DECISION-MAKING: THE COUNCILLOR AS A DIRECTOR

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The Importance of Community Culture

This paper takes its initial direction from the Prospectus that invites participation in the 17th EAROPH World Planning Congress. The introductory statement about EAROPH in the Prospectus declares:

> *EAROPH is committed to the provision of better quality of life for the people of this region without the need to sacrifice their socio-cultural values. EAROPH was founded in 1954 at a time when … concerned professionals of various discipline concurred that* (urban planning and housing for the masses) *were matters which would best be handled by those who were culturally in-tuned with the countries involved.*

Culture is 'the way things are done'. By its statement EAROPH asserts truly that before any local or national community adopts for itself techniques that are successful in another community, it is important to have a sound understanding of that other community's values and decision processes.

A community's traditions of governance derive from its attitudes concerning, for example, representation, community participation in public affairs, and tolerance of dissent. These attitudes may differ from place to place, and from time to time. In Australia, the Victorian Local Governance Association (VLGA) has adopted a Statement of Mission, Values and Objectives, as fundamental to good local governance (Appendix). The six Values adopted are:

- *the right of communities to manage their own affairs through democratic processes*
- *local governance based on the interests of the whole community*
- *economy, effectiveness, efficiency and equity in the use of community resources*
- *equal access for all citizens to community information and resources*
- *free, open and informed discussion prior to decision on community issues*
- *accountability of local governments to their electors.*

This VLGA declaration in 1997 lead to the development of a Code of Good Governance *prepared by representatives of local governments throughout Victoria. … the focus is on principles of governance with an emphasis on accountability, leadership, community responsiveness and relationships.*[1)]

This paper reflects extensive experience in local governance and municipal infrastructure in Australia. Hence it ought to be read in the context of values perceived by Australian local government practitioners.

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1) Municipal Association of Victoria & Victorian Local Governance Association. *Code of Good Governance.* Melbourne, 1997.

Municipal Governance in Australia

Australia is a federation of six sovereign states. Each state has established a system of local government, and excluding major projects, has delegated responsibility for civil engineering infrastructure to municipalities. Councils of elected lay people direct the care and management of local roads, stormwater drains, solid wastes, smaller public buildings, and recreation lands. Rural councils often manage town water supply and sewerage as well.[2)]

Municipal councils have responsibility for several utility systems. Consequently, they are able to transfer financial resources between systems, as well as allocate resources among elements of each one of the separate systems. Much of the asset value of civil engineering infrastructure lies in the reticulation components that are managed by municipalities. Municipal councils spend much of their recurrent funds on the operation and maintenance of those utilities.

During the last ten years the increased use of private contractors to deliver municipal services has made more evident the strategic role of the elected body. Each year an elected council must publish a corporate plan, consult with its constituents, adopt a three-year budget, and report performance against the objectives in the corporate plan. The process implies that the corporate plan must be understandable to 'ordinary' people.[3)]

It is important to acknowledge that giving direction is only one of the roles of a councillor. Reports from inquiries into local governance usually conclude

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2) Australian Local Government Association. *The Australian Local Government Handbook*. Australian Government Publishing Service, Canberra, 1989.

3) Local Government Board, Victoria. *The Roles and Functions of Councillors*. Melbourne, 1995.

that an elected councillor has three distinct roles: community representative, policy director and performance monitor.[4)]

In its 1995 assessment of the roles and functions of councillors, the Local Government Board, Victoria, reported that:

> *"Many ... saw the role of councillors as analogous to that of the Board of Directors of a company. ... But the Board is mindful that while councils should be run in a business-like way, they are more than a business. Local government is also about participation and interaction with communities. In this regard the model does not take proper account of the 'community service/involvement obligations' of councillors and therefore is useful only as a broad guide".*[5)]

Nevertheless, if councillors are expected to 'act more like directors', than as representatives or monitors, then it is important to define the role and function of a director adequately. One purpose of this paper is to explore the meaning of 'director' in the context of Australian local government.

The Meaning of 'Director'

Common usage and understanding of the term *director* implies a commercial context.

The Macquarie Dictionary defines a director as *one of a body of persons chosen to* control *or govern the affairs of a company or corporation*.[6)] Some key concepts worthy of note in this definition are:

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4) Board of Review. *Local Government in Victoria: Role, Structure and Administration*. Final Report. Melbourne, 1979, p.138.

