

Shared services venture to offer economies to councils

A joint venture agreement, signed in Brisbane by the LGAQ and United Customer Management Solutions last month, will lead to the establishment of a first-class facility for Queensland councils to participate in a number of shared services benefits.

The LGAQ Executive's decision to joint venture with UCMS followed consideration of detailed responses to invitations issued to a number of organisations with a proven track record in delivering shared services solutions both in Australia and around the world including CAPGEMINI, IBM, Accenture and UCMS.

Signatories to the agreement were LGAQ president, Cr Paul Bell, executive director Greg Hallam, UCMS executive chairman, Kevin Weldon, and UCMS Consulting executive chairman, former Brisbane lord mayor, Jim Soorley.

Cr Bell said Mr Soorley, a long-time supporter of local government, had been a strong link between the LGAQ and UCMS. "Our agenda is about change, and shared services are part of it," he said.

UCMS' Kevin Weldon said the company's long-term aim was to build jobs for Queenslanders in Queensland.

"For 10 years, we have been heavily Melbourne-centric with our client emphasis on telcos, but we have a capacity to train 3000 people a year in our call centre academy," Mr Weldon said.

"Our vision is to build infrastructure here and establish an office in Brisbane. I am excited at the prospect of negotiating home-based call centres to deal with problems in drought-affected areas and in areas where industry might be moving away," he said.

LGAQ executive director, Greg

Hallam, said: "We have 17 groups of councils considering their futures and shared services are certainly part of that consideration. An area where this venture is going to help is in skills shortages – councils can't get the people they want."

Jim Soorley, of UCMS Consulting, said he was looking forward to working in the joint venture with LGAQ, whom he regarded as the leadership organisation in local government in Australia.

"This will be an incredible opportunity for councils. We could, for instance, employ 20 people in a call centre in Emerald, and 50 in Mt Isa," Mr Soorley said.

Department of Local Government, Planning, Sport and Recreation deputy director-general, Phil Clarke, said councils could be secure in signing up for the new LGAQ business models. "The

minister is committed to the Size, Shape and Sustainability initiatives the association is taking and LG Infrastructure Services has proved a success in a remarkably short time."

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The joint venture, which is expected to be fully operational by November, will operate as the Queensland Partnership Group (LG Shared Services) and will offer streamlined business functions in customer services, finance, HR and payroll, records management, procurement and IT. **CL**



Department of Local Government, Planning, Sport and Recreation Deputy Director-General, Phil Clarke (left) joined the group at the signing. Others (from left) were Claude Walker (Managing Director, UCMS Consulting), Kevin Weldon, Jim Soorley, Greg Hallam, Cr Paul Bell and Steve Crowe (UCMS Director, Consulting)



Signing the joint venture agreement (from left) Jim Soorley (Executive Chairman, UCMS Consulting), Kevin Weldon (Group Executive Chairman, UCMS), Cr Paul Bell (LGAQ President) and Greg Hallam (LGAQ Executive Director)