



**WOMEN IN  
LOCAL GOVERNMENT  
CONFERENCE**  
6 - 7 MARCH 2024



**Wednesday 6 March 2024**

**08.45am** Welcome and Introductions

**09.00am** Gold Medal Excellence

**Kerri Pottharst**



Kerri Pottharst is Australia's most decorated indoor and beach volleyball player, having represented her country over an incredible 20 years. Renowned for being one of the fiercest competitors in the world of volleyball, Kerri is now also known for being a successful speaker, emcee, workshop facilitator, coach, mentor, entrepreneur and published author.

Kerri shares her *Gold Medal Excellence* strategies with unforgettable tales that combine motivational messages with fun. She brings her hard-earned skills of leadership, teamwork, communication and more to Australia's corporate audiences.

**10.00am** Morning Tea – Pre-Function Area

**10.30am** Imposter in the Room

Imposter syndrome is real and, at its worst, can lead to self-sabotage and failure to deliver to capability. Why do we suffer from it (and why do some of us not experience it) and what can you do to manage it, both in yourself and when you see it in others?

**Cat Matson**



Cat Matson is the CEO and Lead Facilitator of Impactful Presenters, equipping community leaders to speak to audiences of 1 to 1,000 with confidence, authority, authenticity and impact. A popular and accomplished speaker, emcee and moderator, Cat is known for her straight-talking, 'realness' and extracting 'the juice' from her clients.

Cat describes herself as a 'Mistress-of-all-Trades' having worked in both the private and public sectors, in small and large business and in virtually every industry. Cat was Brisbane's Chief Digital Officer for eight years, helping small business owners navigate



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digital transformation and she led Brisbane City Council's startup and innovation programming. She is the host of the *Speaking with Confidence with Cat Matson* podcast, likes to 'work out loud' so others can learn from her experiences, enjoys her coffees strong and black and her martinis stirred and dirty.

**11.15am** If women are empowered, why are more not in power?

Julie believes that local government would be a better place if there were more females at CEO level – a ratio more reflective of the communities we serve. In her role, she has some scope to help this happen. In this session, Julie will examine diversity, equity and inclusion in local government and review the gender imbalance within executive leadership roles.

### **Julie Barr, McArthur**



Working for McArthur for the last nine years, Julie recruits extensively at an executive level across the Queensland and Northern Territory local government sector. Julie brings with her over twenty-five years of national and international recruitment experience including working in the UK on large recruitment projects for Thames Water, the UK's largest water utility.

As an end-to-end executive recruitment specialist, she has led numerous executive search campaigns for local government in Queensland and the Northern Territory, including very difficult to fill CEO positions. Through her extensive national networks in local government and in corporate and industry, Julie has been able to source highly qualified and experienced executive talent that are the 'right fit' in both ability and values.

Julie has placed CEOs with incredible pedigrees who have been looking for the right opportunity, attracted to the chance to work within the sector. It is her appreciation for, and understanding of, the sector that allows Julie to identify the type of individual best suited to the organisation and the opportunities and challenges associated.

In addition to support from the team in Brisbane, Julie works closely with her colleagues around the country who have access and intimate knowledge of the talent pools in their jurisdictions, giving McArthur a pool of talent not otherwise visible.

**12.00pm** Lunch – Fresco's / Courtyard

**12.45pm** Tackling the Negatives

Despite all of our organisations' efforts to stamp out such behaviours, sadly many of us will experience bullying and harassment in the workplace. This session will consider how we can deal with incidents when they occur in order to protect our own mental wellbeing and what action we should take for the benefit of our teams and ourselves.





### **Cr. Jo McNally**

Councillor Jo McNally was first elected to Southern Downs Regional Council in February 2010 and holds the Finance and Governance Portfolio. Cr McNally has resided in Warwick since 1990 and lives there with her husband and two sons.

Before being elected to Council, Cr McNally worked in Administration and the Financial Sector and she also served as a Queensland Police Officer at Toowoomba and Warwick Police Stations. Cr McNally is currently studying externally through the University of South Australia for a Bachelor of Accounting.

**1.30pm** Workshop

**2.15pm** **Afternoon Tea – Pre-Function Area**

**2.45pm** CEO Panel

The CEO Panel is a favourite feature of the Women of Local Government Conference. Hear from experienced CEOs about how they have built successful local government careers, what critical skills and approaches they have brought with them and what advice they would give those following in their footsteps.

