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Citizen Participation and Local Governance:
The Australian Experience

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Abstract: This paper is part of a forthcoming book on local government in Canada and Australia. It aims to map types of citizen participation in Australian municipal governance, particularly during the past two decades when local government systems have been the focus of intense reform. The author argues that, despite more than a decade of reform, the basic nexus between state and local governments have not been reformed in ways that embrace local government as an active and integral participant in the Australian Federation.

However, the author notes that there are signs that some of the more recent reforms introduced at local and sub-local levels may enhance citizen participation in government through participatory governance. The chapter considers the extent to which contemporary views of participatory governance have taken root at local level and concludes that should participatory governance be advanced, it may have to look for leadership in organizations other than institutional local government.

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