**REPORT 3**
*(1215/52/IM)*

# REPORT BACK ON CONFERENCE:
# 2011 AUSTRALASIAN CONFERENCE OF THE
# INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR PUBLIC
# PARTICIPATION (IAP2)

## 1.    Purpose of Report

To report back on Wellington City Council's attendance at the 2011 Australasian Conference of the International Association for Public Participation (IAP2).  It includes an overview of the sessions covered and learnings from the conference.

## 2.    Details on the Conference

The biennial Australasian Conference of the International Association for Public Participation (IAP2) was held on 20-21 October in Australia.  The venue for the conference was the Sydney Masonic Centre in Sydney city.

The conference theme, "active participation in a changing world" was underpinned by three pillars: Excite, Engage, Evolve.  The conference aims were to showcase leading practice and challenge current concepts through exploring:

**Excite:** Why and how to motivate, mobilise and inspire the community to get solid results and sustained input;
**Engage:** How current practice influences communities and achieves better decisions; and,
**Evolve:** How to meet the challenges of a rapidly changing landscape and remain relevant, specifically:
–    How to effectively use technologies for appropriate audiences;
–    How to leave a legacy of strong, resilient communities following natural disasters and other major challenges; and,
–    How to reenergise and nurture ourselves in the face of sustained community outrage.

Councillor Paul Eagle attended as Portfolio Leader for Community Engagement. Council staff attending from the engagement and housing teams were Rosie Gallen, Vicky McLaren, Wendy Walker and Simon Wright.

The full conference programme is attached.  Councillor Eagle and Wendy Walker attended a pre-conference event on embedding engagement into

organisational culture.  Other council staff joined the site visit to the Airds Bradbury social housing complex to find out more about the award winning public participation process utilised in the development of the site.

There were 4 Concurrent Session blocks across the 2 days of conference, each of 90 minutes duration.  Each session block offered 6 choices, including a 'Feature Session' in the Plenary and a diverse range of 'Curated Sessions' in 5 breakout rooms.

Curated Sessions were programmed in pairs, ie. 2 curated sessions of 45 minutes duration were incorporated into a single 90 minute session; delegates were asked to remain in their selected session for the full 90 minutes; there was no programmed break and some pairs delivered a single, integrated session.

There was no pre-registration requirement or sign-up at conference – delegates were free to attend their sessions of choice.


## 3.     Subjects Covered

**Wednesday 19 October: Pre-conference events**

**"Culture eats strategy for breakfast"** - **Embedding engagement in organisational culture. Presented by Geoff Wilson, President, IAP2 International (Canada).**

This interactive workshop addressed these questions:
*   What does creating a culture of engagement mean for organisations?
*   What conditions and qualities characterise a culture of engagement?
*   What is the call to leaders, and what are the leadership qualities needed to build and sustain a culture of engagement?
*   What artefacts and evidence point to creation of a culture of engagement?

**"Site visit to Airds Bradbury"** - **Showcasing the winning project of the International and Australasian Core Values Awards for 2010.**

Airds Bradbury is the biggest social housing public private partnership in the history of New South Wales (NSW).  The Airds Bradbury renewal project represented the NSW state government's new approach to social housing which targets the building of communities rather than construction of towers.  The 15 to 30 year program will transform 1,470 dilapidated public housing units into around 2000 21st century homes provided as a mix of social housing, affordable housing and private dwellings adjoining neighbouring reserves and retail.

The site visit gave participants the chance to experience the techniques and meet with the designers, producers and participants that worked together through OutLOUD, an internationally recognised engagement process.

OutLOUD involved hundreds of residents young and old in the social and physical renewal of their neighbourhood. The renewal project continues to be shaped by the input from local people and there was an opportunity to meet them and hear their stories.

Three key sessions from each day have been highlighted:

**Thursday 20 October: Day 1**

**Opening plenary: "State of the Practice" Reports**
Mark McCrindle, an internationally recognised 'social researcher' and well known for tracking emerging trends in society, was exposed as a fraud on Australian TV the week prior to the conference. His commentaries and advice were not based on any credible research. IAP2 responded by cancelling his opening keynote address. On the evening before the opening plenary, New Zealand experts Anne Pattillo and Simon Wright were asked to be substitutes by launching IAP2's State of the Practice (SOTP) reports.