### **Leisa Dowling, CEO, Gladstone Regional Council**



Leisa has almost 20 years of senior leadership and executive experience in the State and local government sectors, across diverse portfolios. She was appointed CEO of Gladstone Regional Council five years ago. Leisa has a Bachelor of Leisure Studies as well as a Graduate Certificate of Public Sector Management and has recently graduated from the Australian Institute of Company Directors course.

Throughout her career, Leisa has successfully led organisational change to deliver value and more effectively respond to the needs of customers and communities. Leisa leads with a culture of care and believes in the importance of building genuine and purposeful connections. Her strengths lie in the management of change, strategy, customer relationships and improvement of business processes.

The Gladstone region has been Leisa's home for 15 years and has been a wonderful place to raise her children.



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### **Sonia Cooper, Ipswich City Council**



Sonia Cooper is the Chief Executive Officer of Ipswich City Council servicing a diverse community of 242,000 people across 1,090 square kilometres, through a workforce approaching 1,500 people.

Sonia joined Ipswich City Council in February 2020 after a thirty-year career in the Queensland Government during which she held chief and senior executive roles in agencies including the Public Service Commission, State Library of Queensland, Department of Child Safety and the Department of Education.

Sonia holds a Bachelor of Arts, a Bachelor of Business and is a graduate and member of the Australian Institute of Company Directors. Sonia is very proud to have joined the Ipswich City Council team leading the re-building of the trust of the community and delivering the vision for Ipswich, a city of opportunity for all.

### **Emma Thomas, Sunshine Coast Council**



Emma Thomas is the Chief Executive Officer of Sunshine Coast Council – one of the largest local governments in Queensland serving a population in excess of 340,000 residents and one of Australia’s fastest growing regions. Sunshine Coast Council is pursuing a transformational agenda to strengthen the region’s economy, improve the region’s liveability, enable community connectedness and inclusion and maintain an outstanding natural environment and landscape.

Prior to joining Council, Emma held a range of chief executive and senior executive leadership roles with the Australian Capital Territory, South Australian and Queensland governments. She is a values-based leader with a passion for, and commitment to, sustainable regional economic development and fostering social inclusion, community diversity, connectivity and accessibility. These elements are an integral part of her focus and leadership as Sunshine Coast Council CEO.

As CEO, Emma is responsible for an organisation with a budget in excess of \$816 million, more than \$6 billion in assets, over 1,800 people and oversees one of the most innovative policy, programme and infrastructure delivery agendas that seeks to position Council as a national leader in local government excellence and the Sunshine Coast as the most liveable and sustainable region in Australia.

**4.00pm**      **Networking Function - Terrace**

**6.00pm**      Close





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## Thursday 7 March 2024

**08.45am**      **Welcome Back**

**09.15am**      **Managing Difficult Relationships**

There will always be people who you do not click with and some of these people will impact your job satisfaction and performance. This session will explore how to manage those difficult relationships, have the challenging conversations and be assertive when you need to. This can include relationships upwards, sideways and even with elected members.

**Bronwyn Blagoev, Independent Assessor (Acting)**



Bronwyn has twenty years' experience in supporting Queensland's local government. She is driven to deliver and get things done, with a passion for seeing local government deliver for their communities. Bronwyn consistently questions how to better support the local government sector. She has a strong desire to mentor and inspire others. She loves her work and wants her team to love their days too.

Bronwyn's experience includes eleven years' experience as Director, Department of Local Government and Executive Director, Strategy and Service Delivery for DSDILGP for over eight years. She is currently the Acting Independent Assessor for Queensland. Bronwyn graduated Bond University with a Bachelor of Laws (Hons) and a Bachelor of International Business (Hons).

**10.00am**      **Morning Tea – Pre-Function Area**

**10.30am**      **Critical Duos**

Individual performance and team productivity rely on the quality of relationships; levels of trust, clarity of roles and responsibilities, and respect. We refer to each of the relationships between two individuals in a team as a duo. This session will explore the importance of these relationships through discussion with two duos about their daily working and interactions.



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### **Claire Simmons, Cairns Regional Council**



Claire is a Town Planner with a passion for people and the great outdoors. She holds a Bachelor of Planning (Hons) from James Cook University Cairns and started her career at a local private planning firm before securing a role as a Planning Officer at Cairns Regional Council.

