

2018

# Local Government

INDUSTRY REFERENCE COMMITTEE  
INDUSTRY SKILLS FORECAST



**SKILLSIQ**

CAPABLE PEOPLE MAKE CLEVER BUSINESS

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## Skills Forecast

**Name of IRC:**  
Local Government

**Name of SSO:**  
SkillsIQ Limited

### About SkillsIQ:

SkillsIQ supports 18 Industry Reference Committees (IRCs) representing diverse 'people-facing' sectors. These sectors provide services to people in a variety of contexts such as customer, patient or client. The IRCs are collectively responsible for overseeing the development and review of training package products, including qualifications, serving the skills needs of sectors comprising almost 50% of the Australian workforce.

*Our qualifications deliver skilled people that are valued and make a difference to others.*

**- Cross Sector Skills Committee, February 2018**



# Executive Summary

There are three levels of government in Australia – federal, state and local. Local government is administered through local councils.

Authority is shared between the three tiers of government. Local and regional economic development is significant in Australia's overall economic performance and prosperity and many federal government policy initiatives require implementation at the local government level. There are significant expectations of the role of local government in respect to climate change, water management services, environmental management, emergency management and the provision and maintenance of infrastructure and facilities.

State or territory governments define the power of local governments and determine the geographic areas for which those governments are responsible. The number, population or catchment areas and the overarching governance (including performance management) arrangements of local governments are the responsibility of the states.<sup>1</sup>

The strategic planning process and its implementation, including workforce planning, at the local government level is heavily influenced by financial capacity and available resources, the parameters of which are largely outside the direct control of the local government business entity and prescribed in state legislation. The regulatory framework is complex in its application regarding the way in which local governments operate and deliver services.

The National Schedule details the training package update and development work commissioned by the Australian Industry and Skills Committee (AISC). The National Schedule is informed by this Industry Skills Forecast, which outlines the proposed timing for the update of existing training package products. This Forecast has been compiled using a number of

information sources, including academic literature, statistical data, Industry Reference Committee (IRC) member input and expertise, feedback received via public consultation, and an industry analysis of both new and emerging workforce skills needs overseen by the Local Government IRC.

The Local Government Industry Reference Committee has responsibility for 18 qualifications, packaged in the *LGA04 Local Government Training Package*. The training package products are currently the subject of a major update to strengthen their alignment to industry expectations in relation to the skills required for job roles now and in the future. No new work is scheduled at this stage due to the scope of the current project.

Local government nationally employs just under 187,000 Australians.<sup>2</sup> As an employer, local government requires a diverse workforce that encompasses a wide range of occupations, requiring a very broad range of skills among its personnel. Local government organisation structures vary. However, all consist of elected representatives and council staff.

The Australian Local Government Association has identified the following general functions of councils:<sup>3</sup>

- Infrastructure and property services, including local roads, bridges, footpaths, drainage, waste collection and management.
- The provision of recreation facilities, such as parks, sports fields and stadiums, golf courses, swimming pools, sport centres, halls, camping grounds and caravan parks.
- Health services such as water and food inspection, immunisation services, toilet facilities, noise control, meat inspection and animal control.
- Community services, such as child care, aged care and accommodation, community care and welfare services.

- Building services, including inspections, licensing, certification and enforcement.
- Planning and development approval.
- Administration of facilities, such as airports and aerodromes, ports and marinas, cemeteries, parking facilities and street parking.
- Cultural facilities and services, such as libraries, art galleries and museums.
- Water and sewerage services in some states.
- Other services, such as abattoirs, saleyards and group purchasing schemes.

Functions range from regulatory responsibilities to those associated with service delivery, some of which will be specific to a community's needs. The diversity and breadth of the sector present challenges in national frameworks and highlight the need for flexibility. Consultation has indicated that skill sets and packaging rules are important components to consider when updating training package products.





# Sector Overview

Local governments play a key role in the Australian economy. As a sector, local government nationally employs just under 187,000 Australians, owns and manages non-financial assets with an estimated written-down value of \$408 billion (in 2015–2016), raises around 3.6% of Australia's total taxation revenue per annum, and has an annual operating expenditure of around \$35 billion (2015–16).<sup>4</sup> Local government owns and maintains about 650,000 kilometres of local road, a significant amount of public transport infrastructure and more than 200 airports.<sup>5</sup>

Across Australia there is substantial diversity in the roles and functions of local governments both between and within jurisdictions. This diversity is partly attributable to differences in legislative and governance frameworks for local government, as well as councils' particular geographical features, the size and density of their populations and their respective financial capacities.<sup>6</sup>

All have an important role in providing leadership in community, economic and infrastructure development and a range of services and social functions. There are 537 local governing entities across Australia<sup>7</sup> servicing metropolitan, regional, rural and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

It is noted that training package products in support of federal and state government workforces are housed in a separate Public Sector Training Package that is overseen by another IRC.

## The Business of Local Government

The provision of services often involves networks of varying complexity and processes associated with:

- Tendering
- Procurement and supply
- Contractors
- Community engagement
- Revenue collection, expenditure and financial management
- Governance
- Requirements defined in regulatory frameworks.

Changes in the services being provided, as well as changes to the way in which they are provided, are a feature of the sector. This is being experienced in other countries as well as Australia. An example of a contemporary framework developed by the OECD (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development) identifies the following four areas which represent specific tasks and for which specific skills are required:<sup>8</sup>

1. Policy advice and analysis
2. Service delivery and citizen engagement
3. Commissioning and contracting
4. Managing networks.

A wide and diverse range of engagement, commercial, legal and regulatory skills is required within a strategic context which is characterised by rapid change. Local government service delivery can be complex, with services not always delivered by local government employees and involving external contractors or service providers.

Robust governance is essential in establishing and maintaining community trust in this sector.

The Australian Local Government Association has identified the following general functions:<sup>9</sup>

- Infrastructure and property services, including local roads, bridges, footpaths, drainage, waste collection and management.
- Provision of recreation facilities, such as parks, sports fields and stadiums, golf courses, swimming pools, sport centres, halls, camping grounds and caravan parks.
- Health services such as water and food inspection, immunisation services, toilet facilities, noise control, meat inspection and animal control.
- Community services, such as child care, aged care and accommodation, community care and welfare services.
- Building services, including inspections, licensing, certification and enforcement.
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- Administration of facilities, such as airports and aerodromes, ports and marinas, cemeteries, parking facilities and street parking.

- Cultural facilities and services, such as libraries, art galleries and museums.
- Water and sewerage services in some states.
- Other services, such as abattoirs, saleyards and group purchasing schemes.

Functions range from regulatory responsibilities to those associated with service delivery, some of which will be specific to a community's needs.

Local governments also have significant roles to play in the implementation of public safety and water supply. The following training package products are covered by IRCs supported by Australian Industry Standards.<sup>10</sup>

- The Public Safety Training Package that includes training package products for sectors such as firefighting and emergency operations, search and rescue, SES (state emergency service) operations and community safety.
- National Water Training Package that includes training package products for water supply, sewerage, drainage services and pipeline transport (water). In some states local governments carry out the legal responsibilities of a water utility, particularly in respect to drinking water.

### Local Government Workforce Structure

Local government organisational structures vary. However, all consist of elected representatives and council staff.

The diversity and breadth of the sector present challenges in national frameworks and highlight the need for flexibility.

This general framework demonstrates the breadth of the diversity in this sector as a necessary precursor to any consideration of the sector on a national basis in relation to workforce planning and skills development.

