Chapter XI
Australia Local Government and E-Governance:
From Administration to Citizen Participation?

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ABSTRACT

This chapter analyses local government's response to the pressure to modernise its structures through its use of Information Communication Technologies (ICT) to execute its broad range of tasks. The chapter begins by discussing Chadwick and May's (2003) three basic models of e-government; managerial, consultative and participatory. Using data collected from an analysis of 658 local government websites in Australia together with existing survey research the chapter then analyses the extent to which local government sites fit into the three models. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the issues and problems faced by local government in its attempt to develop e-governance as both an extension of administrative as well as democratic functions.

INTRODUCTION

Like many other institutions of governance around the world, Australia's local governments are facing new challenges in the 21st century. The pressure for reform has seen major structural changes as state and federal governments seek to impose a new economic and political agenda upon the local institutions of governance (Baker, 2003). The result has seen a renewed focus on way that local government does business especially in areas such as statutory service obligations, financial accountability, local economic development and to a lesser extent democratic representation (Dollery, Marshall, & Worthington, 2003).

In more recent times local governments have adopted Information Communication Technologies (ICT) in the form of websites in the hope of