

Australian Institute of Environmental Health



## National Local Government Environmental Health Workforce Summit

*The changing landscape of the environmental health workforce  
in local government:  
turning threats into opportunities*

**2 - 3 July 2007, Brisbane**

### Summit Report



## **Acknowledgements**

The Australian Institute of Environmental Health (AIEH) would like to express its gratitude to the Australian and New Zealand Environmental Health community and stakeholders for contributing to the success of the *AIEH: National Local Government Environmental Health Workforce Summit* on 2 – 3 July 2007.

In particular, the following organisations (listed alphabetically) have financially contributed directly to this event:

**ACT Government, ACT Health**

**Brisbane City Council**

**Commonwealth of Australia as represented by the Department of Health and Ageing**

**Environmental Health Committee (enHealth)**

**Food Standards Australia and New Zealand**

**Government of South Australia, Department of Health**

**Government of Tasmania, Department of Health and Human Services**

**Government of Western Australia, Department of Health**

**New South Wales Government, NSW Health**

**Northern Territory Government, Department of Health and Community Services**

**NSW Food Authority**

**Queensland Government, Queensland Health**

**State Government of Victoria, Department of Human Services**

## **Executive Summary**

### **Background**

At its meeting in October 2006, the Board of the Australian Institute of Environmental Health (Institute) accepted the recommendation of the Educators' Forum to conduct an environmental health workforce summit focusing on local government. The specific issues identified by the Institute in relation to the local government Environmental Health Officer (EHO) workforce included:

- A critical current shortage of EHOs and projected worsening of the situation
- Regulatory requirements are not being met by government agencies
- There is no broad national information on and response to the EHO workforce and future workforce planning
- There is a declining university intake for EHO courses
- The changed demographics of EHOs from predominantly middle aged male to either a mainly young females or near retiring workforce
- Employers (state and local governments) not valuing a generalist EHO workforce
- Government and particularly local government restructures have tended to categorize environmental health as purely a regulatory function and thus preclude participation in strategic planning and wider community planning activities

The Summit was conducted on 2 & 3 July 2007 and its purpose was to:

- provide a forum to identify, discuss and comprehend the issues pertaining to the local government environmental health workforce;
- develop a national consensus on the current and future issues facing the environmental health workforce in local government; and
- suggest courses of action that will address current workforce shortages and prepare for future demands in environmental health.

### **Summit Outcomes**

This Report of the Summit Proceedings summarizes and synthesizes the material presented by various guest speakers over the two days of the Summit. Importantly, the ideas and suggestions put forward and discussed by participants will be explored further and used as a basis for the development of a national strategy around the four key themes: Indigenous Health, Role of Technicians in Local Government Environmental Health, Recruitment Issues/Sexing Up Local

Government Environmental Health, and the Retention of Local Government Quality Environmental Health Workforce.

The specific actions and suggestions arising from the discussion of the four key themes were:

### **1. Indigenous Health**

Indigenous health and environmental health standards are poor. There is a need to support the role of indigenous environmental health workers and to provide opportunities for career advancement and employment for these workers. Suggestions included:

- The Institute making its position clear on indigenous environmental health and the workforce;
- Local government needs to engage more effectively with Indigenous Australian communities;
- Proposed mentoring schemes should include Indigenous Australians;
- Need to ensure the technician role articulates with the Environmental Health Worker concept and opportunities provided for Indigenous Australians to become technicians;
- Need for the Institute's Special Interest Groups in each state to develop and recommend practical policies.

### **2. Role of Technicians in Local Government Environmental Health**

The role of an environmental health technician and environmental health officer is unclear, as is the level of risk associated with the employment of seemingly less qualified personnel.

Suggestions/issues included:

- Having different levels of training for different tasks, such as, Scientific Officer (Non-EH Degree or Advanced Diploma) or Technician (Certificate III or IV);
- Technicians could work in one Council under supervision or across work environments and several councils;
- Technicians could be appointed as authorized officers under Public Health Act;
- Technicians must not be employed just because they are cheaper;
- Need for national consistency and legislative frameworks to protect both public health and EHO roles in local government;
- Technicians could undermine EHO cadetships and thus workforce development;
- There could be demarcation issues between roles.

### **3. Recruitment Issues / Sexing up Local Government Environmental Health**

Attracting staff to local government requires a different approach to recruitment as local government is not seen as a preferred employer. The pool from which potential EHOs could come needs to be expanded. Suggestions included:

- Exploring government funding opportunities (including funding for critical skills area) to support environmental health marketing;
- Achieving consensus on the EHO role amongst stakeholders;
- Development of targeted marketing to raise local government environmental health profile (council websites, direct email to community databases) including the identification of resources for marketing;
- Development of an environmental health media presence;
- Development of flexible recruitment pathways including enhancement of relationships with other professional bodies as a marketing strategy, re-engagement of previous EHOs;
- Explore opportunities for funding students in local government placements.

### **4. Retention of a Local Government Quality Environmental Health Workforce**

There are a number of factors that will influence the retention of local government employees. Suggestions included:

- The development of a local government public health role framework for Australia;
- The development of a national approach to increasing the profile of environmental health;
- The development of a scoping paper and memoranda of understanding between ALGA, AIEH, and enHealth to promote consistency in regulation;
- The development of a strategy to increase the value of the environmental health workforce especially to Local Government Senior Management and CEOs;
- The development of models for mentorship, CPD opportunities, and career pathways.

### **Future Action**

The Summit identified the four key themes as pivotal in the future development of the local government environmental health workforce. The Summit set the scene by highlighting important events and major national and international initiatives already undertaken in the area of environmental health workforce. The roles of the Environmental Health Technician and Indigenous Environmental Health Workers were discussed at length and, at the same time, the

importance of how other stakeholders played a vital role in workforce development were examined.

Of particular importance is the need for a collaborative approach between all stakeholders; the State and Territory jurisdictions, the Commonwealth, education providers, employers and peak bodies including the Institute as well as the coordination and integration of current workforce initiatives.

The next stage of the Institute's process is to undertake research to compare and contrast the actions and suggestions within the four themes with international directions and strategies. This will be completed in May 2008. In the third stage of the process, workforce goals and strategies will be drafted together with a set of action plans. Consultation will be undertaken with stakeholders attending the Summit with the aim of collaboratively implementing these strategies. It is planned that this will be drafted in June 2008.

**Jim Smith LFAIEH**  
**National President**  
**Australian Institute of Environmental Health**

## Contents

<b>DAY 1</b> .....	8
<b>1.1 Setting the scene for the Summit</b> .....	8
<i>Opening and welcome to participants</i> .....	8
<i>What do we know already? (Summation of summit pre-readings)</i> .....	9
<b>1.2 Morning 1: Changing nature of tasks for local government EHOs</b> .....	12
<i>The future challenges facing environmental health and implications for practitioners</i> .....	12
<i>Legislation development and regulatory responses of government to environmental risks</i> . 13	
<i>Recruitment and retention: two different issues</i> .....	15
<b>1.3 Facilitated Discussion</b> .....	17
<b>1.4 Summary of Discussion</b> .....	22
<b>1.5 Afternoon 1 – Changing nature of EH workforce in local government</b> .....	23
<i>Changes in public sector and local government workforce and current approaches to workforce management</i> .....	23
<i>Responses to changing nature of workforce: education providers, peak body, examples of current models for accreditation</i> .....	24
<b>1.6 Facilitated Discussion</b> .....	27
<b>1.7 Summary of Discussion</b> .....	32
<b>DAY 2</b> .....	33
<b>2.1 Morning 2: Resolving Workforce Shortage</b> .....	33
<i>Keynote Address – Employers, workforce and legal risks</i> .....	33
<i>Symposium on successful workforce strategies</i> .....	34
<i>Risk based activity levels in Environmental Health practice</i> .....	37
<b>2.2 Case Studies</b> .....	40
<i>Case Study: The Wall Report</i> .....	40
<i>Case study: The overseas experience using Environmental Health Technicians and Environmental Health Officers</i> .....	41
<i>Case Study: Making EH Sexy to Prospective students as Future Employees</i> .....	43
<b>2.3 Afternoon 2: Turning Talk into Action – Discussion Groups</b> .....	44
<i>Group 1 - Indigenous Health</i> .....	44
<i>Group 2 - Role of Technicians</i> .....	46
<i>Group 3 - Recruitment Issues / Sexing Up!</i> .....	48
<i>Group 4 – Retention and Quality Workforce</i> .....	50
<b>2.4 Final Word</b> .....	53
<b>Appendices: Summit Report Appendices</b>	
<a href="http://www.aieh.org.au/conferences/Workforce/index.php">http://www.aieh.org.au/conferences/Workforce/index.php</a> .....	54

# DAY 1

## 1.1 Setting the scene for the Summit

### *Opening and welcome to participants*

**Catherine Bermingham**, *Councillor, Brisbane City Council (BCC)*

Cr Bermingham recognized that there are skills shortages in many areas of local government (LG). However, Environmental Health Officers (EHOs) have a very important role monitoring environmental health, including Health Impact Assessment, food safety, immunisation, health promotion, (all aspects of life), health and safety of our communities, and most importantly, as policy makers and educators.

**Margaret Allison**, *Divisional Manager, Customer and Community Service (BCC)*

Margaret Allison recognised the challenges facing environmental health, and reported on Brisbane City Council's (BCC) current initiatives including reducing energy and water usage, to renewable material used for building. In BCC's Green Star Rating, the venue building has achieved 5 and 4.5 stars. BCC is also educating children through library story time programs, encouraging a change in attitudes and behaviours on being water wise.

Current challenges faced by EHOs at BCC include:

- Stage five water restrictions – with level six on the horizon. BCC is focusing on changing attitudes and behaviours through education and enforcement;
- Noise nuisance, lights from urban living;
- An informed and demanding public, especially with responses to nursing home issues, public prosecutions and food premises;
- Cost shifting between state and local government;
- Increasing density;
- 800 applications for water tank rebates.