### Legislative Framework

The legislative framework is significant from a structural perspective and has major implications with respect to the revenue streams of local governments and how they operate. There are three levels of government in Australia – federal, state and local.

Many federal government policy initiatives require implementation at the local government level, so authority is shared between the three tiers of government.

There are significant expectations of the role of local government in respect to climate change, water management services, environmental management and emergency management, and the provision and maintenance of infrastructure and facilities.

Recent research studies document how fragmented and complex this framework is and describe the implications for the role of the local government sector in tandem with other governments in meeting economic growth objectives and broader socio-economic outcomes.<sup>11</sup> These studies analyse the significance of local and regional economic development in Australia's overall economic performance and prosperity.

State or territory governments define the power of local governments and determine the geographical areas for which those governments are responsible. The number, population or catchment areas and the overarching governance (including performance management) arrangements of local governments are the responsibility of the states.<sup>12</sup>

The various states' Local Government Acts generally outline:

- how councils are established
- how elections are run
- how and when councils meet
- how rates are charged
- how revenue can be earned or raised through borrowing
- how councils spend money
- what councils can do.

In addition to the Local Government Acts there are a range of other instruments which mean the regulatory framework is complex in its application regarding the way in which local governments operate and deliver services.

The strategic planning process and its implementation, including workforce planning, at the local government level is heavily influenced by financial capacity and available resources, the parameters of which are largely outside the direct control of the local government business entity.



## Categorisation

Although there is much diversity in the local government sector it is possible to identify categories and groupings of individual councils for the purpose of analysis or obtaining comparative information. There are a range of systems, but naming conventions for local governments vary across Australia. This creates challenges for the implementation of any consistent national system of performance indicators. In general, publications tend to specify the criteria used to define or make comparisons within the sector, or for the purpose of analysing aggregated studies.

A comprehensive example of this can be found in the Annual *State of the Regions* (SOR) Report, coordinated by the Australian Local Government Association.<sup>13</sup>

In summary, the local government sector is a service provider with some sections operating along commercial business lines. Community service streams are included in these lines of business and the sector is subject to the disciplines of strategic management within a public governance framework. As a result, there can be issues affecting local government service delivery that are outside the control of municipalities, and this has an impact on workforce planning, skills development and training resources.

Within this context, the Local Government IRC has responsibility for 18 qualifications, packaged in the *LGA04 Local Government Training Package*. The training package products are currently the subject of a major update to strengthen their alignment to industry expectations in relation to the skills required for job roles now and in the future.

## Nationally Recognised Local Government Qualifications – Current as at June 2018

The nationally recognised VET qualifications that cater specifically to the local government sector are as follows:

- LGA10104 Certificate I in Local Government
- LGA20104 Certificate II in Local Government
- LGA30104 Certificate III in Local Government
- LGA40104 Certificate IV in Local Government
- LGA50712 Diploma of Local Government
- LGA10204 Certificate I in Local Government (Operational Works)
- LGA20204 Certificate II in Local Government (Operational Works)
- LGA30304 Certificate III in Local Government (Operational Works)
- LGA40404 Certificate IV in Local Government (Operational Works)
- LGA50404 Diploma of Local Government (Operational Works)
- LGA60104 Advanced Diploma of Local Government (Operational Works)
- LGA30208 Certificate III in Local Government (Health and Environment)
- LGA40308 Certificate IV in Local Government (Health and Environment)
- LGA50208 Diploma of Local Government (Health and Environment)
- LGA30404 Certificate III in Local Government (Regulatory Services)
- LGA40504 Certificate IV in Local Government (Regulatory Services)
- LGA50604 Diploma of Local Government (Regulatory Services)
- LGA40204 Certificate IV in Local Government Administration
- LGA50104 Diploma of Local Government Administration
- LGA40604 Certificate IV in Local Government (Land Management)
- LGA40708 Certificate IV in Local Government (Planning)
- LGA50508 Diploma of Local Government (Planning)
- LGA70108 Graduate Certificate in Local Government Management.



## Registered Training Organisation Scope of Registration

**Table 1** indicates the number of Registered Training Organisations (RTOs) with local government qualifications on scope. This data is current as at June 2018, per the listing on the National Register of VET ([www.training.gov.au](http://www.training.gov.au)).

**Table 1** Number of RTOs by nationally recognised qualifications on scope – Local Government Training Package Products

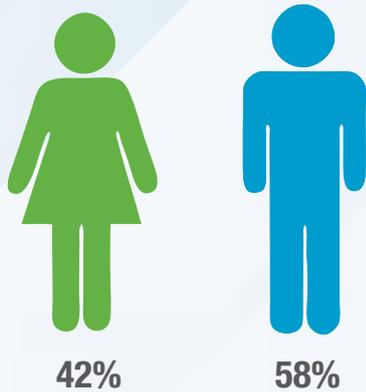
Qualification Code	Qualification Title	No. of RTOs with Qualification on Scope
LGA10104	Certificate I in Local Government	0
LGA20104	Certificate II in Local Government	3
LGA30104	Certificate III in Local Government	12
LGA40104	Certificate IV in Local Government	6
LGA50712	Diploma of Local Government	6
LGA10204	Certificate I in Local Government (Operational Works)	0
LGA20204	Certificate II in Local Government (Operational Works)	3
LGA30304	Certificate III in Local Government (Operational Works)	5
LGA40404	Certificate IV in Local Government (Operational Works)	8
LGA50404	Diploma of Local Government (Operational Works)	6
LGA60104	Advanced Diploma of Local Government (Operational Works)	1
LGA30208	Certificate III in Local Government (Health and Environment)	2
LGA40308	Certificate IV in Local Government (Health and Environment)	1
LGA50208	Diploma of Local Government (Health and Environment)	4
LGA30404	Certificate III in Local Government (Regulatory Services)	4
LGA40504	Certificate IV in Local Government (Regulatory Services)	8
LGA50604	Diploma of Local Government (Regulatory Services)	2
LGA40204	Certificate IV in Local Government Administration	7
LGA50104	Diploma of Local Government Administration	6
LGA40604	Certificate IV in Local Government (Land Management)	1
LGA40708	Certificate IV in Local Government (Planning)	7
LGA50508	Diploma of Local Government (Planning)	6
LGA70108	Graduate Certificate in Local Government Management	1

Source: Training.gov.au. RTOs approved to deliver this qualification. Accessed 21 June 2018.

# 2016 ENROLMENT SNAPSHOT

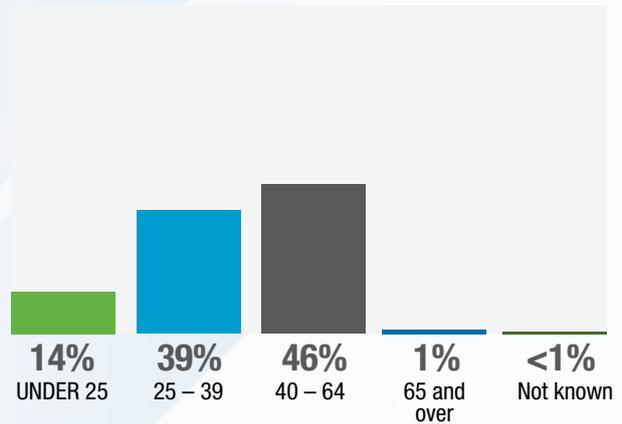
# LOCAL GOVERNMENT TRAINING PACKAGE PRODUCTS