Over the past two years, Claire has progressed within Council and is currently the Executive Manager for the Development and Planning Branch of the organisation. Claire believes planning and development is more than just creating a built landscape and facilitating development outcomes across our region. Claire's passion lies in creating places and spaces to bring people together, foster community and support a quality of life with a high level of amenity and protection of our natural environment.

At the heart of everything Claire does is a deep passion and appreciation for people. When asked what she wants to be famous for, Claire's response is 'to be known as someone who challenges the status quo; who is innovative, vibrant, passionate, and committed to empowering people and the sustainable growth of our region!'.

### **Fleur Anderon, Cairns Regional Council**



A qualified scientist and educator, Fleur is a passionate, values driven individual who seeks to make a difference for the community and the environment. Her career has spanned multiple sectors including local and State Government, not-for-profit and private industry. Fleur is a demonstrated leader of high-functioning teams and brings significant experience in policy and strategy development, implementation and evaluation space.

She is currently the Executive Manager of Growth and Sustainability at Cairns Regional Council where she is striving to improve the liveability and resiliency of the region. She believes that there is no change without people coming on the journey. She is a natural collaborator who seeks to consult early with stakeholders and invest in critical relationships and strategic alliances.

### **Bridget Donald, Western Downs Regional Council**



Bridget has a wealth of business acumen from her extensive professional background in allied health and early childhood practice management. Having joined the Western Downs Regional Council Health Services team in 2021, Bridget assisted the organisation's highly successful landmark transition out of Community Health Care services.

Bridget has also lent her expertise to the Community and Liveability team during the infancy of the Western Downs Futures initiative and has recently been promoted to Senior Executive Officer to the CEO.

A champion of building highly productive and successful teams through meaningful communication, expert business strategy and critical thinking, Bridget is focussed on process improvement for optimal operational efficiency.



## Daniel Fletcher, Western Downs Regional Council



General Manager Community and Liveability at Western Downs Regional Council, Daniel is a dynamic, engaging and empathetic leader able to swiftly deliver outcomes and implement positive change. Leaving the role of CEO at Litchfield Council in the Northern Territory, Daniel and his young family have embraced the opportunity to be part of the dynamic community that is the Western Downs. Daniel is passionate about being driven by value and with his person-centric focus has created meaningful change while navigating sensitive and complex challenges in the business and political environments.

He is a graduate of the Australian Institute of Company Directors (GAICD), Griffith University (Bachelor Psychology and Bachelor Criminology and Criminal Justice) and brings hands-on experience across the public and private sector. He continues to dedicate time to study, currently completing his master's in public administration with the University Technology Sydney.

### 11.45am Update your Profile

Social media platforms regularly call on us to update our profile. But our profile goes beyond just our social media presence. What is the 'profile' you present both online and in real life? Is it working for you, keeping you safe and supporting you in your roles and development?

## Tanya Williams



Tanya is an effervescent, straight-talking, heel-wearing, pink-loving tradigital strategist with over 25 years of experience in marketing, digital, sales and innovation.

Day-to-day, she helps clients transform their business with words (and more words) and some numbers. Her focus is simple marketing that integrates traditional and digital tactics to attract the right kind of clients.

Oh, and here's the kicker – she is NOT obsessed with social media like most marketers are. She is helping clients flip the switch to stop fixating on algorithms and dancing in Tik Toks. Tanya's focus is to use marketing that is practical, free and is more engaging than Facebook.

She is multi-passionate (running 3 businesses), is childfree by choice and values giving back to communities locally and overseas. As a product of the 80's, you will see a distinct theme on her website and marketing because she really does do things differently.

### 12.30pm Lunch – Fresco's / Courtyard

### 1.15pm Workshop

### 2.15pm Afternoon Tea – Pre-Function Area



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**2.45pm** From Bedroom to Board

**Jackie Furey**



Jackie Furey is known as one of Australia's leading clinical psychotherapists and a specialist in relationships and mental health well-being. For the past 30 years, Jackie has helped thousands of people in their personal and professional lives to deal more effectively and successfully with the challenges presenting in today's wonderful yet fast paced and ever-changing world.

Jackie's work on 'well-being', creating mental strength and emotional resilience, has been presented in over 40 major cities around the world. This has resulted in her conducting over 25,000 hours of face-to-face consultations and having thousands of people benefit from her life-changing keynotes and workshops.

**3.45pm** Closing remarks

**4.00pm** Close

## *Thank you – Corporate Partners*



right by your side



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QUEENSLAND BRANCH**



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