5) Local Government Board, Victoria. *The Roles and Functions of Councillors*. Melbourne, 1995, p.11.

6) *The Concise Macquarie Dictionary*. Doubleday, Sydney, 1982.

- *one of a body,* implying that no director has authority as an individual; ultimate authority is vested in the corporate body,
- *chosen,* suggesting that a director is elected or appointed from among others belonging to some defined population, and
- *to control or govern,* which in an ordered society requires a source of power such as may be found in the Australian Corporations Law, and in a company's Memorandum of Association.

The meaning of *director* may be elicited also by reference to associated words and phrases. In the Macquarie Thesaurus *director* is listed with word groups relating to *advisory body, guidance, management/manager,* and *ruler.*[7)]

Another approach is to distinguish the role of a director from that of the executive staff. Attempts have been made in the case of some Australian statutory corporations to make the distinction explicit through a legislated statement of respective powers and duties. Garratt makes a more useful and positive contribution when he points out the complementary nature of both roles:

> *But there is a vast difference between 'directing' and 'managing' an organisation. Managing is literally, given its Latin root, a hands-on activity thriving on crises and action. On the operations side of an organisation it is a crucial role. Directing is different. Directing is essentially an intellectual activity. It is about showing the way ahead, giving leadership. It is thoughtful and reflective and requires the acquisition by each director of a portfolio of completely different thinking skills. Both managing and directing are necessary for a healthy enterprise.*[8)]

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7) *The Macquarie Thesaurus.* Macquarie Library, Sydney, 1984.

8) Garratt, B. *The Fish Rots from the Head*. Harper Collins, London, 1996, p.4.

Directing in Local Government

This paper accepts the premise that municipal councillors should consider and, wherever appropriate, apply the lessons of good governance found in private enterprise to their role as directors.

Councillors have the power and duty to utilise public resources to achieve public purposes. They operate in a political environment. Politics is concerned with making choices. In practice councillors as directors make choices by expressing collective preferences through formal legal processes in order to satisfy agreed community purposes.

The generic role of local government in Victoria is reflected in the *Purposes of a Council* as prescribed in the Local Government Act 1989:

> *S6. (1) The purposes of a Council are -*
>
> *(a) to provide for the peace, order and good government of its municipal district; and*
>
> *(b) to facilitate and encourage appropriate development ...; and*
>
> *(c) to provide equitable and appropriate services and facilities for the community ...; and*
>
> *(d) to manage, improve and develop the resources of its district ...* [9)]

These four purposes become specific to a locality through the Corporate Plan of a council.

In theory every council, through the prescribed orderly annual cyclic process of corporate planning, public consultation, budgeting, and reporting, delivers these purposes to its local community.[10)] The intention of the prescribed process is consistent with the classical managerial functions of planning, organising, directing, and controlling.

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9) Victoria. *Local Government Act 1989,* S.6.

10) Garratt, B. *The Fish Rots from the Head*. Harper Collins, London, 1996.

Ultimately, of course, the central and principal focus of both councillor and executive activity must be the budget. Peck describes the political importance of the budget very succinctly through his experience in government in Washington USA. He comments in pungent terms:

> *What politicians chiefly do ... is fight. And they fight hard. ... They also fight dirty. And, finally, they mostly fight each other. What they fight about mainly is money in the form of budgets. I do not mean to imply that these budgetary battles have nothing to do with ideas or ideals. A budget is a concretization of priorities. But I don't mean to imply that their fighting is commonly altruistic. Most of it is to preserve or enlarge one's own slice of the budgetary pie at the expense of someone else's slice.*[11)]

Corporate resolution of conflict, if not mutual cooperation, is a necessary prerequisite of any budget. Ultimately it is the council of a municipality that makes decisions about the strategic direction of civil infrastructure systems, because the council determines the budget. Budgets express in tangible form the values and priorities of municipal corporations.

Expectations of Board Performance

Some recent Australian recommendations for effective corporate governance, that are worthy of consideration by local governance practitioners, include those proposed for private enterprise by committees chaired by Bosch and Hilmer.[12)]

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11) Peck, M. Scott. *The Different Drum*. Rider, London, 1988, p.309.