## GENDER

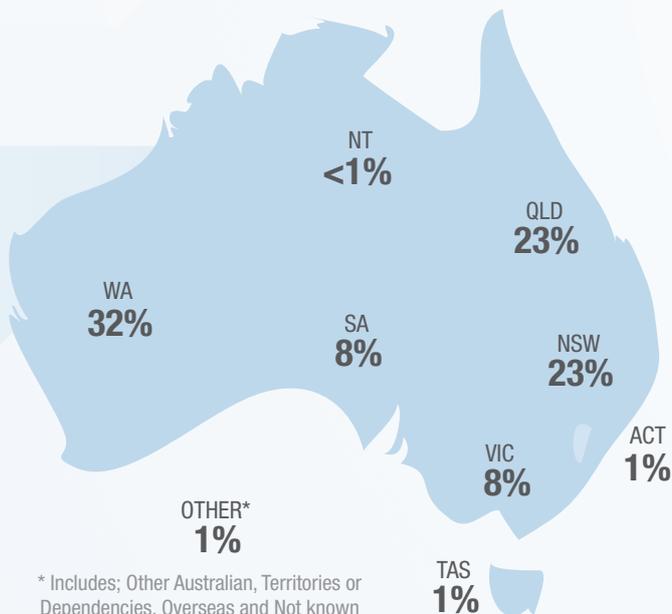


## AGE

Percentage Years of age

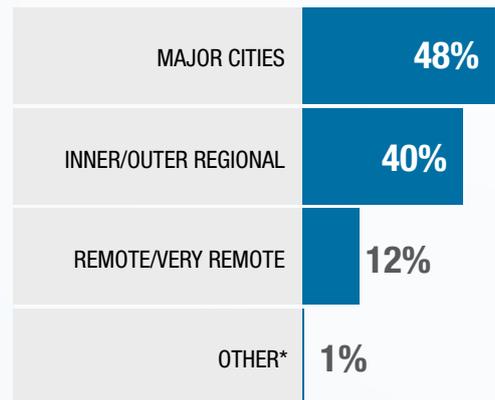


## STATE/TERRITORY OF RESIDENCE



\* Includes; Other Australian, Territories or Dependencies, Overseas and Not known

## STUDENT REMOTENESS REGION (2011 ARIA+)



\* Includes; Outside Australia and Not known

Source: NCVET VOCSTATS (Program enrolments 2016 by various breakdowns)

Base count n = 1,075

Note: Please refer to Table 1 for a list of qualifications that are included in the enrolment summary.



### General notes on statistics

1. Enrolment data is sourced from NCVER VOCSTATS (program enrolments 2014–2016), accessed November 2017.
2. It is important to note that not all training providers are currently required to submit enrolment and completion data. Some figures presented may therefore under-represent the true count of enrolments and completions for a qualification. From 2018, all training providers will be required to submit data. Current discrepancies noted between the national NCVER figures versus actual attendance should therefore be minimal in future releases. The data presented in this report is shown for indicative purposes.
3. Figures reflect public and private RTO data.
4. '-' symbol indicates that the qualification was not listed in NCVER data at the time of reporting.
5. Superseded qualifications, and their respective enrolment data, are not tabled.

**Table 2** Total number of enrolments (Total VET Activity [TVA]) by nationally recognised qualifications on scope – Local Government Training Package Products, 2014-2016

QUALIFICATION	2014	2015	2016	TOTAL
LGA10104 - Certificate I in Local Government	-	-	-	-
LGA10204 - Certificate I in Local Government (Operational Works)	-	-	-	-
LGA20104 - Certificate II in Local Government	10	3	3	<b>16</b>
LGA20204 - Certificate II in Local Government (Operational Works)	7	0	22	<b>29</b>
LGA30104 - Certificate III in Local Government	107	71	66	<b>244</b>
LGA30208 - Certificate III in Local Government (Health and Environment)	1	0	2	<b>3</b>
LGA30304 - Certificate III in Local Government (Operational Works)	166	72	50	<b>288</b>
LGA30404 - Certificate III in Local Government (Regulatory Services)	6	35	57	<b>98</b>
LGA40104 - Certificate IV in Local Government	9	10	2	<b>21</b>
LGA40204 - Certificate IV in Local Government Administration	43	32	17	<b>92</b>
LGA40308 - Certificate IV in Local Government (Health and Environment)	0	2	5	<b>7</b>
LGA40404 - Certificate IV in Local Government (Operational Works)	44	44	75	<b>163</b>
LGA40504 - Certificate IV in Local Government (Regulatory Services)	208	372	406	<b>986</b>
LGA40604 - Certificate IV in Local Government (Land Management)	-	-	-	-
LGA40708 - Certificate IV in Local Government (Planning)	32	41	28	<b>101</b>
LGA50104 - Diploma of Local Government Administration	13	196	209	<b>418</b>
LGA50208 - Diploma of Local Government (Health and Environment)	0	11	16	<b>27</b>
LGA50404 - Diploma of Local Government (Operational Works)	5	6	6	<b>17</b>
LGA50508 - Diploma of Local Government (Planning)	1	47	41	<b>89</b>
LGA50604 - Diploma of Local Government (Regulatory Services)	3	4	0	<b>7</b>
LGA50712 - Diploma of Local Government	26	53	41	<b>120</b>
LGA60104 - Advanced Diploma of Local Government (Operational Works)	0	0	0	<b>0</b>
LGA70108 - Graduate Certificate in Local Government Management	-	-	-	-

Source: NCVET VOCSTATS, accessed November 2017.

Enrolments in qualifications within the current *LGA04 Local Government Training Package* are very low. Industry reports that this is due to the fact that training package products have not been comprehensively reviewed since 2004 and are no longer fit for purpose. Significant

amounts of in-house and non-accredited training have been undertaken to meet skills needs within the local government sector. The current work being undertaken to update training package products will address this.



## Stakeholders

### National Peak Bodies and Key Industry Players

The list below represents a range of organisations that perform a variety of key roles in this sector. These organisations and their networks are well placed to offer industry insights at the time of training package review. Engagement and consultation activities will include a broad range of industry stakeholders beyond those included in this list.

- **State Government Departments**
  - Office of Local Government NSW
  - Department of Local Government Sport and Cultural Industries, and Department of Communities (WA)
  - SA Office of Local Government
  - Local Government Victoria
  - Queensland Department of Infrastructure, Local Government and Planning
  - NT Government
  - ACT Government
- **State/Territory Local Government Associations**
  - Local Government Association of Northern Territory
  - Local Government Association of Queensland
  - Local Government Association of South Australia
  - Local Government Association Tasmania
  - Western Australian Local Government Association
  - Local Government New South Wales
  - Municipal Association of Victoria
- **Unions**
  - United Services Union
  - Australian Services Union
  - Australian Workers Union
  - Local Government Engineers Association (LGEA)
- **Professional Associations**
  - Institute of Public Works Engineering Australasia (NSW)
  - Environmental Health Australia
  - Planning Institute of Australia
  - Local Government Professionals Australia Federation
- Local Government Professionals Australia (National)
- Local Government Managers Australia (LGMA), QLD
- Local Government Professionals Australia, NSW
- Local Government Professionals Australia, VIC (LGPro)
- Local Government Professionals Australia, TAS
- Local Government Professionals Australia, SA
- Local Government Professionals Australia, WA
- Local Government Professionals Australia, NT
- Department of Infrastructure, Regional Development and Cities
- Registered training organisations, both public and private
- Large and small private employers across metropolitan, regional, rural and remote areas
- University of Technology, Sydney, Institute for Public Policy and Governance, Centre for Local Government
- Victorian Local Governance Association (VLGA)
- ICLEI (Local Governments for Sustainability, formerly International Council for Local Environmental Initiatives).