BCC recognised that EHOs feel poorly valued, with frustration in enforcement roles and lack of professional development. In response, BCC has researched retention strategies, developing initiatives such as the development of a Corporate Cadet Program which includes Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders.

**Jim Smith, National President AIEH**

It was acknowledged that the environmental health (EH) workforce is more than just EHOs in local government. It is a diverse workforce including federal, state, local governments and the academic and private sectors. It was observed that Australia was experiencing an acute problem in Environmental Health, with local government experiencing the frontline impact. There is a need to build capacity; including the extremely poor indigenous environmental health status. Currently, governments are taking a reactive approach to acute shortfalls in workforce with band aid solutions. There is a need to work from a national level to support the states and territories. To achieve this it is necessary that all stakeholders are informed, find a consensus, and decide what specific action should be taken. This is the purpose of the Summit.

*What should the strategies be? What are the actions we can take?*

**George Negus, Facilitator**

Environmental Health Officers are experiencing an identity crisis – the community does not understand their role. We need more qualified EHOs not fewer. The state and federal governments blame each other. All blame local government. Problems with federalism – issues do not stop at state boundaries.

*EHOs: where are we now, where to from here?*

**Melissa Stoneham, Consultant**

***What do we know already? (Summation of summit pre-readings)***

A summary of the key issues contained in the National Environmental Health/Public Health workforce reviews conducted in Australia to date was presented. All of these reports were conducted to address the skill shortage at the local government level. The profession is facing a national shortage of EHOs and the two key questions that really need addressing relate to input and output:

- Why can't we attract students at the undergraduate level into Environmental Health courses? and
- How can we better support qualified EHOs to prevent them from leaving the profession?

The National Environmental Health Strategy sets out the overall workforce issues, such as sustainability and a changing workforce, opportunities for professional development and training, and raising the profile of environmental health to that of allied health professionals. The shortage of EHOs also engenders concern over low morale and the quality of local government public health services – particularly in rural areas where recruitment is even more difficult.

There have been a number of Environmental Health Workforce Reviews which identified the following issues which impact on the workforce:

- Low career satisfaction;
- Need for family friendly policies and workplaces;
- Problems of recruiting and retaining EHOs, particularly in rural areas;
- Workers' feelings of being undervalued;
- Provisions for professional development need to be made;
- Need for mentoring;
- Greater support for Indigenous communities;
- Trend towards a more feminised and younger EHO workforce (less likely to work in rural areas);
- Poor fit between expectation of role and levels of satisfaction.
- Significant numbers of EHOs intending to retire in next 10 years.

The Wall Report also discussed how Environmental Health Para-professionals (EHPPs) could supplement the role of EHOs, under supervision. They would have workplace training with diploma level qualifications provided under legislation. Tasks undertaken by EHPPs would be risk-assessed and deemed appropriate for EHPPs to perform.

Currently there are nine accredited university courses however, intake issues are affecting these. The Institute's Environmental Health University Program Accreditation Framework (EHUPAF) contains six EH literacies to assist in improving the quality of graduates.

Recommendations from all reports include:

- The development of a register of employable EHOs;
- Support rural/remote councils in recruitment (including cadetships);
- Support Indigenous Environmental Health Workers (EHWs) through training, uniformity in pay, scholarships etc;
- Recruitment of EHOs from retirement, career change, maternity leave;
- Provide non-standard employment options (part-time) for family friendly workplaces;
- Target school leavers and mature age entrants;
- Developing role and training frameworks of EHPPs;
- Explore Councils' likelihood to engage technicians with limited authority;
- Explore cadetship opportunities for suitable Councils (supervision, location, budget etc);
- More coordinated professional development opportunities (implement AIEH CEHP and CEHT schemes);
- Provision of mentoring and administrative support (rural, remote, younger professionals especially);
- Improved community understanding of environmental health and environmental health professionals and support from elected members and peers.

**See also Summit Report Appendices** <http://www.aieh.org.au/conferences/Workforce/index.php>

**George Negus, Facilitator**

We are seeing a shortage factor, an identity crisis, and low morale. A lack of appreciation, you are so busy working you forget to tell people what you do. The community does not understand your role, if they did the government would also hear and understand.

---

## 1.2 Morning 1: Changing nature of tasks for local government Environmental Health Officers

**Kevin Buckett**, *Director Public Health, South Australian Department of Health*

### ***The future challenges facing environmental health and implications for practitioners***

It is easy for the public to forget about environmental health now that major advances have already been made. However, 25 of the 30 years of life expectancy gained have been due to public health interventions. New public health challenges are being faced including Indigenous health, climate change and extreme weather events, terrorism, chronic disease (heart disease, diabetes), skin cancer. For local government tools on climate change, see [www.greenhouse.com.au](http://www.greenhouse.com.au)

Local Government (LG) is the frontline of Environmental Health. There is a diverse range of Councils differing in size, population and budgets leading to an extreme range of capacities to undertake effective public and environmental health measures (See the Australian State of the Environment Report on LG sizes and land mass). LG is under threat and has pressure from fiscal unsustainability, amalgamations, LG numbers in gradual decline since early 1900s, and they have enhanced accountability. LG also faces a community that is demanding, vocal, educated and distrustful. Devolution is occurring leading to new work. Local Government perceives increasing cost shifting from state governments. LG is the least resourced level of government in Australia but has been given additional roles from 1980s on. LGs role in prevention is very important but is not always understood.

Half of the EHOs earn less than \$50,000 in a stressful role – if you want a career, get out of Environmental Health! Non-standard employment options need to be considered as the workforce is ageing – baby boomers are set to retire taking with them irreplaceable levels of workforce experience. There is a sharp drop in new entrants joining workforce from 170,000 a year, to a predicted 125,000 in a decade (2020-2030).

There is a need to consider new models of recruiting and retaining staff including attracting young workforce, paraprofessionals, and mature aged workers.

The role of the EHO is changing from reactive, hands on approach of enforcement and inspection to one of:

- Direct or indirect management of issues;
- A prevention approach based on evidence and risk;
- Facilitated public participation;
- Use of important risk assessment tools e.g. Health Impact Assessment (HIA).

#### **How did we get here?**

- Resistant to change;
- Blockers;
- Buck goes no further;
- Should we reach out? The Planning Institute, for example, has put out a health statement. So there is the question of engaging with Planning, with Environmental Protection; and Public Health.

There is a need to change the culture from blockers to “can do”.

**See also Summit Report Appendices** <http://www.aieh.org.au/conferences/Workforce/index.php>

**Chris Reynolds, National Centre for Public Health Law, Flinders University**

#### ***Legislation development and regulatory responses of government to environmental risks***

The more successful EHOs are in the management of Environmental Health, the more invisible it becomes. It is only when something goes wrong that EHOs are noticed. In the last 20 years there have been changes in public health (PH) legislation which shape the role and practices of the EHO. EH legislation exists in the structure of public health law for issues such as sanitation, communicable disease control, food legislation, non-communicable disease control, to the 21<sup>st</sup> Century issues of lifestyle diseases, sustainability, pandemics and disasters.

The context for this is that before the 1980s it was a simpler and less complicated role. Legislation was developed with *reactive* changes to urban environment crises. Utilitarian ideas were the basis for these – the greatest happiness for the greatest number. Legislation controls were also driven by the miasmatic theory of disease which was wrong but the subsequent actions were appropriate.

The first public health laws were a reactive, top-down process, and mostly still are. PH law came from state health departments down to LG. That LG responsibility has remained. The challenges for new laws are how to make them proactive. How can we recast environmental health legislation?

EHOs continue to be authorized, appointed officers with continued formal statutory functions to perform. But across the states there are still different methods, qualifications, skills and requirements to be an EHO. Mutual recognition principles for employment arise with fears that if the lower standards are accepted they could become the de facto national standard.

If the formal role has not changed much, the legislation has not changed much either. In a Victorian laneway the sign 'Commit no nuisance' still stands ... and technically still relevant. John Snow would be quite comfortable. Most Acts were just amended and are not consistent leading to a need for a rethink of public and environmental health legislation.

Look at lessons of history, for example Port Pirie – 15,000 people near smelter, exposure to workers (from air/marine) from zinc and cadmium. Although influencing human health, issues such as lead, sulphur dioxide and cadmium are regulated under the Environment Protection Act to reduce harm, yet there are also human health issues. Advocacy, health promotion, why Indigenous children have higher blood/lead levels, socioeconomic issues, human behaviours and so on provide a strong argument for EH regulation. They are EH issues.

There needs to be a broadening out of capacity to respond to issues due to:

1. limitations from sanitary origins;
2. the inability to deal with new and emerging EH issues;
3. oversight of EH issues by EPA controls.

The National Public Health Partnership 2000 organised a new approach to 'risk to health' as a key idea and organizing principle. An argument for a **risk-based approach** was made frequently e.g. in Food Acts. When is food unsafe? We have a duty to protect the public's health by, for example, taking all reasonable and practical measures to eliminate the possibility of harm to the consumer. You could have offences causing a risk to health or causing a 'serious risk to health'.

'Good legislation' does not always lead to 'good things' but it is easier with 'good' legislation. Environmental health based legislation which supports the EHO is the way of the future, and this is probably the way that the states are moving.

**See also Summit Report Appendices** <http://www.aieh.org.au/conferences/Workforce/index.php>

**George Negus, Facilitator**

Social reform of policies, strong argument for Environmental Health based approach. The current approach is limited – stuck in a legal rut. Need to rethink approach by focusing on risk to public health, duty of care, idea of public health, happiness for majority.

**Lyn Russell, Local Government Managers Association, CEO City of Thuringowa, and National Skills Shortage Steering Committee**

***Recruitment and retention: two different issues***

Environmental health, planning, engineering and building surveyors are the current critical workforce shortage areas in local government currently (See National Industry Skills Report, Developing a National Strategy - see link below).

With 700 local authorities trying to solve problems in their own way, a greater alliance needs to be formed. If there is not a collaborative approach, then it is a waste of time. Since ABS has no decent statistics on the Environmental Health Workforce, then research must be done workplace by workplace. EHOs is a “best kept secret” and it needs branding, marketing, and the promotion of LG as employer of choice. LG has an image problem, and needs strong leadership for the attraction and retention of staff. There is a need to specify career pathways in local government.

