>1</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> The 33 documents that made up the Jigsaw recorded more than 28,000 downloads.



**“A programme of work to assist local authorities with the 2009 LTCCP was specifically designed to address the issues that have been identified from the 2006 experience.”**

This commitment has continued since the completion of the 2006 LTCCPs. During late 2006 SOLGM undertook a survey of the experiences and perceptions of senior local authority staff who played key roles in the LTCCP process<sup>2</sup>. The results of the survey provided a basis for extensive engagement with the sector and key stakeholders around “*how the process had gone*”. Workshops were held in November 2006 where the results of the survey were feed back to the sector and the issues that arose were debated. We have also considered the issues raised by the report of the Auditor-General on the 2006-16 LTCCPs. This has, we believe, resulted in a general consensus on “*what worked and what did not*” in the 2006 LTCCP process.

A programme of work to assist local authorities with the 2009 LTCCP was specifically designed to address the issues that have been identified from the 2006 experience. This has been undertaken as a joint effort with *Local Government New Zealand*, and NAMS<sup>3</sup>. One of the key elements of the response is that the guidance material is being developed and made available earlier in the cycle than was possible for 2006. The majority of the proposed suite of guidance documents have already been completed and published. These are briefly described below:

- ◆ ***Living Through the LTCCP*** – This is a specific guide to project management of the LTCCP. It was published at the end of August 2007.
- ◆ ***Piecing It Together*** - This is the general guide to preparing an LTCCP. This was published at the beginning of October 2007. This has been developed in conjunction with NAMS.
- ◆ ***Performance Management Frameworks: Your Side of the Deal*** - This is the guide to developing performance management frameworks to give effect to the LTCCP within a local authority. This was also published in October 2007. This has been developed in conjunction with NAMS.

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<sup>2</sup> This spanned Chief Executives, Asset Managers, and Strategic Planning and Financial Managers.

<sup>3</sup> NAMS has also revised its “*Creating Customer Value*” manual which represents industry best practice in defining levels of service.



- ◆ ***Dollars and Sense: the Guide to Financial Management under the Local Government Act*** – This provides guidance on arrange of financial management topics necessary for the preparation of a successful LTCCP. This was published in early November 2007.
- ◆ ***Community Outcomes Guide*** (as yet unnamed) – Work has commenced on the development of this guide with a target publication date of late February 2008.

These guides are all published “free to air” at the website [www.solgm.co.nz](http://www.solgm.co.nz). We will forward hard copy of these guides to your office for your information shortly. We have also appreciated the contributions made by DIA staff, who have participated in some of the project teams that have developed these guides.

To support the roll-out of the guides a series of five regional workshops has been organised. The first was held on 15 and 16 November. The series runs until 4 December.

***“Consideration is being given to possible future additional guides.”***

Consideration is being given to possible future additional guides. Possible topics include “What a sustainable development approach looks like in an LTCCP” and “What consideration of climate change issues might be expected by the time of the 2009 LTCCP?”

## ***Independent Inquiry into Rating***

Over the course of the Inquiry and since, SOLGM has worked alongside *Local Government New Zealand* to develop sector positions and responses. The submission to the Inquiry was a joint one from the two organisations.

***“...SOLGM has worked alongside Local Government New Zealand to develop sector positions and responses.”***

The title of the submission “*Getting Real: Funding the True Cost of Local Communities.*” was deliberately pointed. It reflected our belief that it was necessary to inject some “reality” and some facts, into a debate about rating which had been largely driven by media hyperbole.



***“ ...the key driver of current and projected rates increases was the development of core infrastructure (transport, water, wastewater and stormwater, and community facilities ...”***

***“ ... it is inevitable that lobby and sectional groups ... will always argue that “we should pay less” (and by necessary implication “someone else should pay more”).”***

The key messages in our submission could be summarised along the lines that:

- ◆ while levels of rates had increased in recent years and were projected to continue doing so until approximately 2011, they were not at, and were not expected to reach, “historically high” levels;
- ◆ the key driver of current and projected rates increases was the development of core infrastructure (transport, water, wastewater and stormwater, and community facilities);
- ◆ demand for infrastructure was partly a cyclical phenomenon (as existing infrastructure reaches the end of its working life and requires replacement) and partly a response to actual and expected economic and population growth;
- ◆ the costs of providing such infrastructure were quite different from those measured by the general CPI inflation measure, and had increased by more than the CPI; and
- ◆ it is inevitable that lobby and sectional groups within communities will always argue that “we should pay less” (and by necessary implication “someone else should pay more”).

In doing so we drew on the analysis from the Local Government Funding Project (a joint central and local government project on local authority finance issues that has been running since 2004).

The Inquiry’s report makes a large number of recommendations across a broad range of matters directly and indirectly related to rating. On 3 September SOLGM and *Local Government New Zealand* jointly hosted a forum for local authority members and staff where attendees were briefed on the Inquiry’s headline recommendations and a first opportunity was provided to debate possible responses.



We understand that Ministers have agreed a process to work through the consideration of these recommendations. SOLGM and *Local Government New Zealand* have been invited by DIA to participate in this process. We are currently preparing ourselves for this.

***“We hope to be able to advance this work sufficiently to give some preliminary responses at the time of the Central – Local Government Forum in December.”***

***“ ... 5 recommendations that the Inquiry made to the sector itself, relating to financial management practice, have been addressed in the “Dollars and Sense” guide ...”***

***“The conduct and management of the recent local authority elections generally proceeded smoothly.”***

A joint *Local Government New Zealand* and SOLGM Steering Group has been established to oversee the development of local government sector responses. A discussion document entitled *“Did the Inquiry Get Real?”* has been developed and circulated to the sector for consideration – the document is available online at [www.solgm.co.nz](http://www.solgm.co.nz). Responses have been invited to assist in identifying possible sector responses on particular issues. We hope to be able to advance this work sufficiently to give some preliminary responses at the time of the Central – Local Government Forum in December. We look forward to working with Government as it considers the Inquiry’s recommendations.