12) Bosch, Henry & others. *Corporate Practices and Conduct.* Information Australia, Melbourne, 1993.

Hilmer, F. G. *Strictly Boardroom - improving governance to enhance company performance.* Information Australia, Melbourne, 1993.

In his recent text, Garratt commends *Standards for the Board* prepared by the Institute of Directors, London and refers to four pairs of conflicting objectives of governance, which he describes as 'Directoral Dilemmas'. Paraphrased, he says that a board must be:

- entrepreneurial whilst keeping prudent control,
- knowledgeable about day-to-day management yet retain a longer-term view,
- sensitive to local issues yet be informed of the broader trends, and
- focussed on commercial needs whilst acting responsibly towards society.

Garratt then adds:

> *These are massive expectations of any board and demand a diversity, in terms of breadth and depth of experience, knowledge, attitudes and skills, which cannot be expected of any one individual. no matter how powerful. That is why we have a board of directors. In theory a board is a collegiate activity - all members are equal.*[13)]

A directorship is usually a part-time occupation. Directors do not necessarily have professional qualifications relevant to all corporate functions, nor are they likely to have independent technical assistance. As individuals, directors of corporations might be described as 'intelligent lay people' who are accountable ultimately to their stakeholders. As a group, directors are often quite diverse in their knowledge, cultural values, and skill. Diversity can be a significant strength of a board provided it is properly utilised. Since no director has individual executive power except by specific delegation, the corporate wisdom of the board prevails.

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13) *The Macquarie Thesaurus.* Macquarie Library, Sydney, 1984, p.14.

The Nature of Council Decisions

Directing any corporation is concerned with making strategic choices. If a municipal corporation is to make sound decisions then councillors should be aware of all the choices, be offered all the choices, and be thoroughly prepared to make all the choices. Professional staff has an ethical responsibility to ensure that councillors have adequate information and opportunity to make sound decisions. They have a responsibility to educate lay directors into the language of their professions.

In these circumstances professional staff of a municipality need to develop decision parameters that express a layperson's expectation of the services to be delivered, that are understood by councillors, and are useful to executives in a practical way. Municipal directors responsible for a sewerage system may be asked to set, for example, standards for admission of trade waste, limits for the incidence of overflow in wet weather, and charges for maintenance of citizens' assets. Municipal engineers should devise decision parameters carefully, so that they are suitable for use in the design and operation of the utility. The consequent council resolutions should be unambiguous and capable of execution.

Furthermore, if the role of councillors is to be strategic rather than operational, then it is essential to discern the questions about which councillors should exercise choice, and those that the council should delegate to executive staff. Councillors should govern on the premise that as directors they are collectively responsible for all actions of the council, including its staff.

Someone, somewhere in every organisation makes a decision before every action is taken. Whoever does so acts under a considered statement of policy or by specific delegation or by default of direction. Thus councillors have a duty of care to establish a 'decision tree' to make sure that responsibility is clearly and correctly assigned.

Duty of care requires a council to consider the appropriate roles of the council and its engineering staff when it makes decisions about provision of municipal engineering infrastructure: public buildings, roads and bridges, water supply, sewerage, drainage, parks and playgrounds, and waste transfer stations.

If the process of resource allocation to various infrastructure systems is to be orderly and objective, then for every 'good' or 'service' desired by citizens, the council should consider and decide the strategies that will do so equitably, economically, efficiently and effectively.

Lay Decision Service Parameters

Commonly, citizen interest is focussed on the quantity, quality, and reliability of services delivered by each utility system. Everyday causes of complaint include road congestion, failure of intersection signals, lack of water pressure, and excessive flooding. System failures such as these may demonstrate that the municipal corporation is not satisfying service obligations declared in the Corporate Plan, or in the Customer Charter.

However Figure 1 demonstrates that charters are not always precise and might not provide useable engineering parameters. If a customer charter gives inadequate guidance, then out of necessity engineers adopt design parameters from codes and manuals, or settle for 'best common practice'.

