

# Getting that Council report right

➤ **Around 100 people working in Local Government have participated in LGPro's Local Government Report Writing program since it started in March and their response has been overwhelmingly positive.**

As anyone faced with preparing reports will tell you it is vital to get them right as there is a clear link between the planning that goes into a report and the ease of implementation of the resulting Council resolution.

Good reports contribute to higher trust between Councillors, the community and staff and better decisions can be made more promptly when reports are of a high standard.

LGPro's specialist training panel, including experienced former CEO Doug Sharp and Steve Cooper of Civic Minds, facilitates the program for LGPro. Steve says he has enjoyed seeing people grow in confidence after completing the one day highly collaborative hands on workshop.

"I have run the program at a number of metropolitan and rural Councils and it has been great seeing the participants develop a deeper understanding of what makes a good report," he said.

The program is designed for anyone who writes or authorises Council reports and wants to develop the skills to report effectively. It includes:

- The Local Government context to ensure reports are appropriately framed
- Characteristics of good reports
- Roles and responsibilities
- Pre-planning
- Working through a case study.

Steve said the program was developed following requests from Councils who understood that the quality of good reports directly

influenced the ability of a Council to make the best possible decisions in the community interest.

"The reports also reflect and shape the levels of trust and the health of the relationships between the elected Council, the administration and the community," he said.

"Effective reports are strategically focused, factually accurate and contain frank and fearless advice. They also have regard to potential media impact, stakeholder expectations, due diligence and capacity for effective implementation. This requires input from the report writer, collaborators, service management and executive level personnel.

Above all reports must be readable, so time is spent understanding the readership and their need or simple well-constructed reports that provide a coherent narrative."

## Steve's tips for writing a good report

- **Start by drafting an Executive Summary as a report outline**
- **Be concise (ie. two-three pages where possible) and use simple language**
- **Explore options in your report**
- **Don't be a cheer leader for your recommendation, stay with the facts**
- **Your recommendation should be able to be read alone**
- **Review and re-write your Executive Summary last**

Visit [LGPro's Report Writing Program](#)

## Hear from a participant

Leah Jones-Davies, the Coordinator of Customer Service at Indigo Shire doesn't find writing reports such an "overwhelming" process after completing the workshop.

She said: "The structure provided in the workshop is easy to use and flexible enough to be used for various reports. I now know that I shouldn't expect two reports to be written the same way. I learnt to firstly consider my position in the process and secondly to consider the audience, timing and relevance of the information I am providing and write the report accordingly."

As well as receiving invaluable take home notes, Leah found the workshop a great networking opportunity and a chance to get other's experiences and perspective on Council business.