Five key initiatives from the National Strategy:

- Centre for Excellence;
- New ways of working
- Promoting Local Government as an Employer of Choice Brand;
- Training and Professional Development;
- Attracting new workers.

There is a changing culture in local government from enforcers to problem solvers. From protecting the Council to respecting the customer (see power point). There is a need for new leadership skills to communicate EH vision, run flexible strategies and motivate workers.

Old approaches to recruitment are not working and there is a need to change the antediluvian attitudes and stereotypical ways of thinking. Need to learn how to work with a more diverse

workforce (aged, disabled, long term unemployed, ethnic, Indigenous). “Poaching” does not assist in creating a new workforce. Offering employment is not “doing them a favour”. Advertising practices for recruitment are out of date – newspapers/national press – young people use the internet to find jobs. 51% of the older age-group employees work part-time. Need to look after the unsuccessful candidates too.

Important factors in recruitment and retention for EH workforce:

- Consistency (toolkits, checklists /guides – consistency);
- Family friendly workplaces;
- Career pathways for EHPPs;
- Attracting migrants, older, single women, indigenous people;
- Employer of choice brand – government advertisements, national brand;
- It is more affordable to retain your staff – people work for organisations but leave Supervisors;
- Succession planning should be based on growing your own people to be managers; administration personnel can be grown into EHPPs;
- Provide challenges, stimulation, encouragement for staff e.g. conferences, training.

**See also Summit Report Appendices** <http://www.aieh.org.au/conferences/Workforce/index.php>

**National Industry Skills Report – available at:**

[http://www.dest.gov.au/sectors/training\\_skills/publications\\_resources/profiles/national\\_industry\\_skills\\_report.htm](http://www.dest.gov.au/sectors/training_skills/publications_resources/profiles/national_industry_skills_report.htm)

## 1.3 Facilitated Discussion

**Panel: Professor Ian Lowe, Ms Kathy Kelly, Dr Chris Reynolds, Dr Kevin Buckett, Ms Lyn Russell**

### Ian Lowe: Three models

- *1. Increase Retirement Age:* No sense in a model making people work a 60hr week until 60. The earlier you stop working these hours, the longer your life is! We need flexible ways to utilize the experience and wisdom of our ageing workforce, humane phase out, work phase in.
- *2. Cadetship model* – my own experience. It's a good way into workforce for people, better induction, phasing into work during study, resulting in a productive worker.
- *3. Feeling Valued:* Increasing importance of EH – the most significant determinant to health. There are high expectations of environmental health worker (impact, risk, sustainability etc.) from a demanding government. There is a need for recognition of the value of EH. In the current climate there is little appreciation by decision makers of the demands of the job. *Problem:* Environmental health practitioners are considered to be a burr on saddle of decision makers. We need to develop better community understanding of EH roles.
- Principles:
  1. every dollar spent saves dollars later;
  2. every effort now reduces human suffering later on.

### Kathy Kelly – Training framework for para-professionals:

We have the knowledge, the policies but no money for training. Skills shortage was a key issue 4-5 years ago. Staff have nowhere to go for training and development. We assume all have acquired qualifications – 45% of senior workers have never gone through formal qualifications, or received on the job training. Another solution is to look to developing and retaining the workforce we have. 82% of the workforce does not want to take up full time retirement. We do not have programs in place to provide upskilling and career diversity. Major concern with paraprofessionals (PPs) is that it must not erode universities. Need a framework for EHPPs.

*Framework regarding EHPPs:*

- Training for those working in the discipline – minimum two years employment;
- Will have qualified practitioners to deliver a 6 day course – will be assessed by a qualified panel and their employer;
- People allow qualified planners to meet demands;
- 12 months ago, steering group (QLD, QUT, HLT, BCC, AIEH);
- How to qualify;
- Level of risk;
- Best training is qualified EHO in Council;
- Candidates work on job related projects;
- Launch course in August, 15 pract. 6-day course, over 5 months, EH projects in workforce, EHO officer and panel;
- To support EHO – no EHO, rural, splitting duties (RISK).

What is the level of risk if they become para-professionals in the field?

**Jim Smith:** There must be diverse workforce. Cadetships are good idea as you learn the skills to practise. I am concerned about local government taking a minimalist view i.e. what is the cheapest option and therefore forgetting about the community. Environmental Health Standards are about the community.

**Kevin Buckett:** We think we are invisible. People relate roads, rates, rubbish to our jobs, and nothing more. Need for growth in risk approach, not clipboard approach. LG wants to do the right thing, but faced with cost shifts – fundamental tension; how will it support EH? By low skilled minimum qualification workforce, working just to minimum standards? Need better legislation.

**Chris Reynolds:** Responsibilities delegated down to LG but HIA will pick up issues which do affect health of people – a holistic approach to EH. Prevention is better than a cure. Our first town planners were EH planners e.g. discharge levels set and perhaps EHOs need to ask further questions. Pick up small developments; try to get systems of control through LG level, legislative strands come together, feeling that town planners come first then environmental health practitioners.

***George Negus: Why is that?***

**Chris Reynolds:** Idealism of '70s has gone, planning new technology, rather visionary– importance taken out of LG. Economic development weighed against EH - triple bottom line.

**Lyn Russell:** We need a sea change. The strategic role is viewed as sexy while the statutory, operational role is seen as routine. Building/planning is glorified. If we sell EHO status as routine roles, we will not get graduates... sell it as sexy, graduates' expectations are not met in their role! Maybe if called Environmental Engineers, can make it more attractive...

**Chris Lease:** What made the EH agenda so different from the public health agenda?

**Chris Reynolds:** Historic rise of EPAs in 70s/80s/90s with human health large role in EPAs. Sustainability, fate of the environment, clearly impacts on humans. Environmental Health overshadowed by Environmental Protection. What EH has to offer human health is being lost e.g. discharge limits, NHMRC standards.

**George Negus:** People are always getting sick and dying, they didn't think the planet would too. Maybe new name of: Environment and Health Officers, rather than EHOs.

**Ken Brown:** Public health non-government organisations put pressure on governments.

**George Negus:** Need lobbyist – rock n roll star?

**Ian Lowe:** Political reluctance to regulate if threats to economic profitability (Mt Isa e.g.).

**Louise Dunn:** Must provide quality placements in learning and at universities. Will cadetships produce what you want? Problem of environmental health nomenclature – who understands it? Need to look at opportunities. The quality of mentors is a problem.

- Education provided via workplace learning...placed in industry 12 months;
- Recruitment (international, work/study, demographics);
- Retention (need quality mentors (skills/ability of mentor), link to higher education);
- Flexibility of program (what models appropriate, work in learning, what evidence, other options, credit bearing of subjects);
- What plan? Range of things to explore;
- Opportunity there to improve; look at more flexibility including cadetships.

**Kathy Kelly:** Workplace EHO would be the best person. Quality training in workplace is probably impossible. It is a critical issue with so many people leaving – we are losing mentors, as well as staff.

- Recruitment – what the career, role, responsibility of an EHO is – increase identification;
- Mentor quality – misunderstood, people think ‘anyone’ can do it.
- Quality training required for mentorship or cadetship – can’t assume any workplace can do it.

**George Negus:** Retrenchment is cutting the head from EHOs. Two way mentoring process – over 45, [life] sitting in office under 25.

**Ian Lowe:** Divorce of education and work, those old don’t work vice versa. Degrees needed use-by date, update/upgrade training. Formal renewal.

**George Negus** to Virgil Kelk (Qld Health): What are the characteristics of EH at the local level? What do they deliver? Have minimised level of risk but how can we deliver what we want to?

**Virgil Kelk:** Challenges in defining what an appropriate EH service is – therefore, how can you evaluate effectiveness of service. EHO does not equal good service if only working one day a month. What would it look like, what would it deliver? We have just done our best to minimize risk? What do we need to deliver, specifics, generalists? EPA has a big stick in Qld, but there is no big stick in Qld for food safety laws.

**Chris Lease:** I agree with Lyn (see Lyn’s Summit Report Appendices <http://www.aieh.org.au/conferences/Workforce/index.php> – old role of EHO is enforcement based.) The old role can still be relevant. Local councils can be too client focused, as company can know of inspections ahead of time. EPA has the sanctions – can put you in jail but EHOs and councils cannot. No significant penalties. PH legislation does not have them.

**Question** to Lyn Russell: On the strategic side, how much is there? How much work is needed to tease out the structure to bring in EHP as a business, economic development?

**Lyn Russell:** Need EHOs with baseline fundamentals and then create career path upon these to get to the strategic roles e.g. climate protection issues.

**Q: Louise Dunn:** The community development PH role has migrated to other people.

**Lyn Russell:** The 3 principle bottom line does have EH staff being brought in to advise Council administration on policy. There are economic benefits, society benefits, EHOs have an important role to play in environmental aspects. There is a need for multidisciplinary teams in council to counter the silo structures.

**Kevin Buckett:** Lots of people in EH to progress their career leave and do something else. May be we need a new vision of EHOs as Health Impact Analysts – that is the new approach, the broader scope. This is important.

**Q: John Coombe:** EHOs have a serious image problem. CEOs take you for granted, see you as soft targets, not up there with the rest of the professionals, and do not take you seriously. If money is left over, maybe it can be for EH. There are people out there who still see you as an inspector (unqualified). We are not strong, no direct industry support. The image must be changed, must provide reports to Council, must attend Council meetings. CEOs take you for granted.

**Q: John Cohen:** CEOs misled by others. We have heard the same arguments for the past 30 years - cadetships, EHPPs are dumbing down and will make the profession less professional. EHOs need to build the profession to make it attractive by marketing separate streams to work in (not all strategic). Very few people apply for jobs when advertised. Profession is a wide range of jobs, of streams, a lot that EHOs can do, not simply a split between organisational and strategic roles.