Customer charters are a method of expressing the quality of service acceptable to citizens. Quality has been defined as the totality of features and characteristics of a product or service that bear on its ability to satisfy stated or implied needs.[14] Garvin suggests that quality has eight dimensions:

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[14] Chestnut, W. R. *Quality Assurance: An Australian Guide to ISO 9000 Certification.* Longman, Melbourne, 1997.

performance, features, reliability, conformance, durability, serviceability, aesthetics, and perceived quality.[15)]

Figure 1. Residential Customer Charter of Yarra Valley Water
(Extract from public document circulated 1998)

Our Service Commitments

Your rights to water supply

We will ensure that the water we supply:

- meets your reasonable needs;
- meets minimum flow rates in the customer contract;
- is clear and free from objectionable odour and taste;
- meets health requirements listed in the customer contract;
- is of quality at least equal to that provided prior to 1995;
- continues to improve across our area as we complete improvement plans listed in the customer contract.

As an example, a municipal council is obliged to consider characteristics of the service that vehicle drivers might want from public roads: *riding comfort, rapid mobility, safety, reasonable cost, and amenable streetscape*.[16)] In addressing these issues municipal engineers might ask:

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15) Garvin, D.A. "Competing on the eight dimensions of quality". *Harvard Business Review*. Nov.-Dec. 1987, pp. 101-9.

16) National Association of Australian State Road Authorities. *Guide to Traffic Engineering Practice: Part 2 – Roadway Capacity*. Sydney, 1988.

- what riding comfort is reasonable? should the roughness count be 80 or 120?
- will domestic drivers and commercial hauliers require the same road geometry?
- whose budget takes priority – the haulier, the domestic driver or the road authority?

Similar questions can be asked about the attributes of quantity, quality and reliability that citizens expect of town water, sewerage, and stormwater drainage systems.[17)]

Municipal engineers should recognize that assumed though unstated values of system parameters can pre-empt significant decisions in budget considerations. The standard of service assigned to competing users, the use of regulation and rationing, and the configuration of components adopted within a utility all affect the allocation of resources by the council. Every engineering parameter chosen to express service will affect the corporation budget. Consequently, assessment of system performance, rather than detailed assessment of particular engineering projects, should take precedence in corporate budget deliberations.

The Generic Nature of Utility Systems

Extensive personal experience as a municipal director convinces that 'ordinary' people perceive a utility as a complex maze of pipes or traffic routes. Lay people have a minimal understanding of a utility system's inner operations; they experience infrastructure through personal contact with a very few system components. As representative 'ordinary' people, lay directors also tend to view individual engineering projects as isolated

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17) Pilgrim, D. H. (ed.). *Australian Rainfall and Runoff: A Guide to Flood Estimation.* (rev.ed.) The Institution of Engineers, Australia, Canberra, 1987.

components, not as improvements to a service system. Complexity often confuses people; even experienced directors might not 'see the wood for the trees'.

Conceptually, the similarity of civil infrastructure systems suggests that municipal engineers could develop a generic procedure to treat with the common strategic decisions in different utilities. 'Systems thinking' could assist directors to understand complex technical issues better.

The fundamental structure (storage nodes and transfer links) and the behaviour (operational controls and influences) of the different civil engineering systems, as illustrated in Table 1, are very similar. Nodes have purposes of storage that enable redistribution of traffic in time and redirection in space. Links have the purpose of transferring traffic to other desired locations in time and space. Nodes and links have operational controls both inherent (pipe diameter and roughness, road geometry and pavement width) and assigned (rationing rules, control valves, and intersection signals).

The physical capacity of nodes and links is designed according to the level of service to be delivered. Design capacity is sometimes exceeded and the system fails to deliver: roads become congested; stormwater drains overflow, and water storages threaten to run dry. Adequacy of storage, and conversely an acknowledged explicit risk of failure, is an example of a useful design parameter that can be understood by a lay director.

Management of a system's condition pre- and post- failure is an essential part of design. Traffic engineers devise operating rules to allocate space in car parks and on freeways when demand is likely to exceed supply. Water is rationed in very dry periods. Sewerage engineers designate overflow points to control sewage discharge in extremely wet weather.