In the meantime 5 recommendations that the Inquiry made to the sector itself, relating to financial management practice, have been addressed in the “Dollars and Sense” guide in the “2009 and Beyond” suite of guidance documents that was published at the start of November.

## ***2007 Local Authority Elections***

The conduct and management of the recent local authority elections generally proceeded smoothly. There was no repeat of the problems that arose in 2004 where the counting of STV votes by one election service provider encountered difficulties that significantly delayed the declaration of results in a number of districts and DHBs.

We are holding an Electoral Officers Forum to debrief on the elections on 12 December. The aim of this is to identify any issues and opportunities for improving the administration of the elections to feed into the Local Government Commission’s reviews of the LEA and any review of the local elections that the Justice and Electoral Committee may undertake.



***“Low and declining voter turnout appears to be occurring across many Western democracies ...”***

The major issue to emerge from the 2007 elections was the low voter turnout in many districts, although the actual decline in turnout nationwide was quite small, around 2.5%. We understand that your predecessor has already called for the Select Committee to look into the question of the voter turnout. We would welcome any investigation that sought to seriously consider this issue, and will be clarifying our own thinking about this issue over the coming months with a view to being able to contribute constructively to this.

At this stage we would merely note that the possible causes of declining voter turnout are not simple or one dimensional. It needs to be acknowledged at the outset that the issue is not unique to local authority elections, or even to New Zealand. Low and declining voter turnout appears to be occurring across many Western democracies, particular in societies where the population have come to be increasingly regarded as “consumers” rather than “citizens”. This does not exclude the possibility that this general trend may be compounded by local factors.

***“An election management issue requiring urgent attention is the need for the election timetable to be extended by a week between the close of nominations and the despatch of voting documents”***

An election management issue requiring urgent attention is the need for the election timetable to be extended by a week between the close of nominations and the despatch of voting documents. This has previously been raised with your predecessor, the previous Justice and Electoral Committee investigation and the Local Government Commission. It had been hoped that legislative amendments would have been made for the recent elections. The experience from those elections had reinforced the need as electoral officers and Datamail/New Zealand Post dealt with the production and delivery of 2,850,107 voting packs (involving 462 different voting documents, 100 different candidate profile pack types) under extremely tight statutory timelines. This pressure resulted in some document production mistakes and high production costs.



***“ ... our members generally take the view the “the law is the law and regardless of its merits public sector managers have a professional duty to make it work as well as possible”.”***

***“As a national organisation of senior managers, SOLGM is well positioned to act as an “implementation partner” in the roll out of new policy and legislation. “***

***“SOLGM has been pleased to see an increasing level of engagement from government departments with the implementation of legislation affecting local government.”***

## ***Implementation of Legislation***

SOLGM has a general interest in the implementation of legislation. From a practical and professional perspective our members generally take the view the *“the law is the law and regardless of its merits public sector managers have a professional duty to make it work as well as possible”*. Accordingly SOLGM is interested in working with government agencies charged with implementing legislative and policy changes affecting local government.

As a national organisation of senior managers, SOLGM is well positioned to act as an “implementation partner” in the roll out of new policy and legislation. We are able to bring to such projects:

- ◆ our channels of communication across local government at officer level;
- ◆ the capacity of the SOLGM Opus Business School to deliver seminar programmes and training; and
- ◆ the fact that our existing good practice guidance products (such as those developed for SOLGM’s Risk Management and Legal Compliance Programme) already address practice issues across a wide range of areas of local authority responsibility.

Put simply *“we have the technology”* for working with local government sector at management level that Government agencies would otherwise have to replicate for themselves.

SOLGM has been pleased to see an increasing level of engagement from government departments with the implementation of legislation affecting local government. Apart from ongoing work relating to the LGA 2002, the main area where SOLGM is currently involved has been the implementation of the Building Act. This has included working alongside DBH to support the process for the accreditation of local authorities as Building Consent Authorities, and involvement in sector initiatives to develop appropriate qualifications for building officials. In addition we have in recent years assisted with the implementation of the National Dog Database, and the revised Rates Rebates Scheme.



***“In briefing your predecessor we outlined the elements of a possible good practice guide for Government agencies faced with the task of implementing initiatives affecting local government.”***

In briefing your predecessor we outlined the elements of a possible good practice guide for Government agencies faced with the task of implementing initiatives affecting local government. We indicated that we were keen to discuss how this might be developed and asked whether he would be interested in his officials working with us on this. We remain interested in the possible development of such guidance and would like to discuss this with you.

The key elements that we would see as underpinning such guidance are:

- ◆ Early Start – While the roll-out of implementation support programmes necessarily follows the enactment of the legislation, their design and development should start earlier.
- ◆ Work With the Stakeholders – For any legislative initiative there will be a range of groups within the sector with a stake in successful implementation. Effective and early engagement can do a lot towards achieving effective implementation.
- ◆ A Separate Process – SOLGM has been pleased to see the increasing willingness of Government agencies to engage with local government (usually through *Local Government New Zealand*) during the process of policy development. While engagement with local government on implementation is likely to involve many of the same stakeholders, it should be set up as a separate process and work-stream. This is to separate debate on “the means of making it happen” from that over “the desirability of making it happen.”
- ◆ A Single Shared Plan – SOLGM and other sector stakeholders will often see it as part of their role to support the implementation of the new legislation by local authorities. If the actions of Government agencies and sector organisations are not co-ordinated there are risks that some work will be duplicated while in other areas there will be gaps. This can be avoided by having a single agreed action plan.