# Challenges and Opportunities

In an Australian Centre for Excellence in Local Government (ACELG) survey,<sup>14</sup> councils were asked to describe, in their own words, what they considered to be the top challenges they face in terms of their workforce development.

## Ageing Workforce

One of the most pressing challenges within this sector is that the ageing workforce has resulted in high levels of impending retirements (19%). The ageing workforce has also led to other questions of knowledge management/transfer (11%), attracting a younger cohort to work in council (10%) and the outlay that is required for new machinery/tools due to the decreasing physical capacity of the workforce (10%). Other concerns highlighted include issues relating to skills shortages (19%), competition in recruitment (19%), and with other city councils (11%). Some of the workforce development challenges concerning human resource management that were identified include a lack of workforce planning resources (18%), staff retention (15%), leadership development (15%) and succession planning (10%).

## Other Workforce Development Issues

Another issue identified by 20% of councils was, 'legislative requirements/training/skills not being available'. Being able to access the skills, qualifications and training may be limited due to geographical constraints in regional and rural areas, or due to state legislation requiring qualifications that are no longer offered or transferrable from other jurisdictions, in order to fill specific roles within local government.

These issues remain relevant in the sector and are being raised in discussions regarding the update to the training package products. Difficulties have been reported through the public consultation process for this Forecast in finding training providers who offer face-to-face courses specific to job roles.

Industry has further identified that the following factors have a significant impact on local government workforces and skills requirements:

- Regulatory changes, including workforce credentials to perform specific services.

- Councils' accountability to residents and ratepayers as to how public money is spent, and the quality of council services provided.
- The increasing complexity of service delivery.
- The management of the public/private/civic interface. Local government is the local face of national policy, and individual councils can hold views that aren't necessarily synergistic with the federal government's policies on a range of issues as the first-line of communication about the local impacts of water management, road safety, climate change and sustainability policies, etc.
- The required safeguards in the system which assign clear roles and responsibilities with respect to elected officials and council workers to mitigate the impact of high profile cases of governance failures. There is a requirement for increased transparency in order to give credibility to practices, governance and ethics.
- The increasing breadth and frequency of the application of technology in business processes: for example, asset management (which includes property, plant and equipment) and the coordination of maintenance activities, service delivery and community access.
- The management of the direct and indirect effects of unemployment, particularly youth unemployment in rural and regional Australia.
- The management of services to relevant populations in line with demographic expectations: for example, the aged, families, the unemployed, students, housing density, local industry employment, etc.
- Carrying out the various responsibilities of a road authority.
- Recognising, encouraging, and implementing innovative solutions to local government problems.

The need for strong interpersonal and 'soft' skills within local government is recognised and evidenced in a variety of both accredited courses and non-accredited training. Targeted programs to 'fill the gap' between formal qualifications and the skills necessary for the performance of job roles have also been implemented. Industry has reported frustration with applicants who have tertiary qualifications and yet who lack the skills and local government context required for the job roles for which they are applying.



Challenges associated with developing these skills include the need for a consistent definition of what they are and how best to structure training package products to flexibly align to local government contexts.

## Regional and Remote Communities

According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics' (ABS) data,<sup>15</sup> in 2016 approximately two-thirds of Australia's population (16.24 million people) lived in greater capital cities and one-third (7.97 million people) lived in the rest of Australia. The age distribution as of June 2016 saw a higher representation of people aged 20 to 44 years residing in capital cities. People in this age group represented 38% of the combined capital city population, compared with 30% of the population in the rest of Australia. This is reflective of younger adults preferring cities where they can access education, employment and other opportunities. In contrast, older adults aged 45 years and over made up a smaller proportion of the population in capital cities (37%) than the rest of Australia (45%).

There are challenges in building a sustainable workforce in regional and remote communities, including recruiting and retaining staff due to uncompetitive salaries, geographical remoteness and lack of suitably skilled staff. Local government employers in these areas also have to consider how best to support the workforce that commonly has a lower level of qualification, and while accessing training and development is limited compared to those who live in metropolitan areas. The employers and employees also face some broader issues such as higher cost of living to housing shortages.

Continued support for effective programs addressing the development and employment growth of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees is critical, especially in regional and remote areas where councils face difficulties in attracting and retaining staff. Within communities these programs have an important relationship with broader programs such as *Closing the Gap* (housing, health, early childhood development, education, economic participation and remote service delivery). In addition, a workforce familiar with matters of cultural significance, including communication methods and respected networks, has a critical advantage in the delivery of municipal services and infrastructure within Indigenous communities.

## Demand for Skill Sets

Skill sets appear to be valued in the local government sector, and the current update of training package products examines how clusters of elective units of competency across qualifications could also be defined as skill sets to increase flexibility and allow for the targeted upskilling of new and existing workers.

The potential for skill sets aligned to job functions to strengthen flexibility and facilitate workforce planning during times of change is particularly evident where specific needs must be addressed. These will be of most significance, for example:

- Where there are significant changes in the scope of council activities: for example, where contract management, service delivery and strategic planning require the upskilling of the existing workforce
- Where there is a need to build consistency in the knowledge and skills base of elected officials: for example, in respect to business processes and/or governance/ethics, common purpose, financials, etc.
- Where there is potential to upskill staff members in order to increase capacity by enabling them to acquire specific skill sets
- Where employees need a greater range of skills than they currently hold
- Where there are evident gaps in skills knowledge in specialised areas, e.g. economic development
- Where there are procurement processes, including specification preparation and tender assessment
- Where there are complex safety management functions, including WHS (Workplace Health and Safety) system development and implementation, and road safety assessment and management function, including road safety auditing and training in traffic control at worksites
- When there are changes in demographics and a need to work with diverse populations.

## Labour Mobility

Australia has an ageing population, with projections that people aged 65 and over will double in number by 2057.<sup>16</sup> This will have specific implications for local government as employees aged 50 years and over are

estimated to represent 37% of the local government workforce, compared to the Australian average of 29%.<sup>17</sup>

Regions with a significant proportion of residents who are over 65 and relying on pensions as their sole income, for example, will continue to be challenged when it comes to paying for what society considers to be essential services. In other regions, youth unemployment is deemed to be both a significant economic and social issue.

All local councils compete with the wider employment sector to attract and retain suitable staff. In order to overcome any perceived obstacles to attracting and retaining staff, councils need to position themselves as organisations that workers will want to work for and in which they will be able to build careers.

In addition, mobility between local government and other sectors is enabled where employees are able to develop and build on broad-based transferable skills. This is particularly relevant where councils are competing to attract younger workers to mitigate an ageing workforce and the attendant loss of expertise when those older workers retire.

The role of pathways and apprenticeship and traineeship programs is significant in this sector. There is particular value in these programs where local governments are major regional employers and in a position to encourage collaboration with other employers to accommodate appropriate arrangements for young people to develop broad-based transferable skills and support youth employment programs. Consultation in respect to the current update to training package products includes consideration of enabling local pathways to job roles and foundations for further skills development and career opportunities.

The NSW Local Government Skills Strategy is an example of a recent strategy which focuses on developing a skilled and qualified workforce in regional areas. Initiatives promoted include pre-employment training and work experience opportunities for young people and those disadvantaged in the workforce, and increasing the number of apprentices and new entrant trainees employed or hosted by councils.<sup>18</sup> Strategies such as these can also highlight different skills needs and development opportunities for existing employees involved in the successful implementation of programs within their workplaces.