Every utility system has a unique capacity that provides an optimum reliability or risk of failure. Given a desired benefit, one principle determining system capacity is to minimize the sum of the costs of infrastructure and the losses caused by failure to deliver service. An alternative approach is to consider the reduction in cost of failures as the benefit of creating infrastructure. From this perspective optimum capacity is that which returns

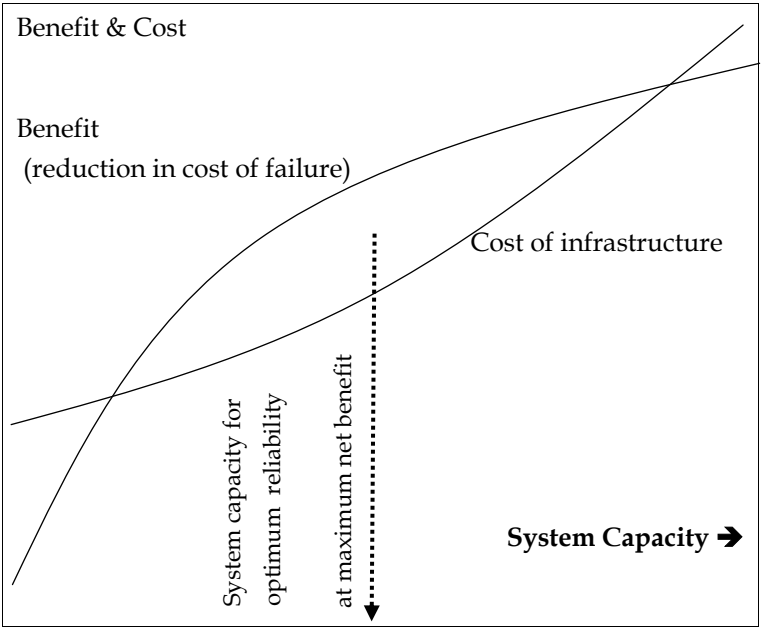
maximum net benefit as shown in Figure 2, or maximum benefit to cost ratio, or for some entrepreneurs, the shortest payback period.

Table 1. The Generic Functional Character of Civil Engineering Utilities
(*illustrated by selected civil engineering components*)

Utility Element and System	(Dis)tributary LINKS	Minor storage NODES	Transfer LINKS	Major storage NODES	(Dis) charge LINKS	Operational Controls	Operational INFLUENCES
Road Network	access ways to & from sites	Precinct parking	neighbourhood collector roads	district parking stations	arterial roads; freeways	road dividers; signs & signals; load limits	advisory signs; tolls
Urban Water Supply	reticulation pipes to sites	service basins	transfer mains	aquifers; dams & pumped storage	rivers	valves, gates, weirs, pumps	user education; rates & charges; rationing
Sewerage	site collection sewers	septic tanks; detention storages	trunk sewers & pump stations	Sewage treatment plants	effluent outfalls	controlled overflows	rates & charges; trade waste controls
Storm-water Drainage	site collection drains	on-site detention	main drains	retarding basins	constructed canals	kerbside entry; litter traps; stoplogs	taxation rebates for land surface treatment
Solid Waste Disposal	site sorting & bin collection	separation & transfer stations	compacted long haulage	landfill; incinerators	gas vents; leachate drains	public health & environmental regulations	user education; fees & charges
Multi-Storey Office Building	passage ways to & from offices, stores, restrooms	elevator lobbies	elevators; escalators; stairways	entry foyer; loading dock; parking station	public spaces; roadways	public health & safety regulations; security barriers; load limits	evacuation drills; advisory signs; parking fees

Some useful service parameters for councillors might be the designed frequency of water rationing, the likely maximum travel time in peak morning traffic, and the expected failure proportion of sewage effluent quality tests. The concept of optimum capacity implies a deliberate acceptance of a calculated risk of failure, and conversely, an assured reliability. Nevertheless, directors may adopt system reliability based on political judgement or other considerations.[18)]

Figure 2. System Capacity for Optimum Reliability
(or risk of failure allowing maximum net benefit)



18) Frecker, G. B. *Planning-Programming-Budgeting for Balanced Development of Melbourne's Water-based Utilities.* Internal Report to the Melbourne & Metropolitan Board of Works, 1970.

Budget And Service Evaluation (The BASE Chart)

Ordinary citizens and representative directors are interested in how much a service costs them, how often their road is likely to be congested or flooded with stormwater, and the effect that a collapsed sewer or a potholed pavement or a geyser from a fractured water pipe might have on their amenity. Such questions may seem simple to a lay citizen, but the answers depend on understanding complex system behaviour. Professionals have the task of finding appropriate decision parameters that will help councilors to understand these complexities and so give reasoned answers to citizens' questions.