***“If the actions of Government agencies and sector organisations are not co-ordinated there are risks that some work will be duplicated while in other areas there will be gaps.”***

***“The detailed work undertaken to identify the practical means of complying with legislation sometimes highlights technical shortcomings in the legislation ...”***

- ◆ Use of the Proven Technology – Stakeholder organisations will generally have established and effective channels of communications with their constituents within local authorities. They may already have tools and guidance material that are widely known, recognised and used. Government agencies should be encouraged to use these rather than establishing competing channels and tools.
- ◆ Clarity About Audiences and Needs – In implementing legislative change affecting local government there are a range of audiences, spanning elected local authority members, managers, and hands-on practitioners in the specific affected areas of work. Their needs and the best means of addressing them are likely to differ.
- ◆ Linkage to Select Committee Process – If work on an implementation programme is started early enough there are opportunities for this to feed back in a positive way into the Select Committee process. The detailed work undertaken to identify the practical means of complying with legislation sometimes highlights technical shortcomings in the legislation – gaps and disconnects, inconsistencies, and areas of unclarity. If the effort is made to start this work early there is the opportunity for these sorts of issues to be addressed prior to enactment.
- ◆ Part of a Life-Cycle Approach – Once legislation is enacted there is a necessary ongoing maintenance task for the administering department. New issues may arise, areas of unclarity or contradiction may come to light, provisions may be interpreted in unexpected ways by either practitioners or the Courts or both. Engaging openly with stakeholders on implementation can assist this by establishing the foundation of relationships that can ensure open information flows about issues that arise into the future.



***“Government agencies should accept a shared and ongoing responsibility for the achievement of the objectives of legislation ..., rather than regarding the passage of legislation as having “passed the parcel ...”.”***

***“The aim ... is to identify, explore and develop key and emerging ideas and issues of importance to the future of communities and local government.”***

Generally we are keen to promote what we would describe as a “responsible” approach by Government’s own agencies in relation to the implementation of policy and legislation affecting local government. What we mean by this is that Government agencies should accept a shared and ongoing responsibility for the achievement of the objectives of legislation that allocates roles and responsibilities to local authorities, rather than regarding the passage of legislation as having “*passed the parcel*” to local government. This involves policy advice being well informed about the practicability of proposals and their implementation implications. It also involves an ongoing willingness to play a positive role in addressing these issues throughout the lifecycle of the policy or legislation concerned.

## **Strategic Issues**

The aim of SOLGM’s Strategic Outlook work stream is to identify, explore and develop key and emerging ideas and issues of importance to the future of communities and local government. The focus here is on those issues, both policy and managerial, which we believe are of major and long term importance, rather than on responding to the current topical policy and legislative agenda.

Our current focus in this area is on:

- ◆ Recruitment and retention and the future supply of the skills that local government needs now and in the future; and
- ◆ Shared Services Across Local Authorities.

A number of possible topics have so far been identified, including an exploration of the practical issues thrown up by Climate Change Adaptation for local authority planning, infrastructure and regulatory activities. Information about our activities in each of these areas is set out below.



## **Recruitment and Retention Project**

The 2004 Chief Executives' Forum focused on the difficulties being faced by local government in recruiting and retaining staff in a number of key skill areas, as a critical issue facing the local government sector as a whole. The Forum asked SOLGM to undertake a project to identify possible sector-wide responses to this.

***“In common with many other sectors of the economy, local government faces major challenges in securing and retaining the skilled workforce it will need in the future.”***

In common with many other sectors of the economy, local government faces major challenges in securing and retaining the skilled workforce it will need in the future. The current local authority workforce is heavy with the “baby boomer” generation – an aging workforce. We face the fact that the competition for skills is increasingly a global rather than a local or even a national one. At the same time the evolution of the role of local government is requiring higher levels of skill and of specialisation.

***“Research commissioned under the project has identified that there are key critical skills and labour shortages across local authorities ....”***

Research commissioned under the project has identified that there are key critical skills and labour shortages across local authorities in the areas of; building control, civil engineering, IT specialists, policy analysts, and environmental consent processing, and that there are also critical shortages of specialised knowledge in areas such as; asset management, change management, strategic thinking, and people management skills.

***“The research found that these skill shortages are impacting through delays in projects and approvals, and that shortages ... are likely to increase over time.”***

The research found that these skill shortages are impacting through delays in projects and approvals, and that shortages and subsequent recruitment and retention difficulties are likely to increase over time. The problem was seen as not only a result of increasing labour market competition for skilled employees but as exacerbated by the negative public perception of local government (and among groups such as tertiary and secondary students) as an employing sector.



The project has developed a series of responses designed to address these issues. The first leg of this has been the development of a local government employment brand. The brand “People Shaping Progress” has been adopted, a logo produced and a website established:

[www.localgovernmentcareers.govt.nz](http://www.localgovernmentcareers.govt.nz)

***“The brand “People Shaping Progress” has been adopted, a logo produced and a website established:  
[www.localgovernmentcareers.govt.nz](http://www.localgovernmentcareers.govt.nz)***

**people shaping progress**  
localgovernmentcareers.govt.nz

The principal features of the website are:

- ◆ an overview of what local government does;
- ◆ a series of case studies of particular local authority functional roles;
- ◆ a job board of current vacancies;
- ◆ general career and immigration advice.

The website has been visited over 12,000 times since its launch in March 2007.

The web presence has been supported by a variety of other related activities targeting schools and tertiary institutions. Academic prizes are being established to gain access to student groups studying subjects which are in scarce supply to the sector. So far two \$3000 prizes have been offered for civil engineering students at the universities of Auckland and Canterbury. We plan to extend the use of such prizes to other disciplines and institutions in the future. Prizes enable us to contribute teaching materials and other support that raises the sector’s profile significantly among students.

SOLGM also worked with MfE during 2006/07 to develop training for groups of ancillary RMA workers (that is groups other than the degree qualified planners). This is dealt with further in the section of this briefing about the SOLGM Opus Business School.