The *National Local Government Workforce Strategy 2013–2020* incorporates strategies focused on improving the experience of workers in local councils. The first relevant strategy identified involves the promotion of local government as a ‘place-based’ employer of choice. As a place-based employer, local government can develop significant competitive advantages in the areas of:

1. Connection – working with the local community
2. Contribution – producing high quality infrastructure, services, and social, economic and environmental outcomes, and
3. Credibility – offering the opportunity for work within an organisation focused on public value and community wellbeing.<sup>19</sup>

Other strategies include ways of creating a contemporary workplace and promoting the professional development of employees.

## Gender Equality

Recent studies in the public and private sectors have focused on the number of women in leadership positions in Australia. Comprehensive data about the profile of the Local Government workforce includes statistics about the roles of women in the sector. A study published in 2015 reported that approximately one-third of all councillors (30%) and almost a quarter of mayors (23%) were women, and that women accounted for a higher proportion of staff positions (46%) but this fell as the management level rose. Only 11% of council chief executives were women.<sup>20</sup> As part of a renewed commitment to gender equality in local government administrative leadership, Local Government Professionals Australia convened a workshop in May 2017 to identify the barriers and develop strategies in a draft action plan for achieving 50:50 gender balance by 2030. The workshop raised a number of issues highlighting how gender equality is consistent with effective leadership and delivering better local government that is responsive to the needs and aspirations of Australian communities.<sup>21</sup>

As the consultation process extends as part of the training package product update project, it is expected that these issues will continue to be reported as ongoing challenges, and priority areas will be identified.



## Employment and Skills Outlook

Local government nationally employs just under 187,000 Australians.<sup>22</sup> As an employer, local government requires a diverse workforce that encompasses a wide range of occupations, requiring a very broad range of skills of its personnel.

The outlook for skills required by this sector involves roles in the following broad categories:

1. Councillors, who are elected members
2. Council staff.

The business activities of local governments have given rise to a reassessment of the roles and responsibilities required. This is evidenced in various workforce planning and capability frameworks as well as in international OECD (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development) studies and research published by the Australian Productivity Commission, local governments themselves and their related Associations.<sup>23</sup>

Integrated planning and reporting frameworks are sometimes mandated under the states' respective Local

Government Acts. An example is found in New South Wales, where councils are required to prepare a set of planning documents, including a mandatory workforce management plan.<sup>24</sup>

Although there is no national reporting framework, the Australian Local Government Association does publish the annual *State of the Regions Report* (SOR).<sup>25</sup> This report provides an annual stock-take of the economic wellbeing of Australia's regions and their prospects for economic development and employment growth. The report identifies the importance of individual context in respect to any insights or trends and includes a comprehensive snapshot of each local government entity which, among other things, emphasises the diversity of the sector.

The SOR divides Australia into 67 regions and allocates every local government authority to a regional type or zone. The report provides a detailed analysis as to how these regions are performing and then analyses the likely consequences of current issues if they remain unresolved. The current report is titled *2017–2018: Pillars of Regional Growth*.

There is significant variation in workforces' requirements and capabilities. For example, smaller rural and regional governments often face difficulties in being able to provide and maintain the necessary range of technical and professional skills – for example, engineering IT and health-related roles – required to undertake their functions. Some individual local governments have responded by sharing professional and technical staff between councils where it is possible to do so.<sup>26</sup>

## Future Skills Needs

### Strategic Planning

Increasingly, the roles and responsibilities of senior local government officers include aspects of strategic planning across all facets of council activity.

The local government sector, as noted, comprises significant asset and resource bases and, when viewed as a business, requires the processes and disciplines of a commercial operation. Strategic planning and business planning skills are increasingly relevant as local government seeks to define parameters and performance measurements in the face of increasing responsibility (which some might call 'cost shifting') and static or reduced funding and revenue resources. Infrastructure management includes assets, services and the environment. There are also significant strategic planning issues in respect to road system safety and maintenance and capital renewal.

### Service Delivery

Local government service delivery has become more complex and diverse. People who may be directly employed or indirectly employed, by local government are now increasingly delivering services to the public. These client-facing employees not only deliver services but also help the public navigate complex service systems in order to acquire the help or services they need.<sup>27</sup> To help achieve, this client-facing public employees require the skills to help the public manage this process. Knowledge of local government services and structures, with community awareness, empathy, reflection, developed communication skills, along with a level of discretion and the empowerment to get things done are essential for these employees.

Increasing demand coupled with fiscal constraints mean that there is increasing pressure to identify efficiencies, including those which can be achieved in work design and productivity. Technology has facilitated greater transparency in service delivery and performance which can be adopted in terms of establishing productivity measures. These can be applied to, for example, utility usage, the ability to weigh/predict volume in waste collection and processing, and infrastructure management, including assets, services and the environment.

Local governments are accountable to their communities and a structured review process has been adopted in some areas of the sector. Service delivery reviews form an ongoing process to ensure local government is delivering what the community needs in the most responsive and efficient way, especially with changing community needs and emerging external factors such as the need to respond to climate change. To be able to contemplate current and future service needs, establishing a review process builds the capacity of both staff and the community is important. It also leads to innovation in service provision.<sup>28</sup>

### A Changing Community Expectation

Being at the forefront of government, local councils have the greatest capacity to identify and respond to changing and emerging community needs and expectations. To meet changing community expectations, local government must be able to understand and address the current and future needs of their communities, as well as the challenges and opportunities those communities face. This includes sound management of council finances, assets, and resources to create the best value; engaging the community; promoting fairness; maintaining asset and service standards; and meeting statutory responsibilities.

### Risk Management

Local governments have a critical role in the management of risk and the safety of communities in multiple key areas with high visibility.

For example, key areas of concern include:



- **Emergency Response Management**

Local governments play a central role in emergency management because of their primary responsibility for ensuring the safety of their communities and providing immediate emergency response following a disaster. Therefore, as first responders in emergency situations, local governments should be adequately prepared to provide immediate and continued assistance to their constituents. The updates to the training package products need to include reference to any other training packages prescribing standards in this area.

- **Counter-Terrorism**

The role of local government in counter-terrorism is often overlooked. The introduction of bollards in public places is a visible and recent example of a response to this threat.

According to the Australian Strategic Policy Institute,<sup>29</sup> there has been little attention given to determining the consequences for local government of a terrorist attack, which will involve financial costs but also cause damage to social and economic systems, to structures, to regional reputations and to the capabilities and roles of local government in enacting counter-terrorism prevention and response.

Updates to the training package products need to take into account the changing roles and skills needs of local governments in relation to counter-terrorism.

- **Community Safety**

The responsibility of ensuring the safety of the community does not rest only on the police. Governments, communities, and partnerships at all levels must be actively engaged. Local government represents the closest level of government to the community which is why it is uniquely placed to make sure that communities remain safe, secure, and vibrant.

Authorities are beginning to acknowledge that collaborative crime prevention efforts are likely to be more effective than single agencies (such as a police department) working alone, and that targeted strategies using extensive analysis, monitoring, and evaluation, often yield better results.

- **Other**

- Changing environmental legislation. The dynamic changes in this impact on local government compliance.
- Road safety and the implementation of the *National Road Safety Strategy 2011-2020* incorporating the *Safe System* principles,<sup>30</sup> and the implications of autonomous vehicles. Local roads comprise over 85% of the Australian road network.<sup>31</sup>
- Playground safety. Frequent inspections of playgrounds and equipment are essential to ensure they are inclusive, safe, and up to standards.
- Risk management, in light of the ongoing changes to the legislative environment within which local government operates.