**Lyn Russell:** Questioner is very lucky to have a team of 30 EHOs. Not many councils have EHOs who have peer support and professional development – or the option of choosing a 'stream' rather than the complete array of EHO responsibilities in LG. It is an exception – (not 30, only 1 or 2 EHOs). There is an issue of professional loneliness in rural situations.

**Gary Smith:** The Department of Human Services in Victoria and the AIEH pumps millions into EHO professional development even when they do not work for them. LGAs are not good providers for PD, seen as a state responsibility. AIEH found bizarre employer practices, little PD. LGAs should contribute.

**Kathy Kelly:** There is a shortage of people in the field to train people in professional development. Responsibility if we want it, we can do it, but what is available? Try AIEH, otherwise universities. Shortage of trainers, lecturers, practitioners to train in what we need and want.

**Q: Sophie Dwyer:** How can we articulate the role of EH professionals – why is Environment more prominent, more recognized? What is the role of LG in PH, rather than asking what is the role of EHOs. LG has a statutory role in PH, this is fundamental, in water, in waste and the health perspective is lost. What is PH in LG? And then go on to fit the EHO into this. An appreciation of EHOs by CEOs, not the role of EHOs. What is the role of LG in PH?

**Ian Lowe:** Advise people to lift the standing of EH. Environment Health lacks charisma. There is a need to understand that humans are in that category not just polar bears...it affects humans too. Politicians do not see risk to voters. There is value in the awareness of harm to humans. Maybe we should have bumper stickers saying 'charismatic megafauna at risk' to highlight EH risks to humans in our ecosystem.

## **1.4 Summary of Discussion**

- Increase retirement age, need flexible part time work for ageing workforce.
- Cadetship model – requires framework.
- Mentorship, workplace training requires framework from research to achieve quality results.
- Need for increased PD, and increased responsibility of employers to assist in providing it.
- Increase the value of EHOs within workplace and in the community.
- Need for EHO identity and a positive image.
- EHOs need to become a presence in LG – to attend Council and other meetings, to provide reports to Council.
- Suggestions to change name of EHO to make role clearer.
- What EH has to offer human health is being lost.
- No political pressure to enhance role and image.

## 1.5 Afternoon 1 – Changing nature of EH workforce in local government

**Lise Windsor**, *Principal Policy Officer SA Department of Further Education, Employment, Science and Technology and Australian Institute for Social Research, The University of Adelaide*

### ***Changes in public sector and local government workforce and current approaches to workforce management***

We are experiencing a demographic change and impact of an ageing workforce. One third of the current workforce is approaching retirement thus re-engaging older people is critical. Poaching causes labour costs. Youth is working in jobs apart from EH to survive. There is a skills shortage, as well as a labour shortage with a significant pool of unemployed and underemployed which could be targeted. A focus on workforce participation shows that demand will outstrip supply of workers. Lise also covered the following:

- EH Workforce challenges – current issues;
- Complex environment;
- Current and anticipated shortages;
- Education and training issues – develop skill levels of all staff regardless of age;
- Difficulties in attracting and retaining workers.

We have recognized the need for a national workforce development strategy, but are yet to develop a multi-faceted national approach. SA has a workforce development strategy. The states and the Commonwealth need to collaborate in the design of a suite of policies and programs. Much focus has been on the fiscal implications, not on workforces. Workforce must be integrated with human relations, budget, strategic information. Develop strategies and plans to address gaps. It must be on demand and supply – analyse gaps; create strategies.

**See also Summit Report Appendices** <http://www.aieh.org.au/conferences/Workforce/index.php>

**Dr Thomas Tenkate, Mr Jim Smith, Associate Professor Nancy Cromar, Dr Richard Lugg, Mr Kel Irwin (Gold Coast City Council) and Tanya Bell (Principle EHO, BCC)**

***Responses to changing nature of workforce: education providers, peak body, examples of current models for accreditation***

**Thomas Tenkate:**

Overview of pressures on EH Programs at a university level, including the following issues:

- Non-university providers – over 100 competing with university;
- Government funding decrease – target overseas students;
- Market forces will decide what stays and what goes;
- IT delivery/use – online delivery mechanisms meaning few face-to-face courses;
- Changes in relationship with students due to online delivery, student/staff ratios etc;
- Tension overdrive of financial development vs. traditional role;
- Class size EH (field trips etc) do not fit with financial models for universities;
- UK EH courses closing/vulnerable (80% decrease in applications);
- UK experience reveals a need for flexibility here to survive;
- Postgraduates – to bring in more EHOs to open up opportunities (*see power point*);
- Student: Staff ratios from 8.5:1 to 20:1.

**See also Summit Report Appendices** <http://www.aieh.org.au/conferences/Workforce/index.php>

**Nancy Cromar:**

Surveys from the UK have demonstrated that EH work contains many of the characteristics which are seen as desirable by today's graduates, however students do not know what they are. We need to raise the profile and knowledge about the work that EHOs actually do, rather than the negative perceptions that are in the public's mind.

- Attractive job elements – seven of the eight top characteristics for desirable employment fit the EH market.
- Many interested people are not aware of degree requirements.
- Shortage in student numbers has led to increase in numbers of unconventional students (i.e. not normally accepted) being accepted into courses to make up enrolments – this has potential to decrease the quality of workforce.
- Many factors are important in assisting in the choice of EHO as a career, however 47% of students in EH programs in UK were influenced by doing council work experience, 35%

influenced by talk by EHP. These are most important strategies for EH here in Australia in gaining potential new graduates.

**See also Summit Report Appendices** <http://www.aieh.org.au/conferences/Workforce/index.php>

**Richard Lugg:**

The Board in WA accredits professional EH courses in tertiary institutions and advises on professional and ethical issues. In WA there is new-look PH legislation, which will sweep away old provisions. This is an excellent conclusion. But unless employers and the community value EH there will be problems for EHOs. Need determination to stay the course.

**See also Summit Report Appendices** <http://www.aieh.org.au/conferences/Workforce/index.php>

**Jim Smith:**

The AIEH has undertaken a number of initiatives:

1. University EH Course Accreditation and Accreditation Policy (EHUPAF) which includes both undergraduate and post-graduate pathways;
2. Development of Workforce Summit
3. Certified EH Practitioner Scheme (CEHP) – the program includes Professional Development (PD) and mentoring program.

Under consideration:

- Cadetships, undergraduate and postgraduate;
- Work experience placements;
- Professional development, recruitment and retention strategies;
- Profile of EH profession and role of EH in the community.

**See also Summit Report Appendices** <http://www.aieh.org.au/conferences/Workforce/index.php>

**Kel Irwin:**

Gold Coast City Council has 38 EHOs in regulatory area, of these 33 are field staff, 30% in first year of work. Twenty four left the team in the last four years, 30% left to travel, 60% left for different experiences (promotion, other organisations). Currently – 8 vacancies (extra staff approved).

***Retention strategies:***

- Reintroduce new mothers to flexible roles and work times; 5-6 currently on maternity leave;
- Working with universities for placements;
- Gain students by working on project work as part of their course, then placement;
- Gold Coast works well for them – they have an edge because of where they are situated. People want to come to work there;
- Be flexible for retirees and Gen Y – lifestyle;
- Remuneration – incentive 20% above award – engineering, planners; proposing to include EHOs in this incentive payment;
- Designed a 'toolbox' for helping staff in their work;
- Are reviewing remuneration as EHOs with a degree get less than receptionist and so they will leave;
- Complete Management System – identity (in a.m. educator/in p.m. prosecutors);
- Identify priorities and the skill sets required;
- Training/ mentoring/support needed.

**George Negus:** *Another recruitment strategy for the Gold Coast...sweep up the 'schoolies'*

**Tanya Bell:** *Principal EHO, BCC*

BCC has a Corporate Cadet Program (which covers other staff as well)

- Is trying to bring in students early in their studies – very flexible, in semester part-time and can do full-time in semester breaks;
- Study and F/T work: in semester flexible hours, and full-time option during university breaks;
- Pay \$25,000 study allowance and benefits;
- Rotated through different parts of Council, including Consultancy Group, Disaster Management and so on;
- Have e-line recruitment;
- Two cadets at the moment, expected to increase to 5 within 3-4 months;
- Cadets – look at graduate program.

## 1.6 Facilitated Discussion

**Panel:** Dr Thomas Tenkate, Mr Jim Smith, Associate Professor Nancy Cromar, Dr Richard Lugg, Mr Kel Irwin (GCCC) & Tanya (Principle EHO, BCC)

### *Discussion on Cadetships or Apprenticeships*

**Q: Zane Hughes:** I have noticed large problems with the professional focus on cadetships/scholarships forgetting TAFE/VET (government funded and a good place to start). VET in school is the way to catch people, Level 1 LG – literacies/numeracies, grab before students leave school. This is the next generation. Need to target students from schools in your own area as a pathway, and then they are more likely to stay with you.

**Panel: Jim Smith:** Do it all, all kinds of pathways, look at undergraduates, postgraduates, look at them all!

**Zane Hughes:** Cadetship does not meet apprentice system which attracts funding. NICP (National Indigenous Cadet Program) recipients, receive \$8,800 financial assistance. Could give say \$5000 to employer to take on an apprentice. Why not Indigenous cadets within boundaries of LG? Could offer to local Indigenous people an education near where they live. If it is where they live, they will stay.

**Kel Irwin:** The NICP means we must commit to employ.

**Zane Hughes:** This is a grey area, capacity to train without forcing to employ.

**Jeff Stanton:** NSW Health is training 8 ATSI trainees F/T now in EH. After six years, they will meet competencies for a degree from University of Western Sydney. Trained from rural areas, and stay in rural areas. They do struggle with the education and a small number will get through but there is a huge role for them at diploma level by distance, but it is difficult to do by distance because it is over 6 years; it is too long. Life experiences also impinge for obvious reasons. Many favour PP role.

**Lise Windsor:** There is money to be found in the vocational education training sector, and apprenticeships. Why isn't the government subsidizing cadetships? There is a need for employers to offer apprenticeships first to obtain EH jobs.