## Shared Services

***“The concept of shared services used is a broad one, covering the joint delivery of services by two or more local authorities, the running of joint processes, and the sharing of capability “in the back office”***

In April 2007 SOLGM joined forces with INGENIUM, Local Government New Zealand, and ALGIM to promote a two day conference on shared services in local government. The concept of shared services used is a broad one, covering the joint delivery of services by two or more local authorities, the running of joint processes, and the sharing of capability “in the back office”. The conference featured workshops at which a total of 20 different examples of shared services arrangements were presented and discussed. These cases spanned regulatory, corporate, IT, service delivery, and infrastructure. This revealed that a wide range of shared services arrangements have been implemented “below the radar” in recent years. These case studies are available on line at [www.solgm.co.nz](http://www.solgm.co.nz).

The concept of “shared services” is not a new one in New Zealand local government. Prior to the structural reforms of 1989 such arrangements had been commonplace including, in a small number of cases, complete shared administrations among neighbouring local authorities. Interest in such arrangements began to re-emerge in the late 1990’s but had since been squeezed off the agenda by the priority on implementing a wide range of legislative changes which have been made over recent years.

***“SOLGM sees shared services as potentially contributing to addressing several of the key pressures facing local authorities in the medium and long term.”***

SOLGM sees shared services as potentially contributing to addressing several of the key pressures facing local authorities in the medium and long term. Among the potential advantages we see in such arrangements are greater market power in contracting and purchasing, in some instances, potential economies of scale, and perhaps most crucially the ability of multi-council partnerships to offer more varied and rewarding career paths with greater scope for the recruitment and retention of highly specialised staff.

There is however a need for a clearer picture to be developed of “*what works and what does not*”, what the critical success factors and key risks and pitfalls in entering these sorts of arrangements are. This would allow local authorities to consider their options on something better than a “*trial and error*” basis.



***“There is ... a need for a clearer picture to be developed of ‘what works and what does not’, ....”***

We had planned by now to have followed up on the conference with a survey of local authorities designed to identify the opportunities and obstacles to such arrangements on a region by region basis. The plan was then to hold a series of regional workshops where the results of the survey relating to each region could be put on the table and the issues opened up for discussion. This work has however, had to be deferred to give priority to work generated by the Independent Inquiry into Rating. We intend to recommence this stream of work early in 2008.

We understand that DIA has expressed some interest in the idea that Government may be able to play a positive role in promoting the exploration of potential shared services arrangements. This could be along the lines of funding for the investigation of potential shared services arrangements – effectively reducing the cost and therefore the risk of investigating possible options. We will be keen to further explore such options once work on this project recommences.

## ***Climate Change Adaptation***

***“... from a local authority perspective there is a need for an early focus on issues of adaptation.”***

As the science is clarified it is becoming increasingly likely that New Zealand communities will face considerable impacts from Climate Change over the coming decades. To date it seems to us that most of the attention to climate change has tended to be around mitigation – how to reduce emissions of greenhouse gases. This is entirely appropriate but from a local authority perspective there is a need for an early focus on issues of adaptation.

Local government is about the long term, and many of the major decisions made by local authorities are not readily reversible when circumstances change. Once built the physical infrastructure of our communities (roads, water and wastewater systems) lasts for a long time. Once consents for subdivisions and buildings are issued the resulting development cannot be undone even if it might seem at some later point that their location was ill advised. Potential impacts of climate change that may not occur for decades will still occur within the lifetime of infrastructure being built and developments being consented today.



***“Potential impacts of climate change that may not occur for decades will still occur within the lifetime of infrastructure being built and developments being consented today.”***

***“...a Court in 40 years time might hold that a local authority “should have known better” in 2008.”***

***“SOLGM is an individual membership organisation, with approximately 580 members ..”***

This poses challenging questions for local authorities making decisions about the consenting of development and the location of infrastructure. The likely impacts of climate change are understood at a broad level in terms of the likelihoods of certain events occurring at various distances into the future – floods are likely to be more frequent in some regions, droughts in others. At what point, however, can we be confident enough of the understanding of likely affects in particular localities for this to be the basis for decision-making about specific projects or applications?

There appear to be risks for local authorities in all directions. On the one hand, short sighted decisions may lead to significant costs to the community in the future. On the other decisions that appear to take the long view may be open to challenge in the short term as being based on insufficiently firm evidence. There is need to consider whether a Court in 40 years time might hold that a local authority “should have known better” in 2008.

At this stage we are starting a process of engagement with Government agencies and other stakeholders in order to clarify our thinking about how best to assist local authorities in preparing to deal with these sorts of issues.

## Part 3

### All About SOLGM

#### Our Members

SOLGM is an individual membership organisation, with approximately 580 members throughout all local authorities in New Zealand. Full membership is available to:

- ◆ Chief Executives;
- ◆ Second tier managers reporting to the Chief Executive; and,



- ◆ Other managers with significant management, policy or strategic development responsibilities.

In July 2005 SOLGM introduced a new category of associate membership, which is open to all local authority staff with an interest in management.

A Code of Ethics defines the expected integrity and professionalism of members of SOLGM. Our members span all disciplines involved in local government, including general management, finance, strategy, policy, economics, engineering, regulation, community development, asset management, and recreation and culture.

***“Our members are a rich resource of professional, technical, and practical knowledge and experience of local government. “***

Our members are a rich resource of professional, technical, and practical knowledge and experience of local government. We are keen to make this expertise available to Ministers, Select Committees, and Government Departments in relation to issues that arise in the course of policy development and implementation.

## **Our Relationships**

### ***Local Government***

SOLGM has excellent working relationships with other local government sector organisations within New Zealand. In particular it has a very close relationship with *Local Government New Zealand*. SOLGM also works closely on matters of common interest with INGENIUM (the organisation which represents engineers in local government), NAMS (the National Asset Management Steering Group) and ALGIM (the Association of Local Government Information Management) along with the wide range of other institutes and associations whose membership includes significant numbers of local authority staff.

***“ ... a very close working relationship with Local Government New Zealand”***



## **Central Government**

SOLGM particularly values the good working relationships that it has been able to develop in recent years with central government agencies. The relationship with the Department of Internal Affairs (DIA) is a long standing strong and positive one. We also work closely with other departments and ministries with responsibilities that are important to local government, such as the Ministry for the Environment (MfE), the Department of Building and Housing (DBH), and Audit New Zealand along with Parliamentary offices such as the Office of the Auditor-General.