### **Leadership**

Leadership skills are of significant importance in the local government sector. A structured framework to identify, develop and foster these skills is evidenced in some local governments, while others report a lack of resources and expertise to address them.

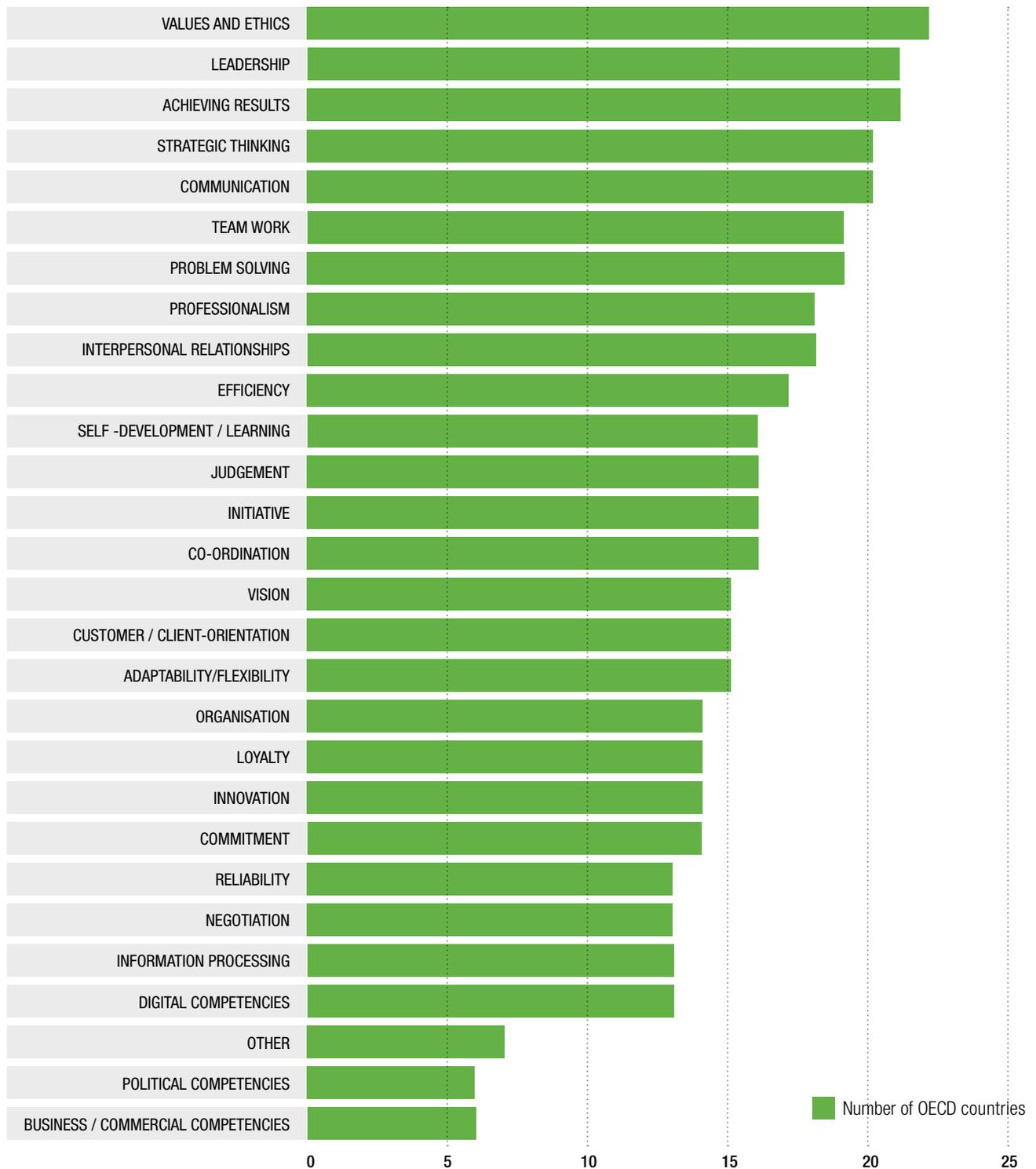
Formal training provides a foundation for the diverse skills associated with leadership, from technical skills to solving problems and managing change. A quarter of senior leaders in private sector organisations have no formal training or qualifications beyond secondary school. This is also true of most Australian-owned small or medium-sized organisations. It has been shown that investing in leadership development has a positive effect on leadership capabilities, which help improve workplace performance and innovation.<sup>32</sup> Integrity, and the importance of public trust, is also an important element of effective leadership in the sector.

### **Governance**

Public expectations of staff performance are significant in the local government sector. These expectations apply to all levels of the workforce and include elected officials.

A recent OECD study showed that most countries ranked Values & Ethics and Leadership as the most important qualities that their leaders should espouse (see Figure 1).<sup>33</sup>

**Figure 1: Competencies highlighted in competency profiles (OECD 35, 2016)**



Source: The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), Public Governance Reviews, Skills for a High Performing Civil Service



### Elected Members

Elected members have a challenging role. There are no official pre-requisites to stand as a candidate, and elected officials often represent diverse communities with competing priorities. Once elected, councillors can be responsible for overseeing multi-million-dollar budgets. Elected members can bring a variety and depth of skills and knowledge to their role and in some cases may be challenged by the environment and scale of the responsibilities

In South Australia, Western Australia and Tasmania, voting in local government elections is not compulsory, and this creates the risk that sectional

interests can be over-represented in decisions about service delivery priorities. This phenomenon has been the subject of research studies.<sup>34</sup> Until recently, South Australia was the only state that required elected members to receive training in order to hold office. In August 2016 the NSW *Local Government Act* was amended to include a provision for a person in the role of a councillor to '*...Make all reasonable efforts to acquire and maintain the skills necessary to perform the role of a councillor*'.<sup>35</sup> In support of this, the amendments allow regulations to be made for induction and other professional development for mayors and councillors.

Local government associations, councils, government departments and private providers now provide councillor-specific training in a wide range of topics and formats. Today there is a range of high quality, relevant training and professional development opportunities available for local government councillors.

There are, however, some gaps in the training and professional development being offered, with significant differences from state to state.

There is also sector-wide interest in a nationally coordinated approach to the structure of nationally recognised training standards that cover the full range of knowledge and skills required to fulfil the role of councillor.

### **Preparation of Newly-elected Councillors for their Roles**

Newly elected councillors can feel both overwhelmed and unprepared for the workload which faces them, as well as for the depth and breadth of the responsibilities which they will assume once elected. The 2016 Census of elected members in Western Australia conducted by the University of Western Australia found that approximately one in four elected members completing the survey had not completed Year 12 of secondary education.<sup>36</sup> The NSW Office of Local Government is consulting with councils in relation to comprehensive guidelines for councillor induction and professional development. The consultation draft highlights the key issues faced by new councillors and acknowledges the demanding and multifaceted nature of the roles.<sup>37</sup>

### **Soft Skills**

Soft skills include things like communication, teamwork, problem solving, emotional judgement, professional ethics and global citizenship. Deloitte Access Economics forecasts that two-thirds of jobs will be soft-skill intensive by 2030.<sup>38</sup>

Soft skills are almost universally viewed as desirable but consistent definitions are elusive. Research in the local government sector has highlighted the need for skills in relation to collaboration within the sector, with the public and with external parties. These skills are highly

valued and becoming more significant as the range of services and functions evolve and the way in which they are delivered changes with the application of technology, data, expectations and requirements. Many states have implemented programs and frameworks which actively incorporate soft skills, given the recognition of their growing importance.<sup>39</sup>

Interpersonal skills which foster collaboration, critical thinking and engagement are also significant in local government as the sector continues to operate dynamically in times of change. The demonstration of integrity and values in behaviours is an important element of effective leadership at all levels of the sector, and critical to community trust.