**Jim Smith:** The AIEH will look at cadetships.

**Melissa Langhorne:** We have one F/T cadet. It is difficult to keep members of the younger generation for longer than 12 months, how could you keep them for 5 or 6 years? To get a degree is 6 years if working F/T and doing degree P/T. It is twice as long. Fulltime students – 2 years F/T study, 1 year work exp. 1 year finish.

**Lisa Bricknell:** Central Qld University – has a 3 term year, flexible courses, if students are committed, can finish in four years instead of 6. Students can study over Christmas.

**Thomas Tenkate:** QUT excited about postgraduate pathways, postgraduate cadetship model. Like Flinders, QUT and Curtin have a 2 year P/T program, 1 year F/T. Shortens timeframe, however, might want more pay as a postgraduate.

EHO programs at universities are vulnerable but other broader programs are robust. EHO training is narrowed down to the specifics; this is a paradox because undergraduates are very interested in sustainability and EH; are very interested in the broader issues.

**George Negus:** Do they then go into environmental science?

Most students are interested in EH and sustainability. Broader programs quite robust, but EHO training program is narrowed down to the specifics. Undergraduate students are all very interested but thought it was not sustainable as a profession. Things that happen in the UK, happen here. We can learn from the UK experience. There is a window of opportunity to plan ahead.

**Lise Windsor:** Young people are not choosing EH as an occupation as conditions are not good, there is an old style management, poor pay. If people don't stay in the job, change the job itself.

**Jim Smith:** Good point. Lots of public policy, specialist/generalist, huge food safety push, pressure for food safety (FSANZ) workplace change, public policy arena. FSANZ putting pressure on EH workforce across Australia in food safety standards, now we have to implement it.

**Louise Dunn:** The federal government is rewarding universities for demonstrating employability. There is a need to dedicate some resources to marketing and recruiting for a strategic approach.

TAFE students are a good source [as evidenced by Swinburne that has both TAFE and University].

**Lise Windsor:** State workforce development fund in SA for youth and older workers. DEST puts a lot of money into workforce.

**Jim Dodds:** 60% are leaving the course. After 3 years, we turn out graduates with the same expectations. Chris said a lot of decisions shifted from the Chief Medical Officer to the EPA so that there is not a lot of PH influence. Is there a legislative solution that needs to happen?

**Chris Reynolds:** Ensure that there are connections and links made early so that they are EH problems. Essential to ensure points of referrals. Must ensure standalone inquiries into environmental health more routinely. More delays in planning process - government trying to speed up, to deal with problems at the outset (prevention). Essentially allow chief EHO to put more checks in the planning process for those trying to speed it up. Try and break down the silo thinking in this area.

**Lyn Russell:** Change thinking, rather than putting EHOs at the end of the process. Turn it around and break down barriers. Regarding high turnover – who are we recruiting? School leavers, do not know what they want to do; want to travel, leading to a high turnover. Be clever about a different type of worker; look at others – from other careers who want a change, cadets from high school, committed to region.

**Jim Smith:** Pay not too bad, for example, starting wage is \$45,000 when starting with a degree. Issue with award system is that it is non-incentive, which is needed to attract and retain people.

**John Coombe:** GC pays 20% above award. Change EHO mindset to important role, clear thinking, planning, development, maintaining healthy community. Needs change of mindset in this area, and for CEOs to change their mindset too, as to how do we achieve a healthy community. Make sure the message gets across to senior people in LG and elected representatives.

**Chris Lease:**

**Q:** Is enforcement a problem for EHOs, especially if the EHO is smaller?

**A:** Have had to train people particularly in this role.

**Virgil Kelk:** Finds that when students are in the work role they find it very difficult in the actual work environment. Face to face enforcement causes problems with the retention of young people

because of intimidating situations. Could be faced with drug addicted people, with poisons, and with interpretations of legislation, it is incumbent on the employer then to go out with them and give them support.

**BCC:** Depends on the person. Some officers enjoy enforcement more, for the action and adrenaline, whereas some are resistant.

**George Negus:** Training for EHOs includes being tough, conflict resolution. Training should include details of practice e.g. carport application/enforcement, drug dependency. Clear understanding from university might not be there, need more understanding of the role before going to university.

**Virgil Kelk:** Regardless of act or person a support network is important (mentoring scheme, support program). Don't send staff where they are uncomfortable or to things that they are not trained for.

**Lise Windsor:** Starting point for universities – what to deliver, what outcomes do you want? If enforcement, recruit people who can do that sort of work. Need to get the right people for the right job. More roles, VET job streams, Graduate streams. Education providers – not in touch with real world so have cadetships to create EHOs with skills you want.

**Thomas Tenkate:** Regulation is different from baseline professional role, some see enforcement as a less skilled role. Most legislative risk based approaches require understanding of scientific principles, of EH principles. Skills enforcement has a very specific framework, with basic science principles – if you divorce the two it would be detrimental to improving environmental health standards.

**Shane Worley:** When thinking of EH professionals some roles are 'sausage machine', they are routine. A lot of audits and applications and because of the nature of this work there will be a high turnover in those areas. They will go off to policy areas or elsewhere but cannot exclude those repetitive roles. Ameliorate the basic nature of the job to reduce high burnout – make it more palatable, but not a different job altogether.

**George Negus:** Practice, policy, analyst, enforcement- all different, all part of one job.

**Kirsten Ross:** Does placing people in cadetships result in more EHOs, or take jobs from graduates? If you are taking cadets, perhaps you do not take university placements. Be sure that the scheme would increase the number of professionals, not take away from university courses.

**Rosemary Nicholson:** Huge range of mature age students who have come from a trade and are quite comfortable with the regulatory environment and enforcement role. Preparedness for moving into regulatory roles, target range of ages and types. Be realistic about what we tell them to expect. Regulatory role is very exacting not a low unskilled area and should be approached that way.

**Jeff Standen:** Cadetships are a good idea; enforcement is a very skilled technical area.

**Dean Bertolatti:** Undergraduates - most are not school leavers, 50% are mature age. Of 500 Graduates from WA, we have employed 230. Where have 200+ gone?

**Darren Ponton:** Different name for cadetships - Trainees, or Environmental Health Assistants (cadets demeans them). As to where graduates go, some choose other careers. It might be quite an informed choice, into the food safety industry, private practice – not LG.

**Eric Johnson:** Upsets him when people denigrate the regulatory environment right up to international trade level e.g. seafood etc, ask about systems we have in place for exporting product. The employer is important in creating a supportive work environment, where EHOs are valued, rewarded.

**Cameron Earl:** Issue of the image of the job. Some cannot get out quickly enough. Sick of grief from public/colleagues/even people at parties! Negative community perceptions. There are social pressures.

**Thomas Tenkate:** Non-retention can be viewed as positive. It indicates the training received is highly transferable and highly valued. Higher achievers identify that those skills are transferable, positive because people in other areas want to employ them and can be used as a springboard. The mix of legislative understanding and scientific principles is very important. These things are also valued by employers apart from LG.

**Jan Bowman:** EHPs are members of large multidisciplinary teams and are highly valued there. EHOs make up 20% in her unit and 20% in communicable diseases because they can do legislative development.

**Bruce Morton:** There is no money available to assist with cadetships. VET sector receive 1.6 billion government support for traineeships. UK has a national fund for £10,000 cadetships for EH planners (from 2004 report). Becoming an employer of choice is important.

## **1.7 Summary of Discussion**

- Look at the viability of cadetships; perhaps LG could utilize to a greater extent the National Indigenous Cadet Program for ATSI trainees in their LGA, or consider the VET/TAFE sector both for cadets and as a way to start training earlier at school and to attract funding.
- Regarding cadetships, consider the difficulties of keeping members of the younger generation for the time it takes to get a full degree (6 years part time).
- Ensure cadetships do not take places from university students.
- Postgraduate cadetship pathway interesting, but might demand more pay.
- Consider different name for 'cadets' such as Environmental Health Assistants.
- Target people from your own area (from local schools). If from the local area, they are more likely to stay there for employment.
- Need to consider carefully training for EHTs – must not see enforcement as a lesser skill as it still requires understanding of scientific principles.
- Consider less conventional sources for employees such as mature workers, career change people, people with a trade background.
- Need to create a clear identity for EHOs if we are to attract undergraduates who are interested in sustainability and EH, and give students a clear idea of the occupation before graduating.
- Need to change profile and perhaps the role of EHOs to attract the younger generation – they see occupation as having poor conditions, poor pay, and old style management. Focus on importance of role, of maintaining healthy communities.
- Increased pressures on EHOs – how can we relieve or reduce.
- Need to break down silo thinking.
- Need for financial incentives and pathways within the role of EHO.
- Look at enforcement roles which cause problems in retention, and repetitive jobs (permits, inspection) which can cause burn-out.
- Provide excellent support networks for staff.
- Work on community perception of EHOs.

## DAY 2

### 2.1 Morning 2: Resolving Workforce Shortage

**Michael Essery**, *Team Leader, Queensland Department of Local Government, Planning, Sport and Recreation*

#### ***Keynote Address – Employers, workforce and legal risks***

Address looked at the legal risks of a reduced or differently skilled workforce. There are advantages of being an EHO including varied work and different people, inside and outside work, range of skills and knowledge, comradeship, adaptability, university training, international recognition, workplace learning, strong and prominent professional association (AIEH). There are also disadvantages of being an EHO, such as increased workloads and smaller budgets, focus on roads, rates and rubbish.

For EHOs there are issues of liability such as civil/criminal liability, negligence, duty of care, breach of duty and causation. There are personal and agency liabilities and duties. There are statutory defences for agencies and employees. Civil Liabilities Act (Wrongs Act VIC) Sect. 35 protections for Council. Statutory Defence – employee does not incur liability if they acted honestly/without negligence. This is highly relevant to the workforce issue of the paraprofessional and issues of appropriate training and supervision.