SOLGM also appreciates having observer status at the six monthly Central-Local Government Forum.

## **International**

SOLGM also has strong relationships with a range of sibling organisations in the United Kingdom, Australia, United States, Canada and South Africa.

# **How We Are Organised**

## **Executive Committee**

SOLGM is led by an Executive Committee, comprising the President, 2 Vice Presidents, and 6 Branch Representatives and 2 co-opted Executive Members. The membership of the current Executive Committee is detailed in Appendix A. The main role of the Executive Committee is to focus on the Strategic Direction of SOLGM, to drive this through the Annual Plan and Budget, and to be accountable to members for this.



## ***Branches***

SOLGM is organised into six regional branches (four in the North Island and two in the South Island). Each branch organises its own regional activities, including branch meetings, seminars and retreats. They are a valuable vehicle for networking among staff of local authorities within their area, and provide input into SOLGM's into many aspects of SOLGM's overall work programme. Each branch elects a representative to the Executive Committee. The President and Vice Presidents are elected by the whole membership.

## ***Advisory Boards***

There are two Advisory Boards comprising Executive Members and other co-opted members. These oversee the two main areas of strategic focus of the work programme.

The **Sector Leadership Advisory Board** oversees:

- ◆ The Strategic Outlook work stream – this aims to identify, explore and develop key and emerging ideas and issues of importance to the future of communities and local government; and,
- ◆ The Influencing Government and Partnerships work stream – this includes policy development and implementation and advocacy (much of which is driven by the Financial Management, Electoral and Strategic Planning working parties); and

The **Growing Sector Capability Advisory Board** oversees:

- ◆ The Sector Knowledge Base Development work stream – this is focused on identifying and promoting leading practice within local government; (including the Risk Management and Legal Compliance Programme, the New Zealand Post Management Excellence Awards, and the International Leading Practices Symposium);



- ◆ The Professional Development Training work stream – this is primarily focused on the conferences, seminars, and training provided by the SOLGM Opus Business School, but also includes the Management Challenge, and Overseas Manager Exchanges and Conference Attendance Awards.

## **Working Parties**

SOLGM also has 4 standing Working Parties that drive significant aspects of its work programme. Each working party comprises a mix of local authority officers and representatives of key stakeholders, including government departments. They are a vehicle both for identifying issues and articulating the perspectives of managers within their areas of focus. These are:

- ◆ the Electoral Working Party (EWP);
- ◆ the Financial Management Working Party (FMWP);
- ◆ the Risk Management and Legal Compliance Working Party (RMLCWP); and
- ◆ the Strategic Planning Working Party (SPWP).

### **Financial Management Working Party (FMWP)**

***“The FMWP is a major forum for discussion between central and local government officials on accounting issues, rating, and the practical application of the financial management provisions set out in the Local Government Act 2002 (LGA2002).”***

The FMWP is descended from a group established in 1989 to assist the adoption of accrual accounting by local authorities. In the late 1990s the FMWP played a key role in the implementation of the requirement for a Long Term Financial Strategy (forerunner to the LTCCP). The FMWP has been a key driver of the guidance material developed to assist councils with both the 2006 and 2009 LTCCPs.



Its membership comprises local authority officers along with representatives of the Office of the Auditor-General, Audit New Zealand, the Department of Internal Affairs (DIA), and *Local Government New Zealand*. The FMWP is a major forum for discussion between central and local government officials on accounting issues, rating, and the practical application of the financial management provisions set out in the Local Government Act 2002 (LGA2002).

### ***Electoral Working Party (EWP)***

The EWP is concerned with the organisation and conduct of local elections. Its membership includes representatives of *Local Government New Zealand*, the Ministry of Health and DIA as well as local authority electoral officers.

The EWP played a key role in the development of the Local Electoral Act 2001 and has acted as an advisor to the Justice and Electoral Select Committee for its review of the 2001 local elections. It played a major role in preparations for the implementation of STV at the 2004 local elections.

The EWP has developed a detailed *Code Of Good Practice For the Management of Local Authority Elections and Polls*. This is published at [www.solgm.co.nz](http://www.solgm.co.nz).

### ***Risk Management and Legal Compliance Working Party (RMLCWP)***

The membership of the RMLCWP comprises local authority officers and representatives of Audit New Zealand and Riskpool. Since 1999 the RMLCWP has overseen SOLGM's Legal Compliance Programme.

It has published 15 guidance modules to provide local authorities with the tools to ensure that their business processes comply with relevant legal obligations. These are available online at [www.solgm.co.nz](http://www.solgm.co.nz). Following a review of its direction over the past year the RMLCWP is now broadening its focus to address issues around risk management more generally.

***“The EWP has developed a detailed Code Of Good Practice For the Management of Local Authority Elections and Polls”***

***“It has published 15 guidance modules to provide local authorities with the tools to ensure that their business processes comply with relevant legal obligations.”***



### **Strategic Planning Working Party (SPWP)**

The SPWP is newly established during 2007. It arises from reflection on the 2006 round of LTCCPs. This highlighted the need for a sector forum for local authority staff with strategic planning roles to operate along similar lines to the more longstanding FMWP. Its membership comprises local authority officers, and representatives of *Local Government New Zealand*, DIA and the Office of the Auditor-General.

### **National Office**

The National Office is located in Wellington and is managed by the Chief Executive supported by a staff of eight.<sup>4</sup>

In addition to the work programme developed through the working groups and Advisory Boards, the National Office produces a four monthly e-magazine PULSE, and on the other months of the year a newsletter. We have created a subscription to PULSE and the newsletter for you and your private secretary.

We also have a significant presence on the web with two linked sites at [www.solgm.org.nz](http://www.solgm.org.nz); and [www.solgm.co.nz](http://www.solgm.co.nz). The “.org” site is the primary web address and also provides access to the “.co” site. The “.co” website contains a large range of good practice guidance materials for the local government sector including those developed by the working parties.