These skills are and will be vital to workers within the local government sector in the future as frontline staff often need to deal with, and display ethical judgement in respect to, complex issues that can be personal in nature - as in, for example, the need to intervene in matters such as home renovations, neighbourhood disputes, and issues involving pets or companion animals. Dealing with conflict in the course of one's work also involves utilising these skills, and is a requirement in many local government job roles where the enforcement of regulatory or legislative requirements is a vital component of the role - as is the case, for example, for parking rangers.

There are a number of units of competency in the existing training package products that need to be updated to align with these aspects of job roles, and there are also cross-sector project considerations to be addressed. It is imperative that industry be satisfied that the specific needs of the local government workforce are met.

These skill requirements are not unique to Australia and are reflected in OECD research.

### **Technology**

With the constant evolution of technology through automation, Artificial Intelligence (AI) and robots, the skills needed by the workforce today will be vastly different in the coming years. Technological disruption will require the ability to adapt, as it will change the



process by which some jobs are carried out and possibly replace others entirely.

Australians are generally welcoming of technology and most believe that innovation and new technology development is vital for Australia's future prosperity.<sup>40</sup> There are some predictions that, due to technology, approximately 40% of the workforce will be replaced by computers in the next 10 to 15 years.<sup>41</sup> This does not take into account, however, the fact that new technology also creates new jobs and often replaces inefficient processes. Also, rather than replacing a worker's role, the rise of technology and automation won't necessarily change what jobs workers do; rather, it will change the way in which workers perform their jobs. Technological advancement has the ability not just to impact low-skilled workers by replacing menial tasks through automation, but also affect highly skilled workers through supplementary AI, or even by replacing cognitive tasks.<sup>42</sup> It is imperative that training package products being developed or updated are flexible enough to incorporate rapid changes in technology and do not 'time-lock' training to current systems only.

### Digital Literacy of the Workforce

Technology has had a major impact on how local governments engage with the community and stakeholders, particularly with respect to accessing and sharing information, the release of information to appropriate audiences, and engagement and transparency.

Digital literacy and competency in the use of different technological platforms are recognised as essential skills for the future. Without basic digital competencies a person will not have the skills to negotiate the digitally connected world which has now become the norm.<sup>43</sup> Workers will need the ability to use digital technology in their jobs to access and use information and digital content; communicate and collaborate through digital technologies; manage their digital identity; develop digital content; and use and protect their digital devices, personal and organisational data and privacy.<sup>44</sup>

The digital transformation in governments is resulting in an ever-increasing number of ways in which local governments can interact with the community to identify

issues and propose better policy and service solutions. Social media can allow governments at the local level to source ideas from the public to provide platforms for policy discussion, as well as providing information. Managing social media is a particular skill set that is not usually combined with policy expertise, and it requires a new and constantly updated skill set. SkillsIQ is currently conducting a cross-sector project titled *Consumer Engagement via Online and Social Media*, which aims to identify the skills that are required now and will be required in the future, to conduct online and social media engagement.<sup>45</sup>

There are emerging developments in defining national standards for Big Data skills, particularly those in relation to data management, data analytics and data-driven decision-making, and identifying related skills needs shared by multiple industry sectors.<sup>46</sup> Additionally, there is a requirement for cybersecurity skills, particularly those utilised in relation to data confidentiality, protection and privacy, and there is a need to identify related skills needs shared by multiple industry sectors.<sup>47</sup> There are currently Cases for Change under consideration by the AISC that have been developed regarding cross-sector skills of this nature.

The 2017 *Digital Productivity Report* by the Local Government Association of Queensland noted that councils in Queensland have realised that there is a skills shortage in terms of digital literacy. 43% of councils in Queensland are committed to overcoming this shortfall by recruiting new staff who already have these skills or by training existing staff.<sup>48</sup> Not only are councils in Queensland looking to upskill their workers in digital literacy but they are also looking to implement technology into their work practices, given their understanding that being digitally enabled and productive through technological advancements allows for enhanced communication and engagement with residents and their communities. Over the last six years, councils in Queensland have moved away from simply collecting data as a performance measure to a more strategic approach. This will afford more opportunities for councils to improve their processes and deliver better community outcomes.<sup>49</sup>

Councils in Queensland are also becoming increasingly aware of the value of engaging with customers through social media, and are concentrating their efforts on Facebook. 57% of councils in Queensland report that they use social media to engage with customers.<sup>50</sup> This also means that staff will need the skills to be able to manage this new job function. The Australian Workforce Strategy 2013–2020 recognises the need for councils to invest in the skills of their workforce and has highlighted this as a major strategic initiative.<sup>51</sup>

The Office for Local Government NSW has also identified the upskilling of staff as a major strategy and has outlined actions to complement the need to invest in skills, including developing state-wide strategies to increase the employment of apprentices and trainees in local government; developing a state-wide proposal for vocational education and training funding in order to address common skills gaps among employees; and developing and implementing a capability framework that describes the capabilities required by councillors and employees of local government.<sup>52</sup>

### **Procurement Skills**

Local government purchasing processes need to be transparent to ensure public trust is not compromised by commercial transactions. The size and complexity of the transactions vary enormously and so too do the processes involved. Increasingly, local government departments also establish contractual relationships with third-party service providers to deliver services to citizens on their behalf. This can take many forms, from service contracts and grants to non-profits and social impact bonds. Expectations are that local government staff will be able to conduct complex impact assessments, cost/benefit analyses, risk management, forecasting and foresight, and assess value for money. This requires a range of commercial, legal and regulatory skills that go far beyond most countries' expectations of traditional procurement agents. They include knowledge of markets and the ways in which firms operate; how to design and manage contractual relationships in a way that provides value to all parties (and especially the public); and how to regulate markets. This necessitates

not only commercial skills to establish and manage contracts, but also the ability to set market-based policy frameworks and design systems for providing feedback on how the various actors (regulators, commissioners, providers) are achieving policy objectives. Additionally, local government employees setting up and managing contracts need to have skills related to integrity and the management of conflicts of interest.<sup>53</sup>

A significant aspect of procurement in the local government sector is the longer-term nature of managing the contracts. For example, a service delivery contract to local governments may extend over a number of years and require specialised knowledge of equipment, machinery and resource allocation. The contract management aspects are a yet further layer of complexity in the procurement function in this sector.

Road and infrastructure projects, in particular, often extend across networks and require a high degree of collaboration, both within the sector and with other tiers of government, as well as private businesses. Examples are road systems, water management, plant purchase and maintenance, etc.



# Key Generic Skills – Ranked in Order of Importance

Note: The 12 generic skills listed below, including the descriptors, were provided by the Department of Education and Training for the purpose of being ranked by industry representatives. For the 2018 ranking exercise, an ‘Other’ generic skill option was included in the list to capture any additional key skills considered important for an industry. Please note that, in this case, no other generic skills were identified.