#### **Two Case Studies:**

- Pyrenees and Sutherland Shire Cases

#### **Pressures on LG:**

- Maintain enforcement responsibilities;
- Hire competent people –consider experience and expertise;
- Seek alternative ways to obtain employment;
- Maintain budgets;

- Minimum exposure;
- Employee pressures – more tasks, less experience (see slides), actions outside experience;
- Legal risks for reduced or differently skilled workforce, although new they have the same experience as skilled experienced workers, judged under same Acts.
- Less chance to learn from older people (60+).

Ongoing training and CPD is essential, as is the provision of mentoring and colleague support to nurture and care for staff. Traineeships are valuable for the level of workplace experience. Promotion of EHO work important to combat workforce shortage.

**Mr Greg Sullivan, Manager, Licensing and Compliance, Brisbane City Council**

### ***Symposium on successful workforce strategies***

With 70 qualified EHOs, BCC is one of the largest employers in the country. BCC is currently experiencing a 12% attrition rate per annum. To maintain required employment levels must grab 100% of graduates to continue to function. Current situation is unsustainable, and the cost of turnover is huge. With the high numbers of temporary staff, risk increases. Initial strategy is to use risk prioritization (A Licensing and Risk Management System [ALARMS]) to analyse and prioritise tasks based on risk. Reallocate some tasks to Law Officers (clear offences), while EHOs deal with technical issues. These strategies have worked well.

Currently, around 40% of EHOs have been at BCC for less than 2 years, 21.5% are likely to retire within the next 10 years. A survey on retention issues found the four most critical issues for EHOs were training and CPD, permanency of employment, volume of administrative work, and career progression opportunities.

The Environmental Health Future's Program focuses on recruitment, retention and promotion. Uses a holistic approach to analyse workforce trends, review reports, policies, strategies and initiatives and identify specific BCC issues:

- Promote profession, raise importance, to increase pool of employees;
- Retention of staff prioritized, keep skills, better work output;
- Promote voluntary compliance in community to reduce workload;
- Create Links & Partnerships e.g. Working with QUT, Griffith, Diploma Courses, and AIEH;

- Alumni – stay in contact with past employees;
- Specialist training (e.g. emergency management);
- Retention – create higher team leader positions for career progression;
- Work experience, cadetships, graduate programs;
- Convert temporary employees into permanent ones (as quickly as possible);
- Recruitment – from overseas, from educational institutions ahead of vacancy to be ready.

In the future, we will grow our own EHOs, intercept school leavers, recruit (domestic and international). There is a need for multiple strategies, isolated strategies do not work. Implement strategies to increase permanent staff, slow the attrition rate, and achieve success attracting cadetships and new staff.

**Mr John Coombe, CEO Alexandrina Council, SA**

### ***Symposium on successful workforce strategies***

Overview of own strategies implemented to retain and recruit staff, maintain reputation as a Work Choice employer. Organisation built through teamwork, respect, trust, quality leadership, and good relationships. All staff are made to feel important (not just Councillors or CEOs) and are involved in strategic direction of Council. Evidence that it is working: some staff live in Adelaide and drive to Alexandrina – driving 1.5 hours each way for work. It is likely that Council will be open 7 days a week within 10 years and this has implications for workforce development.

Initiatives which make Alexandrina an employer of choice include the following:

#### *Work environment:*

- Respecting all staff;
- Pleasant environment;
- Organised events (social, birthdays, morning teas);
- Maternity care – bring babies in, family feeling;
- Management has genuine interest and care in work area; wants to keep up with developments;
- Council up with latest trends;
- Feeling safe;

- Fairness: staff members are valued, treated equally. EHO proud of organisation because can contribute to others;
- Limited supervision which promotes a feeling of trust and responsibility;
- Management know staff by name (greet by name, ask questions about how they're doing);
- Flexibility of hours.

*Support for Staff:*

- Administrative support – so EHOs can focus on areas of expertise;
- Management support and encouragement;
- Open-door policy at all levels – discuss issues without discomfort;
- Helpful budget – purchasing, things done and acquired to do job;
- IT helpful, prompt, understanding;
- Recognition that staff have a life and family (more important);
- Accommodation assistance for say community late night meetings e.g. attendance, motel accommodation to stay overnight, safety issue travelling long distances at night;
- Financial support for people traveling long distance (fuel, car if required);
- Equity for staff who live outside the area e.g. increase super contributions;
- Keep healthy, counselling if necessary;
- Growing/learning experience, family life impacts.

*Incentives and Training Initiatives:*

- Financial reward;
- Organise opportunities to be part of professional body that knows its business;
- Training;
- Organisational recognition of good work – tell others, if win award or pass exam, make presentation to staff member;
- Mentorship;
- Experience skill development (public speaking, speed reading, report writing, tai chi);
- Support CPD all disciplines;
- Opportunity to work on special projects (outside area of expertise, for experience);
- Workplace challenge – thinkers in residence;
- LG management challenge – including outside workforce.

*Recruitment/Retention Strategies:*

As leaders in sustainable leadership strategies, Alexandrina does not support poaching - better marketing by increasing awareness of EHO role. Target schools and develop community interventions to promote the role as important in maintaining the health and safety of their community. Strategies include:

- Talk to schools, career teachers/advisors, who have very little knowledge of work of EHOs;
- Provide work experience for locals in tertiary studies – find and contact them, offer paid part-time work where they will learn more in two months, than from two years of theory.

As a strong council, we share support services to other councils (5 neighbouring councils). In other areas, EHOs are a soft target for CEOs. EHOs are not prepared to challenge, and fight hard for budget. Not innovative – cannot overcome stereotype of regulator. EHOs are not making themselves heard via reports or reporting to Council. EHO are led, and not leading. The need is to challenge the existing perceptions of EHOs to engender a healthy, strong and vibrant community. Work hard to change perceptions. Summit supports action now for positive outcomes in EH workforce.

**Jeff McNamara, Central Coast Council, Tasmania**

***Risk based activity levels in Environmental Health practice***

It has taken 6-12 months to implement the current risk management system and addressing the issue that most of the EHOs work is not complete at the end of the day. More Acts, more work, new areas to act on – legislative reform increases roles and responsibilities. Need more staff to be able to cope, however, EHOs in short supply (TAS, regional). Find more staff to issue more rates, fines. We have calculated the time needed to cover all responsibilities, and need at least four or five EHOS – we only have two.

To cope, translate ‘good’ management theory into practical actions, making operational and organisational changes. We used an evidence and merit based system. Promote delegation and autonomy. Divide work by function rather than by geography. Change from reactive to programmable work priorities – prioritizing risk management as High, Medium, Low priority. Focus on high priorities, allowing some time for reactive work (calls, emails, meetings...) and project work. It is a balancing act. 70% is programmable and 30% reactive (must do).

Educational regulator rather than enforcer (promote prevention, self-regulation). Nuisance = annoyance (noise complaints), threats = cause harm (higher priority – water quality, food safety). Even with evidence of addressing highest risks with time and resources given, Mayor still wants “just a bit more low priority”.

Pay-off...our high risk is their high risk. EHOs feel they are doing what they are trained for which inadvertently creates a competitive advantage. Important, meaningful work equals job satisfaction and retention of staff. Strong supporter of a multi-tiered EH practice model – SWOT analysis. Solutions would be to legislate roles e.g. an EHO does this, EH technicians that. Need to talk to the insurers involved before implementing.

### **Related Discussion:**

**Q: Jeff Fraser:** Low risk gets done? **No.** In our LGA, the trivial information led to the largest problems, they are trigger points that prioritise work. Low risk: neighbourhood complaints, lead to high risk hits and misses, high performance, bang for buck.

**A:** Priorities – back to legislation, why it exists. Revisit legislation – what it is trying to achieve. Risk prioritization analysis - everyone doing some risk in some ways. We have formalised prioritization method to function on limited resources. Best defence for CEO, identify potential risks and show to elected members... if you accept risk, you accept the consequences. If not, factor into budgets so EHOs have more resources. Flavour of the month, priorities, local issues...

**Xavier Schobben:** Private health nuisance, public health nuisance – defined difference high risk within legislation. 250 years precedent of nuisance.

**Chris Lease:** Can distinguish between private act and public health nuisance. The word is used both historically and actually. Nuisance is not just an eyesore but there are many nuisances. Courts decide public or private. Do not need to hang on to word ‘nuisance’ (Chris Reynolds).

**Darren Ponton:** There are about 3 sets of state government legislation to oversee EH services. Responsibility on state to oversee local Risk Management. Why aren't the state governments filling vacancies for LG?

**Roscoe Taylor:** Ability to appoint EHOs in LG, pay bill. We haven't done so. Short-term fix for system. Long-term issue, develop whole strategy and people support so EHO gets assistance

(with permits) etc. Some workforce surveys show EHOs are burnt out from repetitious stuff, related to environmental management (permits etc).

### **Squadron Leader David Taplin, Australian Defence Force**

An overview of the ADF structure including EH and EHOs was provided. There are three main areas of work: preventing casualties, vector control, and prevention of occupational injuries. Successful workplace strategies for retention of EHOs and EH surveyors (Navy and Army have higher exit rates of EHOs which doesn't apply to Air Force (which is a sexy defence job with aeroplanes!) including that ADF reimburses membership of AIEH, raised the retirement age, and death benefit scheme after twenty years of service.

#### *Recruitment Strategies*

It is difficult to get EHOs with EH degrees. Hence the development of Project Vector which aims to recover EH capability. This includes the review of entry methods to be sustainable, define roles, rank structure and career streaming (promotion, defined career pathways). Used to train EH Surveyors but became top-heavy as all surveyors up-skilled to EHO.

Reviewed entry options, such as direct entry from degrees, accept postgraduate as training/traineeships, undergraduate training. Graduate Diploma EH for people with science degree (new), with Flinders University. They work with health units in ADF. Have arrangements with Flinders, Griffith, La Trobe, Swinburne. Furthermore, ADF pays \$30,000 while studying – although participants have to commit to 4 years service. Also have arrangements with EHOs from Qld Health – 7 days per year on call.