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<sup>4</sup> This comprises a Manager and Senior Advisor Good Practice and Policy, the Manager of the Business School and two event organizers, Project manager Recruitment and Retention and 2 support staff.



## Our Activities

SOLGM's activities generally fall into two areas of strategic focus and four work streams. These are

- ◆ Sector Leadership
  - Strategic Outlook – highlighting the key long term issues likely to affect the future of local government in New Zealand
  - Influencing Government and Partnerships – participation in the consideration of policy and implementation issues
- ◆ Sector Capability
  - Sector Knowledge Base Development – the identification and promotion of good practice
  - Professional Development and Training – development and delivery of training fro local government managers and staff.

Appendix B illustrates how SOLGM's activities are organised, relate to our Constitutional objectives, and the impacts expected of them. The activities undertaken within each of these streams, and the current focus of that work, are briefly summarised below.

### Sector Leadership

#### Strategic Outlook

The aim of the Strategic Outlook work stream is to identify, explore and develop key and emerging ideas and issues of importance to the future of communities and local government.

*“The focus here is on those issues, both policy and managerial, which we believe are of major and long term importance”*



rather than on responding to the current topical policy and legislative agenda. That is the focus of the Influencing Government and Partnerships work stream described later in this briefing.

For 2007/2008 the three critical areas of work we have identified in this work stream are:

- ◆ the development of guidance to better equip local authorities for the 2009 round of LTCCPs – the “2009 and Beyond” suite of guides;
- ◆ the Shared Services project; and
- ◆ the Recruitment and Retention programme.

We are also starting to consider the practical issues thrown up by Climate Change Adaptation for local authority planning, infrastructure and regulatory activities. A brief outline of concerns and activities in relation to each have been provided in Part 2 of this briefing.

### ***Influencing Government and Partnerships***

***“SOLGM’s interest in policy development affecting local government is more from a professional management perspective”***

This group of activities is concerned with our role in more topical policy and legislative issues. SOLGM has not generally taken a lead role in making representations to Government on topical headline policy issues. This has been seen more appropriately the role of *Local Government New Zealand*. SOLGM’s interest in policy development affecting local government is more from a professional management perspective. Consequently on many issues SOLGM works within and supports the processes established by *Local Government New Zealand* to identify and advocate sector positions on current issues.

SOLGM has, however, played a large role in policy discussion on particular areas of the legislation that are technical in their content, such as the electoral and rating legislation, and those Parts of the Local Government Act 2002 that are concerned with financial management and planning processes. In addition SOLGM has a general concern to see that, whatever the policy content of legislation, it is enacted in a form that can actually be implemented successfully.



***“In these areas of relatively technical legislation SOLGM is able to draw upon extensive technical and professional expertise from among its members across a wide range of disciplines.”***

In these areas of relatively technical legislation SOLGM is able to draw upon extensive technical and professional expertise from among its members across a wide range of disciplines. SOLGM is thus well positioned to provide advice on the practical implications and practicability of legislative proposals, and to contribute this perspective to the policy development process. According to the circumstances we can do this, by working alongside government officials during policy development, by directly making submissions to government agencies and Parliamentary Committees, or by contributing towards the clarification of sector positions that are represented by *Local Government New Zealand*.

## ***Growing Sector Capability***

### ***Sector Knowledge Base Development***

This area of activity is concerned with the identification and promotion of leading practice across the range of areas of local authority activity. The main activities are:

- ◆ the Risk Management and Legal Compliance Programme
- ◆ the Electoral Code of Good Practice
- ◆ New Zealand Post Management Excellence Awards
- ◆ Leading Practices Symposiums

### ***Risk Management and Legal Compliance Programme***

This programme originated in 1999/2000 as an initiative of Our “Top of the South” branch working with Audit New Zealand and Riskpool. By 2003 it had grown to the point where administration of the programme was transferred to National Office.



***“ ... the programme is now broadening its scope to promote good risk management practice more generally in local authorities”***

The original objective of the programme is to develop a suite of guidance modules that set out legally compliant processes that enable local authority staff and managers to ensure that statutory responsibilities are carried out in a way that is consistent with the relevant statutes. As a result of a review of the programme completed earlier this year the programme is now broadening its scope to promote good risk management practice more generally in local authorities<sup>5</sup>.

The programme (which is overseen by the RMLCP) operates on the basis of voluntary subscriptions from participating local authorities (83 local authorities currently participate) and with the support of a variety of government departments. The guidance modules are published on the Good Practice Toolkits website at [www.solgm.co.nz](http://www.solgm.co.nz)<sup>6</sup>

The module development process takes as its basis the expertise of experienced practitioners and key stakeholders (such as the Government departments that administer the legislation concerned). To provide quality assurance, draft guidance is peer reviewed by a second similar team, and then reviewed by Audit New Zealand and by legal advisors. Modules are reviewed on a regular cycle at intervals of approximately 2 years to ensure that their context remains up to date.

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<sup>5</sup> Legal compliance is usually regarded as one of the several key areas of risk management.

<sup>6</sup> The suite of published modules now extends to:

- LGOIMA
- The Privacy Act
- Resource Consents
- Enforcement
- L.I.M.s
- Employment
- Dog Control
- Rates Rebates
- Rating - Billing & Collection Process
- Property Sales, Acquisitions and Leases
- Tendering and Procurement
- National Dog Database
- Health and Safety
- Building Consents
- Liquor Licensing
- Bylaws

An additional module on the Rating Database are expected to be published shortly.



We acknowledge the assistance provided by DIA, both in contributing to the development of several modules, and by its agreeing to join the programme as a subscription paying member. The Rates Rebates and National Dog Database modules were developed as part of overall implementation packages for those measures.

