

# Director-General's foreword



I am pleased to present the 2018-19 Annual Report for the Department of Local Government, Racing and Multicultural Affairs. Throughout the year, the department has taken significant steps towards achieving its vision by engaging with stakeholders, taking an energetic response to new and emerging opportunities and delivering on government's priorities through the completion of key projects and policies.

Developing a shared understanding of common goals is integral to delivering on the department's vision—key partners include the state's 77 local governments, the Local Government Association of Queensland, Local Government Managers' Australia, Local Government Finance Professionals of Queensland, Electoral Commission of Queensland, Office of the Independent Assessor, Crime and Conduct Commission, Queensland Integrity Commissioner, Racing Queensland, the broader racing community, Ethnic Communities Council of Queensland and dedicated stakeholders throughout Queensland who help promote and celebrate multiculturalism and support vulnerable people from culturally diverse backgrounds.

Through a consistent and dedicated approach to working with stakeholders, significant milestones were achieved by the department in 2018-19 across all three areas of Local Government, Racing and Multicultural Affairs.

The passing of the *Local Government (Councillor Complaints) and Other Legislation Amendment Act 2018* established the Office of the Independent Assessor to assess and manage councillor conduct complaints in Queensland. The Office opened its doors on 3 December 2018 as a major milestone in implementing the new framework for management of accountability, integrity and transparency in the local government sector.

The department has also continued to develop and deliver targeted training and resources that build councillors' understanding of their obligations and responsibilities. Our endeavors have contributed to more transparent processes, the sustainable management of assets and infrastructure, and sound decision making in the public interest.

The department has been implementing the Queensland Government's local government grant programs such as Works for Queensland and the Local Government Grants and Subsidies programs which will inject more than \$700 million over five years from 2016-21 into local economies supporting capital projects and the creation of employment opportunities across the state.

Later in 2019, the implementation plan developed with significant input from stakeholders for a new *Grants to Local Government Model* will streamline funding administration processes to create efficiencies for both local governments and across the State Government.

Recognising the significant economic and social contribution of Queensland's racing industry to the state, the department facilitated a Racing Industry Forum in March 2019 in collaboration with Racing Queensland. The forum brought together more than 60 stakeholders from all codes to discuss a reform agenda which will modernise Queensland's racing industry.



A key outcome of the Forum was receiving the racing industry's agreement to reform, as part of the Queensland Government's commitment of an additional \$26 million in prize money for Queensland thoroughbred racing and a further \$12 million over three years for greyhound and harness racing. This new investment in the racing industry builds on government's commitment in 2017-18 of \$70.4 million over four years for country racing.

Delivering on the vision of the *Queensland Multicultural Policy: Our story, our future*, to promote an inclusive, harmonious and united Queensland, the department continued to engage with government agencies to deliver the final year of the first three-year Multicultural Action Plan.

Key outcomes include the Department of Education's *Refugee and Asylum Seeker Early Childhood Pilot Program*, positive employment and training outcomes for participants from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds in the Department of Employment, Small Business and Training's *Skilling Queenslanders for Work* initiative; and the Queensland Police Service's *Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Recruitment Preparation Program*.

The department's positioning of the Multicultural Affairs portfolio alongside the Local Government portfolio presents a significant opportunity to demonstrate inclusive growth, which brings together a multitude of stakeholders in support of migrants and refugees. In 2018, the department established a partnership with Welcoming Cities, an organisation that supports local councils and their communities to build an understanding of regional opportunities to attract and retain new arrivals. This has been an important step towards boosting declining populations across the state and creating economic opportunity with and for regional and remote communities.

Significant interest has been received from government and industry since the departments' release of Deloitte Access Economics landmark report *Seizing the opportunity: Making the most of the skills and experience of migrants and refugees*. Providing evidence that Queensland's economy could benefit from a boost of \$250 million over the next 10 years, if the skills and experience of people who are migrants and refugees are recognised, the Report is a call to action for government, industry and the community.

I would like to thank our stakeholders, the department's executive leadership team and our employees across all regions. Their commitment and dedication in delivering programs, policy and services contributes to our shared goal to improve outcomes for all Queenslanders.