One useful approach is to reduce complexity to practical working relationships between citizen beneficiaries, available resources, utility system assets, and services delivered. Examples of these relationships include budgets and tariffs, programmed maintenance systems, customer charters guaranteeing reliability, and community service obligations. This means, for each 'good' or 'service' desired by citizens, a council must consider simultaneously:

- what level of service do the various stakeholders expect from the system?
- how should the corporation raise funds for each improvement project?
- what is the best configuration of the physical system?
- how should the existing physical assets be utilised to deliver services?

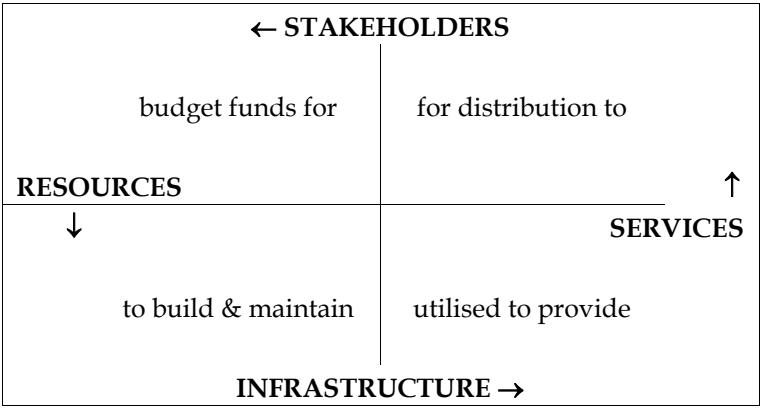
In some instances the inter-relationships implied in these objective questions can be expressed as mathematical functions, and they can be displayed on Cartesian coordinates as in the BASE Chart of Figure 3. Each of the axes can be scaled and the parameters measured. The professional's task

is to find measures that are meaningful to both lay director and executive staff.

Each quadrant expresses a relationship – an **objective function** – and describes a transforming process between two pairs of decision factors measured on the four axes, that is:

Quadrant	One	describes	equity: distribution of services among stakeholders
……	Two	……	economy: taxation and pricing policy
……	Three	……	efficiency: configuration of the physical system
……	Four	……	effectiveness: utilisation of the system to provide services

Figure 3. Conceptual Objective Functions for Decision Making



The process in each quadrant can be expressed by numerical relationships. In some cases the relationships might be discontinuous ('stepwise'); often a quadrant will contain a family of objective functions dependent on one or more secondary parameters. It is a matter of council choice which one of a family of functions is appropriate, and where on that curve the corporation

wishes to operate at a particular time. The objective function and operating position selected in each quadrant represent the council's decisions about the relative merit of the values of equity, economy, efficiency, and effectiveness in its operations. Some implications of the factors of choice are:

Equity considerations allow flood protection to vary between parkland, residential, industrial, and commercial catchments, priority to be given to multi-passenger vehicle use of peak time road space, and design speed for roads to differ between local and highway traffic.

Economy can be implemented through prices, fees and charges. Prices may be market driven based on average unit cost, or alternatively, marginal cost pricing may give consumers of large quantities a substantial discount. Prices may be used as an instrument of policy to limit excessive use of scarce resources; small users may pay a lesser unit rate especially if most are pensioners.

Efficiency in provision of engineering assets is a problem of optimal system configuration. A council may use the criterion of maximum benefit-cost ratio or of maximum net benefit, to select the best combination of pipe drain and retarding basin, or to require some private pre-treatment of trade waste before public treatment of sewage.

Effectiveness is achieved by regulation of traffic signal phasing, reservation of flood prone land, insuring against damage by flood, and rationing water supply in fire fighting crises.

The Development of Municipal Directors

Clearly rational decision-making about services to be provided by municipal infrastructure is complicated. The challenge facing professionals is to describe complex concepts in simple terms, and within the life experience and language of lay directors. Inevitably, of course, councillors will make decisions influenced by political considerations, but those decisions should be informed also by basic technical understanding.

