About the department

Legislation

The Department of Local Government, Racing and Multicultural Affairs administers the following portfolio legislation from which its functions and powers are derived:

City of Brisbane Act 2010 – Is specific to Brisbane City Council and provides for its constitution and the unique nature and extent of its responsibilities and powers. The City of Brisbane Act 2010 aligns with the Local Government Act 2009 where appropriate.

Local Government Act 2009 – Provides a legal framework for a system of local government in Queensland that is accountable, effective, efficient and sustainable as well as for the way in which a local government is constituted and the nature and extent of its responsibilities and powers. It ensures that the local government jurisdiction is sufficiently recognised to support each local government to take responsibility for the good rule and governance of its area.

Local Government Electoral Act 2011 – Provides for the transparent management and conduct of elections of Queensland local government councillors.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Communities (Justice, Land and Other Matters) Act 1984 (Part 9, Div 2 and Part 10) – The department continues to be responsible for transitional provisions for any local law making process that was started but not finished at the time the Community Services (Aborigines) Act 1984 was replaced (Part 9, Division 2), and transitional provisions for the continued appointment of police officers, members of certain boards and community groups under the Local Government and Other Legislation (Indigenous Regional Councils) Amendment Act 2007 (Part 10).

Multicultural Recognition Act 2016 – Establishes the Multicultural Queensland Advisory Council, introduces the Multicultural Queensland Charter and provides for a Multicultural Policy and Action Plan. The Act also requires chief executives of government entities to ensure employees are aware of the Multicultural Charter, the Multicultural Policy and Action Plan and how those documents apply to the work of their employees. Employees of government entities must consider the Multicultural Charter when developing policies or providing services of the entity.

Racing Act 2002 – The department is one of two Queensland Government departments responsible for the oversight of legislation which enables the operation of the racing industry in Queensland and has administrative oversight of Racing Queensland.

Roles and functions

The Department of Local Government, Racing and Multicultural Affairs vision is for a contemporary organisation enabling sustainable, vibrant, inclusive and confident communities.

Through collaboration, engagement and professional leadership, the department has steadfastly pursued its priorities by designing, delivering and administering policy, legislative and administrative frameworks that inspire confidence and trust in systems of governance across the portfolio responsibilities. It has acted to increase stakeholder capability across the local government, multicultural and racing sectors and to support and encourage communities to thrive.

The department has contributed to the Queensland Government’s Our Future State: Advancing Queensland’s Priorities by:

- creating jobs and a diverse economy through enabling councils to deliver and maintain resilient community infrastructure and essential services
- providing responsive and integrated services to the local government sector, the racing industry and community, and diverse cultural groups.

Employees work in Brisbane’s central business district and in regional offices across Queensland – in Cairns, Townsville, Rockhampton, Bundaberg, Maryborough, Toowoomba and Maroochydore. Important connections are made through the departments’ regional staff, enabling greater collaboration with local governments, supporting local communities in times of natural disaster, fostering closer relationships across regions and facilitating communication between our stakeholders and various levels of government.

The department is committed to the Queensland public service values – encouraged to be courageous, to turn ideas into action and to contribute to the efficiency and effectiveness of the organisation.
The division administers local government legislation, undertakes programs and initiatives to support and promote the state’s 77 local governments and provides advice to local government and the community on the local government system. It delivers practical and useful capacity building programs and resources and manages and administers a range of local government funding programs and includes the Office of the Chief Engineer and the local government grants review project team.

The division facilitates the social and economic participation of Queeslanders from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds through initiatives that build a united, harmonious and inclusive Queensland; the sustainability of Queensland’s racing industry through funding programs, policy advice and legislation; and provides whole of department corporate, strategic, policy and engagement functions.
Our operating environment

Local governments play an important role in the daily lives of Queenslanders providing good governance, sound and professional financial management and the delivery of services in the communities they serve.

In 2018-19, the department has continued to pursue a thorough and detailed process of legislative reform and the rollout of training programs and online resources in response to outcomes of the review of the 2016 local government elections, which highlighted instances of inappropriate and irregular conduct in some jurisdictions.

The recurring nature of these issues, despite increased regulation and oversight of local government elections, political donations and councillor conduct over time, has highlighted the potential for adverse public perceptions of and confidence in the integrity and transparency of local governments.

The departments’ rolling reform agenda aims to further advance the quality and reputation of local government in Queensland with a view to improving community perceptions, restoring confidence in local governments and improving transparency, integrity and accountability in council elections and decision-making.

The department works closely with other government agencies and a range of corporate and community organisations to promote the benefits of diversity, build intercultural connections and support equitable access and opportunity for all Queenslanders.

Queensland’s diversity is on the rise and the diversity of our workforce, our policies, services and programs need to be reflective of, and responsive to, the people we serve. From 2006 to 2016 the number of Queenslanders born overseas has increased from 700,000 to more than one million – 1 in 5 Queenslanders. In addition, language diversity has increased with over half a million Queenslanders (more than 1 in 10) speaking a language other than English at home.

Local and overseas events such as the 2019 terrorist attacks in Christchurch and in Sri Lanka, have a significant impact on local communities. The department’s understanding of and engagement with diverse communities, and our ability to garner corporate and cross government connections enabled us to respond quickly to those events delivering appropriate messages of support and providing links to relevant information and support services.

Queensland’s racing industry contributes $1.5 billion to the state’s economy, with thoroughbred racing the third most popular spectator sport in Australia and is a vital aspect of community life in many towns and cities across Queensland. With the viability and sustainability of racing integral to the state’s social fabric, the industry is adapting to changes in consumer behaviors, a growing competitive presence of corporate bookmakers, an updated betting tax regime and the impacts of operating across Australia’s most decentralised state.

In this environment, industry strategies to keep racing strong focus on four key areas:

- industry and government engagement
- promoting better commercial outcomes
- delivering racing infrastructure across Queensland
- stronger governance arrangements between Racing Queensland and race clubs.

To this end, the government’s $38 million prize money and reform package across all three codes has focused on industry engagement, governance, infrastructure and commercialisation.