1	<b>LEARNING AGILITY / INFORMATION LITERACY / INTELLECTUAL AUTONOMY / SELF-MANAGEMENT</b>	Ability to identify a need for information. Ability to identify, locate, evaluate, and effectively use and cite the information. Ability to develop a working knowledge of new systems. Ability to work without direct leadership and independently.
2	<b>MANAGERIAL / LEADERSHIP</b>	Ability to effectively communicate with all functional areas in the organisation. Ability to represent and develop tasks and processes for desired outcomes. Ability to oversee processes, guide initiatives and steer employees toward achievement of goals.
3	<b>CUSTOMER SERVICE / MARKETING</b>	Ability to interact with other human beings, whether helping them find, choose or buy something. Ability to supply customers' wants and needs. Ability to manage online sales and marketing. Ability to understand and manage digital products.
4	<b>COMMUNICATION / COLLABORATION / SOCIAL INTELLIGENCE</b>	Ability to understand/apply principles of creating more value for customers and collaborative skills. Ability to critically assess and develop content with new media forms and persuasive communications. Ability to connect in a deep and direct way.
5	<b>TECHNOLOGY AND APPLICATION</b>	Ability to create/use technical means, understand their interrelation with life, society, and the environment. Ability to understand/apply scientific or industrial processes, inventions, methods. Ability to deal with mechanisation/automation computerisation.
6	<b>DESIGN MINDSET/ THINKING CRITICALLY / SYSTEM THINKING / PROBLEM SOLVING</b>	Ability to adapt products to rapidly shifting consumer tastes and trends. Ability to determine the deeper meaning or significance of what is being expressed via technology. Ability to understand how things that are regarded as systems influence one another within a complete entity, or larger system. Ability to think holistically.
7	<b>FINANCIAL</b>	Ability to understand and apply core financial literacy concepts and metrics, streamlining processes such as budgeting, forecasting, and reporting, and stepping up compliance. Ability to manage costs and resources, and drive efficiency.
8	<b>ENVIRONMENTAL / SUSTAINABILITY</b>	Ability to focus on problem solving and the development of applied solutions to environmental issues and resource pressures at local, national and international levels.
9	<b>LANGUAGE, LITERACY &amp; NUMERACY (LLN)</b>	Foundation skills of literacy and numeracy.
10	<b>DATA ANALYSIS</b>	Ability to translate vast amounts of data into abstract concepts and understand data-based reasoning. Ability to use data effectively to improve programs, processes and business outcomes. Ability to work with large amounts of data.
11	<b>ENTREPRENEURIAL</b>	Ability to take any idea and turn that concept into reality/make it a viable product and/or service. Ability to focus on the next step/move closer to the ultimate goal. Ability to sell ideas, products or services to customers, investors or employees etc.
12	<b>STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths)</b>	Sciences, mathematics and scientific literacy.



## Key Drivers for Change and Proposed Responses

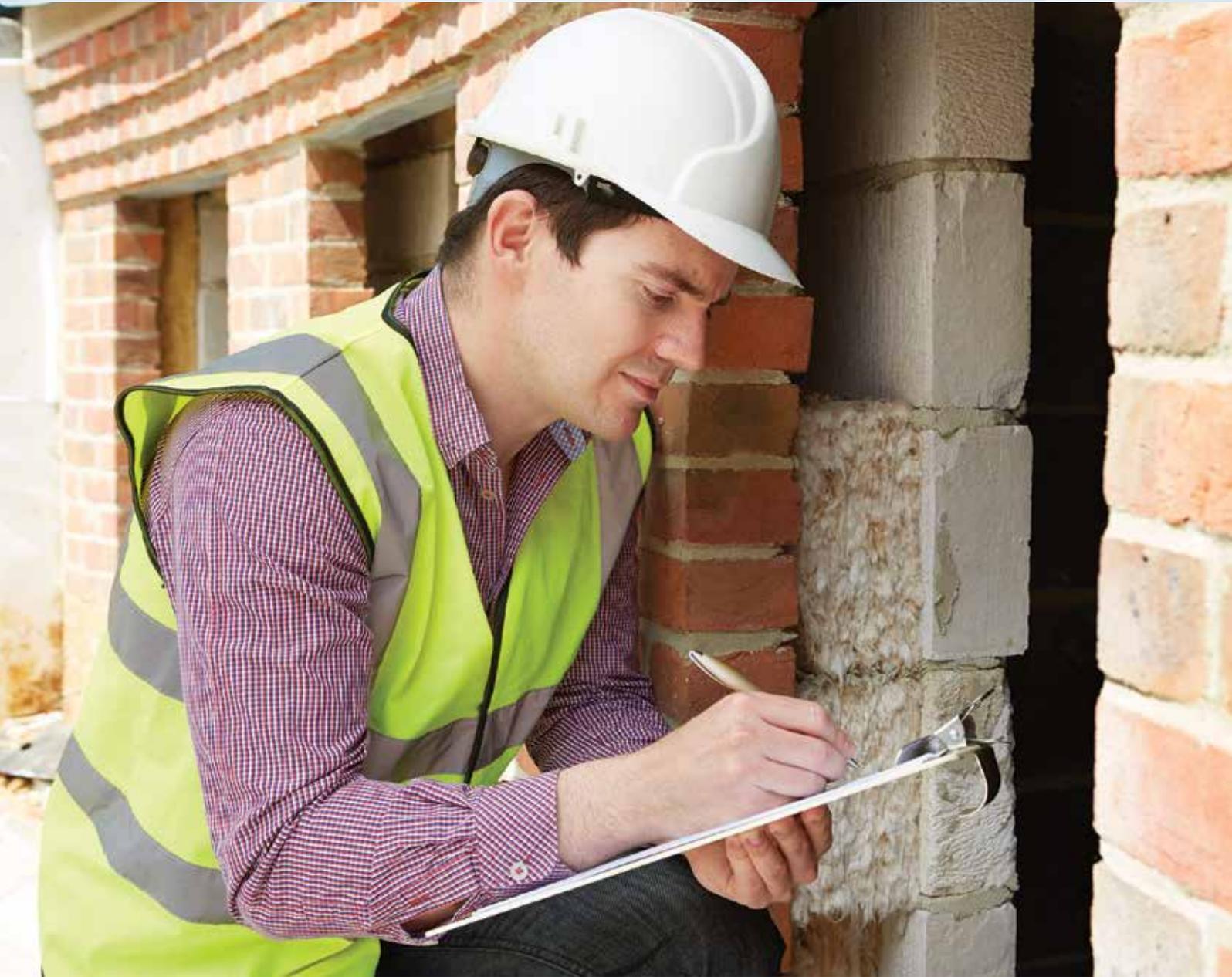
The *Local Government Training Package* is currently undergoing a full update to ensure it is fit for purpose and aligned to current and future industry skill needs.

Significant changes in job roles related to health and environment, waste management, water management, procurement, and commissioning and controlling assets have been identified within a framework of governance and regulatory parameters. These contribute to some of the unique features of the skills and knowledge requirements within the local government sector.

In addition, the skills and knowledge requirements of elected officials are a significant consideration in the

sector, particularly as public trust is critical to the integrity of local governments and the essential role they play in community leadership.

This Industry Skills Forecast was made available via SkillsIQ's website for comment in March 2018 and promoted to over 17,000 stakeholders registered in SkillsIQ's database network for feedback. The draft was prepared through an online national survey administered in November/December 2017 and in consultation with the Local Government IRC, with input from wider industry stakeholders.



## Proposed Schedule of Work

A major update of the *Local Government Training Package* is currently underway and due for completion in December 2018. It is possible that there will be future projects identified through the consultative work carried out as part of this review.



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