Councillors usually have a good understanding of their community, the ability to market ideas (and themselves), the ability to organise, and considerable energy and persistence. Councillors do not usually come to office as ready-made directors. Normally they do not have the 'knowledge, attitudes and skills' seen as essential by Garratt. Councillors need guidance, encouragement and forbearance to enable them to develop as valuable leaders of the municipal team.

General *knowledge* about Australian local government practice is readily acquired through attendance at conferences and seminars. Comprehensive short courses are available to a lesser extent, commonly promoted by peak associations.[19] More and better courses are needed.

As to attitudes, councillors are obliged by provisions of the various Local Government Acts to respect private and confidential commercial information, to declare any conflict of interest, and generally not to take personal advantage of their public office. New councillors step into a legal minefield when they take office and swear:

> *"I, AB declare that I will undertake the duties of the office of Councillor in the best interests of the people in the municipal district of (.....) and faithfully and impartially carry out the functions, powers, authorities and discretions vested in me under this or any other Act to the best of my skill and judgement"*.[20]

The best of *skill* and *judgement* are demanded, however poorly developed. Councillors must act *faithfully* and *impartially* usually without any considered advice as to the likely meaning of those obligations.

Skill as a director is much less generally recognised as a necessary attribute for councillors. Little if any formal training is provided. Most councillors gain a measure of negotiation and like skills by osmosis, that is, by 'training on the

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19) Frecker, G. B. & others. *Preparatory Training for Local Government Candidates.* Graduate School of Government, Monash University. November 1995.

20) Garratt, B. *The Fish Rots from the Head*. Harper Collins, London, 1996, S.63.

job'. One useful course worthy of consideration by councillors is that conducted by the Australian Institute of Company Directors.[21)]

Most people find it easier to deal with specific issues rather than with general policies, to consider practical details rather than abstract concepts, and to argue from the particular to the general, rather than from the general to the particular. How can councillors be trained to respond as directors when this is 'unnatural behaviour'? A recent paper by Taylor makes an excellent contribution to this dilemma.[22)]

Above all, if good decisions are to be made by a municipal council, then barriers in language and understanding must be overcome. Politics is about making choices, but the choices should be presented in lay language and terms meaningful to lay councillors. Professional responsibility should cause executive staff to facilitate development of directorial qualities in councillors, and so achieve better decisions for the 'ordinary people' that they serve.

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21) *Company Directors Course*. Australian Institute of Company Directors.

22) Taylor, D. *Communicate or Crumble.* MS. 1996. (Manuscript in possession of author; later presented to a conference of engineers in Queensland, Aust., publisher unknown).

APPENDIX

VICTORIAN LOCAL GOVERNANCE ASSOCIATION
(Associations Incorporation Act 1981)

MISSION, VALUES AND OBJECTIVES
(adopted by the membership in Special General Meeting 7 August 1997 as the basis of the VLGA constitution.)

MISSION

The role of the Association is to be a principal source of democratic and co-operative leadership to municipalities and associated community groups and to assist local governments to maintain peace, order and good government in the municipal districts of Victoria.

VALUES

The Association expects of itself and seeks to encourage in Australian community life the qualities of integrity, justice and respect for other citizens. In particular the Association supports:

- the right of communities to manage their own affairs through democratic processes
- local governance based on the interests of the whole community
- economy, effectiveness, efficiency and equity in the use of community resources
- equal access for all citizens to community information and resources

- free, open and informed discussion prior to decision on community issues
- accountability of local governments to their electors.

OBJECTIVES

In fulfilling its role the Association has the following objectives:

a) to support and promote democratic, elected and accountable local governments in Victoria;
b) to seek the inclusion of an inalienable right to a system of democratic local government in the Victoria Constitution Act 1975 and the Commonwealth of Australia Constitution;
c) to promote compatibility in local, state and national governance;
d) to assist local governments to manage, improve and develop the resources of their districts;
e) to assist local governments to provide appropriate services for their communities;
f) to facilitate co-ordination of the actions of local governments and other public bodies;
g) to facilitate involvement of citizens, users of services and municipal staff in local governance;
h) to assist local governments and community organisations to represent and promote the common interests of their citizens;
i) to promote and undertake research, training and public education in any matter relating to the objectives of the Association or to the objectives, functions and powers of local governments;
j) to raise funds and undertake any action consistent with the objectives of the association.