### ***Electoral Code of Good Practice***

The *Code of Good Practice for Local Authority Elections and Polls*, is a comprehensive guide provided for local authority electoral officers. It is the major product developed by the Electoral Working Party, and is reviewed and revised for each local authority general election. For the recent elections it contained new vote processing and counting quality assurance guidelines to assist in preventing a repeat of the 2004 failure around STV vote counting in some local authorities and DHBs. It is published at [www.solgm.co.nz](http://www.solgm.co.nz).

### ***New Zealand Post Management Excellence Awards***

These awards are held annually with the support of New Zealand Post. The winners are announced at SOLGM's annual conference (held in September each year). The awards provide the opportunity for local authorities to showcase their successful projects and share them with their colleagues. Since the awards were initiated in 1997 over 50 local authorities have submitted more than 250 projects. Since 2004 all entries have been published [www.solgm.co.nz](http://www.solgm.co.nz).<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> These have attracted a high level of interest with more than 40,000 downloads recorded to date for copies of the entries since 2004.



***“Some previous Ministers have been prepared to host displays of posters for the award winning entries in their Parliamentary Offices.”***

Some previous Ministers have been prepared to host displays of posters for the award winning entries in their Parliamentary Offices. We are happy to work with your Private Secretary to arrange this if you are interested.

### ***International Leading Practices Symposium***

The symposium is held every second year as a collaboration between SOLGM, ICMA (USA) and LGMA (Australia) as a means of promoting best practice in local government internationally. SOLGM hosted the previous symposium in Rotorua in November 2006. This featured case studies from New Zealand, Australia, Canada and the United States. The case studies from the 2004 and 2006 symposiums are available on line at [www.solgm.co.nz](http://www.solgm.co.nz).<sup>8</sup>

The next Symposium will be hosted by LGMA in conjunction with its National Congress on the Gold Coast in May 2008.

### ***Professional Development and Training***

This major element of this work stream is made up of the training and development activities delivered through the *SOLGM Opus Business School*. However, it also includes the annual Management Challenge, and a range of Overseas Manager Exchanges and Conference Attendance Awards.

### ***SOLGM Opus Business School***

The Business School has operated since 1997 and has significantly raised the level of training throughout local government. In 2006/2007 over 1,870 local government officers attended Business School seminars, courses or programmes.

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<sup>8</sup> These have also attracted widespread interest with more than 15,000 downloads recorded since November 2004.



The scale of operations of the Business School has increased steadily over the years. The target for 2007/08 is to run approximately 35 training seminars, courses or programmes. These events generally fall within one of four broad types:

- ◆ Information Sharing Seminars;
- ◆ Competency Development Courses;
- ◆ Networking Seminars for particular disciplines; and
- ◆ One-off Events on particular themes and topics.

### *Information Sharing Seminars*

These are most frequently organised to assist local authorities to get to grips with new policy proposals or to support the implementation of new legislative requirements.<sup>9</sup>

### *Competency Development Courses*

An increasing range of such courses has been developed that are able to be offered as part of a regular programme<sup>10</sup>.

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<sup>9</sup> Recent examples of this sort of event are:

- the “2009 and Beyond” seminars planned for November and December 2007;
- the Seminars held in 2006 to debrief following the 2006 LTCCP round; and,
- The Forum held in September 2007 to discuss the recommendations made by the independent Inquiry into Rating.

<sup>10</sup> Courses that are offered regularly include:

- Introductory and more advanced policy analysis (in association with Victoria University);
- Negotiation and Conflict Resolution;
- Customer Service training;
- Community Consultation Skills; and
- A range of leadership courses targeted for different tiers of management.



***“ ... we are developing relationships with key training providers (such as Victoria University), ... and with the Local Government Industry Training Organisation (LGITO)”***

***“ ... partnership with MfE to start developing and delivering training for non-planning staff involved in roles under the RMA.”***

The Business School is aiming to move from offering ad hoc training packages to being able to offer training leading to recognised and transferable qualifications. This supports the strategic focus on Recruitment and Retention. To this end we are developing relationships with key training providers (such as Victoria University), relevant government departments (particularly MfE) and with the Local Government Industry Training Organisation (LGITO). There have been several significant recent developments in this area.

SOLGM has worked in partnership with MfE to start developing and delivering training for non-planning staff involved in roles under the RMA. This reflects MfE's ongoing focus on improving the quality of administration of the RMA. Packages have been developed and delivered for:

- ◆ RMA Hearings Administrators, and
- ◆ RMA Technicians.

We are keen to investigate the possible development of NZQA recognised qualifications for these groups of officers. The development of further courses in this area is currently on hold as a result of changes in the funding available to MfE, but we are optimistic further progress can be made during 2008/2009.

SOLGM's relationship with Victoria University has led to the development of courses with the option of additional course work which can be assessed for Victoria University Certificates of Proficiency and potentially credited towards future Public Policy or Public Management qualifications. To date two such courses have been offered in Policy Advice and Analysis, and a further course on Strategic Management is being offered for the first time in 2007/08.



***“Such events will play an ongoing role in raising the profile of strategic issues.”***

***“This is a premier training and development event for young and up and coming local government managers.”***

### **Networking Seminars**

A range of networking seminars is offered annually for different groups of non-managerial local government officers. These enable staff working in similar areas of work across local authorities to develop networks and share issues and ideas<sup>11</sup>.

### **One Off Events**

Over the recent years the Business School has also become involved in running large one-off events to highlight particular themes and issues of importance to local government. During 2004/05 the Business School organised the *Bay Roads Conference* which highlighted the performance-based road management partnership that had been developed in the Bay of Plenty. Following the February 2004 floods, the lessons were captured through the *When the Rains Kept Falling* conference. During October 2005 an *International Infrastructure Management Summit* was held jointly with INGENIUM. Most recently the *Shared Services Across Local Government* conference was held (jointly with INGENIUM, and in association with *Local Government New Zealand* and ALGIM) in April 2007.

### **Management Challenge**

The Business School also organises the New Zealand leg of the Local Government Managers Australia Management Challenge. This is a premier training and development event for young and up and coming local government managers.