The reports were the culmination of an 18-month participatory process. Over 300 public participation practitioners were involved in creating the first ever snapshot of the state of public participation in West Australia, South Australia, Victoria, New South Wales, Queensland and New Zealand. The presentation highlighted a few of the findings (see the table below) and issued a general invitation to help reflect further on this work and develop recommendations for advancing the practice.

| Foundations | Legislation requires minimum level |
| | Growing membership |
| | Organisational commitment key |
| | Training widely available |
| Reach | Strength of local government |
| | Organisational leadership key |
| | Government changes reduce visibility in 2 jurisdictions |
| Quality | Purpose skewed |
| | Varied quality without a strong standards for practice and use |
| Impact | Little evidence |
| | When influence promise isn't kept cynicism develops |

The State of the Practice reports can be downloaded from the members section of the IAP2 website:
http://www.iap2.org.au/resources/cid/48/parent/0/t/resources/l/layout.

**Concurrent Sessions 1 - Day 1: "Using social media for public participation" (Chair: Simon Wright)**
This was a very popular session which was well chaired. Becky Hirst (Table Talk Engagement) assessed the potential of a range of social media platforms and tools against the IAP2 spectrum. However, many of the examples she cited were not actually related to decision making, so were not about public participation at all. Sadly, this is an all too common mis-use of the IAP2 framework. Michael

Ulph (GHD) tried to demonstrate that social media can be used to cost-effectively target communications with specify types of people or people in specific geographical locations.

**Concurrent Sessions 2 - Day 1: "Making the practice more influential and stakeholder management" (Chair: Simon Wright)**
Another well attended session. Stuart Waters and Max Hardy (Twyfords) led half the session with a presentation entitled "It's all about power: Why your technique will never work". They invited session participants to devise engagement strategies to help the mayors of two fictitious towns solve parking problems and then role play pitching to the respective mayors for the work. The point they were making was that people in positions of power are likely to view the world differently from public participation practitioners, so to be successful, practitioners need to let go of their techniques and engage with the power holders to co-create solutions.

The other half of the session was led by David Hawkins (SOCOM). His talk looked at his company's framework for managing stakeholder relationships – 'an organisations most valuable but under-utilised asset'. He claimed that SOCOM software enables firms to easily audit and quantify relationships, and provide insights into ways for improving those relationships.

**Gala Dinner and Core Values Awards**
The winners of the Australasian Core Values Awards 2011 were announced during the dinner. The 'Organisation of the Year 2011' went to Melbourne Water. As an organisation, they have fully embraced IAP2's public participation core values. The key to their success has been their Stakeholder Engagement Strategy. It drives how they engage and details their intent to apply the IAP2 core values and 'Public Participation Spectrum'. One of the paths they took to embed public participation was to create a "one-organisation" approach to the way they build relationships and work with stakeholders.

**Friday 21 October: Day 2**

**Plenary session 1: "Involving people in decision-making in meaningful ways – are we getting it right? Let's ask them."**
The Australian 'Kim Hill', Julie McCrossin interviewed residents from the Airds Bradbury social housing complex about their lives and their experiences of public participation. She also interviewed staff from relevant authorities. These stories attested to the potential of excellent public participation in terms of better decision making, better relationships and capacity building.

**Concurrent sessions 1: Project of the Year**
The IAP2 Practice Committee (Anne Pattillo, Nicole Hunter and Simon Wright) collaborated to design and host this session, which profiled and evaluated the Australasian winner of Project of the Year against an expanded version of IAP2's planning for effective public engagement framework. The winner was the Department of Innovation, Industry, Science and Technology's project called 'Community Engagement in Science and Technology: A multi-stakeholder

collaboration to develop a framework for community engagement'.  This is the first time a federal government agency has won a Core Values Award.  The session also encouraged participants to reflect on their own practices. Participants were given a copy of the process so that they can use this simple participatory evaluation process for their own community engagement projects.

**Concurrent sessions 2: Organisation of the Year**
The IAP2 Practice Committee also designed and hosted this session, which profiled and evaluated the winner, Melbourne Water, against the McKinsey 7S framework.  The framework is a management model that is most often used as a tool to assess and monitor changes in the internal situation of an organisation. The session also encouraged participants to reflect on their own organisation approach in this space.

## 4.    Material for Circulation

The full conference programme is attached.

## 5.    Learnings/Next steps

The conference provided an overview of best practice engagement in an Australasian context.

Key lessons from the conference focussed on the importance of:
• Acknowledging that a "one size does not fit all" approach is necessary for best practice decision-making;
• An effective engagement framework that fully encompasses the IAP2 spectrum – need to advance "collaborate" and "empower" phases;
• fundamental principle that "everyone needs to do engagement" – staff, contractors, council controlled organisations and elected members alike;
• brand values (the "attitude and behaviour") need strong leadership;
• clarification of marketing and communications and the channels utilised to drive engagement; and,
• global move to utilise e-Democracy and the need for a better understanding of the place and value of social marketing.

These have been incorporated into the proposed engagement framework (which is being presented to councillors at this meeting).

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