#### *Marketing Strategies*

Web resources clearly define roles and responsibilities of EHO in ADF, clear identity for those looking at the role. Also undertake university presentations, acceptance of Graduate Diploma as an entry qualification and investigating career marketing at career expos.

#### **Discussion**

Local Councils could look at supporting students in Graduate Diplomas and then getting them to work for them for say 2 years, like ADF. Sponsorship/mentoring – could AIEH offer sponsorship for university placements for EHOs outside the ADF?

**See also Summit Report Appendices** <http://www.aieh.org.au/conferences/Workforce/index.php>

## 2.2 Case Studies

**Ms Jan Bowman, Chair enHealth**

### **Case Study: The Wall Report**

The Report was concerned with an examination of the role and training of environmental health paraprofessionals. What has enHealth done about EHO shortages? It is timely. It is important. Skill shortage exists but variable workforce from BCC to ADF, to rural, to remote and urban councils. Not why but what can we do?

Wall narrowed it down in his report to paraprofessionals (PPs) and technicians in other fields. He came up with a report on frameworks for employment of paraprofessionals. Risk management as a framework. The key is that state and local governments work together to:

- Commence training of PPs;
- Introduce Certificate III & Certificate IV courses under LG or PH frameworks (this is controversial);
- Ensure that this is accepted by the stakeholders (enHealth responsibility).

*EHPP Issues from the Wall Report discussed include:*

- EHPP training and competencies;
- Relevant authorities under legislation;
- EHPPs working under support of EHO;
- Activities for EHPPs are risk assessed and appropriate to their training;
- Articulation entry point (Cert III) to fill EHO qualifications;
- What name for this position: Environmental Health Technicians (term PP).

*Concerns/Feedback on Report:*

- Concerns on undermining current qualifications/training packages. Dollars better spent on scholarships. Existing training report concepts not developed enough, research first before action;
- “Dumbing down” skills in EH;
- Professionalisation and then need for career development;
- Recruitment and retention;

- Rural and remote areas;
- Cheaper options;
- Legal risks – what can people with Certificate III or IV do?;
- Workplace – high workloads, liability, are workplaces ready to accept EHPPs?
- PH concerns most emotive. If we do this, we will not get PH outcomes. What about UK experience?
- Credibility of the report itself – suggested it is not in line with recommendations of other reports, made with limited consultation. What underpins philosophy? How does this impact on PH outcomes?

EHPPs are not the one solution, but part of a range of solutions to the workforce shortage in EH. We need to act quickly in a collective, orderly way for cohesive solutions. EHPPs are not going to undermine people in the EH profession; there are enough jobs, not enough people. Further, LG competes with other employers (including ADF) for the limited skilled staff out there. Everyone will have a role, so why can we not let more people in? enHealth will reassess Wall Report, redefine planning, construct ways to attract more funds. enHealth needs to work collaboratively with LG Managers Australia, the Planning Institute, the National Health Report, and work with government, Skills Australia (National Training Packages) as this is the only way to achieve cohesive pathways through partnerships. Need coherent, cohesive action plans.

***Associate Professor Nancy Cromar, Flinders University***

***Case study: The overseas experience using Environmental Health Technicians and Environmental Health Officers***

EH is a sector in the top 10 skills shortages in UK. We look at the UK experience regarding use of technicians to view its wider implications. University courses are under threat of closure.

In UK, technician staff provide technical competence, but are not capable of carrying out other aspects of the EHO role. The impact of National Initiatives in the last 2-3 years has resulted in a small decline in the rate of recruitment problems, however it is still a significant problem.

Retention is less of an issue than recruitment (however retention rates are worst for those employees with at least three years experience which means that when they resign they take a wealth of experience with them).

The UK history: the 1972 Local Government Act moved public health under the National Health Service (NHS) and effectively medicalised and centralized the provision of PH, but left EH under the control of local authorities. Initially this was seen as positive as it freed up EH to expand outside of the control of medical authorities. Within 10 years however, significant cutbacks were seen in local government and the repealing of the Act which required certain PH qualifications in local authority staff resulted in many less well qualified staff being employed. Technical staff had single issue role e.g. noise, food, etc. They are seen as good foot soldiers, but do not have a PH mindset. Deskilling followed. A lack of qualified staff in certain key areas of public health risk e.g. food has led to the reintroduction in legislation.

UK issues are often close to home. In Australia, some local authorities are not prepared to employ enough suitably qualified staff unless externally imposed, which then equals lack of budget. In UK, medical PH continues to be funded centrally, but EH linked to LG funding. *Easier to get funds for an ambulance at bottom of cliff than for the fence at the top.*

In UK, the shortfall in EH workforce led to a range of national initiatives which raised the profile and understanding of EH in LG. These were effective in profile raising, but had a minimal impact overall on recruitment rates (see earlier talk on Day 1). IN 2005, UK EHOs were still third in the list of skills shortages in local government area. Councils reporting recruitment problems rose over 25% in one year (2003-2004). Retention issues are significantly less than recruitment issues (again see Day 1 talk).

The backdrop against which this is all occurring in UK is that of the 'Post-Hampton era' – this refers to Hampton's report where local governments are moving to taking decisions on the basis of risk assessment – no inspection without a reason, tackling high risk priorities. Tavistock Institute report (2007) also noted that power is being devolved to LG from central basis.

UK has no EHOs – all EHPs. The public cannot differentiate EHP and EHT. Need to ensure job definitions, structured workforce to reduce confusion with the public. UK use model of well trained and tested technical staff who work alongside generic EH practitioners with a number of provisos such as the need for competency frameworks, which are nationally consistent. EH technicians are not replacements for EHPs. First response to technicians caused concerns such as impacts on public health outcomes when taking on unqualified staff.

### **Cromar's Response to the Wall Report**

EH technicians are not replacements for EHO staff. We should look at both levels very carefully and determine competencies / skills basis for each level independently and then see how they can interact. Need to have technicians to augment not to replace. Resources for training of technicians should not be favoured over retention and recruitment measures for EHO degree based staff. Any attempt to develop a nationally consistent framework for acceptable qualifications for EH staff must pay attention to the need to maintain standards at the highest level (not the lowest) to ensure PH remains protected at LG level.

**See also:** Power point Presentation

***Note:** An expanded report on the UK experience is planned after Nancy Cromar has visited the UK. The final report should be due for completion by the end of 2007.*

**See also Summit Report Appendices** <http://www.aieh.org.au/conferences/Workforce/index.php>

**Dr Kirsten Ross, Flinders University**

### ***Case Study: Making EH Sexy to Prospective students as Future Employees***

The workshop was developed in response to an EHO identity crisis. The community does not understand what EHOs do. Presentations are made to classes below year 12, to allow time to consider EH as a career. There are 6 sets of material for the workshop, 2.5 hours plus DVD from Curtin University of a Cyclone Scenario. Students do tests on water samples and develop a news broadcast. 14 EHPs were trained to facilitate workshops but there are more schools than EHOs.

#### **Discussion**

As a marketing tool it is very labour intensive. However, more effective than simply watching a DVD as engaging the students took at least half an hour in itself at the beginning of class.

Students would not engage with a DVD alone.

---

## 2.3 Afternoon 2: Turning Talk into Action – Discussion Groups

Four topics for discussion were isolated with designated group facilitators as follows:

1. Indigenous Health – *Virgil Kelk*
2. Role of Technicians – *Nancy Cromar*
3. Recruitment Issues (Sexing up!) – *Thomas Tenkate*
4. Retention/Quality Workforce – *Steve Davidson*

The following summaries have been noted directly from each group's written notes. Where conclusions or key points were not included in original notes, a brief summary has been written.

### **Group 1 - Indigenous Health**

- Not limited to Indigenous health workers
- Talk about indigenous Environmental Health Practitioners
- Gap between EHW and EHO – need for exit points
- Employers – is there a need for this training?
- Goal – ultimately having Aboriginal EHOs in community
- Issues of supervision in move to EHO type work
- Can success in communities be translated to mainstream regional areas and cities
- AIEH needs to make position clear on ATSI issues
- Local governments need to get to know their Indigenous communities (not engaged with them) ...(Darwin a model)
- How can we influence local government?
- Need contacts to be made available to LG employees
- Strategy: Involve EHW in exploring EH issues
- Concern that EHW will be left alone
  - What would make a council ensure EHOs are in rural areas?
- Need policy from AIEH to ensure EHW have the right qualifications
- Do the three qualifications (EHO/EHPP/EHW) fit the jobs the people are going to get?
- Issue of 'over training'
- EHPP training inadequate for EHW
- Expectations of EHW exceed abilities, no mentoring etc.

- EHPP training not appropriate for EHW (therefore we need to look at what employers want)
- Need to be wary of pigeon holing skills
- Is there scope for private industry involvement? – scholarship system, marketing
- Qld change in community Council structure has resulted in EHW having EHO-type responsibility
- 8 CAE competencies identified by NSW Health
- Can they be applied more widely (i.e. EHT level?)
- Training to achieve these competencies provided?\* by NSW Health
  1. Don't have enough Indigenous Environmental Health folk (Officers, Workers etc.) Not recognized?
  2. Arguments about training required (funding dependent on outside, needs to be market LG based)
- LG needs more funding (would do it if they could)
- Need to state that we value Indigenous Australians (IA), been employed in EH can be noted that it is an endorsed policy
- How do we get mainstream EHO involved in IA communities?
- Is the lack of interest and funding because people do not know what EH is?
- Need an economic argument
- Need to develop indicators that can be used to explain
- Indicate 'quick wins'
- Target these 'simple' things
- Big wins linked to EH so that we have no need to promote EH
- LG needs to be made aware of funding available for IA cadets
- Training, if done cleverly, should be transferable to many other areas.

