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1. *On the whole, how would you rate Queensland local governments' handling of the pandemic?*

Local government being closest to its communities stepped up and learnt all the way through and responded according to local level demands and needs. National Cabinet was new as were State Public Health Directives. Local government was really strong in its support to implement the directives, to help explain the changes to the community and was very strong in raising issues including unintended consequences.

Importantly, it gave feedback from grass roots. There were so many examples, from vaccination rollouts to small business impacts to community showground requirements. The Local Government Association of Queensland (LGAQ) ensured regular engagement for its members on teams and phone meetings with Premier, Chief Health Officer (CHO) and Ministers which helped local governments to respond to sudden changes and get the latest information.

2. *Generally what aspects did Queensland local governments' handle best?*

Good communication, good promotion of vaccination rollout, calm level-headed responses, including the use of local disaster management group structures and handling of employment challenges. Local government was always pro-active, e.g. alerting State Government to emerging Rapid Antigen Test supply constraints.

3. *Generally what aspects did Queensland local governments' handle worst?*

Most problems were minor and were at the start, so I am not able to comment as I was not employed by the LGAQ at that time. Later, local government was well on course and built on its experiences.

4. *To what extent was the local government sector reliant on State Government guidance/direction?*

Local government had to rely on Public Health Directives but sometimes the directives did not take into account localised situations or environments; and in those circumstances local government was forthright and sought changes. In later stages of the pandemic, local government operated through lockdowns and emerging changes like a well-oiled machine.

Funding was a huge issue, however. LGAQ advocated very strongly for councils to be reimbursed for their extraordinary efforts. For example, Queensland's border councils were required to implement hard border controls, which incurred infrastructure and operational costs. These councils had limited capacity to fund and sought retrospective payment which was ultimately agreed to by the Deputy Premier.

Very early, local governments responded with individual initiatives to help small businesses and employers within their community to find ways to keep operating or innovating. This was all done without budget – but as the pandemic went on, councils looked for ways to help community and businesses and encourage the state government to help fund this work. To that effect, the LGAQ’s ‘Battle Plan’ proposal was the first peak body to put forward a funding proposal to the state government to back in their work during the pandemic, which was supported by the State Government.

5. How would you rate the local government sector’s performance during the pandemic in the following (1 = worst performance, 10 = best performance)?

Aspect	Rating	Comment
<i>Timing of first response?</i>	Differed but some 10	Brisbane and Gold Coast City Councils were exceptional with dedicated personnel
<i>Structure and strategy in the response?</i>	Unsure	
<i>Community engagement?</i>	Unsure	State set direction and local governments followed. This became more integrated as time elapsed and a rhythm was established
<i>Service delivery?</i>	10	Exceptional including work from home and related services constraints
<i>Integration with other governments and their agencies?</i>	6	Not through lack of effort by local governments – some agencies were hard to engage with at times due to their own work loads
<i>Enforcement of Health Directives?</i>	9	Sometimes the directives were confusing – e.g. state or local govt or private sector
<i>Compliance with Health Directives?</i>	8.5	Sometimes there were clarity issues as noted above
<i>Community support?</i>	11	Above and beyond
<i>Business support?</i>	11	Above and beyond
<i>Economic stimuli?</i>	10	This was State and Federal responsibility. The LGAQ put forward the LGAQ Battleplan which was funded by the state. Local government also participated in the Small Business Friendly Councils programme and promoted their work to support small employers
<i>Protection of their communities?</i>	10	Mayors were able to provide direct advocacy on videoconferences with Premier/CHO – their communities was their primary focus.
<i>Advocacy to State and Commonwealth governments?</i>	10	
<i>Vaccination encouragement/facilitation?</i>	9	
<i>Border control?</i>	10	Queensland border councils had a special role, putting in place hard borders for the first time in history!

6. *If you were to guide Councils in a future epidemic what three things would you define as paramount?*

1. The use of local disaster management group teams – as they are well practised in Queensland.
2. There should be early engagement with, and updates from, the CHO and State Government.
3. There should be the ability for prior consultation with the CHO on intended Public Health Directives, so that any unusual local government or regional nuances could be managed.

(Approved by A Smith 12/7/2022)