



WOMEN IN LOCAL GOVERNMENT – Stand for Your Community

BOB: I hear that the NSW Government is encouraging women to stand for election to local government. Do you want to tell me a bit more about your experience of this issue?

AMANDA: It is good to see this campaign being led by the NSW Government and it would be good to see it encouraging greater diversity of candidates so that elected Councillors better reflect the communities that they represent.

For many years I was the Vice-President of Womensport and Recreation NSW and there were very rewarding results as we were pushing against an open door. I facilitated a strategic planning workshop for Cricket NSW to encourage more women and girls to play cricket, and Cricket NSW has been one of the leaders in women's sport. We have seen a big increase in women's sports locally, nationally and globally. We see a lot more women's sport on TV. I was so thrilled to see the Australian Women's Water Polo team win Gold at the Sydney Olympics and the 20th anniversary was celebrated recently, and I was there when it happened!

Womensport and Recreation NSW was also very involved in lobbying for more women on Boards; more women in the management of sporting bodies, and working with the **Male Champions of Change** to help those changes to happen.

There are many statistics about the importance of diversity and one of the most telling is this from the **Catalyst Information Centre: Why Diversity Matters.**

'Companies with more women board directors outperform those with the least in three financial measures: return on equity (53% higher); return on sales (42% higher); and return on invested capital (66% higher); than average results prevailed at companies with three or more on their corporate boards.'

There does not seem to have been the same progress for women in local government, both as Councillors and officers, in NSW, as there has been in other sectors. The term 'boys' club' is often used to describe the culture of some councils, and I have certainly experienced that in my local government career in NSW.

I have found that organisations with a monoculture, whether it be almost all men; almost all women; all anglo Australian people or all people of a similar age and background, tend to suffer from 'group think'. If we believe that women are equally as intelligent as men, then organisations with only men at the top will, by definition, fall well short of the performance that could be achieved.

While I was thinking about this column the Equal Opportunities episode of 'Yes, Minister' popped up on TV. It was filmed almost 30 years ago and has some of the best scripts of any comedy before or since. In a meeting of all of the white male Permanent Secretaries to discuss Equal Opportunities Sir Humphrey says: 'So we are all agreed. We agree in principle that we should promote the best man for the job regardless of sex' and 'I think we should stress that it would be difficult to find a more diverse bunch than us.'

Later in the evening I watched the movie 'The Rose' starring Bette Midler with the great line - 'come on ladies let's stop being waitresses at the banquet of life'.

Research (Johanna Adriaanse, UTS) shows that it is difficult for any one person to make an impact on a Board or Council, and that for real change to happen 'minority groups' need to have at least one third of the positions on the governing body.

We started writing these columns to encourage people to get more involved so that we can get the best out of our councils. At the last local government elections in 2017 I understand that 88 candidates stood for election including 13 groups of 6 (known as tickets). Only one of the tickets had a woman at number one on the ticket, which was Joanne McRae, and she was elected. So, essentially we need more tickets with women and people from different backgrounds to stand as number

one on the ticket so they can be elected and bring about the kind of change that comes from a better balance when the governing body better reflects the community they serve. We do not need more tickets!!

BOB: So tell us a bit more about the NSW State Government campaign.

AMANDA: The NSW Minister for Local Government the Hon. Shelley Hancock, MP is leading a campaign to encourage more women to stand for election to their local council at the local government elections in September 2021.

'The NSW Government is committed to inspiring and empowering more women to stand for their local community and nominate to run for their local council at the September 2021 elections.'

Did you know that women represent less than a third of all councillors and mayors serving on the 128 councils in NSW?

Women from all walks of life are being encouraged to put their hand up for election to help ensure local councils are representative of the communities they serve.

If you have a strong sense of community and are keen to make a difference in your local neighbourhood, then you should consider nominating for the 4 September 2021 local government elections.

Local councils are the level of government closest to the community. They provide key infrastructure, facilities and services to local residents and are integral to improving the lifestyle and amenity of local communities.

Councillors represent their local community's needs, wants and aspirations and make important decisions on behalf of their local community.

You don't need any formal qualifications and you will receive training, support, expenses and fees if you are elected.

There is nothing more rewarding than serving in the level of government closest to the local community.'

There are videos and resources available at:

<https://www.olg.nsw.gov.au/public/about-councils/become-a-councillor/women-in-local-government-stand-for-your-community/>

Resources include:

- Women for Election Workshops
- A Snapshot of Women in Local Government that states:
- Election of Women to Local Government Action Plan
- Help promote female participation in the NSW local government sector

The Office of Local Government has prepared a range of promotional materials to encourage more women to stand for their community at the council elections on 4th September 2021 and these are downloadable from the website page.

Orange City Council held a workshop for women interested in standing as Councillors in partnership with the NSW Australian Local Government Women's Association (ALGWA) in October 2019. This was followed by a workshop for potential candidates run for Orange City Council by Local Government NSW and the second workshop that was scheduled for May was cancelled as the local government elections were postponed for 12 months to 4th September 2021.

- The Ministers' Awards for Women in Local Government

These awards have celebrated the dedication and commitment of female staff and councillors in local councils in NSW since 2008. I have to confess to being one of the designers of these awards when I was CEO of Local Government Managers Australia (LGMA) NSW. I have nominated two award winners and the awards have become bigger and better over the years, now having 11 categories of Awards.

BOB: I understand that last week's City Watch was cut off in the middle.

AMANDA: Yes, somehow the whole table of representation on Council Community Committees didn't make it into the column, so here is the missing bit.

COMMITTEE NAME	CHAIRPERSON	COUNCILLORS
Orange & Cabonne Roads Safety (OCRSC)	Cr Treavors (Cabonne)	Cr Duffy, Cr McRae
Orange Conservatorium & Planetarium	Cr Duffy	
Orange Regional Museum	Cr Kidd	
Orange Showground	Cr Kidd	Cr Munro, Cr Romano
Parks, Trees & Waterways	Cr Kidd	Cr Nugent, Cr Hamling
Sister Cities	B Ostini	Cr Duffy, Cr Mileto
Sport & Recreation (inc. Bicycling)	Cr Hamling	Cr Duffy, Cr Nugent
Spring Hill	Cr Mileto	Cr Munro, Cr Nugent
Tidy Towns	Cr Duffy	Cr Munro

If you would like to discuss any of the matters that Bob and I raise in our conversations, please feel free to contact me at aespalding2@bigpond.com or on 0417 288 246.