## **Conclusions**

- Institute needs to make position clear on Indigenous EH and workforce
- LG needs to engage IA communities
- Mentoring scheme should include IA for mutual learning
- Ensure we get technician role (need to see this as a real opportunity in EHW scheme); people ready for crossing the gap (page #1)
- Entry to EHT should provide opportunity for IA to take up
- Need AIEH SIGS in each state with links to form policies

## **Group 2 - Role of Technicians**

### **Process**

1. Workshop tasks of EHOs – 10 major, 36 more specific
  - a. Based on legislation – requirements
  - b. Problem – changing legislative landscape
  
2. Articulate principles that underpin demarcation of professional vs. technical workers

### **What are technicians?**

- Competency based training
- Different minimum standards/qualifications for different tasks

### **Models for defining technical roles**

#### ***Guiding principles***

Technical: Consistent, standardized, reproducible tasks e.g. water sampling in swimming pools, rainwater tanks, low risk functions, supervised environment – level of supervision

Professional: Analysis, interpretations, recommendations. Designing monitoring/sampling programs, analyzing results. Gathering of evidence (legal) e.g. pharmacy assistants – direct supervision.

### **Models of Professional/technical roles**

- Shared work practice in one work environment
  - Officer and technicians together on inspections – delegate onsite
- Shared work across work environments
  - Train specialist technicians in key areas who can work for several local authorities
  - Water, food - difficult
- Appointment of “authorized officers” under Public Health Act
- Environment Protection Act “noise only” limited authorizations
  - Actually happens in WA

### **Pre-requisites**

- National consistency;
- Mutual recognition;
- Lowest common denominator;
- Legislative framework (national) for EHT;
- Protects against technicians being employed for EHO roles, protects public health.

### **Terminology/Roles**

- *Scientific officer* (not EH degree)
  - Degree or advanced diploma
  - Work in area of technical expertise
  - E.g. (crossed out food technologist) water/noise, could form regional alliances...> economy of scale.
- *Technicians* – EH
  - General – multi-skilled
  - Practical skills
  - Qualifications? (Articulation pathways, Cert IV). May be different levels required for different task but all need to be embraced by AIEH.
- *Cadets* – impact of technicians on cadets.

### **Career progression**

#### **Summary**

- Could have different levels of training for different tasks, to be Scientific Officer (Non-EH Degree or Advanced Diploma) or Technician (vs. Cert III, Cert IV);
- Could work in one Council under Supervision, or across work environments - EHTs could work across several councils;
- Appointment of “authorized officers” under Public Health Act;
- They must not be employed just because they are cheaper;
- Food technology samples could be difficult, some think could delegate;
- Need for national consistency and legislative frameworks to protect both public health and EHO role in LG;
- Technicians could undermine cadetships, who are EHO trainees. There could be demarcation issues.

### **Group 3 - Recruitment Issues / Sexing Up!**

#### **1. Internal issues**

- a. Has LG got a role in EH?
- b. What are the roles?

#### **2. External**

1. Aspects of EH - attractive
  - a. Broad impact of EH;
  - b. Sell relevance;
  - c. Education of elected representatives.

#### **Image/Profile/Understanding**

- LG – dated, CEOs
  - Relevance, key roles ...> profile
  - Roles and Responsibilities – agree on common aspects/roles
- Marketing of what EH is ... need to engage specialist
- Public
  - Relevance
  - Broad impacts/scope
  - Positive aspects of job/work conditions
  - Advocacy (AIEH to develop effective media and advocacy role)
- School system
  - 'Totally Wild' story and others
- Re-engagement of former EHOs
- Need for a partnership for strategy NICS
- Profile/Brand
  - Examine funding opportunities.... critical skill shortage area
  - Audit existing resources
  - Collaborate with other professions and industry
- Markets
  - School leavers
  - People looking for work transition (scientists)
  - Early retirees – professionals
  - Re-engagement of former EHOs
  - 1<sup>st</sup> & 2<sup>nd</sup> years UG students in other courses

- Funding
  - HECS relief for students
  - Explore range of funding opportunities for students
  - Critical skills area
  - EHOs need for on the ground involvement
  - Include activities in CPD program.

### **Key Immediate Actions**

- Explore existing funding opportunities including critical skills area
- Consensus on EH role – engage stakeholders (e.g. legislative)
- Raise profile/brand – targeted marketing
- Identify the best ways to get the message out (direct email to community database, Council websites careers)
- Media presence
- EHO profiles 'Career One'
- Flexible recruitment pathways
- Identify existing resources for marketing
- Re-engagement of previous EHOs – AIEH
- Student funding opportunities and partner funding
- Enhance relationships with other professional bodies.

## **Group 4 – Retention of Quality Workforce**

### **Issues**

- EH hidden behind legislation;
- Risk based legislation is positive for role;
- Delegation of legislation to LG impacts on resources and morale;
- What is PH role in LG?
  - Can we have national consistency?
  - Can we agree on national framework in relation to PH Plans for LG?
  - Roadmap for EH/PH?
- Definition of EH role
  - Community
  - Consistency
  - Discretionary vs non-discretionary roles.
- Need “quality” legislation.

### *Regulation*

### *Solutions*

1. Scoping paper
    - a. Skill sets
    - b. Population health risks
    - c. Risk based model
  2. MOU
    - a. AIEH/ALGA/enHealth
    - b. Population health in LG
    - c. Requiring highly skilled EHPs to accomplish
- AIEH advocate for risk based, outcome based, innovative and strategic responses to community issues;
  - Balanced approach.

### *Valuing Workforce*

- Market EH to senior Management/CEOs regularly;
- Support processes
  - Case studies of effective strategies

- Role - Who? ALGA, AIEH, enHealth
- Mentoring (with EH and other professionals)
- Succession plan/career path
- CPD
- Flexibility including HR policies
- enHealth to consult with other professional associations having similar issues to learn from experience – join with NLGM;
- Focus on individual needs
  - Consult continuously
- Recognition/reward staff;
- Leadership/supervisory course (AIEH?/State Govt. Funded?)
  - Coaching, longer-term (e.g. Health ways leadership course)
  - Research why people are leaving the profession - nationally
  - Profession profiling

#### *CPD*

Secondments/mentoring with private enterprise

#### *Increase profile of EH*

- Good practice guides – AIEH does
- Partner with many including NGOs
- Consistent national approach to increase profile
- Update NEHS (translate to local level....reinvigorate)
- Need an EH Champion
- AIEH to advocate to politicians
  - Federal level
- AIEH engage with media more, need
  - Policies
  - Position statements
  - Need advocacy priorities.

#### ***Internal Support Mechanisms***

Be visible with elected representatives and actively engage with them to continually tell them why EH is important.

### ***Mentoring Options***

- Individual LGs to mentor internally / rural EHOs;
- AIEH develop formal mentoring scheme (voluntary);
- Buddies on a regional basis;
- Need flexible models for mentoring ... investigate a range of strategies;
- Explore LG Toolbox.

### **Summary**

- Need national consistency of PH role in LG;
  - Need a National approach in increasing the profile of EH;
  - Need scoping paper and MOUs between ALGA, AIEH, enHealth for consistency in regulation;
  - Need to increase the value of the EH workforce, especially to Senior Management/CEOs;
  - Need models for mentorship, CPD opportunities, career pathways.
-

## **2.4 Final Word**

### **George Negus, *Facilitator***

There is an unsung hero aspect to what EHOs do. Need a high profile spokesperson – someone who has credibility. When negative stories occur, get someone to back the profession – and turn the negative story into a positive one. Talk radio is an area that should be explored. First point to start self promotion is with elected member and then with the CEO. Talk the profession up locally. The Australian Institute, not State Institute, is how you should be seen.

Now turn words into actions. AIEH should form a national action plan. Get together with Chris Reynolds. Set yourself up as a vanguard. It makes approach far more sensible as a national template for states to follow. There is no reason why there cannot be a national legal template for EH that everyone follows and puts in needs for individual states. Need a few catch phrases. Building a healthy living environment; making the human environment healthy...or EHOs make better lovers.

### **Jim Smith, *National President AIEH***

Where to from here? The Summit proceedings will pull together the thoughts that people have contributed and will be used as the basis for a national strategic plan. Other activities include:

- Workforce planning will be on the agenda at the International Environmental Health Congress.
- A local government workforce resource project is being undertaken on behalf of Queensland Health which will include a risk framework and workforce for LG.
- AIEH is developing its strategic plan in which workforce planning and development will be a priority and this includes the CEHP scheme which will be rolling out this financial year.
- AIEH will be embarking on partnerships development e.g. MOUs with ALGA and others, including assistance in Indigenous EHW development.

Importantly, an action plan will be developed so as to develop a national workforce strategy with the stakeholders at the Summit.

# Summit Report Appendices

Available at <http://www.aieh.org.au/conferences/Workforce/index.php>

## Appendix A: Pre-Summit Readings

- **Reading 1:** Local Government Environmental Health Workforce Symposium, Pre-summit Reading, *Compiled by Melissa Stoneham - June 2007*

**Note:** *The second pre-reading compiled by Nancy Cromar has not been included, due to planned expansion. A comprehensive report on the UK experience should be completed by the end of 2007, after further research in the UK.*

### Monday's Power points:

- Summary of Pre-reading, *Melissa Stoneham*
- Future Challenges facing environmental health and implications for practitioners, *Kevin Buckett*
- Rethinking the Framework for Public Health Law, *Chris Reynolds*
- Recruitment and Retention – Two Different Issues, *Lyn Russell*
- Changes in public sector and local government workforces and current approaches to workforce management, *Lise Windsor*
- Universities and Environmental Health Education and Training, *Thomas Tenkate*
- UK experiences in education sector, *Nancy Cromar*
- Education, Accreditation and Maintenance of Standards, *Richard Lugg*
- Responses to changing nature of the workforce, *Jim Smith*

### Tuesday's Power points:

- Employers, workforce and legal risks, *Michael Essery*
- ADF EH Workforce Issues, *David Taplin*
- Environmental Health Workforce Strategies, *Greg Sullivan*
- Risk based activity levels in environmental health practice (or, Doing what matters most), *Jeff McNamara*
- Case Study 1: Wall Report, *Jan Bowman*
- Case Study 2: The UK Experience, *Nancy Cromar*
- Making EH Sexy to prospective students, *Kirstin Ross*