The event attracts more than 100 teams from throughout Australasia each year. Last year some 126 teams participated in the Challenge, with 18 (representing 16 local authorities) in New Zealand.

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<sup>11</sup> These include annual events for:

- Committee Secretaries,
- Executive Assistants,
- Rating staff;
- Community Planners; and
- Human Resources staff



***“The exchanges enable managers to experience and learn how overseas local authorities operate and to pick up on good practice management processes with transferability.”***

The 2007 New Zealand winner, the team from Wellington City Council, competed in the Australasian final in Hobart during April 2007, and was the runner up<sup>12</sup>.

### **Overseas Manager Exchanges**

Each year SOLGM (with the assistance of its sponsors Jardine Lloyd Thompson and Civic Assurance) offers five overseas manager exchanges. There is one exchange each year to the UK, one to the USA and two to Australia and one to British Columbia. Exchange managers spend a week with a host local authority and attend the national conference of the host association.

### **International Conference Attendance Awards**

Exposure to overseas local government managerial conferences is a valuable professional development experience. Together with MWH, SOLGM sponsors five managers to attend the conferences of our overseas partners. Three awards are available for attendance at the ICMA Conference in the USA, and two for the LGMA Congress in Australia.

### **e-localgovernment Services**

One of SOLGM’s principal strategies has been to focus on the use of electronic technology as the means of delivering services to its geographically dispersed constituency. The main vehicle for delivery of e-localgovernment services is *Local Government Online* (LGOL).

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<sup>12</sup> New Zealand teams have a very good record in this event. In 2006 the team from Waitakere City won the Australasian final. In 2004 Dunedin City was runner up, Christchurch City was 3<sup>rd</sup> in 2003, and Manukau City was the winner in 2002 after finishing 3<sup>rd</sup> in 2001. The Management Challenge has been won by New Zealand teams on four occasions – Christchurch City – 1994, Environment Waikato – 1996, North Shore City – 1997, and Waitakere City - 2006.



## *Local Government Online Limited (LGOL)*

LGOL was established in 1998 by SOLGM in partnership with the Association of Local Government Management (ALGIM). Since that time LGOL has been developed as the New Zealand local government internet portal. Access is not, however, restricted to local authorities and the site is open to anyone interested in learning about local government in New Zealand. Shareholding in the Company is now shared between; SOLGM, ALGIM, *Local Government New Zealand*, and Civic Assurance.

The LGOL website records an average of over 41,000 visits and up to 150,000 page views monthly. Results from the 2001, 2004 and 2007 Local Authority Elections were carried live on the site. These included results for the 85 councils and the 22 district health boards.

A wide and growing range of services are offered to local authorities by LGOL. The main ones are:

- ◆ Hosting local government association websites;
- ◆ Advanced search facility across local authority websites;
- ◆ Community Online website hosting service;
- ◆ Local Government News Service;
- ◆ Shared Workspace Facility;
- ◆ A wide range of Online Service Partnerships;
- ◆ Resource Library;
- ◆ Directory of Councils;
- ◆ Mailing Lists / Discussion Groups<sup>13</sup>; and
- ◆ What's New Ezine (twice weekly)<sup>14</sup>.

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<sup>13</sup> There are more than 60 Mailing Lists/Discussion Groups (LISTSERVs) for the various professional and vocational groups within local government. This tool enables staff to readily share problems, solutions, policies, and practices across the whole sector. Currently approximately 6,905 officers are linked to the LISTSERVs and up to 200,000 interactive emails are generated each month.

<sup>14</sup> *What's New Ezine* is distributed to 3,900 direct subscribers plus an estimated further 3,000 via Intranets. It contains, amongst other things, the past week's accessions to the News Service.



We have taken the liberty of arranging subscriptions to *What's New* for you and your local government portfolio private secretary. The Ezine should by now be arriving in your in-box weekly.

## Conclusion












In conclusion, SOLGM is a professional organisation committed to contributing towards better local government management to advance the sustainability of our communities. This contribution is made across a wide range of areas, from raising the big issues, to contributing to the development and implementation of policy and legislation, to building the capability of the local government, to enhancing the professional development of our members.

Not only has the substantial knowledge base of professional managers with technical and practical experience across a range of disciplines facilitated SOLGM's 'good practice' work, it has also enabled SOLGM to positively contribute to several important Government policy development and implementation initiatives affecting local government.

SOLGM therefore looks forward to working with you and the Government in local government initiatives, and continuing to build on the current positive working relationship.

# Appendix A

## SOLGM Executive Committee

<b>President</b>	Steve Parry	Chief Executive Gore District Council	
<b>Vice President</b>	Athol Stephens	General Manager, Finance and Corporate Support Dunedin City Council	
<b>Vice President</b>	Ross McLeod	Director, Corporate and Civic Services Waitakere City Council	
<b>Executive Member (Northern)</b>	Alistair Drake	Corporate Services Manager Whangarei District Council	
<b>Executive Member (Midlands)</b>	Gary Allis	Engineering Group Manager Western Bay of Plenty District Council	
<b>Executive Member (Central)</b>	Clare Hadley	Chief Executive Rangitikei District Council	
<b>Executive Member (Wellington)</b>	Graham Sewell	Senior Policy Analyst Hutt City Council	
<b>Executive Member (Top of the South)</b>	Paul Davey	Chief Executive Selwyn District Council	
<b>Executive Member (45 South)</b>	Duncan Field	Chief Executive Queenstown Lakes District Council	
<b>Co-opted Member</b>	Andrew Dalziel	Chief Executive Hurunui District Council	
<b>Co-opted Member</b>	Mary Sinclair Jones	Chief Human Resources Officer Environment Waikato	

# Appendix B

## SOLGM Model

The following diagram illustrates the linkages between SOLGM's Objectives and Vision we will achieve through the combined impacts of our activities. The Annual Plan describes these elements in more detail.

